

THE STORY OF MYRDDIN AND THE FIVE
DREAMS OF GWENDDYDD IN THE
CHRONICLE OF ELIS GRUFFUDD

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In the *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* xii, 19-22 Mr. R. Wallis Evans published a text of *The Five Dreams of Gwenddydd* from Llanover MS. B.S. 102b ff., a manuscript written in 1674 by Tomas ab Ieuan of Tre'r Bryn¹. Mr. Evans refers in his introductory note to another text of the 'Dreams' in the National Library of Wales MS. 6209 E. pp. 120-27, but as we shall see, this text is indirectly derived from that printed below. The latter, from NLW MS. 5276D. ff. 400b-404b, forms part of the Chronicle tracing the history of the world from the Creation to the year 1552, which is found in NLW MS. 5276D and Mostyn MS. 158. This Chronicle was compiled from many sources—manuscripts and printed books—in English, French and Welsh by Elis Gruffudd, 'soldier of Calais', who hailed from Y Gronant Uchaf, Gwespyr in the parish of Llanasa in the old cantref of Tegaingl, in modern Flintshire. This Elis Gruffudd, who was for many years in the service of Sir Robert Wingfield, was present at The Field of the Cloth of Gold near Calais in 1520, and in his Chronicle he has given a detailed account of the daily events which he witnessed there. From July, 1523 to the close of that year he served, in attendance upon Sir Robert Wingfield, on the English campaign in

1. See G. J. Williams, *Traddodiad Llenyddol Morgannwg*, 167 ff.

France led by the Duke of Suffolk, Sir Charles Brandon; and Elis's personal account of this campaign has been edited by me in the *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* xv. 267-279¹ and translated into English by Mr. M. B. Davies ('Suffolk's Expedition to Montdidier, 1523') in the *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts, Fouad I University*, vol. VII (July, 1944), Cairo, 1944. From the close of 1523 until early in 1530 Elis Gruffudd was employed by Wingfield in London, and it was there he transcribed Cardiff MS. 5, which contains a miscellaneous collection of Welsh prose and poetry. After Sir Robert Wingfield had been appointed Deputy of Calais Elis became a member of the English garrison in that town; and it was there he compiled his world history (NLW MS. 5276D and Mostyn MS. 158) and a large collection of tracts on medicine (Cwrtmawr MS. 1).

Certain sections of his Chronicle together with many scattered references show that Elis Gruffudd, despite his long years of service in France and London, was deeply interested in the oral traditions and written literature of his native land. He quotes Welsh *englynion* and proverbs, records a few folk-tales, and transcribes Welsh texts from such MSS as he had at his disposal. Sir Ifor Williams has already shown in his *Chwedl Taliesin*, p. 10 that the earliest extant text of the story of Taliesin is that which Elis has incorporated in his Chronicle (NLW MS. 5276D, ff. 380a-). Elis states that the story was current (*sathredig*) in Wales, and that his version of it is based on an earlier written text. Elis was equally interested in various stories and traditions

1. For a list of other passages from Elis Gruffudd's MSS. which have appeared in print see *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* xv. 267. To the list add 'Chwedl Myrddin a'r Farwolaeth Driphlyg yng Nghronid Elis Gruffudd', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* xvi. 184 ff., and 'Gwraig Maelgwn Gwynedd a'r Fodrwy, *ibid.* xviii. 55-58.

about Myrddin and in the many prophecies attributed to him. These stories and prophecies form a long section of his Chronicle and it will be convenient to list the main items, with occasional comments on his sources :

1. ff. 303*b*-305*a*: Ymaa ynn ol j dilin partt o Ysdori Merthin y proffwydwr ne'r bardd kynt[*a*] ar a vv o vewn yr ynnys hon (' Hereafter follows a part of the Story of Myrddin the first prophet or bard who was in this island ').

This section relates how Myrddin was begotten of Aldan the nun and third daughter of a nobleman from South Wales by a spirit called ' Minckamws ', and how Blas (= Fr. Blaise) the hermit had the child baptized and named ' Merddin '. Whatever Elis's immediate source may have been, it is clear that this section derives ultimately from the French Vulgate *Merlin*¹. It is not based on any native Welsh tradition.

2. ff. 309*a*-317*b*: how Myrddin was brought before Vortigern and uttered prophecies.

The ultimate source is Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*.

3. ff. 347*a*- : Yma yn ol j dilin sertain o'r proffwydoliaethau ar a wnaeth Merddin i Arthur (' Hereafter follow certain prophecies which Myrddin made to Arthur '). Then follow the items listed below :
 - (*a*) ff. 347*a*-348*a*: The Threefold Death Prophecy, published with a discussion by me in the *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* xvi. 184-188. It derives ultimately from the French *Merlin*.
 - (*b*) ff. 348*a*-349*b*: an unnamed prophecy addressed to Arthur, *Inc. Arthur, bid ysbis a diogel j chwi... Exc.... Ac ettwa y hi a ddigwydd o'i achos ef.*

1. See *Lestoire de Merlin*, ed. H. O. Sommer, pp. 6-17.

- (c) ff. 349b-350a: Gwaith Merddin i'r Lili ('Myrddin's Composition to the Lily'). On this prophecy, which is a translation, see M. E. Griffiths, *Early Vaticination in Welsh with English Parallels*, pp. 170, 198.
- (d) ff. 350a-b: Gwaith Merddin j'r Fflwr-dylis ('Myrddin's Composition to the Fleur-de-llys'). This is probably a translation, like (c) and (e), from English. I have failed to trace another version of it.
- (e) ff. 350b-352a: Gwaith Merddin j'r Keiliog ('Myrddin's Composition to the Cockerel'): see M. E. Griffiths, *op. cit.* 209-10.
- (f) ff. 352a-353b: Amser ac arwyddion o waith Merddin Emrys a'r ysbrudd ('Time and signs by Myrddin Emrys [Merlinus Ambrosius] and the spirit').
- (g) ff. 353b-356a: Proffwydoliaeth Merddin am y chwe brenin diwethaf a fyddai ar yr ynys hon ('Myrddin's Prophecy concerning the last six kings who would be over this island'): see M. E. Griffiths, *op. cit.* 201-2.
4. ff. 356a-358a: O Varuolaeth Merddin ('Of the Death of Myrddin'). This section describes how Myrddin was imprisoned for ever in the Glass House by his love. It derives ultimately from French romance. For a significant comment by Elis Gruffudd on this section see below.
5. ff. 358a-359a: Ysdori Gwion Bach ('The Story of Gwion Bach'). This derives from an earlier Welsh text. Section (6) below is really a continuation.
6. ff. 369a-381b: the story of the finding of Taliesin—a continuation of (5) above—together with transcripts of poems and prophecies attributed to Taliesin.

7. ff. 381*b*-383*b*: the prophecies of the poet Heinin. In the story of Taliesin under (6) above Heinin is a bardic adversary of Taliesin, and Elis Gruffudd says that he has placed the prophecies of the former at this point in his Chronicle because he was a contemporary of the latter.
8. ff. 400*b*-402*a*: Ysdori Merddin Wyllid ('The Story of Myrddin the Wild'). This is the first section of the text edited and translated below.
9. ff. 402*a*-404*b*: the dreams of Gwenddydd. This forms the second section of the text below.
10. ff. 404*b*-405*a*: Ymrauaylion gwesdiwne ac areithie ac ymddiddannau rhwng Merddin a Gwenddydd ('Various questions and addresses and conversations between Myrddin and Gwenddydd'). Under this general heading the items are as follows:
- (a) ff. 405*a*-406*a*: Gouynion Gwenddydd ('Gwenddydd's Questions').
- (b) ff. 406*a*-407*a*: four stanzas each beginning with the words *Hoyan borckellan o borchell...*¹.
- (c) ff. 407*a*-411*a*: fifteen stanzas each beginning with the words *Orddod bron goruod...*².
- (d) ff. 411*a*-412*a*: Yma ynn ol j dilin y *Kyfoesi* a uu hrwng Merddin a'i chwaer ('Hereafter follows the *Cyfoesi* which was between Myrddin and his sister')³.

At the end of this section (f. 412*a*) the following

1. Cf. the twenty-five stanzas each beginning *Ojan a parchellan* in B. B. C. 52-63. On the B. B. C. 'Hoianeu' see M. E. Griffiths, *op. cit.* 90-3, 103-106, and on later adaptations, *ibid.* 142.

2. See M. E. Griffiths, *op. cit.* 162, 163, 164, 168, 180, 185, 187.

3. For an earlier text of the *Cyfoesi* poem see the *Red Book of Hergest Poetry*, p. 1. For comments on it see M. E. Griffiths, *op. cit.*, index.

colophon occurs: Val hyn j deruydd kymaint ac a welais j mewn ysgriuen o waith Merddin Wylld. (' Thus ends as much as I have seen in writing of the work of Myrddin the Wild ').

The above analysis shows clearly that Elis Gruffudd had read about Myrddin in many sources—texts deriving from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*, the French romances (either in the original or in English translations and adaptations) and Welsh texts. He obviously distinguishes between Myrddin Emrys (Merlinus Ambrosius), i. e. the Myrddin of the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, and Myrddin Wylt (Merlinus Silvestris), i. e. the Myrddin of the *Vita Merlini* and its French and English romantic derivatives. With the ' Death of Myrddin ' (ff. 356a-358a: see (4) above) Elis concludes what he regards as the story of Merlinus Ambrosius, and after relating how Myrddin was imprisoned in the Glass House by the Lady of the Lake, he makes the following comment (f. 375a-b):

Ac j mae ynn hryuedd
jawn j mi adel o wr mor
ddoeth ac mor ddisimil
a fffroffwyd mor gysdal ac
j mae llawer o bobyl yn
koelio bod Merddin, adel
j verch j shiomi ef ynn i
gyluyddydd j hun. Ac
etto jr hyn j mae ymrauae-
lion oppiniw[n]s a soon
ymyse y bobyl : kanys
hrai ohonnaunt twy ysydd
yn dal opiniwn ac yn
dywedud yn gadarn mae
ysbryd ydoedd Verddin
ynn hrith dyn, yr hwn

And it is very strange
to me that a man so wise
and so discreet and a
prophet so good as many
people believe Myrddin to
have been, allowed a girl
to trick him in his own
art. But nevertheless
there are diverse opinions
and rumours amongst the
people : for some of them
hold opinion and firmly
say that Myrddin was a
spirit in man's form, who
continued in that state

a vv ynn y modd hwnw
o amser Gortheyrn hyd yn
nechreuad brenin Arthur,
ynn yr amser j diulanodd
ef. Ac ynn ol hynn jr
ymddangoses yr ysbryd
hwn dracheuyn ynn amser
Maelgwn Gwynnedd, ynn
yr amser jr henwyr ef
Taliesin, yr hwn a ddy-
wedir j vod ef ynn vyw
etto mewn dinas a elwir
Kaer Sidia. O'r man
jr ymddangoses ef y dry-
dedd waith ynn amser
Moruryn Vrych mab
Esyllid, j'r neb j dywedid
j vod ef [ynn vab], ac
ynn yr oes honn jr henwyd
yvo Merddin Wyllid. Ac
yr hyny j hyd (*sic*)
heddiw j dywedir j vod
ef ynn gorffowys o vewn
Kaer Sidia, o'r man j
mae sertain o bobyl yn
koelio ynn ddiamau j
kyuyd ef etto vnnwaith
j vynnu kyn Dydd y
Varnn.

Elis Gruffudd, therefore, like others (as he himself states) regarded the Taliesin of *The Story of Taliesin* as Myrddin in another form, and this explains why he has placed his version of the story of Gwion Bach (ff. 358a-359a) and the finding of Taliesin, together with the pro-

from the time of Vortigern until the beginning of king Arthur, when he disappeared. And after this, this spirit appeared a second time in the time of Maelgwn Gwynnedd, at which time he is called Taliesin, who is said to be still alive in a city called Caer Sidia. Thence he appeared the third time in the time of Morfryn Frych son of Esyllt, whose son he was said to be, and this time he was called Myrddin the Wild. And from that to this day it is said that he rests in Kaer Sidia, whence certain people believe without a doubt that he will arise once again before the Day of Judgement.

phacies attributed to the latter (ff. 369a-381b) and those attributed to his bardic adversary Heinin (ff. 381b-383b), between his account of Myrddin Emrys and his account of Myrddin Wyllt. He is obviously attempting to co-ordinate and to 'rationalize' the many conflicting traditions and stories he had heard and read of Myrddin and Taliesin. It follows that he was unacquainted with the *Vita Merlini* and *Ymddiddan Myrddin a Thaliesin*¹, the first poem in the *Black Book of Carmarthen*, in both of which there are dialogues between Myrddin and Taliesin. In the version of the story of Taliesin known to Elis and recorded by him, Taliesin is made to say that he is really Myrddin in another form, as the following passage shows (f. 374a):

Ac ynna j gouynnodd
y brenhin jddo ef (sc.
Taliesin) pa ddelw j gelwid
yvo. Ynna jr atebodd
ef y brenin drwy ddywed-
ud val hyn :

'Shihanes ddewin² a'm
gelwis j Merd[d]in.

Bellach poob prenin a'm
geilw j Taliesin...'

The 'Kaer Sidia' mentioned twice in the passage quoted above (p. 321) is almost certainly a corruption of *Kaer Siddi*, which forms another link with the story of Taliesin, cf. *Myv. Arch.* p. 25a:

Mi a fum ynghadair flin

Uwch *Caer Sidin* (al. *Sidydd*)...

And then the king asked
him (sc. Taliesin) how was
he called. Then he an-
swered the king by spea-
king thus :

'Johannes the magician
called me Myrddin :

Henceforth every king
will call me Taliesin...'

1. Edited with introduction and notes by A. O. H. Jarman (Cardiff, 1951).

2. In *Myv. Arch. of Wales* 21a the form is *Ioannes Dewin*. Cf. Ifor Williams, *Chwedl Taliesin*, pp. 9, 17.

— 'I have been [says Taliesin] in an uneasy chair above
Caer Sidin (al. *Sidydd*)'.

Now in poem No. xiv. of the *Book of Taliesin*, which obviously was a monologue spoken by Taliesin in a ix-x cent. form of his story¹, we find the words (BT. 34.8-10):

Ys kyweir vyg kadeir yg *Kaer Sidi*,
Nys plawd heint (a) heneint a uo yndi;
Ys gwyr Manawyt a Phryderi.

— Perfect (ready) is my chair in *Caer Siddi*,
The affliction of old age strikes not him who is in it;
Manawyd and Pryderi know it.

As Sir Ifor Williams has pointed out², the obvious conclusion is that one of the manipulators of the story of Taliesin regarded Taliesin as a re-incarnation of Myrddin. And this has been accepted by Elis Gruffudd.

The value and interest of the text printed below is twofold. In the first place, its second part supplies a text of the *Five Dreams of Gwenddydd* which is about a hundred and fifty years earlier than the Llanover B.8 text printed in the *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* xii. 19-22. The only other known text, that of NLW MS. 6209E, pp. 120-27, is of no independent value: it is a copy made by David Parry, one of Edward Lhuyd's amanuenses, from a lost MS. of John Jones of Gelli-lyfdy's, whose text was a direct transcript of the Elis Gruffudd version. The latter and the Llanover B.8 version appear to be independent translations of an original (probably in English) which I have not succeeded in tracing. What appears, however, to be a textual corruption in the Elis Gruffudd text is echoed in the Llanover MS. version. Below, in Myrddin's

1. Cf. Ifor Williams, *Chwedl Taliesin*, pp. 18-24; R. S. Loomis, *Wales and the Arthurian Legend*, pp. 148-49.

2. *Op. cit.* p. 9.

interpretation of the fourth dream, the NLW MS. 5276D text reads:

A'r mylgwn y sydd yn arddangos j daw gwyr
mewn milgwn gwynion ('And the greyhounds
 denote that there will come men in white grey-
 hounds').

The italicized words are almost certainly corrupt, and more than one emendation may be suggested: (1) the whole phrase may be intrusive and ought to be deleted, as has been done in the NLW MS. 6209E transcript; (2) *milgwn* may be an error for *mentyll* or some such word; (3) *mewn* may be a mistake for *mal*. In any case, it is more than a coincidence that the corresponding words in Llanover MS. B.8 appear to be unsuitable in the context:

A'r milgwn sy'n arwyddokau y daw *milgwn gwynion* (*Bull. of the Board of Celtic Studies* xii. 22).

The Elis Gruffudd version of the dreams and their interpretation is more concise than the later version. Welsh scribes often took liberties with their originals, modernizing them and often adding to them. Elis Gruffudd himself sometimes was very free with the rehandling of a text. Hence one cannot be sure what the exact relationship between the two versions is. They may be two independent translations of an untraced original English text, or they may both derive from an earlier common original, itself probably a translation from English.

The contents of the Dreams consist of very vague vaticinations of such a nature that they do not appear to afford internal evidence for their date of composition. Elis's version shows that the Welsh text is at least as early as the first half of the XVth. cent. But Elis himself certainly transcribed them from an earlier copy. Mr. R. Wallis Evans, *loc. cit.* has already noted that the

social criticism voiced in the Dreams is not unlike that expressed in the dreams of *Piers Plowman* by William Langland (c. 1332-c. 1400).

The second major point of interest in the text is that its first part appears to be based on oral tradition, although it may be that Elis was not the first to record that tradition. Indeed Elis's references seem to imply that he was following an earlier written record. It is to be noticed, however, that the story is located in Nanconwy (<Nant Conwy), the valley of the Conway which is not far from Elis Gruffudd's home in Flintshire. In Geoffrey's *Historia* Myrddin is begotten by an *incubus* and is found at Carmarthen (W. Caerfyrddin). In the *Vita Merlini* he is king of Dyfed. In Welsh tradition, as recorded by the *cywyddwyr* and others¹, he is the son of Morfryn—as in Elis Gruffudd's story. Cf. B. B. C. 46 20 ff. (in a later hand than the main text) *Merddin wyllt... am Mhorfryn*. It does not appear to me that the native tradition is derived from the *Vita Merlini*; rather it appears to be a variant of the oral tale which Geoffrey used and adapted in his *Vita Merlini*². I know of no other version of the tale which corresponds fully to the first part of the text which follows below, but as late as the XVIIIth. cent. Lewis Morris recorded a tradition in Anglesey which seems in part to be a debased form of the story³. A young man in love with a young woman, a middle-aged woman, and a widow wishes to consult Myrddin as to which of the three he ought to marry, and Gwenddydd, Myrddin's sister, helps him:

1. Cf. RP 582.37 ; 584.5-6.

2. On the legend of Myrddin and its affinities to that of Suibhne Geilt see *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* i. 229 ff., M. E. Griffiths, *op. cit.* 75, K. Jackson in *Féil-sgríbhín Eóin Mhic Neill* 551 ff., J. Carney, *Studies in Irish Literature and History* 129 ff., 385 ff.

3. For the full text see *Llên Cymru* iv. 179-180. For other references in Welsh bardic verse to the legend of Myrddin see *ibid.* iv. 117-119.

Gan hynny hi (sc. Gwenddydd) roes i'r gwr jeuangc bottelaid o gwrw a photelaid o laeth er mwyn cael gan ei brawd aros i [ym]ddiddan ac ef. Pan gyfarfu ef a Myrddin fe gynnygiodd y bottel gwrw iddo. Ynte a edrychodd arni ac a ddywedodd, 'Tydi sy'n peri i'r doeth fod yn annoeth'. Ac ni yfai moni.

Yna estynnodd y bottel laeth iddo. 'Tydi', eb'r ef (sc. Myrddin), 'yw magwriaeth yr jeuangc a chynhaliaeth yr hên'. Ac fe yfodd honno. Yna dywedodd y gwr ieuangc ei neges, a Myrddin a atebodd...¹.

In the above text Myrddin is offered two drinks—beer and milk — not five — wine, mead, beer, milk and water — as in Elis Gruffudd's story, but Myrddin's comments on these two drinks agree fairly closely in the two texts. Lewis Morris calls his story 'A tradition in Anglesey concerning Myrddin Wyllt'; and it is reasonable to regard it as a late and corrupt variant of the earlier Nantconwy tradition recorded by Elis Gruffudd.

Therefore she (sc. Gwenddydd) gave to the young man a bottle of beer and a bottle of milk so that her brother might be prevailed upon to stay to converse with him. When he met Myrddin he offered him the bottle of beer. The latter looked at it and said, 'Thou causest the wise to be unwise'. And he would not drink it.

Then he held out to him the bottle of milk. 'Thou', said he (sc. Myrddin), 'art the nourishment of the young and the sustenance of the old'. And he drank that. Then the young man stated his errand, and Myrddin answered...

1. B. M. Add. MS. 14,907, f. 222 a-b.

There is no case for regarding either of these variants as derived from the *Vita Merlini*, for in the latter the only drink mentioned (ll. 1136-1153; cf. ll. 1254-1260) is water which restores his reason to the deranged Merlin.

The text given below has been edited in the usual manner. Literal exactness has been aimed at in the facing English translation.