

YMBORTH YR ENAID, edited with introduction and notes by R. Iestyn Daniel. *University of Wales Press*, 1995. 155pp., £25.

It may seem slightly odd to be reviewing a book entirely in Welsh in the pages of this journal, but this review stands primarily as a short notice of an important new edition of one of the major Welsh religious works of the middle ages, a work almost certainly composed by a Welsh Dominican in the 13th century, and one discussed in some detail by John Ryan OMI earlier in this issue. That work is *Ymborth yr Enaid*, translated by Ryan, and recently by Oliver Davies, as "The Food of the Soul", but perhaps better "The Nourishment, or Nurture of the Soul". It is well known and is held in high regard by Welsh literary scholars as one prose tradition, as well as one of the clearer insights into high medieval Welsh theological thought outside of translations and poetry. Despite this standing, it has not received a proper edition until now, and still awaits translation into English.

R. Iestyn Daniel's edition is important for numerous reasons. First, he gives a proper edition of all the manuscripts, bringing the three parts of *Ymborth yr Enaid* together from divergent manuscript traditions. Second, in his introduction and notes, he gives a full picture of the theological and textual background to the work and its vocabulary. For all that this text was composed originally in Welsh, for a Welsh audience, as Daniel persuasively argues, it is unquestionably the product, by and large, of high medieval thinking, and displays heavy influence primarily from the theology of the school of St. Victor. In Daniel's edition, however, one appreciates more fully the degree of integration of Welsh literary tradition with standard medieval doctrine in the piece, especially in the poetry which is flecked through the text, and the intense rhetoric, at once mystical and panegyric, of the section entitled *Pryd y Mab*, a portrait of a vision of Jesus as a twelve year old child.

This vision was experienced, the anonymous author tells us, by "a certain Brother of the Order of preachers", and his story is told in some detail. It is on this reference, and a few others, that Daniel's most important arguments, alternately tenuous and convincing, depend. He argues, as many have done before, that this section makes it likely that *Ymborth yr Enaid* was written by a Dominican. He backs this up fairly convincingly by parallels between the theological slant of the text and that held by contemporary Dominican works, but goes further and suggests that indeed the Brother of the vision is the author of the work. This hiding of the true author behind a distanced third-person experience is common, he suggests, in the middle ages, but this suggestion is hardly the last word on the subject.

What most convinces me of the Dominican authorship of the text is Daniel's novel and persuasive suggestion concerning the missing companion "books" of *Ymborth yr Enaid*. As Ryan discusses elsewhere in this issue, *Ymborth yr Enaid* is identified in its text as the third book of a larger work, called *Cysegrlan Fuched* ("The Holy Life"). The first two books are completely lost, and it is something of a mystery what they would have contained, since *Ymborth yr Enaid* is so full an introduction to the spiritual life, outlining vices and virtues, the Trinity, the way to knowledge and divine love, and the like. Daniel suggests that the missing two books are the two books of discipline of the Dominican order, the *constitutiones*, divided into two *distinctiones*, the first dealing with the details of the life of the Dominican priory, and the second dealing with the organisation of the order

as a whole. This seems to me to explain both what the missing books were (the organisational rather than spiritual parts of living "The Holy Life") and why they are so completely absent from the manuscript tradition (they were commonplace—every Dominican knew them; though Daniel suggests that they might have been translated for inclusion in the overall work).

This contextualises the work well. Written for a particular Dominican community in the early years of the Dominican expansion into Wales (roughly 1240–1260), it appears to introduce mainstream theology to new Dominicans, many of whom may have had need of such a work in the vernacular. Daniel fails to narrow down which of the various Dominican priories is the best candidate for the text. Though the use of the vernacular does tend to suggest a priory in the north, such as Bangor or Rhuddlan, other factors suggest a southern location, such as Brecon, Haverfordwest, or Cardiff.

Daniel's further arguments are less convincing. He suggests, on the basis of the obvious literary skill of the author, and similarities between the text and a medieval Bardic Grammar, that both works come from the hand of his postulated author of the grammar, a bard called Cnepyn Gwerthryniion. The argument depends on a number of highly unprovable theses, and on the reliability of textual comparisons as proof of common authorship. On the other hand, his general suggestion that much of the translation work which can be found in manuscripts like *The Book of the Anchorite* is actually the work of Dominicans is attractive. A number of these translators identify themselves as "Brother", and the tendency in the past has been to assume that the translators who gave birth to this golden age of Welsh prose were Cistercians, based on the prevalence of Cistercian houses in Wales and their evident favour with royal patrons. But Daniel rightly asks what, for Cistercians, would motivate this translation work. Rather, he says, we should attribute it to those whose job was preaching and conversion, and who most needed accessible and orthodox works in the vernacular: the friars, both Franciscan and Dominican. Here and elsewhere he has gone further to suggest that the religious works of this period, both translations and original compositions, hold greater import for the native literary tradition, especially for narrative prose, than has generally been recognised.

There are niggling complaints about this edition which are not the concern of readers of this journal, but Daniel has brought a masterpiece of Welsh religious prose into an excellent modern edition. This should provide the springboard for this work of spiritual education by a Welsh Dominican to acquire a greatly deserved wider audience.

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DAVID JONES: THE MAKER UNMADE by Jonathan Miles and Derek Shiel, *Seren, Poetry Wales Press Ltd. Bridgend, 1995. 328 pp. £29.95.*

In 1942, after David Jones had seen the restored El Greco painting *Christ and the Money-changers*, he wrote to a friend that it looked about twice as 'real' as the people walking about in front of it. Clearly anyone trying to understand Jones's own art or poetry must come to terms with a complex mind and a combative aesthetic sense.

The two authors of this book announce by their chosen title their delicate task; the unmaking of a maker. Having considered over a thousand images by Jones they reproduce and discuss a portion of them. The