

Lewis Morris and the *Mabinogion*

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Lewis Morris (1700/1–1765) was regarded as the foremost Welsh antiquary and authority on Welsh literature of his day.¹ A founding member of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion in 1751,² his expertise on Welsh literature and history was solicited by Welsh poets and antiquaries alike. Despite Morris's status as an expert upon all things old and Welsh, his opinions on what has come to be seen as the defining text of medieval Wales, the Four Branches of the *Mabinogi*, have not been remarked upon. Rachel Bromwich pointed out in 1986 that the *Mabinogion* do not receive a single mention in the voluminous surviving correspondence between Lewis Morris and his brothers, and assumed that, if Lewis Morris was aware of the existence of the Four Branches, he did not consider them to be worthy of comment.³ This is in sharp contrast to the rapturous letter he sent to his fellow antiquarian, the schoolmaster Edward Richard, upon his first introduction to the *Gododdin*, which he compares to the *Iliad*, the *Aeneid*, and *Paradise Lost*.⁴

In actuality, Morris was well aware of the existence of the *Mabinogion*. Visiting Hengwrt in 1738, he drew up a list of manuscripts of special interest included in the library.⁵ The first item on this list is 'Mabinogion'.⁶ He also described the Four Branches in detail in a notebook bearing the title 'Collections in relation to the British History' (now BL, Add.

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¹ On Lewis Morris see Alun R. Jones, *Lewis Morris* (Cardiff, 2004); David Wyn Wiliam, *Lewis Morris: Deugain Mlynedd Cyntaf ei Oes 1700/1–42* (Llangefni, 1997); and his *Cofiant Lewis Morris 1742–65* (Llangefni, 2001); Hugh Owen, *Life and Works of Lewis Morris (Llewelyn Ddu o Fôn) 1701–65* (Llangefni, 1951).

² Jones, *Lewis Morris*, p. 121; On this society see R. T. Jenkins and Helen Ramage, *A History of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion and of the Gwyneddigion and Cymreigyddion Societies (1751–1951)* (London, 1951).

³ Rachel Bromwich, 'The *Mabinogion* and Lady Charlotte Guest', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1986), pp. 127–42, at p. 129. For Lewis Morris's correspondence with his brothers see John H. Davies (ed.), *The Letters of Lewis, Richard, William and John Morris, of Anglesey (Morysiaid Môn) 1728–1765* (Aberystwyth, 1907–9). The index to these letters bears out Bromwich's point. See Hugh Owen, 'The Morris Letters – Index of Subjects', *Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society and Field Club* (1944), pp. 58–148.

⁴ Jones, *Lewis Morris*, pp. 178–9.

⁵ Hengwrt is an estate located outside Dolgellau in North Wales. It contained the library amassed by the antiquarian Robert Vaughan, including the collection of manuscripts which went on to form the Peniarth collection at the National Library of Wales. Besides being an antiquarian and author of the 1662 *British Antiquities Revisited*, Robert Vaughan of Hengwrt (1591/2–1667) was also the possessor of the most important collection of Welsh manuscripts of that or any date. On Robert Vaughan see Daniel Huws, 'Robert Vaughan', in his *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Aberystwyth, 2000), pp. 287–302. Mihail Dafydd Evans, 'Vaughan, Robert Powell (1591/2–1667)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). Morris received permission from Robert Vaughan (d. c. 1750), the grandson of the antiquarian, to consult the library in 1738, and he records visiting again in 1742–3 and 1745. On Morris's Hengwrt visits see Jones, *Lewis Morris*, p. 106 and Wiliam, *Cofiant Lewis Morris*, pp. 160–1. On the Hengwrt library see G. Tibbott, W. L. Davies and E. D. Jones, 'A Brief History of the Hengwrt–Peniarth Collection' in *Handlist of Manuscripts in the National Library of Wales*, vol. i (Aberystwyth, 1943), pp. iii–xxiii.

⁶ Wiliam, *Cofiant Lewis Morris*, p. 161. This is most likely a reference to NLW Peniarth 4.

MS. 14924).⁷ The notebook contains two treatises on the British History, a copy of *Bonedd y Seint*,⁸ a collection of pedigrees, and a detailed description written in 1764 of a manuscript in the library of the Mostyn family and its contents including the Four Branches.⁹ According to Morris's description of his source, it is a quarto paper manuscript bound in vellum, identified by the number 79, and containing the texts *Peredur*,¹⁰ *Bown de Hamtwn*,¹¹ and the Four Branches. The manuscript Morris is describing is Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales MS. 3043 (formerly Mostyn MS. 135) which contains copies of those texts in the hand of the copyist Roger Morris of Coed-y-talwrn (fl. 1590).¹² While Morris describes the text of *Bown de Hamtwn* first, he notes that it appears second in the manuscript, following *Peredur* and preceding the Four Branches, as in NLW MS. 3043.¹³ He notes that the text of *Peredur* fills fifty-seven pages of text, *Bown de Hamtwn* fills 114 pages, and the First Branch fills twenty-seven, as they do in NLW MS. 3043. NLW MS. 3043 was part of the collection of the Mostyns at Gloddaith, and was designated 'Quarto 79' in Sir Thomas Mostyn's 1744 catalogue of those manuscripts.¹⁵

The section on the Four Branches contains descriptions of the texts, that is, plot summaries with long quotations from the beginning and end of each one. These descriptions are interspersed with short comments by Morris which provide clues to his thinking about the texts. This short tract is vital to the history of the reception of the *Mabinogion*. It represents the only sustained eighteenth-century commentary on these texts, and the only treatment of the texts of any length by an antiquary of the Cymmrodorion circle before William Owen Pughe. Morris's inclusion of material relating to the Four Branches in a notebook dedicated to the 'British History' suggests that he did see their importance for the literary and cultural history of Wales. Indeed, it would seem to suggest that he anticipated the scholarly tendency which was to develop in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of treating the Four Branches as an historical source, of using them to explain the social history of medieval Wales, to elucidate the Celtic past of the dark ages, and to reveal earlier mythological truths. In reality his attitude towards them was more complicated than this. Like many later scholars, it is apparent that while Morris saw the stories themselves as fictitious creations, he recognized that they contained valuable pieces of information relating to the Welsh literary tradition, although he was unsure whether these were earlier elements being used by a later author, or whether they originated in the Four Branches.

Morris viewed the stories of the Four Branches as fictions. In treating the proverb 'a vo ben bit pont' (let him who would be a leader be a bridge) which appears in the Second Branch,

⁷ 'List of Additions to the Department of Manuscripts. 1844', *Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum, 1841-1845* (London, 1850), p. 34.

⁸ For this text see A. W. Wade-Evans (ed.), 'Bonedd y Seint', *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogiae* (Cardiff, 1944), pp. 320-3.

⁹ On the Mostyns see A. D. Carr, 'Gloddaith and the Mostyns', *Transactions of the Caernarvonshire Historical Society*, xli (1980), pp. 33-57; and his 'The Mostyns of Mostyn, 1540-1642', *Journal of the Flintshire Historical Society*, xxviii (1977-8), pp. 17-37 and xxx (1981-2), pp. 125-44; Llywelyn N. V. Mostyn, *History of the Family of Mostyn of Mostyn* (London, 1925). On the Mostyn manuscripts see Daniel Huws, 'Sir Thomas Mostyn and the Mostyn Manuscripts', in his *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Aberystwyth, 2000), pp. 303-38.

¹⁰ Peter Wynn Thomas (ed.), *Peredur* (Cardiff, 2003).

¹¹ A translation of the French adventure of Bevis of Hampton: see Morgan Watkin (ed.), *Ystorya Bown de Hamtwn* (Cardiff, 1958).

¹² 'Morris, Roger, of Coed-y-talwrn', *Dictionary of Welsh Biography down to 1940* (Cardiff, 1959), pp. 665-6. For a description of this manuscript see J. Gwenogvryn Evans, 'Mostyn 135', in his *Report on Manuscripts in the Welsh Language*, vol. i (London, 1898), pp. 118-19. Roger Morris copied the texts from the White Book of Rhydderch (NLW Peniarth 4), as lacunae in places where the White Book has sustained damage or become illegible demonstrate.

¹³ Add. MS. 14924, f. 25v.

¹⁴ Add. MS. 14924, ff. 25v, 26r, 27r.

¹⁵ Huws, 'Sir Thomas Mostyn', pp. 307, 328.

Morris refers to ‘Dr Dav[ies’s] [octa]vo’ which describes the source as ‘ficta historia Mabinogi’ (the fictitious story of the Mabinogi).¹⁶ ‘Dr Dav[ies’s] [octa]vo’ is a reference to a manuscript in Morris’s possession, BL, Add. MS. 14923, which contains the antiquarian Robert Vaughan of Hengwrt’s copy of the lexicographer and biblical editor Dr John Davies of Mallwyd’s ‘Adagia Britannica’, his collection of Welsh proverbs with Latin translations.¹⁷ There, Davies explains the proverb ‘A fo pen bid pont’ with a short account of the incident in the Second Branch which supposedly gave rise to it, in which the giant Bendigeidfran acts as a bridge to allow his army to cross a river, referring to the source of the story as ‘ficta historia Mabinogi’.¹⁸ On another occasion Morris describes the Second Branch as a ‘wild Romance’,¹⁹ and he refers to the episode of the iron house in that text as ‘an odd story’.²⁰ He claims that the Fourth Branch contains ‘the best language of any of these Romances, and was wrote on the plan of the Triades, which is Industriously mixed with this fictitious story’.²¹ Morris is in no doubt that the stories themselves are fictitious, but as this last passage illustrates, he believed that they contain some valuable earlier material.

Morris’s use of the word ‘romance’ to describe the texts is significant. He is the first to use this word to refer to the texts, although it became one of the standard definitions for the word ‘mabinogi’. In the eighteenth century, the word ‘romance’ had not yet developed the specific generic connotations it holds in the field of medieval studies today. Originally denoting a text composed in one of the vernacular languages descended from Latin, by the eighteenth century ‘romance’ referred to medieval narrative in general, especially those texts characterized by a high level of wonder and fantasy.²² By referring to the texts as ‘romances’ Morris is signalling his awareness that they belong to the medieval world, that wonder-filled, credulous,

¹⁶ Add. MS. 14924, 28r: ‘and he was made a bridge over a river in Ireland called Linon, for his army to pass over his crack! which the story says was the beginning first use of the Proverb a vo pen bit Pont (See. dr. dav. 8vo. where he calls this story ficta historia Mabinogi)’.

¹⁷ It is unclear how Morris came to be in possession of this manuscript, but he kept it with him until his death, as its presence amongst the ‘Welsh School’ manuscripts in the British Library attests. See Wiliam, *Cofiant Lewis Morris*, p. 162. John Davies of Mallwyd (c. 1567–1644) was one of the foremost figures of the Welsh Renaissance. For a recent treatment of his life and work see the papers collected in Ceri Davies (ed.), *Dr John Davies of Mallwyd: Welsh Renaissance Scholar* (Cardiff, 2004).

¹⁸ Add. MS. 14923, f. 6v. Davies’s opinion on the Four Branches is also to be found in a comment written at the end of the text of the Four Branches in the White Book of Rhydderch (NLW Peniarth 4) in his hand, where he accuses the author of the tale of outdoing the Chimera in falsity. See Daniel Huws, ‘John Davies and his Manuscripts’, in Davies (ed.), *Dr John Davies of Mallwyd*, pp. 88–120, at p. 118 for this verse.

¹⁹ Add. MS. 14924, f. 29v.

²⁰ Add. MS. 14924, f. 28r.

¹⁹ Add. MS. 14924, f. 29v.

²⁰ Add. MS. 14924, f. 31r.

²¹ Add. MS. 14924, f. 29v.

²² John M. Ganim, ‘The Myth of Medieval Romance’, in R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols (eds.), *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper* (Baltimore and New York, 1996), pp. 148–68, at p. 149; Arthur Johnston, *Enchanted Ground: The Study of Medieval Romance in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1964), p. 10. On the various definitions proposed for ‘mabinogi’, see Diana Luft, ‘The Meaning of “Mabinogi”’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, lxii (2011), pp. 57–80.

Catholic age.²³ Morris repeats the titles for the individual branches found in NLW 3043, using the generic term ‘ystoria’ (story).²⁴ He also refers to *Peredur*, again following NLW 3043, as ‘Ystoria Peredur’ (the story of Peredur), placing these texts in the same generic category.²⁵ This refusal to differentiate between the Four Branches and the story of Peredur is noteworthy, as it differs so greatly from later treatments which placed this text, along with the two other texts derived from Chrétien de Troyes (*Iarllles y Ffynnon* and *Gereint*), into the invented genre of ‘rhamant’ (romance).²⁶ Nevertheless, Morris devotes significantly more space to his treatments of the Four Branches, perhaps in recognition that they are unlike any other text he has come across.

Morris demonstrates a fascination with the Triads which are to be found scattered throughout the texts, as well as a well-grounded familiarity with their contents.²⁷ This is no

²³ This is the vision of medieval Wales offered by such writers as Charles Edwards in his 1671 *Y Ffydd Ddi-ffuant* and Theophilus Evans in the 1740 edition of his *Drych y Prif Oesoedd*. Edwards describes ‘yr amseroedd Pabaidd hynny’ (those Papist ages) as being characterized by ‘[m]eddyliau ofergoelus’ (superstitious ideas, p. 196), while Evans refers the era of his medieval compatriot Gerald of Wales as ‘Oes dywell [...] pryd yr oedd y Byd ei gyd agos wedi ymroddi i Chwedlau celwyddog ac ofer-goelon’ (a dark age [...] when almost the entire world was devoted to untrue stories and superstitions, p. 272). This vision is informed by a Protestant and especially Dissenting historiography which presents the middle ages as a lost period between the proto-Protestant Celtic church and the coming of Protestantism with the rise of the Tudors. This interpretation of Welsh history can be traced back to Bishop Richard Davies and his introduction to the 1567 translation of the Bible, and forwards to twentieth century historians such as O. M. Edwards. On this historiography see Dafydd Glyn Jones, ‘Yn Nrych yr Amseroedd’, in his *Agoriad yr Oes* (Talybont, 2001), pp. 9–44, at pp. 38–9. On Lewis Morris’s attitudes towards the sources of Welsh history, especially Geoffrey of Monmouth, see A. O. H. Jarman, ‘Lewis Morris a *Brut Tysilio*’, *Llên Cymru*, ii (1953), pp. 161–83.

²⁴ He calls First Branch ‘Ystoria Pwyll arglwydd saith gantref dyfed a Phryderi ei fab’ (the story of Pwyll lord of the seven cantreds of Dyfed and Pryderi his son), the Second ‘Ystoria Bendigeidfran vab llyr a Branwen ei chwaer a matholwch o Iwerddon ei gwr hitheu’ (the story of Bendigeidfran son of Llyr and Branwen his sister and Matholwch of Ireland her husband); the Third ‘Manawydan a Phryderi’ (Manawydan and Pryderi) and the Fourth ‘Ystoria Math vab Mathonwy’ (the story of Math son of Mathonwy).

²⁵ Add. MS. 14914, f. 25r. In a departure from NLW 3043, Morris refers to Bevis in English as ‘the Stories of Bevis [Boun o] of Hampton’.

²⁶ William Owen Pughe was the first to place the three texts which later became known as ‘Y Tair Rhamant’ (the three romances) into the same category in a letter published by Thomas Croker in 1828 in volume three of his *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland* and in his planned edition and translation of the texts found in NLW MS. 13242. Pughe was unaware of the Chrétien de Troyes connection; rather, he placed these texts together because they all treat King Arthur and his knights. See Arthur Johnston, ‘William Owen Pugh and the *Mabinogion*’, *National Library of Wales Journal*, x (1958), pp. 323–8. The idea of the ‘three romances’ has come in for sustained criticism since the last quarter of the last century. For a recent treatment summarizing the relevant arguments see Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, ‘Medieval Welsh Tales or Romances? Problems of Genre and Terminology’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, xlvii (2004), pp. 41–58.

²⁷ The Triads are a series of short texts relating story material in groups of three. They may represent mnemonic devices for storytellers, and thus may contain the kernels of many stories which have since been lost. Alternatively they may represent a learned game, only occasionally involving actual story material. The Four Branches contain several references to the Triads, some of which appear in contemporary copies of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*, and some of which do not. It is not at all clear if the use of the Triads in the Four Branches is traditional, innovative, or satiric. The Triads were extensively copied through the early modern period, and antiquaries such as Lewis Morris showed a great fascination with them. For an edition and translation of the Triads see Rachel Bromwich (ed.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*, 2nd edn (Cardiff, 2006).

surprise, as he had copied Robert Vaughan's collection of Triads in NLW MS. Peniarth 185, and had at one time considered publishing an edition of them.²⁸ He records that the burying of Bendigeidfran's head at the end of the Second Branch was 'Trydydd matcudd ban guddiwyd ar 3ydd anvat-datcudd pan ddatguddwyd' (the third fortunate hiding when it was hidden, and the third unfortunate revealing when it was revealed) and notes 'See the Triades'. This triad is indeed found in *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*, number 37, 'Tri Matkud Ynys Prydain' (Three Fortunate Concealments of the Island of Britain).²⁹ Morris also refers to the Triads when discussing the blows Branwen receives from the butcher in the Second Branch, one of 'Three Sinister (Ill-omened) Hard Slaps of the Island of Britain' (triad 53),³⁰ and Gronw Pebr's disloyal war-band in the Fourth Branch, one of the 'Three Disloyal War-bands of the Island of Britain' (triad 30).³¹ His reference to the triads in his account of the birth of Dylan Ail Ton seems to be erroneous, but may have been suggested to him because of the presence of the element 'ail' in the name (lit. 'second', here taken metaphorically to mean 'son of' or like).³² Rachel Bromwich points out that while the death of Dylan is referred to in the *Mabinogion* as the 'third unfortunate blow', there are no references to Dylan in *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* at all.³³ Morris also makes reference to poetry in his comments. In describing Pryderi's death at the hands of Gwydion in the Fourth Branch and his burial at Maen Tiriawg he notes 'see Beddau milwyr'.³⁴ This is a reference to the series of short *englynion* (a short verse form) called 'Englynion y Beddau' (the *englynion* of the graves) found in the Black Book of Carmarthen (NLW MS. Peniarth 1) which deals with the graves of the heroes of Wales.³⁵

Morris's opinion on the relationship between the Four Branches and the other materials to which he refers does not remain constant throughout the treatise. In treating the 'Three fortunate concealments of Britain' (above) he quotes a line from the text which seems to provide an explanation for how the Triad is being used in the story: 'a hynny addywaid y Cyfarwyddyd hwn' (and this is what that lore says), and then goes on to speculate about what is meant by *cyfarwyddyd* (lore), and its relationship to the rest of the story: 'Question, what is meant by Cyfarwydd, the Triades, or that the passage in the Triades was taken out of this wild Romance'.³⁶ Morris assumes that *cyfarwyddyd* refers to the Triads, but cannot say whether the Triad pre-dates the story, or whether it originated with it.³⁷ Yet he later claims that the Fourth Branch is modelled around the Triads, and concludes that the *englyn* 'Tri meib Cilfaethwy enwir' found in the Fourth Branch must pre-date the rest of the story ('This seems to be an ancient Englyn, far before the Contriving this Romance').³⁸ These references to the Triads and to poetry may

²⁸ Wiliam, *Cofiant Lewis Morris*, pp. 161-2.

²⁹ Add. MS. 14914, f. 29v; Bromwich, *Trioedd*, pp. 94-102.

³⁰ Add. MS. 14924, f. 28r; Bromwich, *Trioedd*, pp. 150-2. Morris describes this individual as the 'cook'.

³¹ Add. MS. 14914, f. 34v; Bromwich, *Trioedd*, pp. 66-9.

³² 'The child whiped away to the See and therefore was Called Dylan Eilton [See the Triades].' Add. 14924, f. 33r. I am grateful to Sioned Davies for this suggestion.

³³ Bromwich, *Trioedd*, p. lxxii. For a full discussion of the character of Dylan Ail Ton in the medieval period see Marged Haycock, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (Aberystwyth, 2007), pp. 478-87.

³⁴ Add. MS. 14924, f. 32v.

³⁵ Nevertheless this poem does not agree with the *Mabinogion* on the location of Pryderi's grave, placing it instead at 'aber Gwenoli [...] yn y terev tonnev tir' (at the confluence of the Gwenoli [...] where the waves buffet the land). Thomas Jones, 'The Black Book of Carmarthen "Stanzas of the Graves"', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, liii, pp. 97-137, at pp. 118-19.

³⁶ Ifor Williams interpreted this remark as a reference to the preceding episode in the story, not to the triad. Most later scholars have followed this interpretation. See Ifor Williams (ed.), *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi* (Cardiff, 1930), p. 224, for this interpretation.

³⁷ Add. MS. 14924, f. 29v.

³⁸ Add. MS. 14924, f. 33r.

be fleeting, but they serve an important purpose. They form connections between these orphan stories and known texts, and thus begin the process of weaving the *Mabinogion* into the fabric of the Welsh literary tradition.

Morris also displays an interest in the language of the texts, and often notes words that are unfamiliar or unexpected. For example, he glosses Annwn (the Otherworld) as ‘fairy land’, and ‘dynion mwyn’ as ‘fairies’ in his description of the First Branch.³⁹ He notes that the word for the bird that Branwen sends with a message to her brother in the Second Branch is ‘drudwen’, denoting a specific type of bird (a starling); the word for the leather bags in which the Irish warriors are hidden for the ambush at the end of that tale is ‘boly croen’ (lit. ‘skin belly’), an unusual usage, and that each is said to be filled with ‘blawd’ (meal).⁴⁰ At times the glosses seem to be intended as reassurance that the story is actually saying what it seems to be saying, especially when strange events are depicted. Here, for example, is Morris’s description of the end of the Second Branch:

In Ireland not a living man was left but five women big with child, who went into a Cave in the wilderness there, to these were born 5 sons, who when they came to the age of men, they could have no wives [*sic*], but they lay with one another’s mothers [Cysgu bob un law heb law gan fam ei gilydd] and so peopled the Island, and divided it between them into 5 parts, and there found Treasures where the battles had been.⁴¹

The presence of the original text demonstrates that Morris’s depiction of the events, dubious as they may be, is indeed correct. Morris’s short remarks on the language serve to authenticate the text. They demonstrate that this ‘ficta historia’ is important enough to deserve aids to interpretation, and dependable enough to be used as a source for vocabulary.

Morris is also concerned to point out place names, especially where they correspond with actual places. He notes that in the Fourth Branch, Pryderi’s journey with his herd of otherworldly pigs from south Wales to the north resulting in a string of place names containing the element ‘pig’, is the result of ‘a continued simple Pun, on the Etymology of those places’.⁴² Note that Morris is not tempted by the text’s claim to represent the origin of those place names, seeing it as etymological trickery instead. He comments that Arianrhod’s fortress in the Fourth Branch, Caer Arianrhod, seems to correspond with an actual location: ‘hence Caer Aranrhod the foul ground in the Sea near Caernarvon bar said to be a sunk fort’.⁴³ Morris would have been well placed to make such an observation, having been employed by the Admiralty to survey the Anglesey coast in 1737.⁴⁴ He also remarks on the burial of Branwen at the end of the Second Branch at Abergelaw (along the banks of the river Alaw in Anglesey) in a ‘bedd petruel’ (a four-sided grave).⁴⁵ This location had been noted earlier by Edmund Gibson in his additions to his 1695 translation of Camden’s *Britannia*. Gibson received information about the location of this grave in a letter from the antiquarian John Davies, rector of Newburgh, Anglesey, who claimed that according to Anglesey tradition, ‘the largest *Kromlech* in this County, is the Monument of Bronwen, daughter to King *Lhyr* or *Leirus*, who you know is said to begin his reign *An. Mundi*

³⁹ Add. MS. 14924, f. 26v; this second item has usually been interpreted as ‘noble people’. The expression is used by Teirnon’s wife who, upon seeing the foundling Pryderi’s rich wrappings surmises that he is of noble lineage. See Sioned Davies (trans.), *The Mabinogion* (Oxford, 2007), p. 18, for this translation.

⁴⁰ Add. MS. 14924, f. 28r.

⁴¹ Add. MS. 14924, f. 29v.

⁴² Add. MS. 14924, f. 32r.

⁴³ Add. MS. 14924, f. 33r.

⁴⁴ Jones, *Lewis Morris*, p. 78. A selection of Lewis Morris’s sea charts can be found on the National Library of Wales website: <http://www.llgc.org.uk/index.php?id=lewismorrisandwilliammorris>.

⁴⁵ Add. MS. 14924, f. 29r.

3105.’ Davies goes on to quote from a letter in his possession from ‘an ingenious Antiquary whilst living’, John Griffith of Llanddyfnan (fl. 1649–1669)⁴⁶ to Robert Vaughan of Hengwrt. According to this letter, the traditional burial place of Branwen was ‘a crooked little Cell of stone not far from Alaw, to the west’.⁴⁷

Morris was certainly aware of this grave, as he quotes this note on it in his entry on the river Alaw in his *Celtic Remains* (completed in 1757 and published posthumously in 1878), stating, ‘There is a cromlech in these parts which is said to be Bronwen’s Tomb’.⁴⁸ The antiquary and travel writer Richard Fenton records the discovery of an actual grave at this site in 1813 in the journals of his travels through Wales.⁴⁹ According to Fenton’s report, a local farmer came across a *carnedd* or stone heap along the banks of the Alaw, underneath which was found an urn full of ashes. When the news of the discovery reached the ears of the local parson, also an enthusiast in antiquities, he was immediately reminded of the passage recording Branwen’s death at that spot in the *Mabinogion*. The urn came into the possession of the poet Richard Llwyd, the ‘Bard of Snowdon’, who gave it to the British Museum just before his death in 1834.⁵⁰ Angharad Llwyd also records the discovery of the urn in her 1833 Eisteddfod prize-winning essay *History of the Island of Mona*, quoting from her father John Lloyd’s manuscript notes on the event.⁵¹ Llwyd rejoices at the fortuitous discovery ‘as it seems to give authenticity to our ancient British documents’. For Llwyd the artefacts and indeed the landscape associated with the Second Branch serve to authenticate the persons and events treated in that text as history. While Lewis Morris relates the place names in the *Mabinogion* to actual places in Wales, he does not take this final step. For Morris the landscape may have inspired the tales but, as his remarks on the ‘pig’ place names mentioned above indicates, coincidences between the landscape of Wales and the places mentioned in the Four Branches do not serve to authenticate the texts. They remain ‘wild romances’, albeit ones with a special connection to Wales. Nevertheless, Morris’s remarks serve to demonstrate that the texts are more than mere fictions. They show that, while the stories themselves may not be historical, they are based around real Welsh places and thus can claim a place in the Welsh literary tradition.

Morris’s references to the language, literature, and landscape of Wales in his description of the Four Branches serve to reposition these texts as interconnected elements of the Welsh literary tradition, the medieval language, and the landscape itself which were the focus of antiquarian interest at the time. They place the *Mabinogion* in a web of reference to poetry, language, and landscape from which they had become divorced through lack of attention. Morris was not the only nor, indeed, the first to make these types of connections. Annotated copies of the Four Branches in the hand of William Thomas (1685–1764) produced in 1717 show him making similar connections between the Four Branches and the Welsh laws, for example.⁵² Copies made by Moses Williams (1685–1742) include extensive notes on the language.⁵³ Lewis Morris may be

⁴⁶ ‘Griffith, John’, *Dictionary of Welsh Biography down to 1940* (Cardiff, 1959), pp. 293–4.

⁴⁷ William Camden, *Camden’s Britannia, newly translated into English with large additions and improvements*, ed. Edmund Gibson (London, 1695), p. 678.

⁴⁸ Lewis Morris, *Celtic Remains*, ed. D. Silvan Evans (London, 1878), p. 12.

⁴⁹ See Richard Fenton, *Tours in Wales (1804–1813)*, ed. John Fisher (London, 1917), pp. 267–8. This report was republished in the *Cambro-Briton*, ii (1820–21), pp. 71–3.

⁵⁰ See *The Poetical Works of Richard Llwyd* (London, [1837]), pp. cx–cxi.

⁵¹ Angharad Llwyd, *A History of the Island of Mona, or Anglesey* (Ruthin, 1833), p. 46. Llwyd refers to her source as simply ‘Caerwys MS’, that is, a manuscript in the possession of her family at Caerwys. On Angharad Llwyd see Mary Ellis, ‘Angharad Llwyd, 1780–1866’, *Flintshire Historical Society Publications*, xxvi (1973–4), pp. 52–95 and xxvii (1975–6), pp. 43–84 as well as her ‘Angharad Llwyd, 1780–1866’, *Taliesin*, lii (1985), pp. 10–44, and liii (1985), pp. 20–32.

⁵² Cardiff MS. 4.22. On William Thomas see ‘Thomas, William’, *Dictionary of Welsh Biography down to 1940*, p. 970.

⁵³ NLW Llanstephan MS. 90 and NLW Llanstephan MS. 126. On Moses Williams see John Davies, *Bywyd a Gwaith Moses Williams (1685–1742)* (Cardiff, 1937); Brynley F. Roberts, ‘Williams, Moses (1685–1742)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

following the lead of earlier scholars, but his comments are important in illustrating the development of this critical tendency in the eighteenth century, which laid the groundwork for the explosion of *Mabinogion* scholarship which would follow the publication of Charlotte Guest's edition and translation of those texts between 1839 and 1845.⁵⁴

Some questions remain: what brought Morris to the *Mabinogion*? What was his interest in NLW MS. 3043? Why did he consult that manuscript when putting together material for his 'Collections in relation to the British History'? It may be that Morris's acquaintance with the Four Branches occurred as an accident, that he came to them through *Bown de Hamtwn*. As mentioned earlier, although this text appears second in NLW MS. 3043 (after *Peredur*), Morris treats it first. This would make sense were it the main reason for consulting the manuscript. He describes the text very briefly, dismissing it as a translation with few interesting linguistic features: 'The Romance of Boun o hamtwn, seems to me to be a translation from the French. from the names etc. in it [...] The language is not extraordinary, and the story full of impossibilities [*sic*]'.⁵⁵ Whilst at this period the *Mabinogion* had not yet been co-opted as a source for the British History, Bevis of Hampton had been posited as a real historical figure in the fourteenth century, and was not ousted from that position until well into the nineteenth.⁵⁶ Most likely originating with the romance itself, a body of legends and folklore grew up around Bevis portraying him as the giant warder of Arundel castle (supposedly named after his horse, Hironnelle).⁵⁷ The Bevis legends came complete with real artefacts (i.e. the two leaden lions and the sixteenth-century panels depicting Bevis and his servant Ascupart as giants adorning the Bargate in Southampton,⁵⁸ the 'Bevis tower' at Arundel castle and the fourteenth-century sword still on display there as that of Sir Bevis) much as the Second Branch was to acquire artefacts. At the time of Lewis Morris's writing, Sir Bevis was counted as an historical figure: a text concerning him would have been entirely appropriate for inclusion in a collection of materials on the British History. It may be that Morris came looking for *Bown de Hamtwn*, and found the *Mabinogion*.

⁵⁴ On Guest's edition see Bromwich, 'The *Mabinogion* and Lady Charlotte Guest'; Sioned Davies, 'A Charming Guest: Translating the *Mabinogion*', *Studia Celtica*, xxxviii (2004), pp. 159-78; Donna R. White, 'The Crimes of Lady Charlotte Guest', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, xv (1995), pp. 242-9; and her 'The Further Crimes of Lady Charlotte Guest', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, xvi/xvii (1996/97), pp. 157-66. On the attitudes of a slightly earlier group of scholars see Johnston, 'William Owen Pugh and the *Mabinogion*'.

⁵⁵ Add. MS. 14924, f. 25r.

⁵⁶ For a treatment of this 'historical' Bevis of Hampton and his artefacts see Jennifer Fellows, 'Sir Bevis of Hampton in Popular Tradition', *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society*, xxxix (1986), pp. 139-45.

⁵⁷ For local West Sussex traditions about Sir Bevis see Jennifer Westwood and Jaqueline Simpson, *The Lore of the Land* (London, 2005), pp. 308-9.

⁵⁸ For a description of these panels and a discussion of their possible origins see Adrian B. Rance, 'The Bevis and Ascupart Panels, Bargate Museum, Southampton', *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society*, xlii (1986), pp. 147-53.