

## THE DEATH OF MERLIN IN THE CHRONICLE OF ELIS GRUFFYDD

by Patrick K. Ford

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The story of Merlin has had a rather complicated development. There can be no doubt that his name and his character came from Celtic sources, but even there we find conflicting traditions. Nennius relates the history of the boy Ambrosius and his confrontation with Vortigern, and that story was picked up and developed by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Historia regum Britanniae*, where he is called Merlinus Ambrosius.<sup>1</sup> Later, Geoffrey got to know his sources better, and came to realize that there was a 'Mad Merlin' (*Myrddin Wyllt* in Welsh), who, like his earlier Merlinus, was a prophet. It was this Merlin and the traditions about him that informed the later *Vita Merlini* (1148), and Geoffrey makes it clear that this Merlin was the same as the one who had been associated with Arthur, but in a different age.<sup>2</sup> The stories of Myrddin Wyllt do indeed have analogues in Scottish and Irish tradition and connections with hagiographical literature, but not with Arthurian romance.<sup>3</sup> By the time of Giraldus Cambrensis, there is a firm distinction made between the two, namely, Merlinus Ambrosius and Merlinus Silvestris.<sup>4</sup>

These matters have been expounded with great care before, and it is not my purpose to elaborate on them here.<sup>5</sup> Whatever sources were known to Geoffrey at the time of *Historia regum Britanniae*, they were not sufficient to stoke his interest

<sup>1</sup>*Historia Brittonum*, chaps. 40-42; *Historia regum Britanniae*, 6.17-19. It may be significant that this initial appearance represents the young prophet as a builder as well, i.e., he is sought because of the difficulties in construction of Vortigern's fortress. His success not only insures construction of the fort, but also makes him ultimate possessor of it. He was, in Arthurian tradition, the architect of Uther Pendragon's monument, as well as architect and builder — in the present text — of the House of Glass, abode of the gods, according to R. S. Loomis (*Wales and the Arthurian Legend* [Cardiff 1956]) and museum of the treasures of Britain, see below.

<sup>2</sup>In this he was not terribly far from the views held by Elis Gruffydd four hundred years later, as we shall see.

<sup>3</sup>See the note, s.n. Myrddin Wyllt, in Rachel Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* (Cardiff 1961), and references there, especially K. Jackson, "The Motive of the Threefold Death in the Story of Suibhne Geilt," in *Féil-sgríbhinn Eóin Mhic Néill* [Essays Presented to Eóin MacNéill, (Dublin 1940) 544-550.

<sup>4</sup>*Itinerarium Cambriae* 2.8.

<sup>5</sup>For an excellent general account, see Professor A. O. H. Jarman's Inaugural Lecture, *The Legend of Merlin* (Cardiff 1960), and now Basil Clarke, *Life of Merlin* (Cardiff 1973).

in Merlin's career once he had used him as the means of Arthur's conception, as fosterer and tutor of Arthur, and as prophetic voice of Britain. He ignores what later career Merlin may have followed, as well as his disappearance or death. It is in the French prose translation and continuation of Robert de Boron's versified tale of Merlin that we first encounter a tale of Merlin's disappearance. The details of Merlin's imprisonment vary from manuscript to manuscript, of course,<sup>6</sup> and a different version altogether is found in Malory. Against these, Welsh tradition itself is not silent, and, with the publication of the text of Elis Gruffydd that appears below, I am pleased to present Arthurian scholars with yet another version of the events that led up to the disappearance of the wizard of Arthur.<sup>7</sup>

According to the Vulgate Cycle,<sup>8</sup> Merlin is unable to refuse the request by his beloved that he teach her his secrets, a weakness he has already confessed to his tutor Blaise. Ultimately, she asks how she can imprison a man without a tower, wall, or iron, but by magic alone, so that he could not go out of it without her permission: "Comment iou porroie un homme enserrer sans tour et sans mur et sans fer par enchantement, si que iamais nen issist se par moi non" (Sommer, 451.38-40). Merlin, fully aware of the outcome, accedes to the request. The place of enchantment is to be "vn biau lieu bien conuenable, que iou puisse fermer par art si fort quil ne puist estre desfais" (452.11-12). She rejects Merlin's offer to construct the edifice, asking rather that he give her the information, so that she can carry out the enchantment whensoever she pleases.

One day, some time after this, they are walking along in the forest of Brocéliande, when they come upon a beautiful tall green hawthorn, covered with flowers. They rest there, and while Merlin sleeps, she traces a circle all around the hawthorn and Merlin, and begins the enchantment. When he awakens, "il regarda entour lui et li fust aus quil fust en la plus bele tour del monde, et se trouua couchie en la plus bele

<sup>6</sup>See the discussion by Elspeth Kennedy, "The Scribe as Editor," *Mélanges . . . offerts à Jean Frappier* (Geneva 1970) 523-531: "In another passage at the end of the account of the imprisonment of Merlin most MSS state that he was never seen or heard of again [ref. H. O. Sommer, *The Vulgate Version*, 8 vols. (Washington 1908-1916) 3.21.38], but this again is modified by the 110 group [Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale fr. MS 110]: 'puis ne parla a homme fors une fois a mon signor Gawain, si com li contes le devise el conte de Merlin.' This refers to an incident to be found in Sommer II, p. 461, when Gauvain, engaged on a quest for Merlin, hears him speak from his prison" (p. 528). In discussing these variants, Kennedy notes that some of the scribes were absolutely eagle-eyed and would not tolerate narrative discrepancies. The author goes on to say that texts were sometimes modified to produce mystery, not eliminate it. B. N. fr. MS 754 says that no one ever heard of Merlin again, "tant que Perlevax l'an traist et gita hors qui vit la grant mervoille del Graal apres la mort de Lancelot, si com li contes vos devisera ca avant" (p. 528). The promise of a future tale may also have motivated the words to Bagdemagus in Malory's "The Death of Merlin," promising a tale in which the Lady of the Lake comes to release Merlin.

<sup>7</sup>I discovered the text while working in the National Library of Wales during 1973-1974 on a Fulbright Research Grant, and I am pleased to acknowledge that support.

<sup>8</sup>*The Vulgate Version 2. Lestoire de Merlin* (n. 6 above) 451-452. I am indebted to Dr. D. G. Hoggan of the University College of Wales at Aberystwyth for help with the Old French text.

couche ou il eust onques geu" (452.27-29). From his most beautiful couch in the most beautiful tower of the world, he addresses the maiden, realizing that he is now completely in her power. She assures him that she will be there with him often, and "mi tendres entre vos bras et iou vous; si feres des oremais tout a uostre plaisir" (452.31-32). She kept her promise well; Merlin never left that place, but she went and came when she wished, spending most days and nights with him.

The Vulgate text is clear in characterizing the events as the result of the mutual love that Merlin and the maiden, Niviene, bore one another.<sup>9</sup> In the English translation of the romance (ca. 1450), the story is unchanged: "he loked aboute hym, and hym semed he was in the feirest tour of the worlde, and the most stronge, and fonde him leide in the feirest place the euer he lay be-forne."<sup>10</sup>

In what Fanni Bogdanow calls the Post-Vulgate romances, however, the story is different:<sup>11</sup> the *Suite de Merlin* (Huth) declares that Merlin was entombed, and no one ever saw him again until Niviene was prevailed upon by Tristan to return. Baudemagus tried to help Merlin get free from his rocky incarceration, but was told by Merlin to stop, for only the one who had put him there could ever free him. The Spanish *Baladro del Sabio* picks up this information in the Huth and develops it: four days after Merlin's entombment, Baudemagus comes to the cave and sees the iron door leading to the room where the tomb was. He hears a woeful voice, the lamentation of Merlin, and tries to aid him. Merlin tells him his effort is in vain, that only Tristan, who is still a baby, can help. Then at noon, Merlin, speaking in a devil's voice, calls upon his father to fetch him.<sup>12</sup>

By the fifteenth century, the character of Merlin had apparently undergone further modification, and the story of his imprisonment was changed accordingly. In Malory's "The Death of Merlin,"<sup>13</sup> Merlin has fallen in love with one of the "damsels" of the Lady of the Lake, that marvelous mariner and abetter of Arthur and his court (*Works*, 490.25-26), and the one who provided Arthur's sword (*Works* 52.15f.). Merlin so dotes on her that he will not leave her alone; he tries to hide her

<sup>9</sup> The name has a variety of shapes in English and French, depending on the positioning of the *r* and the *n*. Professor Jarman offers support for the view first proposed in the mid-nineteenth century that the name may be derived from *chwyf-leian* 'a wanderer of pallid countenance,' i.e., Myrddin as wild man. This could have been an obscure meaning by the twelfth century, and may have come to mean 'fair wanton maiden,' thus effecting the transfer from epithet of Merlin to the name of his captor; see Jarman, "A Note on the Possible Welsh Derivation of Viviane," *Gallica: Essays Presented to J. Heywood Thomas* (Cardiff 1969) 1-12, and *idem*, "Hwimleian, Chwibleian," *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 16 (1954-1956) 72-76 (hereafter BCS).

<sup>10</sup> *Merlin*, ed. Henry B. Wheatley, Early English Text Society O.S. 21, 36, ed. 2 (London 1898) 681.

<sup>11</sup> Fanni Bogdanow, *The Romance of the Grail* (Manchester 1966), esp. 52-59.

<sup>12</sup> From the summary given by Bogdanow, *loc. cit.* (recapitulating her "The Spanish *Baladro* and the *Conte du Brait*," *Romania* 83 [1962] 383-399), where she argues convincingly that the Huth had not "lost" this added detail, rather that the Spanish *Baladro* enlarged upon the passage from the Huth; cf. n. 6 above.

<sup>13</sup> Eugène Vinaver, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, 3 vols., ed. 2, corr. (Oxford 1973); cited henceforth as *Works*.

away somewhere, but while she willingly accompanies him publicly, she makes him swear that, if he is eventually to have his way with her, he must never work any enchantment upon her. He so swears.

After a while, the pair comes into Cornwall, Merlin ever trying to seduce the maiden, and she trying to get rid of him, but fearing him because of his demonic paternity. Meanwhile, she has used his lust as the instrument by which she extracts wisdom from him, and at last the opportunity to use that knowledge against him arrives:

And so one a tyme Merlyon ded shew hir in a roche whereas was a grete wondir and wrought by enchanuntement that went undir a grete stone. So by hir subtyle worchyng she made Merlyon to go undir that stone to latte hir wete of the mervayles there, but she wrought so there for hym that he come never oute for all the craufte he coude do, and so she departed and leffte Merlyon (*Works*, 126.21-27).<sup>14</sup>

In fairness to Merlin, it should be pointed out that in spite of his apparent gullibility, he had foreknowledge of his entrapment, and told Arthur that he could not endure long, but would be buried alive (*Works*, 125.10-12).

It is striking that, in this account, it is not the Lady of the Lake herself, but one of her "damsels" who plays the leading part; clearly, some sort of re-analysis has taken place, and "Lady" has become "ladies."<sup>15</sup> Later in the same book, however, Sir Bagdemagus, while out riding on his adventures, travels by the rock "thereas the Lady of the Lake had put Merlyon undir the stone" (132.19-20). The knight attempts to assist Merlin, who is not suffering in silence but making "a grete dole"; but the effort is for nought. As in the French romance, Merlin advises him to save his strength, for he can never be helped except by her who put him there. In the tale of "Arthur and Accalon," Arthur is delivered from the death prophesied by Morgan la Fay by the advent to the field of "The Damesel of the Lake . . . that put Merlyon undir the stone" (*Works*, 142.20-21). In other words, in Malory there is internal confusion over the denizen of the lake, at least with regard to her relationship with Merlin. We may assume that in the development of the traditions about her, the Lady

<sup>14</sup> Vinaver interprets the passage (lines 21-23) as follows: "'Merlin showed her, in a rock, a great marvel which, wrought by enchantment, was underneath a great stone.' The 'grete wondir' is, according to *F* [the Huth and Camb. 7071], a dwelling, the inside chamber of which contains a tomb covered by a large stone. The dwelling, constructed though it is with consummate skill, is not the work of magic; its only supernatural feature is the slab (*M*: 'grete stone') which covers the tomb and which only those familiar with the appropriate spell can lift" (*Works*, 1338).

<sup>15</sup> Vinaver, in his Index of Proper Names, distinguishes three Ladies of the Lake: 1) the one who comes to court to seek Balin's head (in fact, an anonymous messenger from the Lady of the Isle of Avalon in Vinaver's *F*); 2) a reference to *Works*, 796, the christening of Launcelot and Elaine's son Galahad, "bycause sir Launcelot was so named at the fountayne stone (and aftir that the Lady of the Lake conferred hym sir Launcelot du Lake)" – I cannot see why this Lady of the Lake is kept distinct from Nyneve (OF Niviene, etc.); 3) Nyneve herself.

of the Lake was provided with a court and attendant ladies, some of whom then had their own adventures; Malory apparently knew a version of the story wherein it was one of these that Merlin loved and that brought about his downfall.

In the present text recorded by Gruffydd, the character of Merlin is closer to that of the Vulgate, in that Merlin is motivated by affectionate love, not by lust as in Malory. She, however, is a character rather like that in Malory, withholding her favors and using them as bait to elicit knowledge of charms from Merlin. When she has achieved that she shuts him away forever (Elis Gruffydd was astonished by the lack of judgment of Merlin [below, lines 45-47], and this reflects the tradition recorded by the Vulgate: "il len dist tant et enseigna quil en fu puis tenu pour fol, et est encore" [Sommer, 451.31-32]; "and he hir taught and lerned so mouche that after he was holden a fooll and yet is" [Merlin, 680]). In Malory, she is an innocent, using her charm to secure enough information to rid herself permanently of Merlin and his unwelcome attentions. In the Vulgate, as we have seen, the trick is motivated by possessive love. The maiden remains nameless in Gruffydd's account although she is said to be a native of Glyn Galabes, and only later, after surrounding her domain with water, does she become the Lady of the Lake.

A second point of interest in Gruffydd's account is the House of Glass. In the Vulgate Merlin, the place of confinement is a tower, without walls, and so on, but made of magic alone, and the place in which it is made is the forest of Brocéliande. In Malory, the confinement is within (or under) a rock, apparently in Cornwall. In Welsh tradition, the place of Merlin's eternal concealment is variously described. In the Welsh Grail story, for example, we read that Lancelot, Gwalchmai, and Arthur, on their way to visit the castle of King Peleur, stop off at a chapel beside an ancient hall. In the chapel they see a grave old priest, whom they question about the place. He tells them that the castle there is Tintagel (Tindagoyl), where Merlin assisted Uther in the conception of the future King Arthur:

Ac yna yr offeiryat a doeth y gyt ac Arthur y'r capel. Ac or tu allan y'r capel yr oed ysgrin vawr. "Arglwydi," heb ef, "yn yr ysgrin honn y roet corff Myrdin. A gwybydwch chwi yn lle gwir nat ydiw y gorff ef yn yr ysgrin yr awr honn, kanys yr awr y roet y gorff yndi ef a aethpwyt ac ef ymeith. Ny wnn i ae oblegyt duw ae oblegyt diawl."<sup>14</sup>

(And then the priest went with Arthur to the chapel. And outside the chapel there was a large sepulcher. "Lords," he said, "the body of Merlin was put into this sepulcher. And know truly that his body is not there at the present time, for the moment his body was placed inside, it was spirited away. I know not whether it was God's work or the devil's.")

<sup>14</sup> Robert Williams, *Selections from the Hengwrt MSS 1. Y Seint Greal* (London 1876) 347. The text is from Peniarth MS. 11 (= Hengwrt 49), 15th c., fol. 221v. The same text but slightly modernized is in Mostyn MS 184 (16th c.) fol. 156vb.

This episode belongs to the tradition of Merlin's entombment in or under stone, whence he disappears, though of course the rock (sepulcher) remains behind.

The glass house of Merlin turns up elsewhere in Welsh tradition. In a version of the *Brenin-Dlysau Ynys Prydain* ("Royal Treasures" or "Treasures of the Kings of the Isle of Britain") we are informed that "Myrddin Wyllt aeth a'r rhain i gyd o'r ddinas a elwid Caerlleon ar Wysg, i'r Ty Gwydr yn Ynys Enlli" (Mad Merlin took all these from the city called Caerlleon-on-Usk to the House of Glass in Bardsey Island). But an alternative view holds that "Merddin Emrys a aeth i'r mor i Enlli mewn ty gwydr, am ei gariad, lle y mae eto" (Merlin Ambrosius went to the sea, to Bardsey, in a house of Glass, for the sake of his beloved, where he still is).<sup>17</sup>

Both versions of this bit of lore agree that Merlin abides yet in a glass house on Bardsey Island (off the Lleyn Peninsula in northwest Wales); they show, moreover, the utter confusion between the two Merlins. That Merlin went willingly, a victim of his heart, is attested in these lines of Ieuan Dyfi (fifteenth century), quoted by the antiquary Lewis Morris:

Myrddin aeth mawr ddawn ei wedd  
Mewn gwydr er mwyn ei gydwedd.<sup>18</sup>

(Myrddin went — his gifts were great,  
Into glass to please his mate.)

<sup>17</sup> "Brenin-Dlysau Ynys Prydain (o Hen Ysgriflyfr)," *Y Brython* (1860) 372-373. For further references to Merlin and the glass house, see Bromwich (n. 3 above) 474. Eurys I. Rowlands keeps separate the story of Merlin storing the thirteen treasures in a glass house and the story of Merlin imprisoned by his love in a glass house. He argues with Loomis (n. 1 above) that the former is to be understood as, or at least located within, the Otherworld, and draws attention (p. 53) to the description of the court of Arawn, king of Annwfn (the Otherworld) in the first branch of the mabinogi: "Ilyma y llys diwallaf o uwyt a llyn, ac eur llestri, a *theyrmdlysseu* (royal treasures); Rowlands, "Y Tri Thlws ar Ddeg," *Llên Cymru* 5 (1958) 33-69.

Sir John Rhŷs noted the glass bower in which the Mac Óg put Etáin; he carried it everywhere he went, and slept in it at night to attend to Etáin ("Tochmarec Etáine," ed. E. Windisch, *Irische Texte* [Leipzig 1880] 130-131). Rhŷs equated the Mac Óg with the Greek Zeus, Myrddin being the Welsh counterpart of the Mac Óg; see Rhŷs's *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion*, Hibbert Lectures, ed. 3 (London 1898) 147ff.

<sup>18</sup> *Celtic Remains*, ed. D. Silvan Evans (London 1878) 170 s.v. Enlli: "In Caerllion ar Wysg there was a museum of rarities in King Arthur's time [i.e., the Brenin-Dlysau], which Myrddin ap Morfran, the Caledonian, upon the destruction of that place, carried with him to the house of glass in the Isle of Enlli or Bardsey . . . This house of glass, it seems, was the museum where they kept their curiosities to be seen by everybody, but not handled [!]; and it is probable that Myrddin, who is said to live in it, was the keeper of their museum at that time . . . There was a college of Lay Monks in Bardsey in those days . . . Here Myrddin studied, and here he ended his days, and was buried." The next two lines of the poem are even more interesting:

Nid aeth, oedd adwyth iddi,  
Y drws o'i hôl a droes hi.  
(She went not, it was evil of her,  
She turned the door behind her.)

This seems to be a reference to the version known to Gruffydd, and is at least sufficient for us to believe that Gruffydd was recording actual traditions about the incarceration of Merlin and not

The association of Merlin with Bardsey Island is attested further by Wynkyn de Worde, who translated a Latin poem in Higdon's *Polychronicon*, and published it with Caxton's *Morte Darthur*:

At Neuyn in Northwales  
 A lytell ylonde there is  
 That is called Bardysay.  
 . . . . .  
 Men say that Merlyn there buryed is,  
 That hyght also Syluestris  
 There were Merlyns tweyne,  
 And prophecyed beyne,  
 One hyste Ambrose . . .

It ends on a righteous note:

Clergie maketh mynde,  
 Deth sleeth no fendes kynde;  
 But deth slewe Merlyn,  
 Merlyn was ergo no goblyn.<sup>19</sup>

In Gruffydd's version, we have the glass house, built by Merlin — not the result of a charm taught to the maiden for future use — which, the moment Merlin enters, disappears along with its inhabitant. According to his sources, says Gruffydd, Merlin built the house in the Glassy Isle, in a mill-dam beside the Perilous Bridge in Gloucestershire!

Finally, the woman who caused all this is said only afterwards to have been known by the name of Lady of the Lake, that is, after she withdrew to Gascoigne and enveloped her domain with water. Here, Gruffydd quotes Galffreidws, that is, Geoffrey, as one source, although the passage he ascribes to him is certainly not in *Historia regum Britanniae*. He refers elsewhere to French and English sources and to the opinions held by the folk. Who was this Elis Gruffydd and what works might he have had access to?

According to the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, Elis Gruffydd, "The Soldier of Calais," copyist, translator and chronicler, was born between 1490 and 1500 in Y Gronnant Uchaf, Gwespyr, in the parish of Llanasa in Flintshire. Nothing is known of his early life in Wales, but in his "Chronicle" he says a good deal about himself in the service of the Wingfield family in London and in France. He was with Sir Robert Wingfield on the Field of the Cloth of Gold near Calais in 1521, when Charles V met Henry VIII, and also in the army of the Duke of Suffolk in the campaign in France between July and Christmas, 1523. From the beginning of 1524 until 1529 he was

creating his own, unintentionally or otherwise (see n. 21 below). For the complete text of the poem, see Leslie Hazries, *Gwaith Huw Cae Llwyd ac Eraill* (Cardiff 1953) 129-132 no. LVIII.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Mead's introduction to *Merlin* (n. 10 above) lxxii-iii.

keeper of Sir Robert Wingfield's mansion in London. On 27 January 1529 he joined the garrison at Calais and spent the rest of his life there and elsewhere in France with the English army. He translated medical tracts from English, among his other activities, but his chief work was a Chronicle of the History of the World (National Library of Wales MS 5276D and Mostyn MS 158), a translation and adaptation of English and French chronicles for the most part, but sometimes drawing upon materials from Welsh sources. It is not known when he died, but he was still alive in 1552.

Gruffydd, then, was a widely traveled if not cosmopolitan figure. Thomas Jones adds that, "despite his long years of service in France and London, [Gruffydd] 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."<sup>20</sup> Clearly, Gruffydd is an excellent source for uncovering traditions that have otherwise become lost, even though the source of these traditions must remain obscure.<sup>21</sup> It must be mentioned that Gruffydd had more than a simple recorder's interest in the materials he had at hand; he was also a harmonizer. He knew that Welsh tradition asserted that Merlin (Ambrosius/Silvestris) and Taliesin were the same poet in different ages, and he sought to "rationalize" that tradition. Indeed, within a few lines of the end of the present text he begins the story of Taliesin.

I do not think it likely that we shall ever recover the core of material that inspired such a proliferation of detail in English and Continental romance of the twelfth and following centuries, but I think that we can agree confidently with Jarman when he says, "There was in Welsh verse and saga in the twelfth century a fully developed legend of Merlin, or Myrddin, of which Geoffrey had heard in general terms, but the context of which he only knew very vaguely and incompletely."<sup>22</sup> Gruffydd had the benefit of exposure to oral traditions of Merlin from his native district, and to French and English works as well. We can excuse him if sometimes he credited these latter with information that derived from the former, for I think that comparison of the sources shows he owed far more for his version of the death of Merlin to his native tradition.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Jones, "The Story of Myrddin and the Five Dreams of Gwenddydd in the Chronicle of Elis Gruffydd," *Études celtiques* 8 (1958-1959) 315-345; quotation is from 316.

<sup>21</sup> Professor Jones noted in BCS 16 (1958-1959) 185, that Gruffydd was widely read in French and English, and that he borrowed materials from books and MSS in those languages. He felt that Gruffydd's version of the Three-fold Death was unlike any other Celtic story of that motif, and suggested that his source was French and English romances about Merlin. Furthermore, he accounted in part for the uniqueness of Gruffydd's versions of known stories by suggesting that after reading the story in one or more texts, he wrote it down in his own fashion, unintentionally changing details. Professor Jones's knowledge of Gruffydd and his methods was extensive, but I am inclined to disagree with him here. Expressions such as "Neithyr j mae hrai eraill o'r llyure yn dangos" (but other books show) suggest to me that he had carefully chosen the version he records, and was scrupulously – according to the style of his time – recording the variants. A list of passages from Gruffydd's Chronicle that have been published appears in BCS 15 (1952-1954) 267, and is brought up to date in *Études celtiques* 8 (1958-1959) 316 n. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Jarman (n. 5 above) 11.



## TEXT

The text is that of NLW MS 5276D, ii, fols. 356r-357v. Gruffydd uses the letter *j* (always a capital, but I have supplied both upper and lower case as appropriate) for both *y* and *i* (once for *e*), as well as for the third person singular possessive pronoun *ei*; the ligature *hr* is used for Welsh *rh*; *t* after *s*, *ll*, appears as *d*; *u*, *v*, *f* are all used for [*r*]; he exhibits a preference for writing consonants double, and these occur randomly. His prose is marred by too frequent reference to "the story," "other books," and so on, but it is otherwise spirited, and the disingenuousness with which he interjects himself into the narrative is an appealing feature. I have supplied punctuation and arrangement into paragraphs; manuscript pages and additions to the text are in brackets.

O varuolaeth Merddin, y nneb a ymydewis a llys y brenin.

Ar vyrder o ennyd ynn ol hynn jr aeth Merddin o lys y brenin att j gariad j gylch Glyn Galabes, ynn y tuedd jr yddoedd ef wedi syr[t]hio mewn kariad merch vonheddig o'r arddal hwn. Yr hon megis ac j mae ysdori y San Greial yn dangos a  
 5 oedd verch gyurwys ddysgedig, o'r achos y hi a welai ynn amlwg j vod ef o aniann dieu[356v]lig, O'r achos, mewn modd ynn y byd ni chydsyniai hi ddim a'i ywyllys ef, namyn addo ynn deeg jddo ef o ddydd j ddydd dann serttain o amode yr hynn y sydd y'w draethu: dan amod dysgu ohonaw ef j holl gyluyddodau a'i ddysg jddi hi ynn berffaith erbynn serttain o ddydd ac amser, ac o hynny allan y hi a vyddai barod  
 10 j gyulowni j ywyllys ef. Ac ar yr amod hwn j kydsynniasantt twy.

Ac o hynny allan, y vo a roddes j laur ynn gysdal j wneuthud ty o wydyr vdduntt twy j yw yn dragowydd, ac ar j ddysgu y gyluyddyd y'w gariad yn berffaith; yr hynn a wnaeth ef ar vrys. Ac ynn ol bod y kuddigyl ne'r ty yn barod, y vo a ddangoses y'w gariad ddaruod jddo ef gyulowni j amod yn gyulawn, ynn gysdal am j  
 15 dysgu hi ac am wneuthud y kuddigil. Yr hwn ynn ol hrai o'r llyure a ddaruoedd jddo ef j deilad ynn y man a elwir Ynnys Wydrin, yr hon ysydd yngoredd gar llaw'r bontt beryglus yr hon ysydd o vewn Sir Gairloyw.

J'r mann ynn ol hir brosses j dug ef j gariad, ac ynn y vo a egores y ddoor ac a ddamunodd arni hi vynned j mewn. Neithir j mae'r ysdori ynn dangos gaffel ohonai  
 20 hi wybodaeth vod y ddoor mor oddidog j gwaith ac na vedrai neb j hagori hi o bai hi vnwaith gwedi j chau. O'r achos jr ydoedd ynn anodd genthi vynned o'i vewn ef, jr j bod hi yn klywed bod y kuddigyl mor neuol j waith o'r tu mewn ac na byddai raid vdduntt twy wrth na bwyd na diod namyn byw yno val yngylion ynn dragowydd.

Ac ynn wir, j mae'r prosses hwn yn anghyffelib j wir, kanis nid ydiw ef yn sseuyll  
 25 y'r vn o'r ddau na chida hreswm na ffydd. Neithyr val kyntt, myui a ddylynwn yr ysdori, yr hon sydd yn dangos bod ymberchi mawr [357r] hrwng Merddin a'i gariad ynghylch mended j mewn o'r blaen, kanis y vo a vynnai jddi hi vynned j miawn o'r blaen a hith[a] a vynai jddo yntte vynned j mewn ynn y blaen — yr hyn a wnaeth hi  
 30 jddo ef ynn ol hir ymadrodd ynn yr achos. Ac ynn gydrym ac jddi hi j gaffel ef oddiuewn y drws, y hi a dynnodd y ddoor att i ac a gaiodd y drws ynn dyn. Ac ar

hynny j diulanodd y kuddigil a Merddin o'i vewn, heb wybod j ba le, ai j'r ddaiar ynnte [j']r ffuruaen.

Ac ynn y modd hwn j kuddiodd Merddin ef j hun, neithyr etto hrai o'r ysgrienyddion a ddangoses mae ynghreigiau Bryttain Vechain j kuddiodd j gariad  
 35 Verddin, wedi jddo bwyso mewn hennaint. Ac ynn ol hynn, j mae'r ysdori ynn dangos j bod hi yn arglwyddes vawr j gallu o vewn tir Gasgwin ynn y lle, megis ac j mae ysdori y San Greial yn dangos, j damgylchynnodd hi gwbwl o'i chyuoedd a hud, megis llynn o ddwr. O'r achos jr oiddid yn i hennwi hi ynn ol y Ffrancaeg a'r Ssaessonae g'Dde Ladi of dde Laack, sef yw hyny, Yr Arglwyddes o'r Llyn.

40 Onid ettho er hyn, ysdori Galffreidws ysydd ynn dangos mae hrag ovyn am j hoedyl j ffoes j o'r ynnys hon j dir Gasgwin hrag ovynn y bobyl a oedd yn dyuod beunudd atti hi j amouun am Verddin. Onid ni wna matter pa un o'r ddau achos a wnaeth j hi uynned o'r ynnys hon, kanis j mae'r holl ysdoriae ynn kordio j bod hi yn Arglwyddes o'r Llyn, a magu ohonai hi Lansilott du Lack ynn y man hwnw.

45 Ac j mae ynn hryuedd jawn j mi adel o wr mor ddoeth ac mor ddissiml a ffröfwyd mor gysdal ac j mae llawer o bobyl yn koelio bod Merddin adel j verch j shiomi ef ynn i gyluyddyd j hun. Ac etto er hynn, j mae ymrauaelion oppiniw[n]s a sonn y [357v]myse y bobyl, kanis hrai ohonnaunt twy yssydd yn dal opiniwn ac yn dywedud yn gadarn mae ysbryd ydoedd Verddin ynn hrith dyn, yr hwn a vu ynn y  
 50 modd hwnw o amser Gwrtheyrn 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 ddywedir j vod ef ynn vyw etto mewn dinas a elwir Kaer Sidia. O'r man, jr ymddangoses ef y drydedd waith ynn  
 55 amser Moruryn Vrych mab Esyllld, jr neb j dywedid j vod ef [ynn vab], ac ynn yr oes hon jr henwyd y vo Merddin Wyllld. Ac jr hyny j hyd 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 varn.

Notes to the text: line 32 MS *ynn ter.* line 55: *ynn vab* supplied by Thomas Jones, *Études celtiques* 8 (1958-1959) 321, where he published lines 45-58 of this text.

### TRANSLATION

Concerning the death of Merlin, who departed the king's court

A short time after this [Merlin's prophesying in the court of Arthur], Merlin went from the court of the king to his beloved in the vicinity of Glyn Galabes, where he had fallen in love with a noble maid of this district. She was, as the story of the Holy Grail shows, a learned and skilled maiden, so she saw clearly that his was a diabolic nature. Because of that, she would in no way submit to his will, but promised daily to do so on these conditions: on the condition that he teach her perfectly all his

skills and his learning by a certain day and time; from then on she would be ready to do his bidding. And on that condition they agreed.

From then on, he set to work to make a house of glass for them to live in eternally, as well as to teach his art to his love perfectly; this he did hastily. After the chamber – or the house – was ready, he showed his love that he had fulfilled the condition completely, teaching her as well as constructing the chamber. This, according to some of the books, he built in the place called *Ynys Wydrin* ['Glassy Isle'], which is in a mill-dam beside the Perilous Bridge in Gloucestershire.

Much later in the story, he brought his love to the place, and he opened the door and desired her to go in. But the story shows that she had learned that the door was of such marvellous work that none could open it were it once closed. Because of that it was difficult for her to enter, even though she had heard that the chamber was so heavenly wrought within that they would need neither food nor drink but live there like angels throughout eternity.

And, indeed, this narrative is unlike the truth, for it stands neither to reason nor faith. But as before, I will continue the story, which shows that there was an exaggerated display of courtesy between Merlin and his love over precedence in entering, for he wanted her to go in first and she wanted him to precede her – which she made him do after long discourse on the subject. And as soon as she got him inside the door, she pulled the door to her and shut it tight. Thereupon, the chamber disappeared with Merlin inside, and no one knows where, whether in the earth or in the sky.

And thus did Merlin hide himself, and yet some of the writers showed that it was in the rocks of Brittany that Merlin's beloved buried him, after he became enfeebled with age. Following this, the story shows that she was a lady of great power in the country of Gascoigne where, as the story of the Holy Grail shows, she enveloped her entire dominion with magic, in the guise of a body of water. Because of that she was called in French and English, The Lady of the Lake, that is, "Yr Arglwyddes o'r Llyn."

And yet in spite of this, Geoffrey's story shows that it was in fear of her life that she fled this island for the country of Gascoigne for fear of the people who were coming daily to her to ask about Merlin. But it matters not which of the two reasons made her go from this island, for all the stories agree that she was the Lady of the Lake, and that she raised Lancelot of the Lake there.

But it is a great wonder to me that a man so wise and so shrewd, and a prophet as good as many people believe Merlin to be would allow a maiden to deceive him in his own art. And yet despite this, there are a variety of opinions and talk among the people, for some of them hold the opinion and maintain firmly that Merlin was a spirit in human form, who was in that shape from the time of Vortigern until the beginning of King Arthur when he disappeared.

After that, this spirit appeared again in the time of Maelgwn Gwynedd at which time he is called Taliesin, who is said to be alive yet in a place called *Caer Sidia*.

Thence, he appeared a third time in the days of Morfryn Frych son of Esyllt, whose son he was said to be, and in this period he was called Merlin the Mad. From that day to this, he is said to be resting in Caer Sidia, whence certain people believe firmly that he will rise up once again before Doomsday.

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