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10. Dirty Magic:
Seiðr, Science, and the Parturating Man in Medieval Norse and Welsh Literature

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Who can describe the nightmarishness and *richness* of "The Fourth Branch of the Mabinogion"?1 Brutal situations are reported with a blithe impartiality in this early fifteenth-century Welsh text, showing a preoccupation with supernatural and transgressive aspects of birth, gender, nature and nurture and the magic that subverts them. I summarize it briefly:

Math Son of Mathonwy, ruler and sorcerer, can hear everything that is spoken in his kingdom. However, he cannot live when he is not engaged in warfare unless his feet lie in the lap of a virgin, Goewin, as though he is forever still emerging from the womb. When his cousin Gilfaethwy lusts after her, Gilfaethwy's brother Gwydion, also a sorcerer, devises a plan to get her out from under Math's feet. Gwydion causes war to break out between Math and his neighbor and kinsman, Pryderi; Math rushes off to battle and out of earshot, and Gilfaethwy rapes Goewin. Math changes him into a hind and makes him mate with Gwydion (turned into a stag). For three years the two brothers endure this ordeal, and switching gender with each new transformation they bear between them a fawn, a pig and a wolfcub which they must bring to the fortress gates. These Math turns back into boys and baptizes. Math needs a new virgin, so Gwydion, a man again and reconciled with his cousin, offers his sister Aranrhod. Math tests her virginity with his magic wand when she steps over it on the floor, and she drops a full-grown boy, Dylan Eil Ton, but also "a certain little thing" (*ryw bethan*) which Gwydion wraps in a silk cloth and deposits in his clothes chest at the end of his bed. Nine months later a baby boy emerges. Outraged at this fleshly evidence of her unchastity, Aranrhod imposes *tynghedau* ("destinies") on the child she rejects: he will never get a name unless he get it from her, he will never get equipment unless he get it from her, and he will never marry a woman of the human race. Gwydion must comply. Through trickery and shapeshifting, he thwarts the first two curses: Lleu Llaw Gyffes gets a name and martial equipment from his mother. Through magic, Gwydion turns the

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flowers of the oak and the broom into a wife for him. Gwydion imposes his own *tynghed* on Lleu, making him impervious to any mortal blow so long as he avoids standing with one foot on a washtub and the other on a billygoat at the edge of a river under an awning at dusk. In a naive moment, Lleu not only confides this weakness to his "false" wife, but demonstates the position, enabling her and her lover to kill him. He escapes, nonetheless, in the form of an eagle. Perched on a branch and shaking out the maggot-ridden flesh from his feathers for the hungry sow beneath, he is finally spotted by Gwydion who restores him to human form and turns the flower woman into an owl. And that, says the Fourth Branch, is how the owl came to be called "Flower Face" (*Blodeuwedd*).2

What kind of transformative magic is this that plays with names, bodies, falsifications and putrefactions? The Norse called it "dirty magic," seiðr, that is, "women's magic," a magic so obscene that for a man to be associated with it tainted him with ergi, emasculation. *Seiðr* is notorious for transgressing boundaries between male and female, human and animal, and for altering nature and destiny. *Seiðr* is to be distinguished from *galdr*, "men's magic," "honorable magic," associated with writing and poetry, and it was important to keep these gendered categories separate. What do the Norse have to do with the Welsh?

The issue here is how we place a story like this historically, especially one for which there is a paucity of contextual information, and how we discourse on it to a modern audience. Do we look backward for sources and analogues,

forward to literary offshoots? Do we see in it the buried remains of an earlier tradition, over which a foundation of late medieval mores have been erected? Can we comb its elements for signs of borrowing from other cultures? Scholars have taken such approaches, finding contexts for *The Mabinogi* within Indo-European myth, locating Irish or Norse influence, citing uses of folklore motifs. I shall examine "The Fourth Branch" here from rather separate cultural viewpoints: the Norse concept of bad magic, denaturalizing magic, and the premodern and modern science fiction concept of the android maker, a wizard who denaturalizes birth. I use this problematic term "denaturalize" to mean that which changes the essentials of "kind" perceived by a culture to be normative. Carol Clover has recently illustrated how the unusual power and respect granted to medieval Norse women complicates easy gender demarcations, pointing out that epithets of masculinity are used of both strong men and strong women in Norse literature, while blauðr, "female," is used of weak men and women alike.[3] Nonetheless, early Norse and Swedish laws proscribe all forms of magic-making associated with women and erases the indigenous matriarchal associations of shamanism. The android maker appropriates and alters that which *by kind* belongs to the female: parturition. Both traditions are fixated upon the male body and its capacity to bear fruit like a woman, like a sorcerer, like a scientist.

I am not after a proof of cultural influence or source material. Rather, I wish to offset "The Fourth Branch" with an alien point of view "alien," that is, to the Welsh; not perhaps to the twentieth-century reader, who comes from a culture beset with anxieties resembling those expressed by the Norse. My approach is diachronic, but I hope it will allow us to see the degree to which the

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Middle Welsh seem tolerant of the trans*generic* aspects of the male sorcerer prohibited by the Norse and reinscribed by the scientist. Sexual category has been and will always suffer a kind of Foucauldian "confusion," which is dealt with differently in medieval Welsh and Norse writing, starting with the degree of explicitness by which each culture addresses, explores and forbids it.

According to Folke Str"m, the Scandinavian laws of the thirteenth centuries decreed it a crime to call a man *sorðinn*, past participle of ON *serða*, a word denoting male penetration in intercourse.[4] They likewise banned the noun *ergi* and its adjective *argr* in shouting matches: often translated euphemistically as "cowardice, cowardly," these words have the more pernicious meaning of "sexual perversion, perverted." Citing Georges Dumézil and Ström, Roberto Zapperi defines it as "homosexuality,"[5] but it more specifically adheres to the sodomized male, the man in an erotic encounter between men who plays the part of the "woman." No such shame ordinarily adhered to the sodomizer, whether he sodomized man or animal. A man who is *argr* is a man who is *sannsorðinn*, "demonstrably fucked,"[6] on the bottom. He has forfeited his masculinity. Writes Stroum of *argr*: "it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that no other Norse word was able to provoke such violent feelings and reactions,"[7] and a man could kill by law, if he were so accused, claiming *fullréttisorð*, or "full penalty" for a gross insult. The accusation is treated in the laws as though it is invested with a kind of *seiðr* itself, able indeed to change the nature of a man who is not otherwise *argr* until said to be. Atonement undoes the damage of the slander, and gives the injured party back his natural shape. Comparing a man to a female animal commanded the same penalty, whereas to accuse him of being a male animal was to commit *halfréttisorð*, a "half penalty" insult. The crime of *ergi* can attach to women as well, wherein it denotes an unfeminine lack of sexual modesty. *Ergi*, therefore, seems to mean the transgression of cultural taboos regarding th roles of gender.

Another dire insult was to accuse a man of having given birth. Says the West Norwegian Gulathing Law, in force until the mid-thirteenth century:

No one shall indulge in verbal exaggeration or defamatory talk about another. It is called verbal exaggeration if one man says about another that which he neither can be nor can become nor has been,viz. that he is a woman every ninth

night and has given birth to a child.8

Proscribed by the laws, such acts and artilleries of slander occur frequently, however, in Norse medieval literature: *The Gylfaginning* of Snorri's *Edda* tells the humorous tale of Sleipner's conception and parturition.9 The gods are caught in an intolerable contract with a masterbuilder who promises to build them a citadel within one winter which will withstand the giants, for a price they can't afford. This builder uses his giantish draughthorse Svaðilfari to haul stones and, to the gods' dismay, makes excellent progress. They seek delaying tactics, finally agreeing that it was Loki who had given them the worst counsel in this deal. The solution Loki is forced to come up with is famous: in the form of a

mare, he seduces Svaðilfari who charges after him into the woods. The work is delayed, the masterbuilder thwarted, the gods happy, and Loki bears eight-legged Sleipner, "best" of foals.

Soaked through with *ergi*, Loki is well-known for his accusations of *ergi*. In the *Lokasenna* ("The Insolence of Loki")10 we find an exchange of insults specifically proscribed by the *Gulathing*; Loki accuses Oðinn of letting the weaker man win (vs. 22); Oðinn retorts that Loki spent eight years underground, milking cows and bearing babies to the giants: *ok hugðak þat args aðal*, he pronounces (vs 23). "And I call that craven," Patricia Terry translates;11 it literally means "And that I deem the nature of one who is *argr*, "perverted." Loki retorts with:

En þik síða

kóþu Sámsayju í

ok drapt á vétt sem völur,

vitka líki

fórt verþjóð yfir,

ok hugðak þat args aðal. (Verse 24)

(Who chanted charms on the isle of Sams,

who murdered by magic?

In a wizard's guise you walked the earth

that I call *argr*.)12

Along with sexual defamation, the laws also banned the practice of witchcraft (*seiðr*) by men, because it was the domain of women. The equation of *seiðr* with *ergi*, noted by Preben Sørensen,13 shows up in two significant passages. In the *Gíslisaga*, the sorcerer Þ:orgrímr prepares to curse Gísla, and the text describes how he "sets the sorcery going, and equips himself in his accustomed way, and makes a platform for himself, and now performs in the manner of a *seiðskratti* (a "vile worker of *seið*"), with all possible *ergi* ("perversion") and *skelmiskapr* ("devilry")."14 The *Ynglingasaga* describes how Oðinn, a reputable god, not only has the power to change his own shape and that of others, but is well acquainted with *seiðr* features of his divinity that go back to pre-Christian practices when

shamanism and matriarchy were honorable. In chapter seven we find the famous denunciation of this "dirty magic," along with its distinction from *galdr*: the *Æsir* (or gods) are called *galdra*-smiths because they know the runes and poems associated with it. But Oðinn understood and practiced *seiðr*, "to which the greatest power belongs," and in this way he could prophecy and change the fortune and nature of any man.15 "But when this sorcery was practiced," says the text, "so much *ergi* followed upon it that men did not seem without shame in dealing with it; therefore it was taught to the *gyðiunum*" (the "goddesses," or the "priestesses").16

Words for "magic" abound in Middle Welsh, the most common being *hut*, distantly related to *seið* through Indo-European **soito*. *Swynwyr* is "sorcerer";

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sywedydd, prophet or shape-shifter. "Witchcraft" is *dewiniaeth*, the work of the *dewin* or "diviner," a word of Latin origin, or, simply the English borrowing, *witshkrafft*. *Rheibio* means "to bewitch" or "to ravage." Middle Welsh *kelfyddwr*, "artificer," comes from *kelfydd*, "craft." *Hut* is wielded by both Gwydion and Math; but it doesn't exhibit the same kind of negative foregrounding that the Norse give it. Math's punitive magic forces Gwydion and Gilfaethwy not only into animality, but also incest and sodomy. The precise command that "the one who has been the stag last year shall this year be the sow"17 seems to ensure that both men will suffer the humiliation of being *sorðinn*. "Great shame" (*chywilid mawr*) is what Math calls it, "each of you bearing children to the other," in an example of *ergi* that might compete with Loki's punishments, were it to show any longlasting effects. But where is the vocalized concept of *ergi* in the Welsh? Does it taint those who make it happen with magic?

The "weirdness" so frequently attributed to "The Fourth Branch" lies, I think, in this silence, perceived by readers more accustomed to expressed bias. Or in this noise: as Saunders Lewis has pointed out, *The Four Branches* is a collection of narrative fragments and traditions from many separate sources, skillfully woven together into a "living relationship."18 While unpopular among those who look upon each tale as a polished *textus receptus*, this rationale explains in part the kalaidoscopic effects of "The Fourth Branch," the sense that anything and everything pertains that the story is as important for its etymologies as for its *englynion* ("verses"). It may explain why, in the *englyn* sung about him, Gilfaethwy is *enwir*, "evil," but his brute offspring turned boys are *kywir*, "loyal, honest."19 How does ignominy and disgrace give birth to honesty and heroism? The text doesn't tell us; it doesn't have time to. The *englyn* is a footnote to another narrative, but the note has been made, nonetheless, in an orchestra of asides and seemingly random observations.

Gilfaethwy and Sons drop out of the story. However, no pejorative epithets quite like *seiðskratti* describe Gwydion's magic when he is conniving with his brother, and no particular shame clings to him after his transformations. Forgiven by Math, Gwydion turns his talents to besting his sister in a parental contest. As we read this story across the gulf of centuries, we wonder about its emphases. We as readers want to know what importance attaches to this passive and slightly stupid Lleu Llaw Gyffes, and whether Gwydion's behavior is admirable, despicable, comical or neutral. "The Fourth Branch" does not indulge us with *apologiae*.

We find evidence of the male magician's respected status elsewhere. Gwydion appears in another text, the "Kat Godeu" in the The Book of *Taliesin*,20 which offers valuable information about the prestige once associated with the Welsh vates and his powers of self-dissolution. Mixed in with panegyric and heroic poetry (attributed to the questionably historical Taliesin), many of the poems in this fourteenth-century manuscript show a preoccupation with the hermetic and pseudo-scientific knowledge popular in medieval wisdom traditions. Both "Kat Godeu" ("The Army of Trees") and the poem preceding it in the manuscript, "Angar Kyfyngdawt" ("Cruel Bondage"[?]), feature lists of

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supernatural attributes spoken in the first person by the Taliesin persona who boasts of his exploits, ordeals, secrets, and incarnations as animals and objects. The sixteenth-century *Ystoria Taliesin*21 describes the figure's origins, his acquisition of wisdom from the cauldron of Cerridwen, his flight from her in various shapes, and his devoration by and second birth from her. These confer advantages not enjoyed by the ordinary mortal, and Taliesin confounds the bards of King Maelgwn with a recitation of his polymorphic perversity.

More to the point, in "Kat Godeu" Taliesin boasts of having been made by Gwydion and Math from flowers.22 Given what we've seen of Gwydion in "The Fourth Branch," we're unsure if this is good. The entire text is dark; but most readers recognize the reference to Blodeuwedd. Whether he is speaking here in his own persona or that of the woman of flowers, Taliesin connects himself in some way with the famous artificial woman. Nor are Taliesin's other transformations exclusively male. In *Canu y Meirch* he claims, in a sudden aretalogy, to be "sow" (*hwch*), along with "buck," "boar," and "a shout in the tumult."23 Honor as a *vates* is achieved, along with vigorous, non-human activity, by curious displays of bodily passivity: born from one's female enemy, imprisoned in the castle of a sorceress, under the spell of Gwydion's magic staff of generation, "in a bedcover in the middle between the two knees of kings."24 This last startling claim from "Kat Godeu" is either ignored or fudged by its few translators. Whether it is innocent of innuendo or not, this rather astonishing claim reminds us that the Taliesin-poet is empowered by his *transgression* of boundaries established by both nature and nurture. Male parturition and other gender transgressions offer natural associations with the production of poetry in societies all over the world, early and late.25 Wisdom releases the *vates* from cultural proscriptions; utterance is an act of birth.

Gwydion's name means "wizard," *gwyddon*, the Modern Welsh word for both "scientist" and "witch."26 Other Welsh terms are *dewines*, a feminization of *dewin*; *hudoles*, a female worker of magic; *rheibes*, "enchantress"; and *swynwraig*, "sorceress." But by far the most common contemporary word for witch is *gwrach*, "hag," usually opposed to the *dyn hysbus*, the "cunning man" who is also sometimes called *consuriwr*, "conjurer," not usually applied to a woman.27 The very term *dyn hysbys*, literally "knowing (as in cunning), familiar, or public man," is a curious one, in that he is actually a "private" man. His early status as "known, publicized" may serve to distinguish him from the "private woman," the witch. That there was rivalry between the *dyn hysbys* and the *gwrach* has been noted; the male sorcerer in Welsh tradition was typically hired (by farmers, country folk fearing for their crops and cattle) to undo the damage of a witch.28 In tales other than those examined here, magic women collaborate with or pitch their arts against magic men. In *Ystoria Taliesin*, the witch Kerridwen is "learned (*dysgedic*) in the three arts: *hud*, *witshkrafft*, a *sossri*,"29 and she tangles with the self-made Taliesin. Prominent magic women of Middle Welsh Literature are Rhiannon of "The First Branch," a descendent of the ancient Celtic horse Goddess Epona or Rigantona, traditionally possessed of a cauldron that boils the champion's portion and which revives slain warriors

for which Cerridwen with her cauldron of knowledge is another manifestation and Aranrhod, "Silver Wheel," who probably finds her analogue in Diana, goddess of the moon. In Blodeuwedd, turned into an owl, we see the familiar shapes of the disobedient Lilith, fashioned like Adam from the earth, vilified as temptress and homebreaker.

That women shared if not monopolized prestige in a pre-Christian Celtic religious tradition which worshipped powerful goddesses in control of birth, rebirth, and the distribution of honor has been persuasively argued by Patrick Ford.30 Nancy Huston writes that "[t]he symbolic equivalence between warfare and childbirth" is "one of the rare constants of human culture."31 Men go to war, women bear children, these apparent distinctions giving rise to "cross-dressing": the Morr¡gan, the pangs of the Ulstermen. Aranrhod may be a version of the warrior-woman who excels in the virile practice at a cost to her childbearing capacities; but her confused pregnancy compromises her in a Christian setting that brought with it the demotion of paganism and women. Her obstruction of Lleu's access to sovereignty puts her in the category noted by Maire Bhreathnach of "Sovereignty/Death Goddess."32 Among the Norse, the need arose for men to dissociate themselves from the ignominy of woman's magic, an attitude perhaps instigated, as Jenny

Jochens suggests, by Old Norse sorceresses who were jealous of a monopoly they originally enjoyed, and fueled by Christian mores.33 This devaluation was present among the Welsh as well, but even while magic men and women contend fiercely over cauldrons and other containers, the status given to the male magus who borrows female generative power still emerges from under the literary overlay in the figure of Gwydion. It is mixed in with what I call an *enmasculation* of female power which de-emphasizes its more threatening aspects while putting male artifice in control of the male and female body. Two of Gwydion's magic feats bear scrutiny in context with myths of generation: the birth *ex utero* of Lleu Llaw Gyffes, and the collaboration with Math in making an artificial wife for him.

Both story elements have numberless analogues in literature and folklore stretching in both temporal directions. The concept of the moving statue, or the brass or wooden servant put into motion by a male artificer is so wide-spread as to defy brief discussion. The early Jewish legends of the Golem may have influenced the folklore surrounding Albertus Magnus, Virgil and Roger Bacon, but the concept of the "Synthetic Lady," with its strong allegorical connections to rhetorical pretension, takes on particular significance in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance.34 Spenser's False Florimel of *The Faerie Queen* has a body literally made up of the conceits of poets; constructed by a woman magus, interestingly, she does not merely have skin that resembles snow, but is snow, hair that is gold.35 Gwydion's flower woman is false in that she's a construct and she cuckolds her husband. Like the android-makers of tradition, Gwydion has to dismantle her after she has "run amok." Meanwhile, Zapperi's book examines medieval treatment of male parturition, ignoring the wealth of classical and Indic analogues: Angelique Gulermovich finds sources for the image of "some little thing" dropped from a woman, rescued by a man and incubated in a vessel

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in the myth of twice-born Dionysus, the birth of Ericthonius, and the birth of Atri from the divinity "Speech."36 It is in the "Hermetic and Alchemical Writings of Paracelsus," however, that I find the most interesting union between these two myths: the Artificial Woman and the Parturating Man come together in the crucible of the homunculus, and lead me to my conclusions about *seiðr*, science, the body, and "dirty" magic.

Sixteenth-century natural philosopher and alchemist, Paracelsus unlocks the secrets of artificial parturition in his treatise *De rerum generatione*.37 "The generation of all natural things is twofold," he writes, "one which takes place by Nature without Art, the other which is brought about by Art. . . ."38 The "very greatest and highest miracle and mystery of God . . . disclosed to mortal man" teaches how "men can be generated without natural father and mother . . . not in the natural way from the woman, but by the art and industry of a skilled Spagyrist."39 Putrefaction, the fifth of twelve stages in the making of the Philosopher's stone, seems a dirty matter to us today, but it was essential in alchemy for procreation: allowed to putrefy inside a heated vessel, semen produces an embryo without the need for the female womb. To make an artificial human, one seals up human semen in a glass vessel with the feces of a horse and keeps it there until it begins to move. "It will be in some degree like a human being," Paracelsus writes, "but . . . transparent and without body,"40 If it is kept hot, moist, and enclosed for forty weeks,

it becomes . . . a true and living infant, having all the members of a child that is born from a woman, but much smaller. This we call a homunculus; and it should be afterwards educated with the greatest care and zeal, until it grows up and begins to display intelligence.41

The alchemical orientation here should not mask its connection to ancient and medieval beliefs about conception even to the popular belief that sprites were generated like maggots out of organic material. Gwydion's Tiresian adventure, while given a shameful context in *The Mabinogion*, evidently empowers the magic man in the affairs of women, for it is as a kind of midwife or surrogate mother that he acts: he captures and swaddles the "little thing" that Aranrhod has dropped in her test of virginity. It is not a boy; nor is it clearly a baby like the first dropping. It has something of the foetal to it, perhaps even of the abortus, as Gwydion harbors it in a makeshift womb. In putting these

disparate traditions together, I run the risk of introducing dirty magic into the clean cucurbite of Celtic narrative tradition to produce who knows what critical homunculus; but I would like to close by scrutinizing the shadow of abortion that is cast over this story, and its implications.

The final emphasis of "The Fourth Branch" is the competition between a sorcerer and a sorceress over the fostering of a son. Foster fathers are ubiquitous in Welsh literature, the noble tradition being to have one's male heir brought up in a kinsman's court so he could prove his worth away from the fond affections of his parents, especially his mother. The mother in this story,

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though, is monstrous: not only does she claim to be a virgin, she denies her maternal obligations to Lleu, after Gwydion has given surrogate birth to him, and strives to undo his efforts at nurturing him, presumably from anger over the exposure of her *ergi*. "The Fourth Branch" is less concerned with evil parenting than in showcasing the sleights of artifice practiced by men in the area of reproduction. Like the disgraced Gilfaethwy, the women are erased from this text, their fecundity null or perverted. Goewin's only function is as a virgin, and when that is gone and Math marries her, we hear nothing more of her, much less of her children. The artificial wife made by Gwydion for Lleu apparently gives him no children. Aranrhod is thwarted by Gwydion at every turn, her power as goddess, sorceress and sovereign barely hinted at in the story. In this way the onus is deflected away from the pregnant man, the *argr* man, and onto the compromised woman warrior and magus: the unchaste and aborting woman, the unnatural mother, the unfaithful wife. It makes of the "public man" a hero and vilifies the "private woman" who has kept her pregnancy secret. Men are powerful forces of denaturalization, not simply correcting what the female has neglected under the new Law, but inscribing maleness, "artistry," into it.

"The Fourth Branch" depicts two competing orders, the newer burying the older and yet emerging from it, its feet still resting in the lap of the matriarch. In the old order the pre-Christian women may have exercised the same artful authority over their bodies and its functions as does the male magician over them, their midwives and priestesses controlling conception and birth in ways that were prohibited under Christian law. Christian Patriarchy legislated chastity, ensured the exposure of unchastity, and in this tale it rescues the abortion and shames the abortress. The common association of midwifery and abortion with witchcraft is evinced in the fifteenth-century *Malleus Maleficarum* discussed by Kathleen Biddick elsewhere in this Volume; witness the chapter entitled, *That Witches Who Are Midwives in Various Ways Kill the Child Conceived in the Womb, and Procure an Abortion; or if They Do Not This, Offer new-Born Children to Devils*.42 In another chapter, the good monks claimed that witches could *hebetate* ("blunt") the male organ of generation, or, by working "Some Prestidigitatory Illusion," cause it to disappear.43 I wonder what they would say of this story where both men and women wield a dirty magic that alters and denaturalizes the genitals. The Norse are unequivocal in their fear that men will not merely become women, but they will be *sannsorðinn*; the befouled one, the one underneath. The Welsh text is more complex, but it does suggest, along with all the science fiction stories, that parturition can only be appropriated into the masculine if function is separated from the body, put in a test-tube, and kept under external control. Paracelsus, E. T. A Hoffman, Mary Shelley, Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, Karl Capec, Isaac Asimov, Gene Roddenberry, Philip Dick and William Gibson were enchanted by this myth, and it keeps enchanting. The robot may rot, the cucurbite may be filthy, but the magic, at least, is "clean."

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Notes

1. I would like to express my gratitude to the colleagues on ANSAX-L,

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MEDFEM, and CELTIC-L who have graciously suggested resource material in our discussions of *seiðr* and other forms of Norse and Welsh magic, especially Jeffrey Cohen, Kathryn Klar, Ifan Morris, Will Sayers, and Paul Beekman Taylor. Translations are my own unless otherwise note.

2. "Math uab Mathonwy," in *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi*, ed. Ifor Williams (Caerdydd, 1951), pp. 67-92, hereafter referred to as PKM. This is the standard edition in Middle Welsh. For an up-to-date translation, see "Math Son of Mathonwy," in *The Mabinogi and Other Medieval Welsh Tales*, ed. and trans. Patrick K. Ford (Berkeley, 1977), pp. 89-109.

3. Carol Clover, "Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe," *Speculum* 68.2 (1993), 363-88.

4. Folke Ström, *Nið, Ergi and Old Norse Moral Attitudes, The Dorothea Coke Memorial Lecture in Northern Studies* (London, 1974). See also Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, *The Unmanly Man: Concepts of Sexual Defamation in Early Northern Society*, trans. Joan Turville-Petre (Odense, 1983) for a discussion of nið ("slander") and medieval Norwegian and Swedish law. The legalities and penalties concerning niað are also examined by B. Almqvist, in "Nid mot furstar," Chapter I of his *Norroun nidiktning: Traditionshistoriska studeir i versmagi*, vol. 1 (Uppsala, 1965).

5. Roberto Zapperi, *The Pregnant Man*, Fourth Edition, trans. Brian Williams, 4th ed. (New York, London, Chur, 1991), p. 67.

6. The prefix *sann* denotes "provability." A man who is *sannsorðinn* is unquestionably and publically disgraced.

7. Ström, *Nið*, p. 4.

8. Ström, *Nið*, p. 7.

9. Snorri Sturluson, "Gylfaginning," 42, in *Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning*, ed. Anthony Faulkes (Oxford, 1982), pp. 34-35. For a translation, see *The Prose Edda*, ed. Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur (London, 1916), pp. 53-55.

10. Sæmundar-Edda, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Reykjav¡k, 1905), pp. 120-136.

11. Patricia Terry, *Poems of the Elder Edda* (Philadelphia, 1990), p. 76.

12. Terry, *Poems*, p. 76.

13. Sørensen, *The Unmanly Man*, pp. 10-11, p. 55 (see note 4). The definitive text on *seiðr and its connections with ergi is by Dag Strömbauck, Sejd: Textstudier i nordisk religionshistorie, Nordiska texter och undersouknengar 5 (Lund, 1935), p. 29.*

***14.** Sørensen, Unmanly Man, pp. 63-64.*

***15.** Snorri Sturluson, Ynglingasaga, ed. Elias Wessean (Norstedts/Stockholm, 1964), pp. 10-11: " ðinn kunni þá íþrótt, er mestr máttr fylldði, ok framði siálfr, er seiðr heitir, en af ví mátti hann vita orlog manna ok óorðna hluti, svá ok at gera monnum bana eða óhamingiu eða vanheilendi, svá ok at taka frá monnum vit eða afl ok gefa oðrum." (Oðinn knew, and himself practiced, that art to*

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which the greatest power pertains, and which is called seiðr; therefore he knew much about men's destiny and the future; likewise how to bring death to men or bad luck or illness; likewise how to take wit or power from one man and give it to another.)

***16.** Sturluson, Ynglingasaga, p. 11: En þessi fjolkyngi, er framit er, fylgir svaa mikil ergi, at eigi þótti karlmonnum skammlaust við at fara, ok var gyðiunum kend sú íþrott.*

***17.** PKM, p. 75: A'r hwnn a uu garw o honawch yrllyned, bit garnen eleni.*

***18.** Saunders Lewis, Braslun o Hanes Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg, 1 (Caerdydd, 1932), p. 37.*

***19.** Tri meib Giluaethwy enwir, / Tri chenryssedat kywir, / Bleidwn, Hydwn, Hychdwn Hir. (PKM, pp. 76-77) (Three sons of evil Gilfaethwy, / Three loyal champions: / Wolfcub, Little Buck, Tall Piglet.)*

***20.** The Book of Taliesin, Facsimile Edition, ed. J. Gwenogvryn Evans, privately published (Llanbedrog, 1910), ff. 23.9-27.12. Hereafter BT. For a translation, see Ford, "Appendix," The Mabinogi, pp. 183-87.*

***21.** Edited by Patrick Ford (Cardiff, 1992).*

***22.** Nyt ovam athat pan ymdigonat. Am creu am creat. o naw rith llafanat. o ffrwyth offrwytheu. offrwyth deu dechreu. o vriallu ablodeu bre. o vlawt gwydeu agodeu. oprid pridret y pan yndigonet. o vlawt danat odwfyr ton nawvet. Am swynwys i vath. kyn bum diaeret. Am swynwys i wytyon mawnut o brython. o eurwys o euron. o euron o vodron o pymp pumhwnt kelvydon. Arthawon eil math pan ymdygeyaed. Am swynwys i wledic. pan vei let loscedic. Am swynwys sywyt sywydon kyn byt. (BT 23:151-76)*

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(Not from a mother and father was I made. As to creation, I was created from nine kinds of elements, from fruit, from fruits, from the fruit of God in the beginning, from primroses and blossoms of the hill, from flowers of the woods and trees, from the soil of earth was I made. From the flowers of nettles, from the water of the ninth wave. Math fashioned [charmed?] me before I was gifted. Gwydion fashioned me, great magic from a magic staff. From Eurys, from Euron, from Euron, from Modron, from five times fifty artificers, teachers [athrawon?] like Math, was I nursed [?], brought up [?] The king [Lord?] fashioned me when he was almost [half] burning [??], [when death was burning???]. The enchanter of enchanters fashioned me before the world.)

23. *BT: 48.18-20.*

24. *yg kylchet ym perued / rwg deulin teyrned. BT 23:182-86.*

25. *From Hanes Taliesin to the Kalevala, seers and poets regularly emerge from the bellies of deities, giants, and witches, one of the most notable examples being that of Kavya Usanas, the seer who devours his disciple and gives birth to him from his thigh, enriching him with his wisdom in the process (from The Mahabharata, Book I, trans. J.AB. van Buitenan [Chicago, 1973-1978], pp. 177-78]). Poetic production is naturally associated with procreation, and it provides the male poet a way of parturating: both poet and visionary are "impregnated" by inspiration: what they have taken in they later emit in the form of utterances that have a life of their own. For the best examples of the studies made of this widespread metaphor, see the following: Susan Stanford Friedman, "Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor: Gender and Difference in Literary Discourse," Feminist Studies 13 (1987), 47-81; "A Womb of His Own: Male Renaissance Poets in the Female Body," in Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe, ed. James G. Turner (Cambridge, England, 1993).*

26. *As in Ystol Gwiddon, "Witch's Stool," a craig in Wales "where a witch is said to have `planted herself to weave the woof of human destiny. . . .'" T. Gwynn Jones, Welsh Folklore and Folk-custom (Cambridge, England, 1979), p. 126.*

27. *Jones, Welsh Folklore, p. 126.*

28. *For readers of modern Welsh, a good source is Eirlys Gruffydd, "Yr Wrach a'r Dyn Hysbys" ("The Witch and the Dyn Hysbys"), in Gwrachod Cymru ("Witches of Wales") (Caernarvon, 1980), pp. 88-103. Also: Kate Bosse Griffiths, Byd y Dyn Hysbys: Swyngyfaredd yng Nghymru ("The World of the Dyn Hysbus": Sorcery in Wales") (Talybont, 1977).*

29. *Ford, Ystoria, p. 65.*

30. *Patrick Ford, "Celtic Women: The Opposing Sex," Viator 19 (1988), 417-33.*

31. *Nancy Huston, "The Matrix of War: Mothers and Heroes," in The Female Body in Western Culture, ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1985), pp. 119-38.*

32. *Maire Bhreathnach, "The Sovereignty Goddess as Goddess of Death?" Zeitschrift fr Celtische Philologie, 39 (1982), 243-60.*

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33. *Jenny Jochens, "Old Norse Magic and Gender: þaattr þorvalds ens Viaðforla," Scandinavian Studies 63.3 (1991), 305-17.*

34. *See Geoffrey of Vinsauf's model of an effictio in his Poetria Nova, trans. Margaret F. Nims (Toronto, 1967), pp. 36-38, wherein he puts together the portrait of a woman through rhetorical technique. Bertran de Born's "Domna Soisseubuda" describes how a lover concocts the ideal woman for himself, drawn from the features of women he admires. See A. H. Schutz, "Ronsard's 'Amours' XXXII and the Tradition of the Synthetic Lady," Romance Philology 1 (1947/48), 125-35.*

35. *Book III, Canto viii, vv. 5-7.*

36. *Angelique Gulermovich, "Miscarriages and Miraculous Births in Indo-European Tradition," Journal of Indo-European Studies 22.1-2 (1994).*

37. *Paracelsus, "Concerning the Generation of Natural Things," The Hermetic and Alchemical Writings, ed. and trans. Arthur Edward Waite (New York, 1967), 1:120-27.*

38. *The Hermetic, trans. Waite, p. 120.*

39. *The Hermetic, trans. Waite, p. 121.*

40. *The Hermetic, trans. Waite, p. 124.*

41. *The Hermetic, trans. Waite, p. 124.*

42. *Henricus Institoris (Henrik Kraemer and Jakob Sprenger), Malleus Maleficarum, trans. Montague Summers (Bungay, Suffolk, 1928), p. 66.*

43. *Institoris, Malleus, p. 54.*