MABINOGI AND ARCHAISM

THE purpose of the following pages is to make more generally available a discussion which seems to have aroused interest and a degree of approval on a much debated subject in a broad span of special fields. I hope it may prove useful and clarifying to have the text purged of some typographical errors, and updated with certain references and notes. I refrain from the imposition of revising to the degree of incorporating my present expanded views which are better presented integrally elsewhere as I intend.

It had been suggested at one time that this material[1] be reprinted together with other, and excellent, Mabinogi scholarship; but it was then decided that this differed too greatly in texture and genre from the other works. I am pleased, though with the sadness of *écmaise* to offer this effort to the memory of James Carney, who was not afraid to combine literary appreciation with the grime of philological detail.

Dr T. M. Charles-Edwards has offered us[2] some keen reasoning and perceptively broad erudition on the dating of the *Pedair Keinc*; his fascinating argument contains in addition some important substantive analyses of certain subsidiary points which form miniature essays in themselves. The point of this brief note is to elaborate a few of the issues which have been so meticulously argued where it seems to this reader that a trifle more may be said.

Dr Charles-Edwards accords, I feel, the correct degree of seriousness to the phonological arguments of Sir Ifor Williams which is always due the careful reasoning of that philological giant, while properly fastening upon the loopholes in the chronological conclusions which do not in fact follow inexorably upon the perfectly sound phonetic interpretation. There are, as a matter of fact, arguments that may be drawn from current [i.e. 1970s!] views of generative phonological theory in further support of Charles-Edwards's criticisms of Sir Ifor's phonological arguments. Let me first summarize the nature of the issues so that we may see in which direction the argument is heading. We all agree that Sir Ifor has offered a perfectly proper and licit *phonetic* interpretation of the graphic facts; that is to say, Sir Ifor's claims correspond to the phonetic (= heard, perceived, or articulated) surface shapes of sound that characterized these words at some pertinent period of time. I further think that Charles-Edwards has argued correctly that such graphs could have got into the text before us from sources, or a tradition preserved in mosaic-like portions, that *may* be significantly anterior to the date of the text that we have. The point of my present argument is twofold: graphs found in texts such as this (in fact, in most texts of any interest at all) tend not to reflect exact contemporary phonetic facts ('surface sound'); they tend rather to reflect the systematic more abstract features of phonology in their morpho-syntactic setting that are characteristic for the grammar of the language. This is reasonable, since scribes and manuscripts directed their efforts and content not at phoneticians and future philologists, but at native speakers who look for the speediest and easiest conversion of their native intuitions. It is worth pointing out in passing, that I am not

[1] First appeared in *THSC* 1972/3 (1974) 95–103
[2] *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* pt. 2 (1970) 263–98.

considering here the separate question of the purely *graphic* tradition and its possible independent vagaries and regularities (e.g. the ambiguity of *wy* in modern Welsh orthography). Secondly, I would argue that such abstract representations may live on as appropriate graphic representations for a considerable time, thus making their use as a diacritic for the true dating of a text quite different from their value as testimony to past phonetic events.

On these grounds we see immediately that the spelling *makwyf* has no necessary connection with the exact phonetics of any chronology relevant to our central problem. Long after final [v] had ceased to be pronounced in Cynddelw's *maccuy*, as long as the plural was *makwyueit* and the like (in graphic dress for a [v]), the appropriate abstract underlying representation for this lexical entry would have been /maccuiv/ in some matching graphic shape. The writing *makwyf* was a perfectly proper representation for a surface phonetic [mak:u:i] or the like; automatic phonetic rules known to any native speaker of the time would have produced the correct surface phonetics whatever they happened in detail to be. Such a writing would become inexact, unmotivated, or archaic only after a loss of *medial intervocalic* [v].

It seems to me, on the evidence that we have, probable that Charles-Edwards has reached the right conclusion by allowing (265) *stlys* and *stryw* as a possible solitary shred of evidence for a pre-Norman original. However, even these two forms are not immune to debate that could confer on them a status somewhat analogous to that just argued for *makwyf*, and thereby deprive them of crucial evidential value. Here, however, a decision on a point of linguistic theory currently under contest could swing the interpretation in either direction. We know that the development of *y-* in such forms was historically an automatic phonetic event; synchronically, for a very long time afterwards in the language, it has been quite possible from a point of view of rule writing to develop this vowel in such forms by a 'late' phonetic rule. What is at issue is whether such a late rule corrresponds to anything real in the speakers' command of the language.[3] Technically, for example, during the very early period before the eleventh-century accent shift, we could imagine a rule ordered very late which supplied the *y-*: then later in time the y-rule must have been ordered 'earlier' than the rule that placed the accent (which was the subject of the eleventh-century shift).[4] Such a sequence of grammars has in fact the possibility of accounting for the differential behaviour of poets during these centuries; that is, we might say that the rules of metrics at all times during these periods scan the output precisely at the level of word-accent placement. In

[3] Such evidence might be sought, for example, in orthographies representing variants of *Dryll yr Ysgawlwyn* (*Isgowlwyn* 1545, *y Scowlwyn* 1513/14, *yr Scowlwyn* 1592/3) which we find in the admirable dated collection of names in *dryll* published by the late Melville Richards, *Indo-Celtica* (Gedächtnisschrift für Alf Sommerfelt) [1972] p. 189. Compounds of this sort offer a basis for surviving synchronic alternations down to the present day, regardless of whether plurals and other inflected forms remain available.

[4] It seems strongly likely that we should read 9th-century for 11th-century throughout here, on grounds advanced by Arwyn Watkins, *Indo-Celtica* 201–5; Watkins's arguments (204–5) for *guiannuin* / *derguentid*, *eterin*(*n*) / (*h*)*in*(*n*), and especially *treidin* seem to me very powerful indeed. However, this date does not affect my central argument here: it would only move back in time the rule ordering discussed.

other words, we might try (preferably strengthened by additional arguments)[5] to see in the practice of poets a specimen of the behaviour which we seek in order to validate the proposed rules and their ordering. However, it is also possible to see in the earliest poetic suppression of the *y-* a purely metrical conservatism which ignored the altered phonetic facts. This would be analogous to the conservation of dead rimes in English Mother Goose poems, e.g. *gander* and *wander*.

However the above-mentioned arguments might be judged to stand, a purely formal linguistic claim would allege a slender advantage in saving one phonetic segment in each such lexical entry's representation – a segment that a simple rule of context could provide at any point that the speakers' behaviour indicated. Such a formulation has the virtue of according recognition to a highly predictable feature of capturing the predictability of which any speaker must in some way have been aware. Yet such a claim, if not supported by active grammatical alternations in the language or by other rule outputs which thereby gain in regularity, suffers from the weakness of the 'free-ride principle' which has been attacked by Kiparsky and others.[6] In this last connection we may draw a useful lesson from the situation in Spanish. There are no important alternations that oblige us to furnish the *e-* on *estado* by rule. But, as my student Kimball Robinson has pointed out to me, by supplying this *e-* by a late rule we realize a gain in the regularity of accent placement in the case of forms such as *está*.[7] What assurance do we have that such an accentual interstage did not for a time exist in the case of *ystlys* and *ystryw*? In light of a number of the above considerations, it is difficult to say that *stlys* and *stryw* were not for a considerable continuing period defensible abstract underlying forms of Welsh. They are certainly not in an obvious way free from chronological traps.[8]

The case of *uaës* in the well-known englyn is somewhat different, and I would be inclined myself to argue the case slightly differently than does Charles-Edwards. He is of course perfectly right that the age of the englyn proves nothing on the age of the prose text, and this on grounds of argument that Sir Ifor himself has had the merit of initiating in a different context. Charles-Edwards cites the instance of Trystan ac Esyllt, but there is actually an even more striking case in the dossier. It

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[5] Here is where metrical criteria such as that mentioned by Jarman (Watkins 204) might be invoked.

[6] For later comments and recanting on 'free-ride (principle)' see R. Lass *Phonology* (Cambridge 1984), pp. 64–9, esp. pp. 66-7 and 68 (the notion 'abstract'), who cites in his References (p. 351) Arnold Zwicky (1970, 1973) and (p. 347) Paul Kiparsky (1968a); under the rubric 'levels of representation' see M. Kenstowicz *Phonology in generative grammar* (Cambridge Mass. 1994) pp. 74–81 §2.7 ('dual-level') and ibid. 100–3 §3.3 ('intermediate') and 103–14 §3.4 ('multiple', 'abstract underlying'). Many aspects of these categorizations still remain *sub judice*. Of course, at a later time Kiparsky with his Lexical phonology (1982; see Kenstowicz [1994]; p. 195 ff.) could have seen the same data through a different optic.

[7] Note that Kenstowicz (1994) p. 270–1, treats this Spanish phenomenon (after Itô [1986]) as epenthesis, a variety of 'templatic syllabification'.

[8] All this has nothing to do with the distant Indo-European past. On *ystrew* (πτάρνυμαι) see now *Celtica* 22 (1991) 44, footnote 49, on 'sneeze', Welsh *ystrew* ~ *trew*(*i*), Latin *sternuō*. My reconstruction **pstreu-* > **streu-* (Ir. *sreöd*) and **ptreu-* (Welsh *trew*) was repeated in *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 30 (1983) 292, but I saw in *Revue des études arméniennes* 17 (1983) 5 that Armenian *p̄nkam* required **spter-u-* as a pre-form, as also it then must be for Greek πτάρνυμαι; cf. my note on Greek πτ-, *Annual of Armenian Linguistics* 6 (1985) 51. I therefore reconstruct Indo-European **streu-* (> **streu-*) ~ **ptreu-*, with *s-* mobile.

was after all Sir Ifor who so brilliantly perceived that in Llywarch Hen we have but
the metrical wreckage of an ancient sequence of stories; that is the equivalent of
saying that metrical portions may have a separate textual life of their own, and that
in at least one known case the prose component has varied to the limiting point
of zero. What could argue more strongly for the durability and conservatism of
the metrical portions, and hence for their weakness as a chronological criterion in
direct proportion to their priceless value as a repository of archaism?[9]

Yet we should also remove if we can the residual possibility that poetry may
be composed afresh with the incorporation of archaising anachronisms. We know
that English can use for rimes traditional sets of words that through phonological
change no longer phonetically match. The Greeks were aware of some syllabic
values (length and hiatus) which they were able to call forth on the basis of their
knowledge of the text of Homer with its rules constrained by the (fifth-foot)
dactylic hexameter. Japanese classical poetry involves linguistic anachronisms that
border on feats of memory. I have myself heard both traditional and freshly
composed folk verse recited by Albanian-speaking enclaves in Calabria where the
scansion depends on the presence of syllables that have been regularly syncopated
in the local dialect. Finally, to take an indubitably non-literate case, the witch
Dask'iya in the tales of the Quileute (Olympic Peninsula, state of Washington)
traditionally spoke (the language is now moribund – in 1998 reduced to one last
natural speaker – and high oral style now quite forgotten) with nasal consonants,
while normal spoken Quileute over the past two centuries or so has been the one
language in the world that we know of totally lacking in nasals, all nasals having
been replaced by voiced stops. For each of the mentioned sample of cases the
following may be remarked: on the basis of English texts, from Shakespeare and
Byron to Mother Goose, many of us know quite casually in a household way per-
mitted sets of false or eye rimes. Homerische *Wörter* and other aspects of archaic
poetics formed a whole department of Alexandrine scholarship and that of their
predecessors; and so too did archaic Latin inscriptions and documents furnish
(misleading or misremembered) models to Roman statute or epitaph writers or to
Ennius and Lucretius; the cultivation of correct literary styles has formed a large
part of the learning of certain Japanese social groups. In the Albanian (Arbëresh)
of Calabria the combination of intricate syllabic alternation in related inflected
forms and a familiarity with neighbouring village dialects lacking such syncope
conspires to enable these speakers, who are (were) illiterate for the most part, to
manipulate the syllabic deletion rules that exist synchronically to a limited extent
in their grammar.[10] In the Quileute case it seems that certain idiosyncrasies of

[9] But now if we accept Patrick Ford's forceful argument (though the strongest and most damaging
portion of the refutation does in fact suffer by being an *argumentum ex silentio*) set forth in his *The
poetry of Llywarch Hen* (California 1974) pp. 4, 11–15, 18–19, 25 and ff., 48–55, 56–7, the claimed prose
in this case melts away. Nevertheless, Irish certainly supplies less extreme examples that provide ample
material to sustain the lesson. For a view in moderated opposition to that of Ford see (with refs.) P.
Mac Cana, 'Prosimetrum in Insular Celtic literature', in J. Harris and K. Reichl (ed.), *Prosimetrum :
cross-cultural perspectives on narrative in prose and verse* (Cambridge 1997) 117–22.
[10] This oral behaviour provides a living analog to the Old Irish resulting output analysed and discussed
in C. Ó Crualaoich, *Ériu* 48 (1997) 239–64, and antecedent literature such as J. Armstrong, *Ériu* 25–7
(1976), esp. 46–7, 69–72.

the underlying phonological matrix of the language coupled with equations that can be made by bilinguals with other neighbouring minuscule languages in this intricate mosaic offer the possibility of introducing as a stylistic variant a phonetic feature that happens to be an ancestral one. Without going into further detail, the important point of all these cases of productive archaism is that they are in some sense *systematic*.

Now Charles-Edwards has observed that the *regular* metrical value of *maes* for the Gogynfeirdd was a monosyllabic one. The important point about *uaës* then is not just that it is archaic, but that it is so isolated. We have here an important principle at work: in essence it is the same that underlies the classical textual *lectio difficilior*, and in historical linguistics the principle made famous by Meillet (with the favourite example of the Indo-European forms of 'to be') that the isolated irregularity in grammar is to be regarded as the conservative archaism, the débris of an ancient pervasive regularity. Incidentally, *maes* is better reconstructed morphologically not **mag-est-*, but **mages-tu-*, a derivative of an old *s*-stem.[11]

I accept Charles-Edwards's dating of 'Breuddwyd Rhonabwy' at around 1160 on the ground that the satire of Madog's puny soldiers ought to be contemporary; indeed, if this were said of one's grandfather and his associates or enemies it would be both lacking in taste and unmotivated – the latter since it would then be more likely a subject for elegy. But regardless of date, in two texts as different as these I regard the mere number or proportionate incidence of loans as a very poor measure of cultural impact. We know well that (to put it into cold linguistic jargon) there are discourse rules that favour or exclude categories of lexicon quite systematically to mark style, topic, situation, audience, etc., as W. S. Gilbert remarked with his deftly gauche and light ponderosity 'this is the kind of spice I use to give a salt-sea smack.' For all we know, there may have been a string of loans available that were excluded by rule precisely from the *Pedeir Keinc*.

In sum, while I agree completely with the results of Charles-Edwards's linguistic critique, I hope to have shown that upon reflexion *all* of the arguments originally urged are in fact even less probative or relevant than they were represented to be both in the original presentation and in the critique. It would seem then that the really solid evidence for the close dating and interesting cultural placement of the *Pedeir Keinc* text is exclusively non-linguistic in nature.

Charles-Edwards deals (267) incisively with two points of law that were already obsolete for our earliest law texts; his conclusion that this archaism is not decisive for dating is clearly right, but he fails, in my opinion, to give the strongest reason why this should be so. We find in the present day, to cite just one illustrative parallel, that the Serbian epics reflect a state of law and society well anterior in time to any current extant code or compilation. Even though we know that the Celts (at least the Irish) were notably conservative in retaining and recording their formal laws, such corpora are after all designed to serve some more or less practical or applied end; even as objects of scholarship they are likely to be regarded as

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[11] For a detailed analysis of reflexes of the noun **magos* see E. P. Hamp, in J. Eska, R. G. Gruffydd, N. Jacobs (ed.), *Hispano-Gallo-Brittonica: essays in honour of Professor D. Ellis Evans* (Cardiff 1995) 49–50 (in which p. 49, line 7 up, should read **magos*, and p. 50, lines 14 and 18, the *i* should be deleted before the OIr. *g*.); *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 34 (1975) 27–9, for a probable compound of **magos*.

tools towards the solution of active problems. Thus they are normally subject to a certain rhythm of obsolescence. By contrast the situational context of a story or plot gives a continuing motivation for the relatively faithful preservation of cultural features, whether or not they continue to be understood in their full original force. Hence a literary text can be considerably reworked while preserving such cultural archaisms as fossils. A priori we should not be surprised that the *Pedeir Keinc* might occasionally be more retentive than all the law books combined. This means that axiomatically such literary texts will well repay careful combing for such cultural facts.

Perhaps a careful consideration of the term *gwestfa* in this setting may lead to a resolution of the ambiguous etymology that I have pointed to.[12] As I mentioned there, the equation OIr. *feis(s)* = *gwest* in the sense 'spending the night' may be put in relation with *foaid*, while in the sense 'feast' it may be related plausibly to ON, OE, OHG, *wist* (fem.) 'food' and Goth. *wizon*.[13] It would make morphological sense if the verbal noun 'spending the night' were originally **ues-ti-* and the noun 'feast' were the feminine of an old participle **ues-tā*. If this were so, there would be no need for the legal institution to have gone through three stages, as Charles-Edwards supposes (267). From the point of view of the etymology, and consequently of the potential synchronic terminology, the obligation of entertainment and the food-rent could have been a single legal obligation with a unitary term during an early Welsh period; then later it would have turned into a money-rent. It would be interesting if, for example, it could be shown that the morphology of *gwest-fa* was designed to disambiguate these two sources by singling out **uesti-* as the one susceptible of being a place or location. The *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*[14] merges the two meanings of *gwest* in a single entry and fails to offer any hypothesis how this homonymy came about. The entry *gwestfa* (p. 1651) shows that this complex notion requires considerably more careful chronological study.[15]

Charles-Edwards presents (274–7) a most enlightening exploration of the pre-Norman (and hence Celtic and Anglo-Saxon) notions of vassalage and their connection with terms such as *gŵr*, *gwas*, and the like. In exploring the purely

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[12] In *Acta Linguistica Hafniensia* 12 [1969] 162 for *gwest*.

[13] At the time of writing that article I had failed to note Fowke's remarks. *J.C.S* 2 (1958) 1–2, essentially anticipating this pair of comparisons on the basis of Sir Ifor Williams's work. Fowkes then goes on to suggest an equation of *dirwest* 'abstinence, (fast)ing' with Skt. (*sam*)*upa-vas*, but with an unlikely semantic development. Surely, we must have here with the intensive *dir-* (*dyr-*), an instance of *-west* < **ues-ti-* in the sense of 'an (excessive) staying', where Welsh shows a very literal survival of the archaic term applied to the IE institution of sitting (i.e. staying) and fasting at the wrongdoer's house to obtain redress – an institution so lucidly explicated by Binchy. On distraint see now F. Kelly *A guide to Early Irish law* (Dublin 1988), chap. 7, esp. pp. 182–3.

[14] Part xxvi, p. 1650, 1974.

[15] On *gwestfa* see now T. M. Charles-Edwards *Early Irish and Welsh kinship* (Oxford 1993) 370–83; the account mostly concerns food-renders, and the social position and resources of those obligated for *gwestfa* (see also 364–9), but the two meanings of *gwest* and Irish *feiss* (and the later form of money-rent) are taken up (376–8, esp. footnote 37) as we would expect. Yet no arguments later than 1913–1925 are reviewed specifically relating to hospitality. With two available etyma it would seem reasonable to allocate them to two functions.

Celtic background of *gûr* in the sense of these social relations it would be well to consider the early Irish names in *Fer* and allied questions.

In the realm of social relations and law Charles-Edwards has also thrown light (277–8) on the evidence, through the terms *anglot* 'dis-praise' and *wyneb*(*werth*) 'face, honour-price' for early Welsh satire, the equivalent of OIr. *áer*. I discuss other aspects and ramifications of this matter elsewhere in connection with *orn*[16] and the Greek ἐνῑπή, ἐνίσσω.[17] Similarly, Charles-Edwards offers an important discussion and *mise-au-point* of the term *cerennydd* (278–9), which may be glossed not 'personal friendship' but rather 'legal or political non-aggression'. This has interesting semantic connections with *caru* and terms for 'enemy' which I discuss elsewhere.[18]

A passage of impressive lucidity in Charles-Edwards's exposé, one which incisively marshalls many scattered and pertinent threads, is his rejection of the derivation from the notion 'tournament' of the *oet* = *cyfranc* fought by Pwyll and Hafgan at a ford to decide claim to *tir a daear*, a single encounter, i.e. a fight between equal numbers; and his equation which may be summarily captioned *oet* = *cyfranc* = *fír fer* = *comrac fri hoénfer* = *comlann* (282–6) which leads to the inherited Celtic institutions of the single encounter at a ford and of the types of proof and oath in traditional law. But the case is even stronger than Charles-Edwards makes it; it seems to me that on two points an appeal to Dumézilian theory will at once confirm the inherited Celtic standing of this episode and throw its roots back into Indo-European antiquity. The theme of the combat of equal numbers at a ford or river has an exact equation, as Dumézil has partly made clear (since 1942 at least),[19] in the combat of the Horatii and the Curiatii which ends in the victory of the third Horace, the champion of Tullus Hostilius third king of Rome, and which decides the question *de imperio* with the Albans; and in the victory of Indra helped by Trita of the Aptyas over the monster, thus rescuing the domain of the gods. Here we may simply claim to

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[16] *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 25 (1974) 388–91; *Norwegian Journal of Linguistics* 28 (1974) 1–7.
[17] *Ériu* (1974). On matters Indo-European, Greek, and Celtic honour and satire see my discussions *Ériu* 25 (1974) 261–8.
[18] *Ériu* (1974). On *cerennydd* see *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 29 (1982) 683; and also *Ériu* 27 (1976) 6–9.
[19] When I was writing in 1974 and mentioned Dumézil 1942 I now believe that I was somewhat conflating Dumézil 1942 (*Horace et les Curiaces*) with other expressed views of Dumézil (perhaps in conversation with him), of Mircea Eliade and others, and resulting convictions of my own. On reviewing *Horace et les Curiaces* I see that although Dumézil mentions (86) Horatius Cocles 'œil unique' against the Etruscan army 'seul' and (90–1) at the bridge on the Tiber (i.e. Livy II, 10), he was actually mainly interested in the hero of the (triplet) Horatii and Curiatii as a specimen, *ferox* by nature, of *furor* = *ferg* = *dásacht* = *Wut*, i.e. an expression of μένος or ψυχή, *mánas* (Meillet) 'force vitale'; and the merger of this Indo-European equation with the triple adversary theme (i.e. Livy I, 25–6), which Horatius Cocles also shows (104) since he began his exploit in the company of two *seniores*. I am grateful to my colleague Brian Krostenko for having helped me clarify my recall of this aspect of Dumézil's work. For a more explicit equation meanwhile of the bridge of Horatius Cocles with the fords of Celtic, Vedic 'combat', Persian 'bridge', and water at Beowulf's death see the following footnote. As I have argued recently (*In Memoriam Enrico Campanile* 1997) for Greek γέφῡρα and Armenian *kamurǰ* 'bridge' that the Indo-Europeans had no bridges, while *pons* of Horatius shows that this episode goes back earlier probably than the triplicated merged version with the Curiatii, the fords of the Celts must show a still earlier unrevised archaism.

have in the Welsh of *c.*1100 an episode of pure Indo-European story. To have buried this episode in a mediaeval tournament would be to have lost a precious relic of the first order of antiquity.[20]

A more subtle trace of Indo-European culture, as revealed to us by Dumézil, is also to be found among the pertinent features adduced by Charles-Edwards in the course of his explication of the *cyfranc* between Pwyll and Hafgan. To place the *oet* of this episode in its context of law, Charles-Edwards draws on the phrase *gwir Duw* 'truth of God' in *Culhwch and Olwen*, equating this with OIr. *fír nDé*,[21] this was a solemn oath which in the Christian period was sworn on relics or on the altar. Charles-Edwards then goes on to mention *fír[n]daíne*, which was a proof by oath-helpers (*rhaith*), and *fír fer = fír (g)catha* 'ordeal by battle', which he equates with the *oet* illustrated by the *cyfranc* under discussion. Now if we carry the interpretation just a trifle farther here we recover a tripartite relation of great interest. Charles-Edwards, remarking that we no longer have the matching Welsh terms as we do in the instance of *gwir Duw*, glosses both *fír[n]daíne* and *fír fer* somewhat confusingly with the words 'truth of men'. Obviously this loses a distinction, and this is not our point since he is far too clear a thinker for this to be more than a sort of glossator's shorthand not intended to define. Let us first recall that these two last were, respectively, 'truth by oath-helpers, i.e. by fellow humans' and 'truth by warriors'. Now if we put these glosses somewhat clumsily into other IE languages we have, respectively, 'uērum hominum, žmoniu̧' and 'uērum uirōrum, výru̧, vīrā́nām' i.e. truth by mortals vs. truth by warriors or heroes. The lexical opposition here is that of 'mankind, Mensch dyn, ἄνθρωπος': 'man, Mann, gŵr, ἀνήρ', but the equation of *fer* = Skt. *vīrá-* leads to more complications than we can properly deal with in the present framework. While Indic *vīrá-* may in some instances be glossed 'hero' and the like, it has also been argued by Benveniste[22] that the Indo-Iranian and Italic testimony leads us to meanings in the range of 'slave, human property, shepherd, etc.' We may leave the debate on the exact IE terms for various roles of individual persons for another time; for the present it is sufficient to recognize that *fer* is a term of great antiquity in the sense of individual male and in the potential narrower reference to fighting man. It becomes clear now that in the set *Dia*: *fer*: *duine* we have a tripartite opposition which may be paraphrased 'sacred or divine': 'single man or warrior': 'human being or rank-and-file'. The congruence of this is obvious with the well-known Dumézilian functions:

brahmáns, átharvans, druids + bards + filid, Jupiter, Mitra–Varuna,
     magic, knowledge
kṣatríyas + rāj(an)–, ríg + flaith, Mars, Indra, war, strength + bravery
vaiśyas, freemen + smiths, etc., Quirinus, Vofionus, health + riches

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[20] On the single encounter or fight at the ford see my Indo-Iranian comparison " 'Indic *pŕ̥tanā-* 'combat' " *Papers from the Parasession on Nondeclaratives* Chicago Linguistics Society (1982) 63–6, which joins the Celtic testimony to this Indo-European linguistic, topographic, and social fact. On the importance of the water-factor, see also E. P. Hamp, in E. Polomé (ed.), *Homage to Georges Dumézil* (Washington DC, supplement to *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 1982).

[21] For the later fate of this phrase in Irish *fínné* 'evidence, witness' see M. A. O'Brien, *Celtica* 3 (1956), pp. 169–70.

[22] *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* (1969), l.48–50.

We see then that the type of action called $fír^{N}$ in Irish law was subdivided precisely to match appropriately the characteristics of Dumézil's three functions of Indo-European society.

We find on two grounds that the *oet* of Pwyll and Hafgan has a very ancient pedigree.

One last Dumézilian touch may also be pointed out, the tradition underlying the colours of the animals which Charles-Edwards quite correctly recognizes (286–7) as having a solid Celtic pedigree – animals with white bodies and red ears. The full range of Dumézilian IE cultural colours (white for the priestly or druid function, red for the warrior or regal function, black or blue for the freemen-provisioners of society) are to be seen symbolically, for example, in the scene which Deirdre saw when the black raven descending on the fresh calf's blood in the snow captured for her the requirements (physically expressed) which she defined for her lover[23] In the case of these animals the mention of only white and red may be taken as characterizing minimally just the two 'marked' categories of the triad.[24]

<center>MABINOGI</center>

Sir Ifor Williams has reviewed and clarified most aspects of the problem of the meaning and ancestry of the term *Mabinogi* in his classic Introduction to the authoritative PKM,[25] and has brought scholarship on this point essentially to where it stands today. R. L. Thomson[26] has succinctly summarized the meanings which have been proposed:

1. juvenile tales (Thomas Stephens)

2. the material pertaining to the craft of an alleged *mabinog*, supposedly 'a literary or bardic apprentice' (Rhŷs, Loth)

3. 'a tale of youth', Mediaeval Latin *infantia*, Norman-French *enfances*, 'mabol(y)aeth' (Gwenogvryn Evans, in part Pughe, Ifor Williams).

The last meaning is favoured by Thomson and is viewed as being generally accepted. So also Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones[27] who specify the presumed development of this last meaning: 'youth' > 'tale of youth' > 'tale of a hero' > 'tale, story' or (in Thomson's words) 'complete biography'. This is repeated less precisely by H. Idris Bell[28] whereby the gloss is emptied of any exactitude at all. The Four Branches [*keing*, *cainc*, pl. *cang(h)au*] of this 'story' would then be,

[23] Though Rees and Rees (*Celtic heritage* 1961) retell this episode (p. 280; note too that Noísiu excelled as a warrior, in musical milk production, and in prudence) they make no use of these colours in their note 44, p. 376.

[24] The above notes update *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1972–3) 95–103, which stresses the inherited Indo-European content, the 'pagan past' of the *PKM* and which provides background to my "Mabinogi". The linguistic theory and state of attestation of some examples there, of course, reflect the time of writing.

[25] §10 pp. xlii–liii.

[26] *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet* (1957), p. xvii.

[27] Everyman's Library, no. 97, 1949, p. xii.

[28] transl. Thomas Parry, *A history of Welsh literature* (1955), p. 70.

parallel to the Irish plan and according to W. J. Gruffydd's argument, the birth, the youthful exploits, the imprisonment, and the death. The person to which these phases would be assigned, at least in the recension as we have it, is Pryderi/ Gwri – although Lleu gets a mention by Parry-Bell.

This, then, is what seems generally to be understood by *Mabinogi* today. It is agreed by all, moreover, that the texts, (and even Lhuyd) are explicit in using *Mabinogi* of these Four Branches only. Although the *Mabinogi* that we have is related basically, or residually, to Pryderi, it is to be presumed from the most authoritative discussions of the question that a *mabinogi* might have existed for any hero or legendary person of consequence.[29]

At this point it is well to note that Jones-Jones (p. xvi) and Thomson (p. xviii) make it clear that the Second Branch really has little to do tangibly with Pryderi's (youthful) exploits. Moreover, Proinsias Mac Cana has pointed out (*Branwen daughter of Llŷr* [1958], p. 174) that W. J. Gruffydd's set of equations is faulty, i.e. First Branch (Pryderi's conception and birth) = *Compert*, Second Branch (youthful exploits) = *Macgnímartha*, Third Branch, (Pryderi's imprisonment) = *Indarba*, Fourth Branch (Pryderi's death) = *Aided*. For one thing, *indarba* is 'banishment' and not 'imprisonment'. Secondly, the Irish tales may deal either with boyhood feats or with adult deeds and the *Mabinogi* really shows nothing decisive on this score. I would not dare here to cast doubt on some degree, at least, of correspondence, among the many ingredients of the Four Branches, between episodes surrounding Pryderi (and his associates and kin) and the type of event and characterization which defines the Irish heroic cycle and its *remscéla*. But I think any impartial observer, simply looking at the clear structural features and the detailed matching traits, must agree that a frontal equation 'hero's (youth) tale-series' = unit of heroic cycle + *remscéla*, if true at all, is scarcely obvious or even as yet above the level of groping. In expressing these doubts I am aware that some, notably O'Rahilly, have sought to destroy the distinction between the Irish heroic and mythological cycles; it might be argued that the above equation could be rescued by observing this merging of two Irish categories. However, I not only agree with Gerard Murphy,[30] who follows Thurneysen and the Chadwicks, in holding to a core of distinction which may be discerned for the two types; I would insist further that, merely because we rarely find sharp boundaries in nature as well as in man, we do poorly – indeed follow a disastrous course – to abandon heuristic analytic distinctions whereby we may grasp both the discontinuities and the graded spectra of nature and man. I therefore join Dillon[31] in rejecting W. J. Gruffydd's Pryderi-cycle as the central theme.

It is not my purpose in this brief note to attempt an independent characterization of the history and typology of the Four Branches; nor indeed am I enough of a literary scholar to be adequate to that task. I am a poor linguist and comparativist

[29] Indeed, in his astonishingly learnèd and compressed survey of Welsh literary scholarship (*Celtic Studies in Wales* (Cardiff 1963) 103–39) R. Geraint Gruffydd has pointed (122) to Ifor Williams's 'reconstruction from the Latin of Nennius of "the mother of every *Mabinogi* and the grandmother of every other Welsh tale" '. See Ifor Williams, 'Hen Chwedlau', *Transactions* (1946–7), p. 39.

[30] *Saga and myth in ancient Ireland* (1955), pp. 41–2.

[31] *The Celtic realms* (1967), p. 344.

who enjoys reading the texts that provide capital data to his métier. It may, how-
ever, not be out of place here to offer a more positive counterpart to the negative
opinion that I have just expressed. Scholars have long since observed striking equa-
tions (e.g. *Nudd = Núadu*, *Lleu = Lug*, *Manawydan = Manannán*, *Dôn =* [*Túatha
Dé*] *Donann*, etc.) between material of the *Mabinogi(on)* and the Irish mytho-
logical cycle. I see a far stronger set of correspondences here than in the claimed
compert-macgnímartha-aided equation (for which there might also be a *tochmarc*),
though this 'mythological' thematic would not exclude an ingredient or overlay
from the latter material. In short, I am much more impressed by a restrained ver-
sion of the sort of thing discussed and set forth by W. J. Gruffydd in *Rhiannon*[32]
than by his hero's-life equation.[33] And one very persuasive trait of internal consis-
tency within this picture is to be found in the suffix *-on-*[34] observed[35] in *Teyrnon
< *Tigernonos*, *Rhiannon < *Rīgantonā*, *Gofannon < *Gobannonos*, *Gwydion*, and
elsewhere *Modron < *Mātronā* and *Mabon < *Maponos*. With the last is to be com-
pared *Mac(c) ind Óc < *Maccon* (i.e., *óc*) *< *Makʷkʷonos*.[36] His mother, instead of
being the River Marne (*Mātronā*), was the *Boand*, a natural divinity in a cattle cul-
ture; and the *Matronae* show up again in later dress in the *Bendith y Mamau*[37] Mac
Cana[38] has, futhermore, rightly emphasized the birds of Rhiannon and the birds
(Oéngus and Caer) who flew to the *Bruig Maicc in Ó(i)cc*, which add one more
precious link in the above cohesive mesh, where we find that a texture made up of
form (phonology and morphology), lexical semantics, and storyteller's function.[39]

    In the midst of all the perceptive scholarship that has been lavished on the
problem of the *Mabinogi* it is therefore with some surprise that I find that the
name itself has been treated (or not treated at all) with a degree of negligence that
normally is never tolerated in serious Celtic philological studies. In short, it seems
that no one recently has been troubled by the first vowel of the name *Mabinogi*; in
fact, the major references scarcely mention the word, and never for its formation
and vocalism.

[32] *Rhiannon* (1953), pp. 90–110.

[33] Thus I find Rachel Bromwich's characterization (*TYP*, lxxxvii) congenial: 'fundamentally the stories
of the old Brittonic gods from whom the leading Welsh dynasties in early historical times claimed
descent'.

[34] One may now add here *Gwion < *u̯ı̄s-on-os*, which I have equated with Irish *Fer Fí* ('Varia II2', *Ériu*
29 (1978) 152–153); *Peryddon* (*Studia Celtica* 18–19 [1983–4] 132); *Damona* and other Gaulish names,
on which see *Studia Celtica Japonica* 4 (1991) 71–2, in relation to Celtiberian *Tamai* (*Études Celtiques*
27 [1990] 179). This *-on-* suffix, which made masculines in *-os* and feminines in *-ā* for supernatural
persons, should not be confused with other *-n-* suffixes and stems, as happens all too often in the
commentary literature and in onomastic studies.

[35] Gruffydd, *Rhiannon* 98; Jones-Jones, xv.

[36] See T. F. O'Rahilly *The Goidels and their predecessors* (1953), p. 38; *Early Irish history and mythology*
(Dublin 1946), pp. 516–17.

[37] W. J. Gruffydd, *Folklore and myth in the Mabinogion* (1958) p. 5.

[38] *Branwen*, p. 107.

[39] On the *Matronae* there is a large scholarship in the study of Celtic and Germanic antiquities, archae-
ology, and art. For a readable account on the Celtic side see A. Ross *Pagan Celtic Britain* (London
1967), esp. chapter 5. For more recent scholarship and a more complete and ample treatment see the
dozen essays collected from a colloquium in G. Bauchheuss and G. Neumann ed., *Matronen und ver-
wandte Gottheiten* [Beihefte der Bonner Jahrbücher, Band 44] (Köln und Bonn 1987), reviewed by R.
Ködderitsch, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 45 (1992) 259–61.

Thomson notes that 'the true form of the name is uncertain.[40] Ifor Williams is certainly correct in setting aside[41] the *-on* of the lone form *mabynnogyon* at the end of the WM first branch; this must be a scribal contamination from the preceding *dyledogyon*. The noun is then a collective in *-i*,[42] and there is no question of a suffix *-on* or *-ion*. This meaning fits in well with the observation made by Loth:[43] the *Mabinogi* must be a genre of traditional tales, as opposed to the terminology used for Culhwch and other stories which some have regarded as more in the nature of literary compositions. For such a traditional accumulation the collective is appropriate.[44]

Additionally, regarding the form of the noun, Williams remarks (xliii) that one cannot be sure whether the termination was *-ogi* or *-iogi*. After that he turns to a consideration exclusively of the meaning.

There is, however, something to be gleaned, I think, from an inspection of the attested instances of the word. The RM uses *mabinogi* in the titles throughout. WM, which lacks such titles shows:

at the end of the First Branch *mabynnogyon*;

at the end of the Second Branch *mabinyogi*;

at the end of the Third Branch *mabinogi*, *mabinogy*;

at the end of the Fourth Branch *mabinogi*.

Even on this slender evidence we see that we have a fair number of writings with the letter *y*; we find this again in the miscopying cited by Williams (xlvi–xlvii) as *mamynogi*. I draw from this two conclusions: (1) there exists **some** evidence for a spelling *mabynogi at one time. (2) There seems to be justification for an alternant *mabiniogi*; this could well cover over an older alternation which has since been partially levelled out.

Now the real problem of course is that a truly old Welsh word with later Mediaeval *i* cannot appear with *a* in the immediately preceding syllable. Such an *a should have long since been affected to *e* by the following vowel. Indeed, among forms which have been adduced as comparisons in meaning to *mabinogi* we find *mabol(y)aeth*, the diminutive *maban*, but *mebyn mebin*[45], *mebindawd*, *mebydd*: we must then regard *mabyn* as a later cross of *maban* and *mebyn*. A form such as *mabinogi* is *sensu stricto* quite unjustified phonologically in Welsh or in any British Celtic for that matter. We see that we cannot derive the *-i-* of such an isolated term directly from a Proto-Celtic *ī, i.e., an original IE *ī or *ē. On the other hand, there does seem to be evidence for an older **-jog-*: and in view of the rich number

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[40] *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet*, xvi.

[41] *PKM*, xlii.

[42] For my explanation of this suffix (including abstracts and plurals of similar shape) < **-ijī*, see *Proceedings of the 9th International Congress of Onomastic Sciences [1966]* (Louvain 1969), p. 269–70.

[43] ² (1913) i, pp. 12–13, in his Introduction which is for the most part overtaken by Williams's *PKM*.

[44] See now the commented reprint of Loth by P.-Y. Lambert (1994). There is an important renewed literature of editions, commentary, and translation for Culhwch and Olwen and other Mabinogion tales.

[45] See also Loth *Les Mabinogion* pp. 14–15.

of yod derivatives in Celtic it is reasonable to see alternants in *-og-* and *-jog-* grow up side by side. We shall soon see that this gives us a double motivation for the observed *i*.

   We now start from two possible pre-forms, recalling that the final *-i* must come from a collective **ijī* and the **-(i̯)og-* from the banal suffix of appurtenance **-(j)āk(o)-*.

(a) **maponākijī > *mabonɔ̄gi > *mabunɔ̄gi* (LHEB §201) > **mabynɔ̄gi > mabynogi*;

(b) **maponjākijī̄ > *mȩbȩiniɔ̄gi* (LHEB §157) > **mebeiniogi*.

If these two outputs had been simply conflated, we might have ended up with alternants **mabynogi ∼ mabeiniogi*. But we must also recall that early spellings of this archaic and isolated word would have given for the first alternant *mabinogi* (or -*p*-). It seems that this graphic -*i*- was read by speakers who had in mind the alternant in -*iog*- as if it stood for [i]. This would have yielded as a possible intermediary stage **mabynogi ∼ mabiniogi*; the latter is what we presumably see at the end of the Second Branch. Finally the two were further levelled to *mabinogi ∼ mabiniogi*. The only form we really lack for documentation in this series is **mabeiniogi*.

   Now that we may hope to understand the phonology of this deviant form, its interpretation becomes obvious. The word has nothing to do with 'youth' or 'boy, son'. It is a collective of an adjective denoting what pertains to a stem **mapono-*; in the above context its relevance to Maponos is immediately clear. The derivative **mapon-āk-ijī* meant 'the (collective) material pertaining to (those of) Maponos', while **mapon-j-āk-ijī* was 'the material pertaining to those of Maponos', perhaps 'the material pertaining to the family of Maponos'. Turned into Latin these would be something such as Maponālia (: *Saturnālia*) and Maponīlia or Maponiāna (: *Quīnctīlis, Catōniānus*). When we recall the semantics and relation of Macc ind Óc and the Dagdae < **Dago-dei̯s* and of Mabon and Modron, the parallel of the *Mātrālia* (11 June) and *Māter Mātūta* (: Ir. *maith*, Bret. *mad*)[46] is particularly striking in form and meaning. Turned into later Classical Greek we would have Μαπονιχά and Μαπονιαχά. In earlier Greek formations we may see the separate parts in play: Το Ὄλυμπος there is the ethnic Ὀλύμπιος Ὀλυμπιχός fem. Ὀλυμπιάς-άδος (cf. female patronymics), and the neuter collective τὰ Ὀλύμπια similarly Πῦθώ, Πύθιος, Πῦθιχός, Πῦθιάς-άδος, τὰ Πύθια. For the -χ- formation, rare in early Greek, note the solitary Hom. παρθενιχή, and Pind. μουσιχᾰ̆; and note the semantic spheres of these bases, to Ὄλιος Ὄλιον we have Ὀλιαχός (Τρωϊχός) and the feminine Ὀλιάς-άδος. As an archaic patronymic we find Τελαμώνιος i.e. Αἴας. The fictitious Μαπονιαχά is of course neuter plural; it should be noted that τὰ Ὀλύμπια Πύθια and the abstracts, e.g. ἀλήθεια, are in Indo-European at bottom identical.[47]

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[46] On **mat-* and **māt-* 'good', or rather **mȩti* and **mātu-*, see my article in *Archivio glottologico italiano* 58 (1973), pp. 137–9.

[47] In unexpected confirmation of the foregoing remarks, Michel Lejeune has, apparently without knowledge of my analysis of the Welsh word, published (*Études Celtiques* 31 [1995] 91–5) an interpretation of and commentary to a Latin dedicatory inscription, with embedded Gaulish names, context

We now notice several formal features whose convergence may well not be accident. The Roman calendar feasts, which were preponderantly named after divinities, were largely neuter plural collectives. The major Greek games were also neuter plurals in -ια. We must remember that Welsh *-i* < *-*ijī* comes from a cross of nom. sg. *-*ī* with oblique and plural *-*ijā*-; hence *-*iə* or *-*iH*$_a$. Thus *Mōtrālia* = Ὀλύμπια Πύθια Δημήτρια = *Mabinogi* forms a perfect ancient equation. Although the Celtic suffix *-*āko*- has become in prehistoric time enormously productive, it must once have sprung from small and specialized beginnings. Note the early limitation of Greek -χο- to ethnics and familial terms; thus **mapon-j-āk-ijī* and παρθενική μουσικᾰ form a striking parallel in formational syntax. Note too the gender suppletion in Greek for -ιο- -ιχο- and fem. -ιᾰδ-; this additionally permits us to equate on purely formal terms *Mabinogi* with Ἰλιάς, 'the material pertaining to X'. Perhaps this ancient formation in *-*āko*- helps to throw light on the origins and spread of this suffix.

If now *Mabinogi* is to be understood as originally 'the material, or doings pertaining to (the family of) the divine Maponos (Makᵂonos)', perhaps we may consider understanding the family trees sketched by W. J. Gruffydd (*Rhiannon* p. 100) somewhat differently. for example, without attempting to elaborate a vast subject deserving of its own full discussion, by joining the supposed relations we may obtain a somewhat different kinship chart:

*Tigernonos ════ **Rīgantonā*[48]

|

Gwri ════ *Mātronā*

|

Maponos
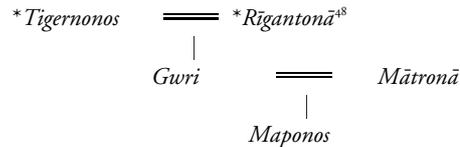
In that case the central figure left vestigially in the Mabinogi as we have it is the father of Maponos.[49]

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and terminology, from the first half of the first century from Limoges (la Roche-au-Go), excavated in 1987 and announced in print in 1990. The inscription includes the phrase ·DECAMNOCTIACIS·GRANNI· (I reproduce word-end puncts; [Apollo] *Grannos* appears in the genitive) which Lejeune reads as an ablative plural (presumably neuter) of an -*āco*- derivative (forming a feast- or celebration-name) constructed on a compound *decam-noctio*- 'of 10 nights' (= Latin -*noctium*) which would be a formation exactly equal to the abbreviation *tri-nox* (for *trinoxtion*) found in the Coligny calendar for the month of Samonos. Regarding -*āco*- Lejeune remarks, gratifyingly as I have, "y fonctionnerait comme en latin -*āli*- (neutre)" (p. 44), adding as examples *Ambarualia, Angeronalia, Bacchanalia, Carmentalia, Cerialia, Compitalia, Consualia.* . . .. It seems that the missing link has materialized.

[48] Jackson has elegantly accounted (*The International popular tale and Early Welsh tradition* (1961), pp. 86–95) for the divorce of this couple by the massive crossing of two tales and the faulty subsequent linking of the débris by a third. Jackson's demonstration also furnishes, I think, a fine example of the success that is to be realized by the proper combination of typological structural analysis with careful respect for residual, even fragmented, inherited traits and their correspondence with traits elsewhere. Jackson's folktale analysis introduces a structurally integral pattern which motivates the replacements and displacements. But he recognizes the fragmented quality of the result; I would insist that we must then seek on genetic lines correspondences for these fragments and discontinuities just as we concentrate in historical linguistics on first explaining the irregularities.

[49] I do not see that acceptance of Jackson's strong arguments (*International popular tale* passim) for a large ingredient of international themes excludes potential myth and story surrounding the names and incidents (p. 129) which we recover from Celtic antiquity. Surely there must have been elements of prior narrative on which to hang the new accretions.

The formal background of *Gwri* is to me at present quite ambiguous, let alone that of *Gweir*. Provisionally, *Gwri* is reminiscent in form of *Beli*. Semantically, of course *Gwri Wallt Euryn*, with his equine associations, is reminiscent of *Mongán*.[50]

Whether or not the redaction we actually have is, as Dillon summarizes in *The Celtic realms* (p. 344) from Jackson, a compilation by literary antiquarians (via a single author, moreover) constitutes, it seems to me, quite another and independent question. The title and many isolated embedded elements point strikingly to a vestigial status among the débris of an ancient oral narrative tradition conveying the mythology and folk history of an early élite.

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[50] I have since elaborated in oral lecture form a set of hypotheses for Gwri and his kin and for these kinship charts for much of the Pedeir Keinc. An expanded version of that lecture is to be published separately.