



## The Literary Context

### *Huw Meirion Edwards*

Had Dafydd ap Gwilym been born only a few decades earlier his poetry would have been very different. He was born within a generation of the defeat of the last of the independent Welsh princes, which put an end to the main source of patronage of the bardic order as defined in the Laws of Hywel Dda. From then on the poets' main patrons would be the landed gentry rather than the old royal dynasties of Wales. Despite such a traumatic setback they managed to adapt to the new political landscape; the collection of majestic, intricately woven odes preserved in the Red Book of Hergest shows that traditional forms of eulogy were still very much in demand among fourteenth-century patrons. It was a type of poetry in which Dafydd ap Gwilym himself excelled. But as some patrons came to desire sophisticated entertainment as well as Taliesinic praise, there grew a demand for more varied and less formal verse than that which had emanated from the pomp and ceremony of the old royal courts. The second quarter of the century saw the creation of a new metrical form, more versatile than the *awdl* and *englyn* metres, as a vehicle for a lighter and more subjective poetry. The old bardic idiom was combined with a more colloquial style, and in the *cywyddau* of Dafydd ap Gwilym, more so than any of his contemporaries, the old objectivity was replaced by an arresting personality that remains central to the poems' appeal.

Several circumstances and influences coincided: the fresh potential of the new political and social situation; the rich inheritance of the Poets of the Princes and their successors in the period immediately following the conquest; the less exalted inheritance of common minstrels who probably suggested to Dafydd not only the metrical pattern of the *cywydd* but also some of his subject-matter; and influences which sprung from European love-lyric, through whichever channels they may have reached him. We must also bear in mind the patronage of cultured noblemen such as Ieuan Llwyd of Glyn Aeron, whose family were part of the lively literary scene which existed in Ceredigion in the thirteen-twenties and thirties precisely when Dafydd was growing up. More significant than any influence are Dafydd's innate powers of imagination and creative energy, which enabled him to transform whatever he may have read or heard in the melting-pot of his own unique vision. He was not the only young poet at that time to experiment in the *cywydd* metre. Other early *Cywyddwyr* included Gruffudd Gryg of Anglesey, Madog Benfras of Maelor, Gruffudd ab Adda ap Dafydd of Powys, Iorwerth ab y Cyriog of Anglesey,

Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen of Meirionnydd and Iolo Goch from the Vale of Clwyd (the last two were slightly younger).<sup>1</sup> The new metre, then, became popular throughout Wales, and some of these poets composed notable *cywyddau*, especially Llywelyn Goch, author of the famous elegy to Lleucu Llwyd,<sup>2</sup> and Iolo Goch, who was mainly responsible for pioneering the *cywydd* as a vehicle for formal praise during the second half of the century. However, the evidence suggests that Dafydd's genius set him apart from his contemporaries, and his pre-eminence has been confirmed by later generations.

One of the peculiarities of his poetry is its broad repertoire. He is usually described as a love poet, since subject-matter formerly considered the stuff of occasional verse became his main source of inspiration. Roughly four of every five poems which may be reliably ascribed to Dafydd concern love and the natural world, and the range of situations, conventions and registers found within them displays exceptional inventiveness. The remaining poems belong to the more ritualized genres of religious poetry, eulogy and elegy, debate poetry and satire. Whilst addressing more traditional subject-matter Dafydd tended, like his contemporaries, to confine himself mainly to the decorum of the old metres employed by the Poets of the Princes. To praise the virtues of the Rood at Carmarthen (1) he composed a long series of *englynion*, a poem which may be compared with Gruffudd ap Maredudd ap Dafydd's impressive and slightly later ode to the Rood at Chester.<sup>3</sup> Dafydd also chose the *englyn* metre for his skilful versification of the Latin prayer, the *Anima Christi* (2), and the poem to Christ (152) which is of uncertain authorship is a devotional ode. The poem to the Holy Trinity (3), however, is in the form of six *cywydd* couplets, a metre well suited to the poem's directness of expression – a reflection perhaps of its practical devotional function. It was again the *cywydd* metre that Dafydd adopted for his most unusual religious poem, depicting a painting of Christ and his twelve apostles which he had seen in a monastery or parish church (4). These poems provide a more orthodox expression of the poet's Christian faith than his debates with mendicant friars (147-50) or the audacious religious imagery of a love poem such as 'The Woodland Mass' (39).

Since the young poet would have been thoroughly steeped in the requirements of traditional eulogy and religious verse (perhaps at the court of his uncle Llywelyn ap Gwilym, 'The grammar book of Dyfed' (5.1), in the region of Emlyn), it may be that some of the poems in the older metrical forms are among his earliest work. The *englynion* to the Rood were added, possibly by Dafydd himself, to the poems which form the third stratum of the Hendrgadredd manuscript which were written around the 1330s when the book belonged to his patron Ieuan Llwyd of Glyn Aeron. One possibility is that the poem was commissioned by Dafydd's kinsman Rhys ap Gruffudd when he was constable of Carmarthen castle in 1335, in order to enhance the town's

<sup>1</sup> On the early *Cywyddwyr* see Rachel Bromwich, 'The Earlier *Cywyddwyr*: Dafydd ap Gwilym's Contemporaries', in APDG 152-71; Dafydd Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr: Hanes Beirniadol Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg 1300-1525* (Cardiff, 2005), 146-94.

<sup>2</sup> GLIGMH 12.

<sup>3</sup> GGM ii, 1.

prestige.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, it was towards the end of his supposed poetic career that Dafydd chose the *englyn* metre to lament his uncle (6) following his murder around 1346. Although the *cywydd*, then, was his preferred medium, he continued to vary his metrical forms as the occasion and subject required. Since the older metres were considered appropriate for satire, it is hardly surprising that Dafydd belittled the inferior minstrel Rhys Meigen in the form of an *awdl* (31), in the manner of the remarkable collection of fourteenth-century vituperative odes and *englynion* preserved in the Red Book of Hergest alongside the more 'official' verse.<sup>5</sup> The satirical genre is essentially a subversion of the familiar ideals of traditional eulogy, and in mocking Rhys Meigen's boastful pride and churlishness and gluttony in colourful metaphorical language, Dafydd shows himself to be well versed in the rather different requirements of that particular kind of verse. Some of the Red Book satires, such as the series of *englynion* exchanged by Casnodyn and Trahaearn Brydydd Mawr,<sup>6</sup> were composed nearer the beginning of the fourteenth century, and although no purely satirical poems have survived from an earlier period, the conventional nature of the poetry suggests that these poets were all drawing on an older bardic inheritance which developed as a counterpoint to the formal praise tradition. It is likely that Dafydd composed other satirical poems which have not survived; he draws on the same tradition in his debate with Gruffudd Gryg, in keeping with later poetic debates in medieval Wales.<sup>7</sup> The same vituperative language is used in some of the love poems, to satirize the jealous husband or the various obstructions which impede the lover's progress.

As one might expect, most of Dafydd's praise poems are in the form of odes and *englynion*. In their intricacy, their elevated language and their largely conventional content, these poems, like the odes of the so-called 'later *Gogynfeirdd*' of the fourteenth century, are direct descendants of the art of the Poets of the Princes. Dafydd, no doubt, as has already been suggested, would have familiarized himself with their work from a young age, and would have had an opportunity to read at the home of Ieuan Llwyd the canonical collection found in the Hendregadredd manuscript. Since he was a descendant of Cuhelyn Fardd and Gwynfardd Dyfed, he may also have been familiar with the lost court poetry of the old kingdom of Deheubarth as well as that of Gwynedd and Powys.<sup>8</sup> In poems of praise and lament Dafydd eulogizes his patrons' nobility, generosity, wisdom and valour, as well as stressing the ancient Taliesinic bond of mutual dependence between poet and patron. These themes are reinforced by some vigorous bardic language and time-honoured imagery. Llywelyn ap Gwilym is 'the eagle of the region of magic' (6.2), 'my mute stag' (6.16) and 'men's defender' (lit. 'door') (6.100); he

<sup>4</sup> See background note to no. 1.

<sup>5</sup> On the Red Book satires see Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr*, 375-400; Dylan Foster Evans, 'Goganwr am Gig Ynyd': *The Poet as Satirist in Medieval Wales* (Aberystwyth, 1996); Huw M. Edwards, DGIA 38-66; *id.*, 'Y Canu Dychan yng Nghymru yn yr Oesoedd Canol', *Cof Cenedl* 23, ed. Geraint H. Jenkins (Llandysul, 2008), 1-33.

<sup>6</sup> GC 11; GGDT 13.

<sup>7</sup> See Jerry Hunter, 'Cyd-destunoli Ymrysonau'r Cywyddwyr: Cípolwg ar yr "Ysbaddiad Barddol"', *Dwned* 3 (1997), 33-52.

<sup>8</sup> See R. Geraint Gruffydd, 'The Early Court Poetry of South West Wales', *SC* 14/15 (1979-80), 95-105.

is 'a tribe's pillar' (5.37), 'of lion valour' (5.42). Ifor Hael is a 'fine stag' (12.2), 'like an eagle' (12.34), and a 'ravaging lion in battle' (17.44). Angharad 'served wine' (9.9) and her husband, Ieuan Llwyd of Glyn Aeron, is a 'wine-loving hero' (lit. 'oak-tree') (9.62). Hywel, Dean of Bangor 'reward[s] suppliants in the manner of Rhydderch' (8.42), a reference to Rhydderch Hael, one of the 'Three Generous Ones' of the Island of Britain who are among the great paragons of medieval Welsh eulogy. Ifor Hael is 'open-handed Nudd of the best of deeds' (11.26), another of the 'Generous Ones' of legend. Just as Ifor is described as 'putting the English [lit. men of Deira] on biers' (17.10), Llywelyn is 'Deira's pursuer' (6.13), anachronistic though highly resonant references to the English as the men of Deira, enemies of the Brittonic kingdoms of the 'Old North' of Britain in early Welsh heroic poetry. In his praise of the Dean of Bangor Dafydd compares this kind of elevated poetry with that of Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr (8.40), suggesting that in terms of craft and ethos it is way beyond the reach of lesser, uneducated poets. In light of his praise poetry, it is little wonder that Dafydd is described by Gruffudd Gryg as a successor to the early poets Taliesin, Aneirin and Myrddin, Poets of the Princes such as Cynddelw and Prydydd y Moch, as well as two poets who upheld the same tradition in the wake of the Edwardian conquest, Casnodyn and Trahaearn Brydydd Mawr.<sup>9</sup>

Although the odes and *englynion* in which Dafydd fulfils the function of praise poet are in some respects highly conventional, these poems are by no means lifeless or lacking in creativity. His elegy to his uncle expresses deep sorrow and anger, and the poem is reminiscent in places of an elegy to another Llywelyn who was slain by a foreign blade, the famous ode by Gruffudd ab yr Ynad Coch to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.<sup>10</sup> In the sequential structure of the *englynion* to Ifor Hael (12) Dafydd seems to take pride in his ingenuity within the strict confines of his art, and he displays similar skill in developing a sequence of rhetorical contrasts between excellence and mediocrity in his ode to the Dean of Bangor (8.29-40). Elsewhere there is the intrusion of love-lyric, typical of Dafydd's fondness of fusing and adapting various poetic genres. The 'Elegy for Angharad' (9) draws on the idiom of love poetry both in the descriptions of Angharad and in the image of the tearful, languishing poet, an appropriate device since Angharad is the subject of the *cywydd* 'A Fortress Against Envy' (122) and also probably 'A Girl From Is Aeron' (136). At the beginning of the ode in praise of Ieuan Llwyd ab Ieuan Fwyaf of Genau'r Glyn (7), there is an implicit comparison between the poet's distance from his patron and longing for a girl in verdant May. And in the elegy to Llywelyn ap Gwilym the utter silence of the loss is intensified by imploring the dead man to rise up from his cold bed just as a poet might address his beloved in a serenade, a device used to good effect by Llywelyn Goch in his elegy to Lleucu Llwyd.

By using the *cywydd* metre to praise Ifor Hael, Dafydd took this innovative spirit a step further. Whilst the virtues extolled are essentially the same, he

<sup>9</sup> GDG p. 428.

<sup>10</sup> CBT vii, 36. It is not certain that the Anglo-Normans were responsible for Llywelyn's death; see background note to no. 6.

pays particular attention to Ifor's generosity, the civilized pleasures of his court and the close, appreciative bond between two kindred spirits. The new verse-form with its more flexible and informal idiom is well suited to the personal warmth of the praise. Dafydd's *cywyddau serch* (love poems) did much to ensure the metre's popularity, and in the four *cywydd*-poems to Ifor Hael (13-16) he proceeds to fuse elements of love poetry with the mainstream poetic tradition. In 'Basaleg' he plays on the popularity of his love poetry, sending a messenger (similar to the *llatai* or love-messenger of the *cywyddau serch*) to inform the folk of Anglesey that he has been 'courting someone up above Cardiff' (14.10). It is 'for the love of Ifor' that he now sings, and this loving relationship between the poet and his patron is one of the poems' central themes. In the eyes of more conservative patrons it would no doubt have appeared presumptuous not only to praise a nobleman in the form of a *cywydd*, but also to combine the elevated conventions of formal eulogy, such as are found in the *cywyddau* as in the *awdl* and *englynion* to Ifor Hael, with the more light-hearted imagery of the love and nature poetry. But however innovative these *cywyddau* may be, Dafydd maintains that his praise represents a continuation of the Taliesin tradition. In the *cywydd* 'Thanking for Gloves' he bestows on Ifor the 'blessing of Taliesin' in the 'hall of Rheged' (15.33-6), and references to the heroic age of the 'Old North' are particularly striking in the poems to Ifor Hael. Thus the *cywydd* in praise of a noble patron asserts its place in the mainstream poetic tradition.

Appropriately enough, it was the new verse-form that Dafydd chose to lament his fellow *cywydd*-poets Madog Benfras, Gruffudd ab Adda and Gruffudd Gryg (20-22). Since Madog and Gruffudd Gryg both addressed similar poems to Dafydd, these are probably fictitious elegies; however, despite the element of frivolity which characterizes the genre, these three poems may be read as genuine and skilful tributes to poets who along with Dafydd pioneered the new kind of poetry in *cywydd* form.<sup>11</sup> By describing them primarily as poets of love and nature, Dafydd is extolling the lighter, alternative verse which was becoming increasingly popular in the homes of the nobility. He may also have been attempting to bolster the status of the new verse-form by appropriating it to the traditional function of elegy, thus paving the way for the grander and more formal *cywyddau marwnad* of Iolo Goch. Dafydd's *cywydd* lamenting the passing of Rhydderch ab Ieuan Llwyd of Glyn Aeron (10) is known to be fictitious, as is that addressed by Gruffudd Gryg to Rhys ap Tudur of Anglesey.<sup>12</sup> Since Dafydd's poem to Ifor Hael and his wife Nest (17) is also thought to be a fictitious elegy,<sup>13</sup> it is surprising that he opted for conventional *awdl* metres rather than the *cywydd* on that occasion. In the poems addressed to his fellow-*cywyddwyr* Dafydd may be seen as part of a group of young poets who were intent on extending the boundaries of Welsh poetry during the second quarter of the fourteenth century. It is clear that he and Madog Benfras, whose name appears in legal documents from the years 1339-40,<sup>14</sup> were close friends. As well as the elegies they addressed to each

<sup>11</sup> See Huw M. Edwards, 'Murnio Marwnadau: Golwg ar y Ffug-farwnad yng Nghyfnod y Cywydd', *Dwned* 5 (1999), 47-70.

<sup>12</sup> DGG LXXX.

<sup>13</sup> See background note.

<sup>14</sup> See GDG lviii.



other, there is a dialogue poem in which they complain of the expulsion of a nightingale from Eutun Woods in Madog's native Maelor (155), and in another *cywydd* (19) Dafydd says that Madog has received a birch-garland as a gift from his sweetheart, unlike Iorwerth ab y Cyriog of Anglesey who expects a gold ring as payment for his poems. Madog may also be the helpful companion, 'a love poet who is my bosom-friend' (95.6), in the *cywydd* 'A Game of "Nuts In My Hand"'. Only around half a dozen of Madog's *cywyddau* have survived, all of which have to do with love in some way or another. The most remarkable is a humorous narrative *cywydd* in the manner of the European *fabliaux*, in which the poet manages to trick his way into the girl's home in the guise of a salt-merchant.<sup>15</sup> Although the lover's ruse is successful in this poem, in keeping with the *fabliau* tradition and unlike Dafydd's many misadventures, 'The Salt-merchant' provides a revealing context for narrative poems such as 'The Goose-shed' (67), 'Trouble at an Inn' (73), and 'Degradation of his Servant' (74), and suggests that other poems of the same type have been lost to posterity.

However, it must be said that 'The Salt-merchant', like most of the *cywyddau serch* composed by Dafydd's contemporaries – judging by the small proportion that has survived – is less imaginative and multilayered than Dafydd's own poetry. It seems that he was the boldest innovator, and that the first generation of *cywydd*-poets followed his lead to some extent. Although hyperbole and satire are an inherent part of medieval poetic debates, it may be significant that one of the accusations made by Dafydd against Gruffudd Gryg is that he is an imitator, the poets' echo-stone. 'Let a poet sing to one who is fair of face,' he says, 'a *cywydd* from his own old wood' (24.55-6). Gruffudd retorts by denying Dafydd's arrogant assertion to the men of the South 'that I had nothing in my poetry / apart from his learning: he was a teacher' (25.9-10). Few love poems by Gruffudd have survived, but it is striking that in his fictitious elegy Dafydd describes him mainly as a love poet; there is only a single couplet which refers to praise poetry. It is worth noting Gruffudd's use of the *llatai* or love-messenger device and the similarity between his and Dafydd's inventive descriptions of the moon, though both poems,<sup>16</sup> which were inspired by his pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella, are remarkable in their own right. One basic difference, as far as it is possible to judge, is that the persona of the self-abasing, suffering lover is absent from Gruffudd's poems. In his only pure love poem<sup>17</sup> he concentrates his attention on the girl's appearance rather than on the poet's response to her. This poem, then, is consistent with Gruffudd's fundamental complaint in the poetic debate, which is that Dafydd's portrayal of himself as a long-suffering lover is nothing more than an exaggerated falsehood which runs contrary to the inherent veracity and dignity of the Welsh poetic tradition. By using the term 'geuwawd' (false praise) Dafydd seems to concede that hyperbole is an essential part of his verse, but he maintains that 'cywydd gwiw Ofydd' (Ovid's worthy *cywydd*) deserves the same respect as praise poetry: 'There is no more nobility, apart from plenty of grace, / to a praise poem than to a *cywydd* of false praise'

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<sup>15</sup> DGG LXX.

<sup>16</sup> *Ib.* LXXXV, LXXIV.

<sup>17</sup> *Ib.* LXXII.

(24.5-6). He admits that it may not be to everyone's taste, but insists that there is a demand for it alongside more traditional verse. We hear the same appeal to the popularity of the new type of poetry in Dafydd's reply to the Grey Friar who accuses him of singing sinful songs of carnal love and worldly things:

When everyone is as glad  
to hear a *pater* to harp accompaniment  
as the young girls of Gwynedd are  
to hear a merry *cywydd*  
I will sing, by my hand,  
the *pater* without end. (148.81-6)

The popularity of his poetry in Gwynedd, former bastion of the Poets of the Princes, is attested in the well-known couplet by Gruffudd Gryg: 'his *cywydd* was loved in Gwynedd, they say, / when it was new then' (25.43-4). But this is grudging praise. According to the Anglesey poet the shock of the new soon faded away.

In fact, the newly coined *cywydd serch* has some fairly significant antecedents in Welsh poetry. Nearly two centuries earlier in short *awdlau serch* attributed to the poet-prince Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd, we find examples, rare in that period, of subjective poetry in the voice of the suffering lover.<sup>18</sup> It is also found to some extent in the famous *rhieingerdd* (eulogistic love poem) composed by his contemporary Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr for Efa, daughter of Madog ap Maredudd, prince of Powys.<sup>19</sup> It has been argued recently that Dafydd was familiar with the poems of Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd and that they might have stimulated his imagination in a few of his poems.<sup>20</sup> There are also some more obvious allusions in the work of Casnodyn and Iolo Goch, who, like Dafydd, had connections with the home of Ieuan Llwyd of Glyn Aeron and could, therefore, like Dafydd himself, have seen the twelfth-century love poems in the Parcrhydderch court book, the Hendregadredd manuscript. Here is an interesting case of literary influence which may be traced back to a specific written text. Since the so-called *amour courtois* conventions of the Provençal troubadours are unlikely to have migrated to north Wales before they reached northern France towards the end of the twelfth century, the courtly love poems of Hywel ab Owain and Cynddelw probably reflect a native tradition. We need look no further than early Welsh prose tales such as The Four Branches of the Mabinogi and Culhwch and Olwen for the concept which appears in their poems, as in the later love poetry, of love as a form of madness and as a debilitating illness. Native tradition also accounts for the set of images of feminine beauty which is common to the whole corpus of Welsh poetry to young girls and married women since the time of Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd.

<sup>18</sup> CBT ii, 7-11. See Huw M. Edwards, 'Canu Serch Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd', LIC 30 (2007), 1-16; J. E. Caerwyn Williams, 'Cerddi'r Gogynfeirdd i Wragedd a Merched, a'u Cefndir yng Nghymru a'r Cyfandir', LIC 13 (1974-81), 3-112.

<sup>19</sup> CBT iii, 5. See Ann Parry Owen, 'Rhieingerdd Efa ferch Madog ap Maredudd: Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr a'i cant', YB XIV (1988), 56-86.

<sup>20</sup> Dafydd Johnston, 'Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd a Beirdd yr Uchelwyr', in *Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd: Bardd-Dywysog*, ed. Nerys Ann Jones (Cardiff, 2009), 134-51.

Most common among them are images of light, foaming water and the whiteness of snow, images which are found throughout the poems of Dafydd ap Gwilym. As might be expected, these images are often used creatively by Dafydd. He is fond of incorporating them in *sangiadau* or parenthetical remarks which qualify the meaning of the main sentence, and of adapting and extending the basic image. A revealing instance is 'Morfudd like the Sun', where the three most familiar images each appear in turn:

I am waiting for a soft-spoken girl,  
 sheen of fine snow on a stony field.  
 See, o God, that she is a radiant girl,  
 brighter than a crest of foam,  
 colour of a bright resounding wave,  
 an ardently bright girl, she is modest.  
 She knows how to earn a love song from my lips,  
 best aspect of the sun beside a cloud ... (111.1-8)

But rather than satisfying himself with this, Dafydd proceeds to explore more fully the image of the sun as a metaphor for the duality of Morfudd's character. As well as being bright and ardent like the sun, she is also fickle and hard to catch, just like the sun's rising and setting and its disappearance behind a thick cloud. Thus the familiar tradition is expanded with considerable originality and sophistication.

In the 'Gorhoffedd' or boasting poem attributed to Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd,<sup>21</sup> where he brags of having 'had' nine different girls, we find a precedent for the more physical and audacious element that appears in several of Dafydd's poems as a counterpoint to the idealism of courtly love. Also relevant is the reference to *Eiddig* (the jealous husband), one of the stock characters of the continental tradition, in a short *awdl* attributed to Cynddelw – 'It was not fortunately that the girl made for Eiddig's bed!'.<sup>22</sup> This may be a coincidence. However, it is not inconceivable that the reference reflects the influence of Ovid, who is in fact named in the boasting poem attributed to Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd. Dafydd makes several references to Ovid as an authority on matters of love or as the archetypal lover,<sup>23</sup> as is common in medieval literature, and there is a great deal of similarity in their ironic and playful treatment of the subject. But such was the influence of Ovid's *Amores*, and especially his *Ars Amatoria*, on western European love poetry in general, it is difficult to judge whether Dafydd was directly indebted to the Latin poet.<sup>24</sup>

If the poems attributed to Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd provide the outstanding precedent from the era of the Welsh princes, Dafydd's most significant

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<sup>21</sup> CBT ii, 6.

<sup>22</sup> CBT iii, 4.8. This and all subsequent poetic extracts have been translated from the original Welsh.

<sup>23</sup> See the note on *Ilyfr Ofydd* (Ovid's book) in 95.1, and the references to Ovid in the index to DGIA.

<sup>24</sup> Rachel Bromwich has suggested that 'The Wave on the River Dyfi' (51) is influenced by Ovid's *Amores*; see background note.



precursor during the fifty years following the Edwardian conquest – at least among those poets whose work has survived – also hailed from Gwynedd. The significance of Gruffudd ap Dafydd ap Tudur is underlined by the fact that Dafydd borrows a couplet from his love poetry in his elegy to his uncle.<sup>25</sup> Only two of his love poems have survived, but the theme appears in the three other poems which have come down: *englynion* calling on Saint Cedig to free the poet from love's captivity; *englynion* thanking a noblewoman for a girdle which calls to mind the love-tokens described by the early *Cywyddwyr*, and an *awdl* requesting the gift of a bow (these are early examples of the thanking and request poetry which was to be closely associated with the *cywydd* metre). Gruffudd asks his patron not to cause him grief 'For the sake of the fine words of chaste girls / and the words of love-messengers who harbour those words',<sup>26</sup> the earliest instance of the word *llatai* (love-messenger). He warns him that unless he receives the bow, 'the girls of Gwynedd will mock you',<sup>27</sup> which is reminiscent of Dafydd's reference to the maidens of Gwynedd in his debate with the Grey Friar. That particular audience would no doubt have been familiar with a variety of entertaining love song before the advent of the *cywydd*. One can imagine their appreciation of Gruffudd's ingenuity as he pretends to bring a formal legal complaint against a girl for having killed him without weapons. She denies the accusation before the court:

'Your complaint just now was that you had been killed without weapons  
by the blades of unjust, courteous words;  
forsooth, had you been killed with a word – swoon of passion –  
you would not be seen alive (cry of sorrow);  
and I see you alive, to which I testify to you all,  
and demand judgement as before.'<sup>28</sup>

With its knowing sophistication, its playful, self-mocking tone, its dramatic setting and its use of dialogue, a poem such as this could have provided a fertile stimulus for the love poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym. The poem plays with one of the central motifs of the courtly love tradition, that of love's weaponry,<sup>29</sup> the very basis of the shameless hyperbole which is the subject of Gruffudd Gryg's anger in the poetic debate.

The poem quoted by Dafydd, the *englynion* by Gruffudd ap Dafydd to an unresponsive girl from Eutun in Maelor, is full of motifs which would soon be developed in the *cywyddau serch*. He reproaches her for her pride, her deceitfulness, her enchantment, her treachery and her hostility, and the poet is weak and sleepless, dying of love. His love is at once sickness, captivity, madness and intoxication, and he implores the girl to send a messenger to arrange a tryst. Even more significant is the mention of innocent, free love in the woodland, in terms which anticipate the image of the *deildy* or house of leaves which is central to the poems of Dafydd ap Gwilym:

<sup>25</sup> See 6.27-8n. His poems are edited in GGDT 1-5.

<sup>26</sup> GGDT 2.13-14.

<sup>27</sup> *Ib.* 2.22.

<sup>28</sup> *Ib.* 5.39-44. Internal evidence points to a date as early as 1284-5 or around 1318, see *ib.* pp. 3, 35.

<sup>29</sup> For examples of causing death without weapons in French love poetry see DGIA 98.

After Adam, passionate lord,  
before the pope's law or his trouble,  
everyone fulfilled his lust  
with his lover without rebuke.

Beyond blame – free and easy loving  
(well has May fashioned houses from the leaves) –  
are two trysts beneath the trees in secret  
for me, me and my beloved.<sup>30</sup>

His contemporary, Casnodyn, was a more conservative poet, and his three poems to unmarried girls<sup>31</sup> are closer to the eulogistic tradition of the *rhieingerdd* as defined in the bardic grammar of Einion Offeiriad. However, he also draws on several of the motifs already noted in the poems of Gruffudd ap Dafydd, including the woodland tryst:

Here's some good counsel for me now against my destruction  
since I cannot have her in marriage:  
to make the journey – gentle girl, the subject of brilliant song –  
beneath the forest's branches with Awd.<sup>32</sup>

Around the same period, during the 1320s, Einion would have been assembling the material for his grammar, probably under the patronage of Rhys ap Gruffudd of the Tywi Valley, one of the most influential noblemen of his age and kinsman of Dafydd ap Gwilym. It is notable that most of Einion's verse exempla are drawn from the love poetry of the period immediately preceding the *cywydd*'s development, as if in an attempt to raise the status of the genre. In the *awdl* metres especially there are verses which correspond to the comparatively formal *rhieingerdd* tradition, but there are also some love lyrics of a lighter and more personal nature. An *englyn* such as the following, referring as it does to the girl's deceitfulness and enchantment and to medieval legend, is just as reminiscent of the poems of Dafydd ap Gwilym as those of Gruffudd ap Dafydd ap Tudur:

You are of similar deceitful intent, due to yearning caused by a frustrated journey,  
to the enchantment of the son of Mathonwy;  
you are formed in a similar manner to Creirwy,  
of false disposition, and of long, excessive treachery.<sup>33</sup>

And here once more is the woodland tryst, with the nightingale as a bird of love as it appears in the *cywyddau*:

<sup>30</sup> GGDT 4.85-92. See Dafydd Johnston, 'Paradwys Dafydd ap Gwilym', YB XX (1995), 114-24; Meirion Pennar, 'Syniad y "Caredd Digerydd" ym Marddoniaeth Gymraeg yr Oesoedd Canol', YB IX (1976), 33-40.

<sup>31</sup> GC 3, 4, 6.

<sup>32</sup> *Ib.* 6.41-4.

<sup>33</sup> GEO Appendix C, 4.

A nightingale's songs at night, during a lovers' tryst I heard them,  
mine are anxious memories of longing,  
the pure voice – suffering the long grief of exile –  
of a songster, fine poet of the forest.<sup>34</sup>

The example cited in the grammar of the metre known as *awdl-gywydd* is extremely suggestive:

Tall, fair maid, do not be too proud  
or too neglectful of speech;  
do not mock your lover  
who praises you in *cywyddau*.  
If you reject, you of the colour of foam,  
a lad whose locks are no longer blond,  
who is courteous and well educated,  
and finds delight in his books,  
you will get a peasant captive to the plough,  
whose attributes go from bad to worse.<sup>35</sup>

This relatively unembellished, straightforward poem reflects a theme which was popular in the medieval Latin songs of the wandering scholars or *clerici vagantes*, that of the clerk's superiority as a lover compared to the uncultured peasant. The same theme, and the same reproachful attitude towards the girl, were soon to reappear in the *cywyddau* of Dafydd ap Gwilym.<sup>36</sup> This is the kind of entertaining verse (*teuluidd* is the term used in the grammar) that seems to have appealed to Einion Offeiriad, the type of poetry he associates with the art of the *teuluwr* (literally 'household poet'), which was more light-hearted than that which pertained to the eulogistic function of the *prydydd* or high-grade poet. Around the same period some examples of occasional verse in a similar spirit were recorded in the third stratum of the Hendregadredd manuscript,<sup>37</sup> poems which Dafydd might have read at the home of Ieuan Llwyd. It is more than likely too, given the close relationship between Einion Offeiriad and the Parcrhydderch family, that Dafydd was familiar with the text of the bardic grammar. Rachel Bromwich has argued convincingly that his *cywyddau* contain several echoes of the stanzas cited in the grammar,<sup>38</sup> but he might also have drawn upon a broader body of verse which circulated orally in Ceredigion and beyond. Although Einion makes a scrupulous distinction between the functions of the *teuluwr* and those of the lower-grade *clerwr*, amidst the uncertainty of the post-conquest period it would not be surprising if these common minstrels – 'y glêr ofer' (worthless or frivolous

<sup>34</sup> *Ib.* 7.

<sup>35</sup> *Ib.* 33; Appendix Dd, 37. The Einion Offeiriad version of the poem has been combined with that found in the North Walian grammar compiled by Dafydd Ddu o Hiraddug, see *ib.* p. 172; Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr*, 30-1.

<sup>36</sup> See background note to no. 72. Cf. also Gruffudd ap Dafydd ap Tudur's words to the girl he accuses of killing him without weapons, GGDT 5.45 'Do not pursue a poor man who does not practise praise'.

<sup>37</sup> See GLIBH, especially poems 12-17; Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr*, 65-7.

<sup>38</sup> Rachel Bromwich, 'Gwaith Einion Offeiriad a Barddoniaeth Dafydd ap Gwilym', YB X (1977), 157-80.

minstrels) as they are referred to by Casnodyn<sup>39</sup> – had some influence on poetry of a more informal and popular nature. As well as the begging and satire and defamation which incurs the grammarian's disapproval, the *clêr*'s cruder form of entertainment may have included love poetry, seasonal verse and narrative verse in metres such as the *traethodl* and *awdl-gywydd* unadorned by *cynganedd*, metrical forms which reappear in later free-metre poetry.<sup>40</sup> When Dafydd ap Gwilym's generation came to elevate the *traethodl* by formalizing the metre and introducing *cynganedd*, it seems probable that they also elevated some of the subject-matter which characterized the sub-literary tradition, and that this partly accounts for their breadth of repertoire.

As for the native inheritance, then, there was no shortage of raw material for a poet of Dafydd's ability to refine and develop in accordance with the new patrons' taste. Circumstances were conducive to the development of the *cywydd serch*. There is also reason to believe that the Welsh tradition was enriched in the poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym, more than any other poet, by a willingness to embrace wider European influences. As previously suggested, the influence of continental courtly love is very unlikely to have penetrated from its Provençal source as far as northern Wales by the middle of the twelfth century. However, by the fourteenth century its literary conventions were well established in northern France and elsewhere in western Europe, and were assimilated and adapted within the various vernacular literatures. While Dafydd's verse contains a strong element of physicality and even at times a fairly 'uncourtly' degree of cynicism, in the persona of the long-suffering lover who yearns for his beloved's favour and languishes from unrequited love he also reflects some of the refined idealism associated with the continental form of *amour courtois*. It is the noble, unattainable *Dyddgu* who corresponds most closely to the exalted *dame* of the courtly love tradition in its purest form, but some of the more fashionable elements of this type of literature are to be found throughout Dafydd's love poetry. Prominent among them is the image of the spear of love (which derives ultimately from the classical imagery of Cupid's arrow), as well as the conceit of the poet's imminent death due to the girl's indifference. There is an emphasis on covert, secret love, and as has often been noted the character of the jealous husband corresponds to the *Jaloux* of continental tradition. As mentioned above, the work of Dafydd's immediate predecessors contains a suggestion of the self-abasement that distinguishes courtly love, along with some of its defining motifs: love's weaponry, for instance, and the lover's imminent death; the lover's captivity and the girl's treachery and hostility. The prominence of elements such as these, which hardly feature in the earlier poetry to girls and married women, suggests that foreign influences were already beginning to find their way into Welsh poetry.<sup>41</sup> A question which cannot be answered is to what extent some of the more popular aspects of the European tradition had been absorbed into the lost verse of the *clêr*.

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<sup>39</sup> GC 7.199.

<sup>40</sup> See R. M. Jones, 'Mesurau'r Canu Rhydd Cynnar', B 28 (1979), 413-41; Edwards, DGIA 106-8.

<sup>41</sup> See Edwards, DGIA 90-108.

Although any attempt to identify specific influences is fraught with difficulties, considered together the correspondences between Dafydd's poems and medieval French and Anglo-Norman love poetry is highly suggestive.<sup>42</sup> The impression gained is that he was participating in a broad literary culture which by the fourteenth century had spread a good deal further than Provence and northern France. Its imprint may be seen in England in the verse collection known as the 'Harley Lyrics' which was copied in Herefordshire around 1330,<sup>43</sup> and later, of course, in a more learned and consciously literary guise in the work of Chaucer. Chaucer translated and adapted known French models,<sup>44</sup> but through which channels might these external influences have reached the ears and eyes of the Welshman? The Church with its Latin lingua franca and the network of monasteries – including Strata Florida where Dafydd may have received some ecclesiastic education – provided possible instruments of cross-cultural influence. We must also keep in mind commercial and military links between Wales and continental Europe. In 'To Wish the Jealous Husband Killed' (116) Dafydd says that friends and relatives of his are on their way to France to do battle under Rhys ap Gruffudd. The poet Llywelyn Goch may have fought in France during the 1340s,<sup>45</sup> and Gruffudd Gryg undertook a pilgrimage to Santiago in northern Spain. Although there is no evidence that Dafydd ever ventured beyond Wales, the poets' horizons were clearly not as narrow as is sometimes believed. Dafydd's poems are full of words of Romance origin,<sup>46</sup> some borrowed directly from French, others through Middle English, and he would have heard both languages within the borough settlements. Since French remained the Anglo-Normans' main language of public administration, his uncle and supposed bardic mentor, Llywelyn ap Gwilym, who became constable of Newcastle Emlyn, would presumably have known some French as well as English. Likewise Dafydd's friend and patron Rhydderch ab Ieuan Llwyd, given his position as a legal specialist in the service of the Crown.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Ib.* 202-83; Rachel Bromwich, 'Tradition and Innovation in the Poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym' and 'The Sub-literary Tradition', APDG 57-104; T. M. Chotzen, *Recherches sur la poésie de Dafydd ab Gwilym* (Amsterdam, 1927). The poems are also discussed in their European context by Helen Fulton, DGEC.

<sup>43</sup> G. L. Brook (ed.), *The Harley Lyrics* (4th edn., Manchester, 1968); see introduction and Elinor Rees, 'Provençal Elements in the English Vernacular Lyrics of MS. Harley 2253', *Stanford Studies in Language and Literature* (1941), 81-95. Some correspondences between these poems and the work of Dafydd ap Gwilym are noted in DGIA chapter 7; see further A. T. E. Matonis, 'The Harley Lyrics: English and Welsh Convergences', *Modern Philology* 86 (1988-9), 1-21.

<sup>44</sup> See Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (Berkeley, California, 1957); J. I. Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the French Love Poets: The Literary Background of the Book of the Duchess* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1968); *id.*, *Chaucer and his French Contemporaries: Natural Music in the Fourteenth Century* (Toronto, 1991).

<sup>45</sup> See GLIGMH p. 3.

<sup>46</sup> See Marie E. SurrIDGE, 'Romance and Anglo-Saxon Elements in the Poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym', *Proceedings of the First North American Congress of Celtic Studies* (Ottawa, 1988), 531-43. On his imaginative use of these borrowings see Bromwich, APDG 8-9, 83-4.

<sup>47</sup> Daniel Huws suggests that he may have seen manuscript collections of French romances of the type fashionable in the English royal court, see 'Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch', CMCS 21 (Summer 1991), 17.



In terms of French culture, the most convincing case for a specific literary source is provided by the similarities between Dafydd's poetry and the *Roman de la Rose*.<sup>48</sup> Begun around 1230 by Guillaume de Lorris who adhered to the idealism of courtly love as elaborated in the courts of Provence, this long verse romance was considerably extended some forty years later by Jean de Meun, a more worldly author with a more cynical approach to his subject, heavily influenced by Ovid. As is the case with Ovid, such is the *Roman's* influence on medieval French poetry that it is difficult to speak with too much confidence of direct influence. However, the argument is given more credence by the fact that a copy of the *Roman* is known to have belonged to Llywelyn Bren of Senghennydd when he was executed for rebelling against the Norman lords of Glamorgan in 1317. Ifor Hael was another Glamorgan nobleman, and in that region of Wales more than any other Dafydd would have had an opportunity to come into contact with the fashions of Norman culture. The imagery of love's weaponry pervades the *Roman de la Rose*, and along with the persona of the suffering lover and the unattainable girl there are stock characters such as the jealous husband, the lover's confidant, the slanderer, and the hag who guards the entrance to the girl's home like the hag described in 'Eiddig's Three Gatekeepers' (68). There is also the fortress which protects love from its enemies, an image which calls to mind the extended metaphor of 'A Fortress Against Envy' (122) and which is fairly commonplace in the continental love-lyric. More suggestive is Guillaume de Lorris's unusual image of the farmer who sows his seed and watches anxiously over his crop only for it to be destroyed by a storm when he is about to harvest it, just as the hopeful lover is left disappointed by his beloved. The same metaphor is developed in the poem 'The Husbandry of Love' (109), although it might have arisen as a natural extension of the basic image of sowing love's seed which occurs in other poems by Dafydd.<sup>49</sup> In Dafydd's hands the husbandry image is more detailed and complex and emotionally charged, and if the original stimulus was indeed provided by reading or hearing the *Roman de la Rose*, the *cywydd* is by no means a slavish imitation.

This is true in general of those elements in Dafydd's poetry which bear some relation to well-known European literary trends. His instinct was for creative adaptation, often with a considerable degree of parody which suggests that his audience would have been familiar with the defining features of his generic models. 'Under the Eaves' (98) corresponds closely to the genre of the *sérénade* (as do, to some extent, other poems in which Dafydd pays a visit to the girl's home at night),<sup>50</sup> just as 'Dawn' (69) corresponds to the *aubade* where two lovers bid each other farewell at break of day.<sup>51</sup> The basic pattern of the *sérénade* is found once more in the *Roman de la Rose*, as well as in popular French poetry of a later period. It has been seen already that Dafydd makes ironic use of this convention in his heartfelt elegy to his uncle. 'Under the Eaves' has a more playful irony in that Dafydd exaggerates beyond all

<sup>48</sup> See Bromwich, APDG 73-5; Edwards, DGIA 158-65, 184-8, 214-33.

<sup>49</sup> E.g. 'The Poet's Affliction' (103), another Morfudd poem.

<sup>50</sup> These poems are discussed by Dafydd Johnston, 'The Serenade and the Image of the House in the Poems of Dafydd ap Gwilym', CMCS 5 (Summer 1983), 1-19. For possible native and continental models see Edwards, DGIA 157-75.

<sup>51</sup> See Edwards, DGIA 279-82.

reason his suffering under rain and snow, inviting his audience to laugh at his wretched fate. Implicit in the humour is a suggestion of the real frustration of his relationship with the married, fickle Morfudd, just the kind of ambiguous combination of humour and seriousness that sets Dafydd apart from his contemporaries. Here, as in other poems, literary convention seems to fuse with the poet's actual experience. Likewise, for a medieval audience, the popular genre of the *chanson de malmariée*,<sup>52</sup> in which the young wife complains to her lover about her cruel, unfeeling older husband, might well have provided a meaningful context for some of the Morfudd poems. Particularly relevant here are 'The Girl's Beauty Defiled' (115) – although Morfudd is not named – and 'Unfounded Suspicion' where Morfudd herself claims to prefer Dafydd's footprint in a wooded vale to her 'mean, miserable husband' (117.17). There is a more superficial similarity between another popular genre, that of the *pastourelle*, and 'A Stubborn Girl' (143),<sup>53</sup> where Dafydd converses with a girl he happens to meet on the moor near Llanbadarn and who leaves him disappointed by breaking her promise to keep a tryst.

Among the other literary models which might have stimulated Dafydd's muse there are various kinds of dialogue poems both in medieval Latin and in the vernaculars. Based on what is presumably an actual situation, 'A Girl taunts him for his Cowardice' (72) contains the familiar theme of the *débats du clerc et du chevalier*. This is the debate as to whether it is the clerk or the soldier who makes the best lover, another of those medieval themes which probably derive from Ovid.<sup>54</sup> Dafydd's dialogue with his reproachful shadow (63) may be read as a parody of the debates between the body and the soul,<sup>55</sup> the genre upon which Iolo Goch modelled his *cywydd* describing a bardic circuit<sup>56</sup> some years later. And although the contrast between the two extremes of summer and winter is central to Dafydd's vision, the *cywydd* to 'May and November' (33) may contain an echo of the conflict between summer and winter which is another well-known medieval genre.<sup>57</sup> In enriching the native tradition with literary genres and conventions of foreign origin, Dafydd's response was a creative one. In some poems the protestations of the suffering lover do not seem particularly ironic, but elsewhere, as in 'Under the Eaves', his anguish is taken to ridiculous extremes. If the hyperbole of 'Love's Spear' (127) was anathema to Gruffudd Gryg, so too presumably were similar poems such as 'Shooting the Girl' (81), 'Love's Tears' (89), 'Love's Needles' (100) and 'The Sigh' (101). Even in less playful poems love is not portrayed as an unconditional service which brings moral and spiritual reward. Unlike the courtly love literature of continental Europe, too, Dafydd makes no mention of a god of love or Venus or of any of the exalted mythology associated with them.

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<sup>52</sup> See *ib.* 256-7, 271-5.

<sup>53</sup> See *ib.* 195-7.

<sup>54</sup> See *ib.* 269-71; Bromwich, APDG 75; Fulton, DGEC 193-4.

<sup>55</sup> See Edwards, DGIA 164n, 169; R. M. Jones, 'Ymryson ac Ymddiddan Corff ac Enaid', YB V (1970), 44-61.

<sup>56</sup> 'Dialogue between the Body and the Soul', GIG XIV.

<sup>57</sup> See Edwards, DGIA 276-8.

There are clearly some fundamental differences between the poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym and his contemporaries and the broader European literary culture. In a genre such as the *reverdie*, which associates love with the spring awakening, the natural world is little more than a conventional backdrop for the poet's feelings. The same is true of those French allegorical poems in which birds debate various subjects concerning love.<sup>58</sup> This is rather different from the sensuous detail of Dafydd's depiction of the woodland, of creatures like the fox (60) and the roebuck (46), and especially birds, descriptions which owe more to the poet's experience and powers of observation than to any literary convention. He would, however, have been familiar with the old *englyn* poetry which combines gnomic wisdom with concise descriptions of the natural world. It is represented in Einion Offeiriad's bardic grammar by the following stanza:

The blackbird laughs in a grove;  
she does not plough, nor does anyone plough for her;  
yet none is happier than she.<sup>59</sup>

The blackbird is personified just as Dafydd endows his birds with human attributes, and the stanza's proverbial function is reminiscent of his fondness for versifying various proverbs in his *cywyddau*. The fact that he cites this stanza<sup>60</sup> suggests not only that he may have known the bardic grammar, but that he could have drawn on a popular tradition of this type of relatively simple verse. But whatever he may have inherited whether in oral or written form, the vivid precision of his descriptions of the skylark (44) and the woodcock (52-3), for instance, or the unexpected imagery of his poems to the seagull (45) and the cock-thrush (49), go far beyond anything that had come before.

Similarly, as has already been noted the concept of the house of leaves already existed in Welsh poetry, but Dafydd took hold of it and turned it into a thematic image which plays a central role in his poetic vision. As is most clearly apparent in 'The House of Leaves' (37), this is a court of divine construction, a natural court designed by the Creator and woven by the hands of May. Just as May and God himself are superior patrons to any nobleman of flesh and blood, so the house of leaves is more civilized and agreeable than any hall fashioned by man, and there are no finer poets and musicians than the birds of the forest. The leafy refuge is a means of escape, a symbol of temporary freedom not only from the gaze of the jealous husband but from all the rules and disappointments of fickle human society. It is nearly always in the freedom of the grove during the three summer months that Dafydd plays the part of the successful lover. When the house of leaves is laid bare in the cold of winter stone-built houses keep Dafydd out, as is seen in poems such as 'The Ice' (54), 'Courting in Winter' (55), 'Eiddig's Three Gatekeepers' (68) and 'Under the Eaves' (98). To extend the analogy between Dafydd's

<sup>58</sup> One such poem is 'La Messe des Oiseaux' by the 14th-century French poet Jean de Condé, which has been compared with 'The Woodland Mass' (39). See Bromwich, APDG 77-8; Edwards, DGIA 233-5.

<sup>59</sup> GEO Appendix C, 17.

<sup>60</sup> See background note to no. 108; Bromwich, 'Gwaith Einion Offeiriad a Barddoniaeth Dafydd ap Gwilym', 160-2.

idealized woodland and human systems and institutions, the place of worship found in the woodland is also superior to any parish church. Here it is the nightingale and the cock-thrush who administer mass, and the sacrament differs greatly from the way of the priest to whom Dafydd turns a deaf ear in Llanbadarn Church: 'and the Lord our Father was worshipped / with a chalice of desire and love' (39.33-4). If he is dubious about the inadequate human intermediary of the ecclesiastic institution, he despises the severe asceticism of the Grey Friar who claims: 'Praise of the flesh which carries the soul / to the devil is no good thing' (148.33-4). Likewise the warning of another preaching friar: 'In trees (three wretched trysts) / and leaves there is nothing but transitoriness' (147.11-12). In his poetry Dafydd embraces creation in its entirety, and transient female beauty and the beauty of the natural world are inextricably linked.

None of Dafydd's *cywyddau* describe the natural world for its own sake without in some way relating to the theme of love. Even in the poem 'Praise of Summer' (35), where summer is personified as a generous prince who returns from the underworld of Annwfn for three months each year, the season of fruitfulness is implicitly also the season of love. This essential marriage of love and nature is central to the image of the house of leaves. If the house receives divine blessing, so too does the 'natural', blameless love that blossoms under its roof. The marriage is especially close in the *cywyddau llatai* or love-messenger poems, in which Dafydd is assisted in his pursuit of love by God's own creatures. The dazzling description of the whiteness of the seagull (45) which is sent as an envoy to an unnamed girl is particularly intricate and original, but it is not description for its own sake. It is suggested that the seagull's virtues – brightness, purity, unblemished beauty – also apply to the girl, an impression enhanced by the fact that the bird is a familiar image of feminine beauty.<sup>61</sup> Similarly the roebuck is a 'tall fair baron' (46.16), and an appropriate symbol of Dyddgu's nobility. The skylark is a 'cantor in God's chapel' (44.35) who praises his Creator as he climbs heavenward, suggesting the sanctity of creation and God's blessing upon the envoy's work. Like the skylark the wind, 'God's blessing over all the earth' (47.33), is free from Eiddig's grasp, but more significantly this love-messenger is indifferent to all the laws and obstructions of human society. Unlike Dafydd who, it appears, is the subject of a legal prohibition imposed by Morfudd's husband, Bwa Bach, it is free to wander at will without rebuke. One aspect of Dafydd's response to the natural world is his constant use of personification. He attempts to identify himself with the wind by imagining it as a poet – 'a fine author of an *awdl*' (47.43) – and a 'high-spirited lad' (47.42), and lines such as the following have a remarkable zest and imaginative power: 'free laughter [on] hilltop, / thruster of the wild-masted, white-breasted sea' (47.45-6). This is among the poems which best convey Dafydd's sense of wonderment as he surveys his natural environment. There are few significant precedents for the *cywydd llatai* in earlier Welsh literature or in the wider European tradition.<sup>62</sup> However, birds do act as love-messengers in later free-metre poetry, and if Dafydd was indeed

<sup>61</sup> The significance of Dafydd's love-messengers is discussed by Dafydd Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr*, 129-32.

<sup>62</sup> See Edwards, DGIA 125-38.

indebted to a sub-literary current of popular verse, then he can be said to have elevated the device into a well developed and ambitious literary genre in terms of imagery, thematic depth and poetic technique.

In those poems in which Dafydd adopts the role of the frustrated lover, the natural world may also be a hindrance. The woodcock is uncooperative, a bird of winter which refuses to act as the poet's envoy (52) and disturbs lovers (53). So too are the ill-omened owl (61), and the magpie (36) which reproaches Dafydd that it is inappropriate at his age to continue to await a girl in the grove. The magpie may be interpreted as a motley companion of the Grey and Black Friars, or as symbolizing the poet's conscience which may also apply to Dafydd's poem to his shadow. The fox (60) disturbs Dafydd as he awaits a girl, and his reaction to it is a mixture of loathing and wonderment which is typical of the obstruction poems. Birds and animals are not the only impediments to Dafydd's success; in these poems it is as if nature itself is conspiring against him. On his journeys to meet a girl he is blinded by mist (57), he is ensnared by a briar which twists itself around him (56), and both he and his horse are engulfed by a peat-pit in unfamiliar territory in the dark of night (59). In 'The Moon' (58) his curse is not darkness but rather the radiance of a full moon which allows Eiddig to spot him in his leafy hideout in the middle of the night. Conversely the light of the star (50), one of love's accomplices, is seen as a blessing. The star is God's candle which guides him towards Morfudd, whereas love's impediments are associated with the dark powers of Annwfn, the otherworld of ancient Celtic mythology.<sup>63</sup> The fox's lair is beneath the ground and therefore 'as far down as Annwfn' (60.42), and the same sinister imagery is found in 'The Peat-pit'. The mist is the 'ointment of the witches of Annwfn' (57.44), brought about by the interference of malevolent powers. Other obstruction poems include those in which cold stone walls or the bars of a window prevent entry to the girl's house in the dead of winter.

A prominent feature of the obstruction poems, like the love-messenger poems, is the use of the device known as *dyfalu* to create a strong visual and emotional impression of the object described through the accumulation of quick-fire images. It is a form of description which characterizes the *cywydd* metre, and may have its roots in popular riddles.<sup>64</sup> The negative *dyfalu* used to describe the mist, for instance, is very different from the depiction of the seagull, but in their imaginative power they are equally original. They are also equally complex: beneath the essential humour that belongs to the persona of the wretched lover and his disproportionate cursing, one senses in these poems the deeper frustration of a man who may have been no stranger to disillusionment. The same frustration is further dramatized in humorous narrative poems such as 'The Goose-shed' (67), 'Eiddig's Three Gatekeepers' (68), 'Trouble at an Inn' (73) and 'Degradation of his Servant' (74). Although these poems have something of the spirit of the European *fabliaux* there are some fundamental differences, not only in that they are first-person narratives but also because the lover's attempts to win the girl are a miserable failure. Of all the narrative poems 'Trouble at an Inn' is the acknowledged masterpiece.

<sup>63</sup> See Eurys I. Rowlands, 'Cyfeiriadau Dafydd ap Gwilym at Annwn', LIC 5 (1959), 122-35.

<sup>64</sup> See Edwards, DGIA 138-52; Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr*, 123-4.



On the surface the poem's humour is pure slapstick, but with its clever use of puns and of jerky interpolations (*sangiadau*) which mirror Dafydd's clumsy passage through the hostel in the pitch dark, as well as the personification of lifeless objects such as the stool and noisy brass pan so that they appear to be conspiring against him, it is in fact an extremely sophisticated piece of comedy. Since Dafydd, with tongue in cheek, is satirizing his own pride, the poem may be read as an ironic parody of the kind of morality tales commonly used as exempla in contemporary sermons. Pride and lust are also the sins of the 'pallid lad with the face of a coquette' (137.29) in 'The Girls of Llanbadarn', another ironic poem in which Dafydd presents himself to his audience as a subject of ridicule.

Dafydd's treatment of the all-embracing theme of love has many aspects, and there are a great number of *cywyddau* which do not fit into obvious categories such as love-messenger poems, obstruction poems and narrative poems. There is a colloquial flavour to many of these poems, where Dafydd, whether the girl is directly addressed or not, casts doubt on her fidelity or reproaches her for her indifference and fickleness, or, in the other extreme, rejoices in their passionate liaison. Some of these poems express deep bitterness and disillusionment, such as 'Disappointment' (107) which rebukes Morfudd for having being made pregnant by another man in spite of Dafydd's love and all the poems he has sung for her sake. The defiant tone of 'Yesterday' is entirely different, as the poem reaches its climax with the triumphant exclamation: 'Aha! the wife of Bwa Bach!' (110.40). However painful the wounds of the past may be, Morfudd has given him cause for renewed optimism. His perseverance and new-found confidence are confirmed by three characteristically novel images: he is resilient as a withe which will not snap however much it is bent; he has the soul of a shivering old cat that survives whatever abuse it endures; and by walking slowly where others run he still has what it takes to come out on top. This method of fleshing out an idea with three connected images is a striking feature of Dafydd's style.<sup>65</sup> Elsewhere he explores the significance of a single elaborate image, developing its potential throughout the poem, a technique which contrasts with the quick-fire images of *dyfalu*. As we have already seen, 'Morfudd like the Sun' is an ingenious expression of Morfudd's fickleness, who like the setting sun disappears each night 'beneath the lintel of the wicked cold man' (111.50), as well as her ardour and beauty. And the storm of sighs and tears which ruins the poet's crop in another of the Morfudd poems, 'The Husbandry of Love' (109), may signify her marriage to Bwa Bach.

Reading poems such as these one gets the distinct impression that Dafydd's *cywyddau* to Morfudd are based on a tempestuous relationship which began before her marriage to Bwa Bach and continued for several years thereafter. Whilst we must bear in mind the context of public performance and Dafydd's use of various poetic conventions, as well as the danger involved in attempting to trace the course of the relationship based on these literary creations, the whole range of emotions provoked by Morfudd does seem to

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<sup>65</sup> See R. Geraint Gruffydd, 'Cywyddau Triawdaidd Dafydd ap Gwilym: Rhai Sylwadau', YB XIII (1985), 167-77.

bear the hallmark of lived experience.<sup>66</sup> She is named in more than thirty poems, and it seems highly likely that she inspired many of the poems where the girl is left unnamed. According to one estimate she could be the subject of as many as ninety poems in all.<sup>67</sup> In 'Love's Needles' (100) Morfudd's love is portrayed as a foster-son who has tormented him for nine years. She is also probably the unnamed girl in 'The Foster-son' (77), where the same metaphor is extended over the whole poem. The restless, troublesome lad is at once loved and despised by Dafydd, and in spite of all his care he has received no payment for nurturing him. The same complex ambivalence is suggested by the extended imagery of 'Love like a Hare' (75), an example of the hunting metaphor which occurs several times in his poems. In a quieter mood, it may well have been Morfudd who inspired the blissfulness of the poem 'Furtive Love' (133), a celebration of a secret love which thrives in harmony with nature in spite of malicious tongues. Love in Dafydd's experience is rarely as uncomplicated as this. The difference between blond, married, passionate but fickle Morfudd on the one hand, and dark-haired, noble Dyddgu on the other is crystallized in the poem 'Dyddgu and Morfudd' (92). Dyddgu is 'true', 'not unruly' and 'constant', but because of her nobility she is beyond the poet's reach. In the six poems addressed specifically to Dyddgu (86-91) particular attention is paid to her status as a nobleman's daughter, and the tone of these poems is on the whole more refined than those addressed to Morfudd. Although Dafydd adopts the position of the suffering lover in poems such as 'Love's Tears' (89) and 'Longing's Pedigree' (90), they have none of the raw passion of Dafydd's relationship with Morfudd. It has been seen that it was another noblewoman, Angharad of Glyn Aeron, who inspired the poem 'A Fortress Against Envy' (122), which is an original and polished interpretation of an allegorical image common in the courtly love tradition.

Beyond tradition and convention, Dafydd ap Gwilym's pre-eminence is due to his remarkable creativeness, his strong poetic personality and the complex vision that informs the poetry. Central to that vision is a keen awareness of the fragility of all earthly things. In the thematic division of this edition the only poem placed under the heading of 'Transience' is 'The Ruin' (151). While the ruined old house, with the poignant contrast between present destitution and past vitality, is Dafydd's most potent symbol of time's oppression, the theme is implicit in much of his poetry. The impassioned love-making that took place in a corner of that house is now but a dream-like memory, as is Morfudd's beauty in the poem 'Morfudd Grown Old' – 'It is a dream; how soon life passes!' (150.36). It is, it seems, this acute sensitivity to the transience of all beauty and all worldly pleasure, as encapsulated in the phrase 'how short is the summer' (34.2), that sharpens Dafydd's response to the world in which he lived. That is the secret of his passion and of the sensuous vividness of his imagery. It also partly explains the duality which is often noted in his love poetry: the frequent oscillation between joy and disappointment, between the energy of summer and the deathliness of winter, between humour and

<sup>66</sup> See *id.*, 'Dafydd ap Gwilym: Trem ar ei Yrfa', *Taliesin* 71 (1990), 25-40; *id.*, 'Dafydd ap Gwilym: An Outline Biography', in Cyril J. Byrne, Margaret Harry and Padraig O'Siadhail (eds.), *Celtic Languages and Celtic Peoples: Proceedings of the Second North American Congress of Celtic Studies* (Halifax, 1992), 425-42.

<sup>67</sup> *Id.*, *Dafydd ap Gwilym* (Llên y Llenor series, Caernarfon, 1987), 36-7.

seriousness, with a dangerously fine line between them. Unlike his fellow *Cywyddwyr* Gruffudd Gryg, Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen and Iolo Goch, he is not believed to have enjoyed a long career. However, such was his poems' popularity that they have been preserved in far greater numbers than the work of any of his contemporaries. They stand among the great achievements of European literature in the Middle Ages.

