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GUTO'R GLYN, a bard who sang during the second half of the 15th century (1440-1493)

Name: Guto'r Glyn
Gender: Male
Occupation: bard
Area of activity: Poetry
Author: Ifor Williams

if he is the author of the *cywyddau* to Sir Richard Gethin and Mathau Goch then it must be presumed that he started to write a little earlier, i.e. c. 1432-5. Guto'r Glyn was, according to Tudur Aled, the best bard for composing poems to men; the bard himself says, 'ac erioed prydydd gŵr wyf.' He knew how to praise; he also knew how to satirize as is shown by his biting references to Dafydd ab Edmwnd; and he certainly could be humorous in a mischievous manner. Several *cywyddau gofyn* and *cywyddau diolch* by him, in which he shows his gift of description, have been preserved; another aspect of this gift is seen in his description of the Welsh country houses - Cwrt Moelyrch, the home of Sir Richard Herbert of Coldbrook, the house of the parson of Llandrinio, not to speak of the abbey of Valle Crucis, his place of refuge and sanctuary when he was old and blind. But his greatest strength as a bard is seen in his poems of praise and his elegies.

Guto'r Glyn was brought up in Glyn Ceiriog, the vale after which he is named. From that district he could journey easily to nine out of ten noble houses where he received a welcome in the course of his long life. Corwen was within reach; from there he could go, as a drover, taking the parson of Corwen's sheep to England, losing them there, and engaging in a bardic controversy with the bard Tudur Penllyn because of the loss. The town which drew him naturally was Oswestry - and we find him there. Although he itinerated as a bard as far as Anglesey, Gwent, and Gwynedd, his region was that of Powys; he calls the abbey of Strata Marcella 'ein tŷ ('our house'). He was fond of churchmen and abbots - the parson of Corwen; David Kyffin and Richard Kyffin, deans of Bangor; Siôn Mechain, the parson of Llandrinio; the abbot of Shrewsbury; and the abbots of Valle Crucis.

Politically, Guto'r Glyn was an adherent of the house of York; some of his chief patrons, such as William Herbert, earl of Pembroke, and his brother, Sir Richard Herbert, Coldbrook, were Yorkists. He sang to king Edward IV. But he could not bear to see a Welshman killing a Welshman; in 1468, when Herbert overcame North Wales, he asks him to be merciful to the generous chieftains of Gwynedd and not to allow Englishmen to take their official positions. He says to Herbert in effect - 'Bring all Wales together into one country' (Dwg Forgannwg a Gwynedd/Gwna'n un o Gonwy i Nedd). Guto'r Glyn was, at heart, more Welshman than Yorkist, although according to the bard Gutyn Owain he wore the collar and badge of king Edward. He died at Valle Crucis, c. 1493, and the abbot, Dafydd ap Ieuan who had looked after him so tenderly during the vicissitudes of old age and blindness, saw also to his obsequies and funeral feast.

Author

Sir Ifor Williams, (1881 - 1965)

Sources

For details see *Gwaith Guto'r Glyn* (1939), where also is discussed the problem of his relationship to Guto ap Siancyn y Glyn

Further Reading

Centre for Advanced Welsh & Celtic Studies: Guto's Wales: The life of a poet in fifteenth-century Wales

Wikipedia Article: Guto'r Glyn

Additional Links

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