

Celtic Source 5

The Captive Youth

1. The Captives of Story

- Gwair ap Gweirioedd (*Preiddiau Annwfn*):

Golychaf Wledig, Pendefig gwlad rhi,
Rhy ledas ei bennaeth dros draeth Mundi.
Bu cywair carchar Gwair yng Nghaer Siddi,
Trwy ebostol Pwyll a Phryderi.
Neb cyn nog ef nid aeth iddi —
i'r gadwyn dromlas cywirwas cedwi.
A rhag preiddiau Annwfn tost ydd geni,
Ac hyd Frawd, parahawt ein barddweddi.
Tri llonaid Prydwen yd aetham-ni iddi:
namyn saith ny dyrraith o Gaer Siddi.

*I praise the Lord, Ruler of the kingly realm,
who has extended his sway over the extent of the world.
Maintained is was Gwair's prison in Caer Siddi
throughout Pwyll and Pryderi's story.
No-one went there before he did -
into the heavy grey chain guarding the loyal lad.
And before the spoils/herds of Annwfn he was singing sadly,
and until Doom shall our poetic prayer continue.
Three full loads of Prydwen we went into it:
save seven, none came back from Caer Siddi.*

- Pryderi (Davies, *The Mabinogion*):

They approached the thicket. As they approached, a gleaming-white wild boar rose from it. Encouraged by the men, the dogs charged at him. The boar then left the thicket and retreated a little way from the men. And until the men closed in on him, he would keep the dogs at bay without retreating; but when the men closed in he would retreat again and break away.

They followed the boar until they saw a huge, towering fort, newly built, in a place where they had never before seen either stone or building. The boar was heading quickly for the fort, with the dogs after him. When the boar and the dogs had gone into the fort, the men marvelled at seeing the fort in a place where they had never before seen any building at all. From the top of the mound they looked and listened for the dogs. Although they waited for a long time, they did not hear the sound of a single dog nor anything at all about them.

‘Lord,’ said Pryderi, ‘I will go into the fort to seek news of the dogs.’

‘God knows,’ replied Manawydan, ‘it’s not a good idea for you to go into the fort. We have never seen it before; if you take my advice, you will not enter. For whoever cast a spell on the land has caused the fort to appear.’

‘God knows,’ said Pryderi, ‘I will not abandon my dogs.’

In spite of the advice he received from Manawydan, Pryderi approached the fort. When he entered, neither man nor beast, neither boar nor dogs, neither house nor dwelling-place could he see in the fort. But he could see in the middle of the floor, as it were, a well with marble-work around it. At the edge of the well there was a golden bowl fastened to four chains, over a marble slab, and the chains reached up to the sky, and he could see no end to them. He was enraptured by the beauty of the gold and the fine workmanship of the bowl. And he went to the bowl and grabbed it. But as soon as he grabs the bowl, his hands stick to it and his feet stick to the slab on which he was standing, and the power of speech is taken from him so that he could not utter a single word. And there he stood.

- Caer Siddi (*Golychaf-i Gulwyd*):

Ys cywair fy nghadair yng Nghaer Siddi:
nis plawdd haint na henaint a fo ynndi;
ys gwyr Manawyd a Phryderi.
Tair orian y am dân a gan rhagddi,
ac am ei bannau ffrydiau gweiligi;
a’r ffynnon ffrwythlon ysydd odduchti —
ys chwegach no’r gwin gwyn y llyn ynndi.

*Harmonious is my song / maintained is my chair in Caer Siddi;
sickness and old age do not afflict those who are inside it,
as Manawyd and Pryderi know.
Three instruments/organs around a fire play before it*

*and around it's turrets are the wellsprings of the sea;
an [as for] the fruitful fountain which is above it —
its drink is sweeter than the white wine.*

- Mabon (Davies, *The Mabinogion*):

Gwrhyr said, 'Who is lamenting in this house of stone?' 'Alas sir, he who is here has reason to lament. It is Mabon son of Modron who is imprisoned here, and no one has been so painfully incarcerated in a prison as I, neither the prison of Lludd Llaw Eraint nor the prison of Graid son of Eri.' 'Do you have any hope of being released for gold or silver or worldly wealth, or through battle and fighting?' 'What you get of me, will be got by fighting.'

2. The Captives of Poetry

- *Gododdin* Stanza 48 (c. 9th century?), my trans.:

*I am no weary lord,
I avenge no wrong,
I laugh no laughter,
Under crawlers' feet,
My legs at full length
In a house of earth,
A chain of iron
About both ankles.*

<i>From mead, from drinking-horn,</i>	O fedd, o fuelin,
<i>From Catraeth folk:</i>	O gatraeth werin:
<i>I, not I, Aneirin —</i>	Mi, na fi, Aneirin —
<i>Taliesin knows it —</i>	Ys gwyr Taliesin —
<i>Master of word-craft,</i>	
<i>Sang to Gododdin</i>	
<i>Before the day dawned.</i>	

- Brendan O Hehir, 'What is the Gododdin?', *Early Welsh Poetry: Studies*:

“The speaker, in other words, is a poet who’s personal name and identity is not that of Aneirin, but who in the poetic trance assumes the persona of Aneirin, is possessed by the spirit of Aneirin, and composes in the name of Aneirin: ‘I am Aneirin who am not.’”

- Patrick K. Ford, 'The Death of Aneirin', *BBCS* 34:

“The implication is that poets must experience an isolation tantamount to death and burial as part of the initiation process — just as in the primordial story of Taliesin, where the initiate was swallowed, lay first in the womb of the mam-awen Ceridwen, then was reborn, then was Taliesin.”

- Ford, *Ystoria Taliesin* (my trans.):

Myui a vum ynn y gwynuryn
yn llys Kynnvelynn,
Mewn kyyff a geuyn
vn dydd a blwyddyn;

I was in the 'Gwynfryn' (blessed-hill)
In the Court of Cynfelyn,
In a stock and shackle
[for] a year and a day.

* *

y bardd ni'm gosdecko
gosdeck ni chaffvo
oni el mewn gortho
dan raiann a gro;
A'r sawl a'm gwrandawo
gwrandewid Duw yvo.

*The bard who does not silence me
will never have peace,
until he goes into a grave (silence)
under soil and gravel;
And those who listen to me,
God shall listen to them.*