Sound and Control in Welsh Poetry (*c*. 1300–*c*. 1600)

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ABSTRACT

This thesis connects the fields of sound studies and medieval Welsh history and literature. In doing so, it argues two related points. Firstly, by using the poetry of 'Beirdd yr Uchelwyr' (*the Poets of the Nobility*, *c.* 1300–*c.* 1600) as a case study, it demonstrates that much new and nuanced meaning can be unveiled by listening carefully to the sounds represented in a body of medieval literature. In this sense, it is the first attempt to apply the theories and methods of sound studies systematically to literature in a Celtic language.

Secondly, in assessing some of these new meanings, it shows the relevance of several aspects of medieval scientific thought concerning sound, especially the importance of controlling 'sound' lest it become 'noise'; meaningful sound was controlled sound. It argues that Welsh poets' concern with control was partly a reaction to social and environmental change. Poets felt threatened by aspects of colonisation, urbanisation, and mechanisation caused by the Edwardian Conquest, and wider European trends. Anxious that patrons were turning elsewhere, poets emphasised the exceptionalism of their controlled and refined Welsh, especially their strict-metre poetry. This anxiety was projected onto the wider auditory world. Acceptable sounds – holy bellringing, the Latin language, beautiful harps – were described in terms of control, while unacceptable noises – minstrels, foreign vernaculars, crwth music – were described in terms of disorder.

Overall, this thesis argues for the importance of listening to all aspects of premodern literature, particularly the highly aural poetry of medieval Wales. Before industrialised, mechanised, and electrified sounds, and before sight became the primary means to access truth and knowledge, hearing was just as important as seeing. An aural-sensitive reading reveals several new meanings in this body of poetry produced by anxious and conservative listeners attempting to control a changing world with a changing place for poets.

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Diolch i Sioned am dy gariad a'th gymorth ym mhopeth, ac i Mam, Dad, Hanna, Miriam, Mama, a Dadcu am bob cefnogaeth ac ysbrydoliaeth. Ry'ch chi werth y byd i gyd.

ABBREVIATIONS

Br	Brittonic
DG.net	*Gwefan Dafydd ap Gwilym*, ed. Dafydd Johnston et al. (Aberystwyth University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2007) <www.dafyddapgwilym.net>
DGIA	Huw Meirion Edwards, *Dafydd ap Gwilym: Influences and Analogues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996)
DSL	*Dictionary of the Scots Language* (University of Glasgow, 2021) <https://dsl.ac.uk/>
E	English
eDIL	*Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language*, ed. G. Toner et al. (2019) <http://dil.ie>
EDPCelt	Ranko Matasović, *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Celtic* (Leiden: Brill, 2009)
EME	Early Modern English
GA	*Geiriadur yr Academi*, ed. Bruce Griffiths and Dafydd Glyn Jones (2007) <https://geiriaduracademi.org/>
GC	Casnodyn, *Gwaith Casnodyn*, ed. R. Iestyn Daniel (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 1999)
GCO	Gerald of Wales, *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, ed. J. F. Dimock, 8 vols (London: Longman, 1861–91)
GDBMW	Dafydd Bach ap Madog Wladaidd et al., *Gwaith Dafydd Bach ap Madog Wladaidd, 'Sypyn Cyfeiliog' a Llywelyn ab y Moel*, ed. R. Iestyn Daniel (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 1998)
GDC	Dafydd y Coed, et al., *Gwaith Dafydd y Coed a Beirdd Eraill o Lyfr Coch Hergest*, ed. R. Iestyn Daniel (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2002)
GDE	Dafydd Epynt, *Gwaith Dafydd Epynt*, ed. Owen Thomas (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2002)
GDLlF	Dafydd Llwyd o Fathafarn, *Gwaith Dafydd Llwyd o Fathafarn*, ed. William Richards (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964)

GDGor	Dafydd Gorlech, *Gwaith Dafydd Gorlech*, ed. Erwain Haf Rheinallt (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 1997)
GEODDdH	Einion Offeiriad and Dafydd Ddu o Hiraddug, *Gwaith Einion Offeiriad a Dafydd Ddu o Hiraddug*, ed. R. Geraint Gruffydd and Rhiannon Ifans (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 1997)
GGG	Gruffudd Gryg, *Gwaith Gruffudd Gryg*, ed. Barry Lewis and Eurig Salisbury (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2010)
GGGICE	Gronw Gyriog, et al., *Gwaith Gronw Gyriog, Iorwerth ab y Cyriog ac Eraill*, ed. Rhiannon Ifans (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 1997)
GG.net	*Gwefan Guto'r Glyn*, ed. Ann Parry Owen et al. (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2013) <www.gutorglyn.net>
GGDT	Gruffudd ap Dafydd ap Tudur, et al., *Gwaith Gruffudd ap Dafydd ap Tudur, Gwilym Ddu o Arfon, Trahaearn Brydydd Mawr ac Iorwerth Beli*, ed. N. G. Costigan, R. Iestyn Daniel and Dafydd Johnston (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 1995)
GGM	Gruffudd ap Maredudd, *Gwaith Gruffudd ap Maredudd*, ed. Barry Lewis and Ann Parry Owen, 3 vols (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2003–07)
GHD	Huw ap Dafydd ap Llywelyn ap Madog, *Gwaith Huw ap Dafydd ap Llywelyn ap Madog*, ed. A. Cynfael Lake (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 1995)
GHDaf	Hywel Dafi, *Gwaith Hywel Dafi*, ed. A. Cynfael Lake, 2 vols (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2015)
GHS	Hywel Swrdwal et al., *Gwaith Hywel Swrdwal a'i Deulu*, ed. Dylan Foster Evans (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2000)
GIG	Ieuan Gethin, *Gwaith Ieuan Gethin*, ed. Ann Parry Owen (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2013)
GIRh	Ieuan ap Rhydderch, *Gwaith Ieuan ap Rhydderch*, ed. R. Iestyn Daniel (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2003)
GLGC	Lewys Glyn Cothi, *Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi*, ed. Dafydd Johnston (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995)

GLM	*Gwaith Lewys Morgannwg*, ed. A. Cynfael Lake, 2 vols (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2004)
GLlaw	Llawdden, *Gwaith Llawdden*, ed. R. Iestyn Daniel (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2006)
GLlG	Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen, *Gwaith Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen*, ed. Dafydd Johnston (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 1998)
GLlyg	Gruffudd Llwyd, et al., *Gwaith Gruffudd Llwyd a'r Llygliwiaid Eraill*, ed. Rhiannon Ifans (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2000)
GMW	D. Simon Evans, *Grammar of Middle Welsh* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1970)
GO	Gutun Owain, *L'Œuvre Poétique de Gutun Owain*, ed. E. Bachellery, 2 vols (Paris: H. Champion, 1950–01)
GP	*Gramadegau'r Penceirddiaid*, ed. G. J. Williams and E. J. Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1934)
GPC	*Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru Online*, ed. Andrew Hawke et al. (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2014–) <http://gpc.cymru>
GMBen	Madog Benfras, and others, *Gwaith Madog Benfras ac Eraill o Feirdd y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Ddeg*, ed. Barry Lewis and Twm Morys (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2007)
GMBrwm	Mathau Brwmffild, *Gwaith Mathau Brwmffild*, ed. A. Cynfael Lake (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2002)
GTA	Tudur Aled, *Gwaith Tudur Aled*, ed. T. Gwynn Jones, 2 vols (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1926)
GTP	Tudur Penllyn, *Gwaith Tudur Penllyn ac Ieuan ap Tudur Penllyn*, ed. Thomas Roberts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1958)
GRR	*Gwaith Raff ap Robert*, ed. A. Cynfael Lake (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2013)
GSC	Siôn Ceri, *Gwaith Siôn Ceri*, ed. A. Cynfael Lake (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 1996)
GSH	Siôn ap Hywel ap Llywelyn Fychan, *Gwaith Siôn ap Hywel ap Llywelyn Fychan*, ed. A. Cynfael Lake (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 1999)

GSRE	Sefnyn, et al., *Gwaith Sefnyn, Rhisierdyn ac Eraill*, ed. Nerys Ann Jones (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 1995)
HWM	*A History of Welsh Music*, ed. Trevor Herbert, Martin V. Clarke, and Helen Barlow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022)
IGP	Iolo Goch, *Iolo Goch: Poems*, ed. Dafydd Johnston (Llandysul: Gomer, 1993)
Ir	Irish
L	Latin
Llst3	Aberystwyth: NLW MS Llanstephan 3
LEME	*Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018) <https://leme.library.utoronto.ca>
Mab	*The Mabinogion*, ed. and trans. Sioned Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)
ME	Middle English
MED	*Middle English Dictionary Online*, ed. Frances McSparran et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2000–18) <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary>
ModW	Modern Welsh
ModE	Modern English
MW	Middle Welsh
MWC	Sally Harper, *Music in Welsh Culture: A Study of the Principal Sources* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007)
NLW	National Library of Wales
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) <https://www.oed.com>
P20	Aberystwyth: NLW MS Peniarth 20
PCelt	Proto-Celtic
PKM	*Pedeir Keink y Mabinogi*, ed. Ifor Williams (Cardiff: Wales University Press, 1930)
PLlK	*Y Pum Llyfr Kerddwriaeth*. Oxford: Jesus College MS 15

PIE	Proto-Indo-European
RBH	*Red Book of Hergest*. Oxford: Jesus College MS 111
RC	Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson et al., 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
Rhag	*Rhagymadroddion 1547–1659*, ed. Garfield H. Hughes (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1976)
W	Welsh
WE	Adin E. Lears, *World of Echo: Noise and Knowing in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020)

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Introduction

I. Beginnings

In many ways, the application of sound studies to medieval Welsh literature began in 1943. In a lecture delivered in University College, Dublin, Ifor Williams postulated an exciting explanation as to why the cuckoo seemed always to signal a mournful moment in Old Welsh poetry. While it could feature in joyous scenes in Modern Welsh, Old Irish, or Middle English, in Old Welsh, uniquely it seemed, it signalled sadness: 'the cuckoo is always a killjoy'.[1] Williams suggested a solution to this conundrum by pointing to the Old Welsh interrogative of place 'cw?' (*where?*). He thus argued that what early medieval Welsh-speakers heard when the cuckoo sang was a wistful question: 'cw, cw?' (*where, where?*). The cuckoo 'sang in Old Welsh'.[2]

Williams was referring in particular to the ninth-century poems 'Claf Aber Cuawg' (*The Sick Man of Aber Cuawg*) and 'Kintevin keinhaw amsser' (*The beginning of spring – the fairest season*). In the former, the bird's song fills the sick man with longing for his past since it is 'hiraethawc' (*full of longing*), explicitly linking the sound to the memory and loss of those he loved: 'Coc uann cof gan bawp a gar' (*loud cuckoo, everyone remembers that which he loves*).[3] In 'Kintevin', the narrator mourns his lot on earth and although the poem begins in merry springtide, once the cuckoo begins its song in the second stanza, gloom descends: 'Ban ganhont cogev ar blaen guit guiw / handid muy. vy llauuridet' (*When cuckoos sing on the tips of fair trees / Greater grows my gloom*).[4] Once again this gloom is linked with the loss of loved

[1] Ifor Williams, *Lectures on Early Welsh Poetry* (Dublin: Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, 1970), p. 13.
[2] Williams, *Lectures on Early Welsh Poetry*, p. 13.
[3] 'Claf Abercuawg', in Jenny Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990), ll. 10a, 9c.
[4] 'Kintevin keinhaw amsser', in Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, pp. 203–04, ll. 5–6.

ones; 'kan ethinet uy kereint in attwet' (*because my kinsmen have departed in death*).[5] On each occasion, there is an initial harmonious scene, which is then disrupted by the cuckoo's call, bringing about a sense of desolation, sadness and grief, revealing that the narrator's mood is out of tune with his surroundings. It is easy, then, to imagine how one could conclude that in the early Middle Ages in Wales, the cuckoo's song was perceived to herald melancholy.

Williams's theory is no longer accepted. Firstly, this is because, as Jenny Rowland points out, the cuckoo's call is not always sad in Old Welsh. Rowland directs our attention to a poem found in the Book of Taliesin, which contains the line: 'atwyn Mei y gogeu ac eaws; / arall atwyn pan vyd hin haws' (*fair is the month of May – its cuckoos and nightingale; / another fair thing is when the weather's finer*).[6] To this we may add the following verses from a poem found in the Black Book of Carmarthen, the same home as 'Kintevin': 'gorwin blaen pertheu. keingywrev adar / hir dit bann cogev' (*resplendent are the tips of the bushes; sweet birdsong / long is the day, loud are the cuckoos*).[7] Furthermore, Rowlands, pointing to Old English analogues, has shown that the sadness of the cuckoo's call was not particularly 'Welsh'. The reason for the poem's sadness, she concludes, is due to the poetic persona's already miserable situation, which has little to do with the bird: 'the narrators of "Claf Abercuawg", "Kintevin", and "The Seafarer" all have good reasons for finding the cuckoo's call disturbing'.[8] Secondly, 'cw cw' as an orthographic approximation of the cuckoo's call is exactly that; an orthographic approximation, not a faithful representation of the actual sound. The cuckoo's call is unlikely to have sounded exactly like the phonemes represented by Old Welsh <cw>, i.e., /kuː/.[9] Moreover, there is no surviving evidence for the onomatopoeic 'cw cw' before the fourteenth

[5] 'Kintevin keinhaw amsser', in Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, pp. 203–04, l. 8.
[6] Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 225, n. 152; '3. Aduwyneu Taliessin', in *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin*, ed. and trans. Marged Haycock (Aberystwyth: CMCS Publications, 2007), l. 21.
[7] '26. Cyntaf gair a ddywedaf', in *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin: gyda rhagymadrodd nodiadau testunol a geirfa*, ed. A. O. H. Jarman (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1982), ll. 43–44.
[8] Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 225, n. 152.
[9] To hear the cuckoo's call, visit: 'Cuckoo', *RSPB* <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/cuckoo/>.

century. The closest to such evidence is the name for the bird itself, 'coc/cog' (pl. 'cogev'): though this name does involve some onomatopoeic approximation of the bird's call, these forms are not particularly close to 'cw' (*where*).[10]

The issues raised by Williams's observation and Rowland's criticism show how our understanding of the 'auditory landscape' and 'auditory imagination' of medieval Wales is unstable in the absence of any form of comprehensive study. This thesis aims to rectify this omission.

These two terms – 'auditory landscape' and 'auditory imagination' – are two of many that this thesis borrows from the field of 'sound studies' in order to discuss the sounds of late medieval Wales. In explaining the meaning of these terms, the question of 'why Welsh poetry' is also answered. Why is it useful – and indeed important – to study sound in the vernacular poetry produced in Wales between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries? Furthermore, answering this question situates this thesis in the wider academic field of research on both historical sound and medieval Wales.

II. Historical sound studies and auditory perception

Ifor Williams's argument was ingenious; the realisation that the cuckoo's call could mean something different to listeners in ninth-century Wales compared to what it meant in 1940s Wales demonstrates what should be an essential part of listening to the past: appreciating that sounds and their perception change from period to period. Moreover, Jenny Rowland's allusion to the English poem 'The Seafarer' in her criticism of Williams's argument implies another essential part of listening to the past: appreciating that sounds and their perception can also change from place to place and linguistic community to linguistic community.

[10] Although we may conjecture that earlier forms were closer: < Br *kokā < PCelt *kowik-. See *EDPCelt*, s.v. **kowik*; and *GPC*, s.v. *cwcw* and *cog*.

Understanding that sounds and the senses are not transcendent is central to the broad field of research known as 'historical sound studies' to which this thesis belongs. The field's overarching argument is that sound and how it is perceived are highly variable across time and place; a concept dubbed 'historical phenomenology' by Bruce R. Smith.[11] With this compound term, Smith balances the fact that we share the same physiological apparatus for speaking and hearing as the inhabitants of any given period and place with the fact that they spoke and listened according to different ideas about how a person speaks, listens, and comprehends. The 'hardware' of the human body remains largely the same from generation to generation, yet the 'software' of time, place, and culture can change.[12]

Even sounds that remain more or less identical can be heard in completely different ways, since how humans perceive sound is both subjective and conditioned by the cultures to which they belong. Take the Nokia 3310 mobile phone ringtone as an example; it has remained unchanged since its release in September 2000, yet it can carry a whole host of meanings depending on the 'when' and 'where' of its listener. At a concert, during a silent moment, it is an embarrassing interruption; as a call from a friend, it is exciting; a call from a foe, irritating; an alarm call, startling; behind the sofa after being lost for hours, a relief.[13] The same is true of chronological difference: in 2023 this ringtone may be heard as old-fashioned, retro, or

[11] Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

[12] Of course, the 'hardware' of human hearing is a generalised concept. Firstly, all humans experience a change in this hardware over their lifetime, since the older we get, the harder it is to hear high-frequency sounds. More importantly here is to recognise 'aural diversity': some people are deaf or partially deaf, some people have hyperacusis, some experience Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR), and some have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). For more on 'aural diversity', see, for example: John Levack Drever, '"Primacy of the Ear" – But Whose Ear? The case for auraldiversity in sonic arts practice and discourse', *Organised Sound* 24.1 (2019), 85–95; *Aural Diversity*, ed. John Levack Drever and Andew Hugill (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022); Jonathan Sterne, *Diminished Faculties: A Political Phenomenology of Impairment* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022); and *Testing Hearing: The Making of Modern Aurality*, ed. Alexandra Hui, Mara Mills, and Viktoria Tkaczyk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[13] The NOKIA 3310 'Nokia Tune' ringtone: ROLENSFC, *NOKIA 3310 ringtone Nokia Tune*, YouTube, 29 Oct 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h6iIFVTwKeE>.

piercing; in 2000, it was the sound of the latest tech and so its striking, laser-like beeping was the exciting new sound of an exciting new device.

One historian who studied this diachronic change in auditory perception, and one whose work provides a methodological model for this thesis, was Alain Corbin. In his seminal study of bells in nineteenth-century France, *Les cloches de la terre*, Corbin demonstrated how sounds can stay the same for centuries, but how they are perceived is highly variable across time and place.[14] Corbin noted that the bells in his case studies had been producing the same sound for centuries in almost exactly the same way at exactly the same volume, and yet people seemed to believe that they had become quieter over time.[15] This was not the case; they had not stopped ringing in some places nor had they been drowned out by an increasingly industrialised world. In asking why, then, did people *think* that the bells had become quieter, Corbin argued that it was all to do with the diminishing importance of the sound of those bells. By the end of the century, France was becoming increasing secular, summonses could be issued by printed paper rather than bellringing, and with the development of timekeeping via private mechanical clocks and calendars, people no longer navigated their lives by the sound of bells.[16] The desacralization of bells, then, rendered their emotional, spiritual, and practical resonance increasingly meaningless. As such, they seemed to disappear from earshot.

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[14] Alain Corbin, *Les cloches de la terre: Paysage sonore et culture sensible dans les campagnes au XIXe siècle* (Paris: A. Michel, 1994); Alain Corbin, *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the 19th-Century French Countryside*, trans. Martin Thom (London: Papermac, 1998), See also: Alain Corbin, 'Identity, Bells, and the Nineteenth-Century French Village', in *Hearing History: A Reader*, ed. Mark M. Smith (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2004), pp. 184–204.

[15] Indeed, some bells exist today that have not changed in any material form for centuries, and so they produce nearly the exact same sound as they did centuries ago, e.g., Christ Church College, Oxford's 'Great Tom', the 'loudest bell in Oxford': '400th Anniversary Bell Ringing', *Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum* <https://www.obga.ox.ac.uk/400th-anniversary-bell-ringing>. See: Frederick Sharpe, *The Church Bells of Oxfordshire*, 4 vols (Oxford: Oxfordshire Records Society, 1949–53), III (1951), pp. 227–86; and 'Tom Quad', *Christ Church* <https://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/visiting-christ-church/tom-quad>.

[16] See Jacques Le Goff's influential article 'Merchant's Time and Church's Time in the Middle Ages': Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work, & Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 29–42. See also: Paul Brand, 'Lawyers' Time in England in the Later Middle Ages', in *Time in the Medieval World*, ed. Chris Humphrey and W. M. Ormrod (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press in association with the Boydell Press, 2001); and Corbin, *Village Bells*, pp. 306–08.

This crucial distinction between sound and auditory perception across time is the backdrop to this study. This distinction is the principal reason why I shall be using Corbin's term 'auditory landscape' – and Mark Grimshaw-Aagaard and Tom Garner's related term 'auditory imagination' – instead of 'soundscape' in this thesis.[17] 'Soundscape' has been the most common shorthand for describing the relationship between sound and place ever since it was popularised by R. Murray Schafer in the 1970s.[18] Nonetheless, it is not always applicable to historical sound studies and it can mislead.

In his critique of Schafer's first and most popular book – *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* – Ari Y. Kelman describes his use of the term 'soundscape' as 'polemical', 'rigid', and 'lined with ideological and ecological messages about which sounds "matter" and which do not'.[19] Indeed, *The Soundscape* is, in many ways, a manifesto. In it, Schafer traces a long history of decline from a prelapsarian, naturally harmonious paradise to a modern, urban cacophony, filled with 'lo-fi noise': sounds in which the signal-to-noise ratio is low, meaning that it is harder to distinguish between what is 'information' (or 'meaning') and what is not.[20] Schafer asks us to listen more consciously and carefully in order to combat this blanket of broadband frequencies that mask meaningful sound.[21] While it is true that in today's world, there is more of a constant, underlying 'hum' than in the quieter times of previous centuries – distant traffic noise being the most common – believing this background 'noise' to be a problem is missing the point. The backdrop for all sounds is a critical component of acoustic phenomena and so it must be taken into account.[22]

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[17] Mark Grimshaw and Tom Garner, *Sonic Virtuality: Sound as Emergent Perception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); See also: Mark Grimshaw-Aagaard, 'What is Sound Studies?', in *The Routledge Companion to Sound Studies*, ed. Michael Bull (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 16–22.
[18] R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, Vt.: Destiny Books, 1993). First edition: *The Tuning of the World* (New York: Knopf, 1977).
[19] Ari Y. Kelman, 'Rethinking the Soundscape', *The Senses and Society* 5.2 (2010), 212–34 (228, 224, 214).
[20] Schafer, *The Soundscape*, p. 43.
[21] Schafer, *The Soundscape*, p. 71.
[22] Kelman, 'Rethinking the Soundscape', 214.

Furthermore, a sound is both a vibration of particles moving within a medium and the perception of that vibration. That is to say that sounds are made of two things: the sound itself and how it is perceived. This relates to the second reason why 'soundscape' is a misleading term for historical sound studies in that it neglects the important second aspect of sound, namely auditory perception, which is its most changeable aspect.

In this sense, the sounds of the past cannot be reconstructed. Some academic and artistic projects seek to do so in some form and use the term 'soundscape' in their endeavours, for example, *The Soundscapes of the York Mystery Plays*: an exciting interactive project from 2016–17 that used digital audio technologies to 'recreate' the 'soundscapes' of late medieval York during performances of mystery plays.[23] This immersive experience included the sounds of music, props, audience participation, simulated weather conditions, and bellringing.[24] Such projects are excellent ways of giving us a flavour of what life was like in a historical place and period. However, without fully immersing oneself in knowledge of how the listeners of that place during that period thought, claiming to wholly recreate the sound in question is misleading, even if the recreation of the sound itself happens to be materially accurate. This is because, with our vastly different set of cultural sensibilities, we will hear that sound in an inevitably different way: we are not fifteenth-century York townspeople. (To a lesser extent, this is even true of listening to entirely accurate recreations from more modern times, e.g., the sounds of London in 1928 that were originally recorded on 78rpm gramophone records for the Daily Mail and that are now available to stream online).[25] This thesis is far more interested in

[23] *The Soundscapes of the York Mystery Plays* <http://soundscapesyorkmysteryplays.com/>. See also: Mariana López, 'The York Mystery Plays: Exploring Sound and Hearing in Medieval Vernacular Drama', in *Sensory Perception in the Medieval West*, ed. Simon Thomson and Michael Bintley (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), pp. 53–73; and Mariana López, 'Using multiple computer models to study the acoustics of a sixteenth-century performance space', *Applied Acoustics* 94 (2015), 14–19.

[24] For this immersive experience, visit the Interface tab on *The Soundscapes of the York Mystery Plays* <http://soundscapesyorkmysteryplays.com/soundscape/>.

[25] 'Recording London Soundscapes, Past & Present', *Museum of London* <https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/discover/recording-london-soundscapes-past-present>.

how the 'soundscape' is perceived than the 'soundscape' itself. This, then, is reflected in its choice terminology, which emphasises the 'auditory' in sound perception.

III. The medieval auditory landscape

Despite this thesis's focus on auditory perception, it does not neglect the fact that the sounds of the medieval world were indeed different. First and foremost, it was, in many ways, 'quieter'. But better than describing the world as 'quieter' is to note that there were fewer broadband frequencies; the blanket of lo-fi sound was much thinner. Not only this, but in terms of measurable volume, it is estimated that sounds above 60dB were rare in the Middle Ages, whereas this is around the volume of a conversation-filled café today.[26] Other modern quotidian sounds, such as a petrol or diesel car engine (three feet away), can easily surpass 100dB. Even the loudest sounds of this thesis' period of study – bells and horns – tend to linger in the mid-range of today's spectrum of sounds. With some exceptions, such as thunderclap, man-made sounds tend to be much louder than natural sounds. (Today's world experienced something close to the medieval auditory landscape during the Covid-19 pandemic when reduced human movement meant some anthrophony fell silent, resulting in the perception that natural sounds had grown louder; a period described by some as the 'The Anthropause'.)[27]

Paradoxically, however, this altogether quieter world of the Middle Ages meant that each sound was, in some ways, 'louder'. Given that the population was much smaller and that this was a preindustrial time with far fewer man-made sounds, each sound could be heard much

[26] C. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, (New Haven, Conn.; Yale University Press, 2006), p. 66; Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, pp. 49–52.

[27] Matt Simon, 'The Anthropause: How the Pandemic Gives Scientists a New Way to Study Wildlife', *Wired*, 29 June 2020 <https://www.wired.com/story/the-anthropause-a-new-way-to-study-wildlife/>; Christian Rutz et al., 'COVID-19 lockdown allows researchers to quantify the effects of human activity on wildlife', *Nature Ecology & Evolution*, 4, 1156–1159 (2020); 'Comparing countries, the risk to NHS staff, and birdsong', *More or Less*, BBC Radio 4, 23 April 2020; Steven Lovatt, '"The Earth Could Hear Itself Think": How Birdsong Became the Sound of Lockdown', *The Guardian*, 28 February 2021 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/feb/28/birdsong-in-a-time-of-silence-steven-_lovatt-lockdown-coronavirus?fbclid=IwAR21QX9WRNEYle3UiCy36pzKkC3J0GwIP-_W_mfLcUAR0XRizWaA1tz12OwU>.

more clearly; each sound was recognisable and meaningful, and did not get lost in a sea of lo-fi sound.[28] Indeed, despite the criticism of Schafer's broader philosophy, his statement that sound in the premodern world was 'hi-fi' – with a higher signal-to-sound ratio, making it easier to find 'information' or 'meaning' in sounds – is generally accepted.[29]

This more meaningful auditory landscape meant that hearing was a much more important skill. This is compounded by the fact that the period in question was before the printing revolution and the Enlightenment; two milestones in the establishment of vision as the principal sense.[30] Before the seventeenth century, when proof by vision came to be the best way of establishing truth, and before the early modern boom in literacy, when people began having private, silent, and vision-based access to information, far greater importance was placed on sound and hearing. This fact is what most scholars working in historical sound studies strive to work against.[31] The pronounced visual bias in Western culture clouds our ability to access cultures that are not so ocularcentric as our own, most notably premodern Western cultures, and some modern-day non-Western cultures.[32]

To theorize listening as a way of knowing, gathering information, and interpreting the world in these cultures, anthropologist Steven Feld coined the term 'acoustemology', a

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[28] Jeremy Mynott, *Birds in the Ancient World: Winged Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 63; Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, p. 66; Bruce R. Smith, 'Listening to the Wild Blue Yonder: The Challenges of Acoustic Ecology', in *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening, and Modernity*, ed. Veit Erlmann (Oxford: Berg, 2004), pp. 21–41 (p. 26).

[29] Schafer, *The Soundscape*, p. 43. For corroboration see, for example: Emily Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900–1933* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2002); Hullel Schwartz, *Making Noise: From Babel to Big Bang & Beyond* (New York: MIT Press, 2011).

[30] 'There is no doubt that the philosophical literature of the Enlightenment – as well as many people's everyday language – is littered with light and sight metaphors for truth and understanding', Jonathan Sterne, 'Hello!', in *The Audible Past* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 1–29 (p. 3).

[31] Most publications begin by referencing this change from hearing to vision. See, for example: Trevor Pinch and Karin Bijsterveld, 'New Keys to the World of Sound', in *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies*, ed. Trevor Pinch and Karin Bijsterveld (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 1–15; Veit Erlmann, 'But What of the Ethnographic Ear?', in *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening, and Modernity*, ed. Veit Erlmann (Oxford: Berg, 2004), pp. 1–20.

[32] David Howes and Constance Classen were the pioneers of this belief. See: David Howes, *The Varieties of Sensory Experience* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991); Constance Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and across Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1993).

portmanteau term combining 'acoustic' and 'epistemology'.[33] Of course, people do still use sound to acquire knowledge in the Western world, and not only in previous Western cultures or in places like the Bosavi region in Papua New Guinea where Feld conducted his original research. We know, for example, that a car is approaching by the sound of its engine, that a storm might be coming by its thunderclap, or that a patient's heart has stopped beating by the monitor's shift from beeping to a prolonged sound. However, this use of sound as a warning is far less necessary than it once was.

Before the seventeenth century, sound was as accurate a way to establish truth as vision, and this fact indirectly permeates all medieval Welsh examples used in this thesis. A more direct example might be how Arawn identifies different packs of hounds in the First Branch of the Mabinogi by their different sounds: 'Ac ual y byd yn ymwarandaw a llef yr erchwys, ef a glywei llef erchwys arall, ac nit oedynt unllef, a hynny yn dyuot yn erbyn y erchwys ef' (*And as he was listening for the cry of his pack, he heard the cry of another pack, but these had a different cry, and they were coming towards his own pack*).[34] Likewise, in praising Ifor Hael, Dafydd ap Gwilym (*fl. c.* 1340–*c.* 1370) refers to the known world as the perceptible world where sights can be seen *and* where sounds can be heard, carrying Ifor's praise *as far as ear can hear*:

> hyd y gwŷl golwg digust,
> hydr yw, a hyd y clyw clust,
> hyd y mae iaith Gymräeg,
> a hyd y tyf hadau teg,
> hardd Ifor, hoywryw ddefod,
> hir dy gledd, hëir dy glod.[35]
>
> (*as far as clear eyesight can see, / it is powerful, and as far as ear can hear, / as far as the Welsh language [is spoken] / and as far as fair seeds grow, / handsome Ifor, splendid custom, / long is your sword, your praise is spread*)

[33] Steven Feld, 'Waterfalls of Song: An Acoustemology of Place Resounding in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea', in *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1996), pp. 91–135. For more recent examples see: Tom Rice, 'Acoustemology' in *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, ed. Hilary Callan (London: Wiley, 2018), pp. 1–7; and Steven Feld, 'Acoustemology', in *Keywords in Sound*, ed. David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), pp. 13–21.
[34] *PKM*, p. 3; *Mab*, p. 1.
[35] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '13. Cywydd Mawl i Ifor Hael', *DG.net*, ll. 33–38.

Medieval Wales, then, was certainly an 'acoustemological' society. Indeed, the very word 'clybod' (*to hear*) gestures towards the prominence of acoustemology as its morphology contains the PIE 'hearing' element, *ḱleu(s)-, modelled by analogy with the Welsh verb 'bod' (*to be*), thus fusing together 'hearing' and 'existing'.[36]

IV. The medieval auditory imagination

As mentioned with the changing perceptions of bells, not only was the acoustic reality of the Middle Ages different, but what those sounds meant to listeners was different too. These differences are explored in the body of the thesis and so will not be surveyed here. What is worth explaining at this stage is that, beyond the sounds that people heard, sound itself and its properties were thought of differently in the Middle Ages.

The primary difference between the medieval scientific understanding of sound and our own is that it was believed to be struck air ('aer ictus'): a tangible material substance coming from breath ('spiritus').[37] A general appreciation of this tangible, affective potential of sound will aid our understanding of several representations of sound in the medieval corpus. It links, for example, to how Christ's incarnation in the Virgin's womb was commonly understood as the direct result of the Annunciation: 'She shall conceyf my derlyng / Thrugh thy word and hyr heryng', says God to Gabriel in one fifteenth-century English play.[38] This aids our understanding of descriptions of sounds as being 'painful' (see Chapter One); and it also offers some explanations to the seeming synaesthetic polysemy in the aforementioned verb 'clybod', which primarily means *to hear*, but can also mean *to touch*:

[36] *GPC*, s.v. *clywaf*; *EDPCelt*, s.v. **klus-ī-*.
[37] Further details can be found in Chapter One.
[38] *The Towneley Plays*, ed. Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley, 2 vols (Oxford: Early English Text Society, 1994), I, 10:69–70. See also: David Howes, 'The Cultural Life of the Senses', *Postmedieval* 3 (2012), 450–254 (p. 452).

trimwy yw'r goglais (tramawr giglau
tri phenyd galar rhag traphoenau)
no chwerw alaeth bron gan chwarelau – dur,
trymfryd ar lafur tromfrwydr lifiau.[39]

(*thrice greater is the wound (I felt / sorrow's triple suffering greatly because of a terrible pain) / than a bitter torture caused by steel bolts, / a sad mind afflicted by a hefty battle's lances*)

Incidentally, the affective force of sound may also explain certain mysterious occurrences in Welsh prose tales, such as the ability of loud sounds to cause pregnant women to miscarry. For example, Culhwch's three great bellows, threatened upon Arthur's gatekeeper and the women of the court: 'yssyd o wreic ueichawc yn y llys honn, methawd eu beichogi, ac ar nyd beichawc onadunt, ymhoelawd eu calloneu yn vrthrwm arnadunt mal na bwynt ueichawc byth o hediw allan' (*all the women in this court that are pregnant shall miscarry, and those that are not, their wombs shall become heavy within them so that they shall never be with child from this day forth*).[40] Similarly, the second plague to fall upon Britain in *Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys* was a dreadful sound: 'a honno a aei trwy gallonneu y dynyon ac a'e hofnockaei yn gymeint ac y collei y gwyr eu lliw ac eu nerth, a'r gwraged eu beichogyeu' (*it pierced people's hearts and terrified them so much that men lost their colour and their strength, and women miscarried*).[41]

Sound was also cosmic. The concept of 'the music of the spheres' held major traction throughout the Middle Ages and into the late seventeenth century when, through a process of 'disenchantment', cosmology and music were finally separated.[42] Medieval music theory revolved around a text known as *De institutione musica*, by sixth-century Roman philosopher, Boethius. This set the precedent for conceiving of the world as containing three kinds of 'music': 'musica mundana' (*cosmic music*) controlling the course of the stars and planets;

[39] Gruffudd ap Maredudd, '1. Marwnad Hywel ap Goronwy', *GGM* I, ll. 45–48.
[40] *Culhwch ac Olwen*, ed. Rachel Bromwich and D. Simon Evans (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2022), pp. 4–5; *Mab*, p. 182.
[41] *Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys*, ed. Brynley F. Roberts (Dublin: School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1995), p. 2; *Mab*, p. 112.
[42] Andrew Hicks, *Composing the World: Harmony in the Medieval Platonic Cosmos* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

‘musica humana’ (*human music*) bringing the body and soul into harmony; and ‘musica instrumentalis’ (*instrumental music*); the only kind audible to humans and the closest fit to our modern definition of ‘music’.[43]

There are only hints of this understanding in the medieval Welsh corpus. We might tentatively suggest, for example, that the paradisical song of ‘Adar Rhiannon’ (*the Birds of Rhiannon*) relates to ‘musica humana’ in its ability to wake the dead and lull the living to sleep, thus adjusting the relationship between human body and soul.[44] Despite its absence, however, this unfamiliar way of thinking about music alerts us to the conscious effort required to study the sounds of the past.

V. Why medieval Welsh poetry?

Each place and each period perceives sound differently. Each individual person perceives sound differently but given that it is impossible for anyone other than the individual in question to know the nature of that perception fully, it is more practical to focus on groups of people at particular points in time.[45] Barry Truax calls these ‘acoustic communities’: communities that understand themselves based on shared hearing.[46] Mark M. Smith offers an example from nineteenth-century America where there seem to have been two distinct acoustic communities: southern plantation owners, who regarded themselves as existing in quiet pastoral isolation, and northern industrialists, who celebrated the noises that filled their cities.[47]

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[43] Boethius, ‘De institutione musica’, in *Anicii Manlii Torquati Severini Boetii, De institutione arithmetica libri duo, De institutione musica libri quinque, accredit Geometria quae fertur Boetii*, ed. Gottfried Friedlein (Leipzig: B. G. Teubneri, 1867), 1:2; Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, trans. Calvin M. Bower, ed. Claude V. Palisca (New Haven, MA: Yale University Press, 1989), 1:2. See also: Elizabeth Eva Leach, *Sung Birds: Music, Nature, and Poetry in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).
[44] *PKM*, p. 46; *Culhwch ac Olwen*, p. 24.
[45] Indeed, some question whether we ever can ‘know’ what we experience fully in our own perception of the world, given how much mediation takes place within our own bodies let alone with the outside world. See the work of Matthew Parker in particular, e.g., Matthew Parker, ‘Vibrating the Web: Sonospheric Studies of Media Infrastructure Ecologies’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of the Arts London, 2019).
[46] Barry Truax, *Acoustic Communication*, 2nd edn (London: Ablex, 2001), pp. 12–13, 65–92.
[47] Mark M. Smith, *Listening to nineteenth-century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

The acoustic community under scrutiny in this thesis consists of the inhabitants of late medieval Wales as reflected in the literary corpus it studies, namely the works of 'Beirdd yr Uchelwyr' (*the Poets of the Nobility*), sometimes known as a combination of the late 'Gogynfeirdd' (*fairly early poets*) and the 'Cywyddwyr' (*the 'cywydd'-writing poets*), which is the vernacular poetry produced in Wales between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.

There are several reasons why the poetry of Beirdd yr Uchelwyr was chosen. Firstly, a practical reason: in terms of original Welsh compositions, poetry is the richest seam of surviving Welsh literature from the late medieval period, and so with upwards of 150 poets whose work has been published in modern editions it is a substantial but manageable corpus. Secondly, Welsh poets were not just creative artists and entertainers; they were historians, genealogists, social commentators, and broadcasters. As such, they can reveal valuable information about Wales during their lifetimes, albeit from an aristocratic and mostly male point of view.

Thirdly, and most importantly, poets and their audiences listened. All medieval literature was aural in some way; even when literature was written down, it was most often written down for it then to be read aloud to an 'audience' – itself a term deriving from L audientia (*the act of listening*) – rather than read alone and in silence.[48] Medieval Welsh poetry, however, is a more concretely aural form of literature still.

Medieval Welsh poets composed with strict patterns of alliteration and both internal and end rhyme: a form of metrical ornamentation known as 'cynghanedd' (lit. *harmony*). This composition concentrates on the sounds of words and how they interact with each other. Its rules on consonance and internal rhyme has euphony as its end goal. Even in today's world of print and digital media, poets writing in cynghanedd write for the ear first and the eye second:

[48] *OED*, s.v. *audience*; Joyce Coleman, 'Aurality', in *Middle English*, ed. Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

a literature to be heard more than read. As Dafydd Johnston describes this tradition: 'Welsh poetry was intended primarily to be heard, and from the very earliest period poets embellished their compositions with metrical correspondences combining rhyme and alliteration which later developed into the elaborate harmonic system known as *cynghanedd*'.[49] Elsewhere, Johnston also draws our attention to the possible aural implications of the name of the most popular metre in late medieval Wales, the 'cywydd', given that it is cognate with Ir cubaid (*harmonious, in accord, agreeing*).[50] These late poets listened carefully to their words and their surroundings; and therefore, this thesis argues, so should we.

This has not necessarily been the case before now. Sound studies is a wide-ranging, rich, and growing field of academic investigation, yet there has been little in the way of sound studies research in recent scholarship on medieval Wales, or indeed on any of the Celtic-language traditions. The important exception is musicology. For Ireland, Ann Buckley has published a wealth of articles and books on medieval Irish music, including in the *Journal of the Society for Musicology in Ireland*, which has also produced several important pieces of research since its founding in 2005.[51] Similarly in Wales, much of the relevant research has been on music, and much of it from the pen of a single scholar. Although primary sources for music in medieval Wales are relatively scarce, considerable research has been produced on the topic, most notably by Sally Harper. Harper has published several significant articles, and until this year (2023) her 2007 monograph, *Music in Welsh Culture Before 1650: A Study of the Principal Sources*, was the only extensive musicological study of premodern Wales.[52] Very

[49] Dafydd Johnston, 'Introduction', in *The Old Red Tongue: An Anthology of Welsh Literature*, ed. Gwyn Griffiths and Meic Stephens (London: Francis Boutle Publishers, 2017), pp. 15–16 (p. 15).
[50] Dafydd Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr: Hanes Beirniadol Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg 1300–1525*, 2nd edn (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), p. 90; *GPC*, s.v. *cywydd*; *eDIL*, s.v. *cubaid*. The *cywydd deuair hirion* is more commonly known mononymously as the *cywydd* since its sibling, the *cywydd deuair fyrion*, fell out of use at an early stage.
[51] A full list of Ann Buckley's publications can be found on 'Ann Buckley (Professional Historian)', *Irish Association of Professional Historians* <http://irishhistorians.ie/members/ann-buckley/>; All *Journal of the Society for Musicology in Ireland* articles are freely available on the journal website: <https://jsmi.musicologyireland.ie/>.
[52] Sally Harper, *MWC*.

recently, Cambridge University Press published *A History of Welsh Music*, which includes important chapters by Helen Fulton, Sally Harper, and John Harper on music in premodern Wales.[53]

Beyond print media, the most important research project was Bangor University's *Beyond Text: experimental workshops comparing the musical performance of vernacular poetry*, again led by Sally Harper and in collaboration with Dafydd Johnston.[54] It held a series of workshops to deliver historically-informed performances of medieval poetry in Celtic languages, based on the surviving evidence of what the performances would have been like. A second seam of valuable research has been the work of musician Robert (Bob) Evans, and his various projects recreating 'crwth' music: the music of the Welsh bowed lyre.[55] (While *Voicing the Verse* was particularly clear about the experimental and creative nature of its endeavour, the advantages and disadvantages of relying on such 'recreations' have already been outlined.)[56]

Beyond musicology, when it comes to medieval Wales, there are almost no articles, books, or projects that explicitly study sound in a broader sense. The few welcome and useful exceptions include Dafydd Johnston's chapter on the senses in his recent study of Dafydd ap Gwilym's vocabulary, and Helen Fulton's aforementioned chapter in *A History of Welsh Music*, which looks at broader literary descriptions of music rather than music itself, but

[53] Helen Fulton, 'Words for Music: Describing Musical Practices in Medieval Welsh Literature', *HWM*, pp. 25–52; Sally Harper, 'Secular Music before 1650', *HWM*, pp. 78–99; John Harper, 'Music in Worship before 1650', *HWM*, pp. 53–77. See also: Trevor Herbert, 'Music in Welsh History', *HWM*, pp. 1–24.
[54] 'Experimental workshops comparing the musical performance of vernacular poetry in medieval Wales, Ireland and Scotland', *UK Research and Innovation* <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH/G000220/1#/tabOverview>. The project produced a series of performances that were filmed and uploaded to YouTube between March and June 2010 under the project's alternative title: *Y Gerdd ar Gân: Perfformiadau Arbrofol o Farddoniaeth Ganoloesol Cymru, Iwerddon, a'r Alban / Voicing the Verse: Experiments in Performing Vernacular Bardic Poetry in Medieval Wales, Ireland, and Scotland*. (Henceforth '*Voicing the Verse*'.) All videos are compiled here: Cymraeg Canol, *Y Gerdd ar Gân / Voicing the Verse*, YouTube, 24 March 2023 <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL5uESANtpE840fiO2U4tmlkAXMKfCaIa7>.
[55] Bragod, *Kaingk* (Bragod, 2004); *Bragod* <https://bragod.com/about/>.
[56] See: p. 7.

remains a largely musicological study.[57] The text that comes closest to a sound studies analysis of medieval Wales is Deborah Furtchgott's recent PhD thesis, which examines the 'growing interest in the sound of poetry' in Wales during the later Middle Ages.[58] Its exposition of the importance of sound in how language is described in the bardic grammars is particularly enlightening. Nonetheless, its literary analysis does not look much beyond Dafydd ap Gwilym, since its principal focus is not on the broader sounds of medieval Wales and its literature but on comparing the rhetorical and musical traditions of Wales and France, thus placing it comfortably in the field of musicology proper.

In the absence of specifically Welsh models, then, this thesis turns to historical sound studies research applied to other medieval European traditions, especially those of England and France. Particularly useful for the thesis' overarching arguments on the importance of control in the auditory imagination of medieval Welsh poets has been the work of Adin E. Lears. Lears's study of Middle English contemplative writing listens to how fourteenth- and fifteenth-century English mystics used sound to express religious experiences and how others used sound to marginalise those same experiences. Particularly inspiring was Lears's conception of language as nonlinguistic sound – an 'extrasemantic experience and expression of sound' – and how the reason many perceived the language of individuals such as Margery Kempe to be 'nonsense' was that it was perceived to be uncontrolled and chaotic.[59] Andrew Justin Albin's doctoral dissertation on similar subject matter and Liam Gil Lewis's research on the representation of animal sounds have also been useful.[60]

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[57] Dafydd Johnston, *'Iaith Oleulawn': Geirfa Dafydd ap Gwilym* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020), pp. 199–229; Fulton, 'Words for Music'.

[58] Deborah Furtchgott, '*Musique Naturelle* and *Cerdd Dafod*: An Exploration of Sound Poetics in the Fourteenth Century' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 2019), p. iv.

[59] Lears, *WE*, p. 4. See also: Veit Erlmann, *Reason and Resonance: A History of Modern Aurality* (New York: Sone Books, 2010).

[60] Andrew Justin Albin, 'Auralities: Sound Cultures and the Experience of Hearing in Late Medieval England' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Brandeis University, 2011); Liam Lewis, *Animal Soundscapes in Anglo-Norman Texts* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2022); Liam Lewis, 'The Sounds of Beasts and Birds: Noise and Nonhuman Communication in Medieval French and English Texts Written in Anglo-Norman England' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Warwick, 2019).

On the matter of sound representation, it should be noted that neither this thesis nor the work of Liam Lewis is concerned with the 'accuracy' of sound representation. This thesis mostly deals with prosaic descriptions of sound, which are often creative and subjective. The closest one gets to an attempt at accurate representation in the textualization of sound is onomatopoeia. Even then, onomatopoeia tells us more about the listener than the sound itself, as a brief glance at different textualizations of a dog's bark demonstrates: in English, it might say <woof woof> (/wʊf wʊf/), Welsh <bow wow> (/bou wou/), Spanish <guau-guau> (/gwau gwau/), Czech <haf haf> (/haf haf/), Arabic <هو, هو> (/haʊ haʊ/).[61] There are some similarities in terms of reduplication and the presence of certain phonemes, but they are undeniably different even though they represent the same sound, even with provisions for different dog breeds having different sounds.

When examining the few instances of Middle Welsh onomatopoeia, the decision to use onomatopoeia rather than prose is what is usually discussed. For example, it seems significant that in Dafydd ap Gwilym's attack on the owl that keeps him awake in 'Y Dylluan' (*The Owl*), its 'ffrec' (*prattle*) is represented by onomatopoeia: 'canu bydd, annedwydd nâd, / "hw ddy hw," hoyw ddyhead' (*it carries on singing, sad wailing, / 'hoo–di–hoo', lively exclamation.*).[62] Comparing this to Geoffrey Chaucer's birds in *The Parlement of Foules* who descend from a civil conversation in Middle English into a cacophony of incomprehensible bird-speak – 'Kek kek! Kokkow! Quek quek!' – one gets the impression that Dafydd wanted to emphasise the nonhuman and thus irrational nature of this irritating bird.[63] This creature, unblessed (by God), 'annedwydd', wrests control of the poem for a split second, since its choice of consonants in the first half of the line – /h ð h/ – determines Dafydd's choice of words in the second half,

[61] Thank you to Omar Mohsen for supplying the Czech and Arabic examples.
[62] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '61. Y Dylluan', *DG.net*, ll. 29, 19–20. [My translation.]
[63] Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Parliament of Fowls', *RC*, l. 499. See also: Michael Warren, *Birds in Medieval English Poetry: Metaphors, Realities, Transformation* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2018), pp. 147–77; Leonard Michael Koff, '"Awak!": Chaucer translates Bird Song', in *The Medieval Translator/Traduire au Moyen Age*, ed. Roger Ellis and Rene Tixier (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), pp. 390–418.

abiding by the rules of cynghanedd. That birds have no problem speaking Middle Welsh elsewhere in Dafydd's poetry solidifies the importance of his decision to use onomatopoeia here to highlight 'the animal' in this animal.[64]

*

This distinction between human and animal sound was key in the Middle Ages, and ultimately, as explored in Chapter Two, it came down to questions of rationality; the former had a controlled and rational mind, the latter did not, and a nonhuman, inanimate object even less so. This question of control is key.

Explored in greater detail in Chapter One, medieval philosophy maintained that sound (the somatic experience of sound) was simply a conduit to sense (the semantic meaning of sound), similar to the aforementioned distinction between sound and auditory perception. For the Christian mind, the hazard was that listeners could prefer the sound as opposed to its sense, which would be a meaningless and potentially sinful experience. As such, controlling that sound was crucial, especially with regard to human sound – language – but also with all the world's sounds, even though some were inherently uncontrolled: animal sounds and inanimate sounds.

In this sense, given that medieval Welsh poets composed poetry in a metre that was all about controlling the sounds of words, they are a fitting example of the contemporary concern with control. Further, these poets define every sound they heard with reference to this concern for control: good sound was controlled sound and bad sound was uncontrolled sound.

This thesis argues that one reason behind this overwhelming emphasis on control was to do with the changing social position of poets in late medieval Wales and the increased competition for patronage. During the Middle Ages, poets had always maintained a prestigious

[64] See: Susan Crane, *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); and *Animal Languages in the Middle Ages: Representations of Interspecies Communication*, ed. Alison Langdon (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018).

social position, patronised mostly by royal individuals. However, in 1282, Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, the last native prince of Wales, was killed in a skirmish with King Edward I of England's soldiers, triggering the Edwardian Conquest of Wales and bringing an end to the royal patronage of poets. While a new class of Welsh nobles now serving the English rather than Welsh crown did plug the gap, this short crisis at the end of the thirteenth century startled poets into realising that their privileged way of life might not last forever. This was then compounded by the growth in popularity of other forms of entertainment – instrumental music, the free metre poetry of minstrels, and aspects of English and Irish culture – meaning that a feeling that the poetic profession could disappear continued to simmer throughout the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries.

Linked with the anglicisation of Wales was its urbanisation, mechanisation, and industrialization. All these changes brought new sounds into Wales: new languages, new forms of speech, new musical instruments, and new materials. Poetic descriptions of towns such as 'tegach dy dop no siop Sais' (*more beautiful is your tree-top than an Englishman's shop*) confirm that 'English settlers held a monopoly on urban trade in the Welsh borough towns established under the Edwardian settlement of 1284 well into the fifteenth century'.[65] Urban areas were fairly consistently associated with English immigration and the English language; a language that was challenging Welsh to become Wales's high-status vernacular in the worlds of commerce, bureaucracy and, to some extent, higher learning.[66] New demographics and larger populations meant that audiences were changing, and that not all of whom were particularly interested in strict-metre poetry, as is satirised in a poem by Tudur Penllyn (*c.* 1420–*c.* 1485–90) to Flint and the English Piper, explored in Chapter Three.

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[65] Anonymous, '28. Y Draenllwyn', in *Selections from the Dafydd ap Gwilym Apocrypha*, ed. Helen Fulton (Llandysul: Gomer, 1996), l. 28, p. 201. See also: Matthew Frank Stevens, 'Anglo-Welsh Towns of the Early Fourteenth Century: A Survey of Urban Origins, Property-Holding and Ethnicity', in *Urban Culture in Medieval Wales*, ed. Helen Fulton (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), pp. 137–62.

[66] Llinos Beverley Smith, 'The Welsh Language before 1536', in *The Welsh Language before the Industrial Revolution*, ed. Geraint H. Jenkins (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), pp. 15–44 (p. 36).

This thesis argues that, in this context of a changing world with a changing place for poets, the professional Beirdd yr Uchelwyr felt a need to emphasise the feature that made them special: their ability to control language. In order to secure respect for their craft and in order to establish themselves as the gatekeepers of 'good sound,' poets praised controlled sound and gave short shrift to uncontrolled sound, especially when it was the human sounds of undesirable and threatening individuals: minstrels, mendicant friars, peasant farmers, and foreigners. Anything that could be deemed to be undermining, sullying, and ultimately threatening the high standard of Welsh poetic practice was branded as uncontrolled. In this sense, it seems unlikely to be a coincidence that this was the general period in which the rules of strict-metre poetry were codified in the form of the bardic grammars, the eisteddfodau, and the so-called 'Statute of Gruffudd ap Cynan'.

'Uncontrolled sound', then, is used as one definition of 'noise' in the ears of Welsh poets. Otherwise, 'noise' will be used in the sense of 'sound out of place' and 'unwanted sound'.[67]

VI. Methodology and thesis content

The research for this thesis consisted of a systematic search for descriptions of sound – in its widest possible sense – in the works of over 150 Welsh poets *c*. 1300–*c*. 1600. These descriptions were then considered within the theoretical framework of historical sound studies, discussed above, by contextualising the sounds in question in their contemporary auditory landscape and imagination.

The data from the primary sources was gathered through largely traditional methods: I read through digital and printed editions of Welsh poetry from the period in question, searching for key words relating to sound and hearing, and logging all relevant references. As I logged

[67] Mike Goldsmith, *Discord: The Story of Noise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Mike Goldsmith, *Sound: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

these references, I began sorting them into thematic categories, such as animal sounds, deafness, languages, musical instruments, and so on. I then searched for commonalities within each category and across all categories. As certain patterns developed so too did my arguments.

In terms of the sources used, I began my research with the Dafydd ap Gwilym and Guto'r Glyn websites, and the forty-four-volume Beirdd yr Uchelwyr series published by the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies between 1998 and 2015; a series that includes the works of around 120 poets and some seventy-five anonymous poems.[68] I then expanded my search to include the works of other important poets published elsewhere, such as Lewys Glyn Cothi (*fl.* 1447–86) and Iolo Goch (*c.* 1320–*c.* 1398), before turning to the those of lesser-known poets, often found in anthologies, e.g., Catrin ferch Gruffudd ap Hywel (*fl. c.* 1555) or Robin Ddu ap Siencyn Bledrydd (*fl. c.* 1450).[69] For a full list of the primary sources consulted, see 'Welsh poetry' in the Bibliography.

By the time I had finished scouring these primary sources and began to establish my arguments, it became clear that some of the material was too marginal to be included within the limits of the thesis and so would have to be left on the cutting room floor, more on which is discussed below. It also became clear that some of these initial categories needed to be merged, leading me to this thesis's structure.

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The chapters explore three types of sound in late medieval Wales: mechanical sounds, the sounds of language itself, and musical sounds. The first chapter examines the sound of

[68] *DG.net*; *GG.net*; Ann Parry Owen, 'Cyfres Beirdd yr Uchelwyr: Rhagair', *Porth Adnoddau'r Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol*, 29 March 2023 <https://adnoddau.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/Beirdd/Beirdd+yr+Uchelwyr+-+Rhagair.pdf>. The Beirdd yr Uchelwyr Series has recently been updated into PDF documents that are now searchable on a dedicated webpage hosted by the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. Should this have been uploaded three years prior, a digitised search may have discovered references to sound that have otherwise slipped through unnoticed. Future research into the poetry of Beirdd yr Uchelwyr will benefit greatly from the now comprehensively searchable nature of their works. See: 'Cyfres Beirdd yr Uchelwyr', *Porth Adnoddau'r Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol* <https://www.porth.ac.uk/cy/collection/beirdd-yr-uchelwyr>.

[69] *GLGC*; *IGP*; *Beirdd Ceridwen: Blodeugerdd Barddas o Ganu Menywod hyd tua 1800*, ed. Cathryn A. Charnell-White (Llandybïe: Cyhoeddiadau Barddas, 2005); *Galar y Beirdd: Marwnadau Plant*, ed. Dafydd Johnston (Cardiff: Tafol, 1993).

bells: the acoustic reality of bellringing in medieval Wales, including their associations with holiness and timekeeping, as well as their usages as metaphors to describe people and concepts. This chapter thus gives the reader a sense of the auditory landscape of medieval Wales and continues to introduce further concepts and terminology that prove key to the thesis's overarching discussions.

The next two chapters both discuss language, asking the question: what was the sound of 'good language' in late medieval Wales? Answers are explored for Welsh in Chapter Two and non-Welsh languages in Chapter Three.

Chapter Two first considers the 'bad' Welsh of speakers who seemed to lack control over their faculties of speech: sufferers of speech disabilities, babbling poets, and disliked groups and individuals, especially lower-grade minstrels ('beirdd y glêr', henceforth referred to as 'Clêr poets'), peasant farmers, and mendicant friars. This, then, helps establish the characteristics of 'good' Welsh, including deliberate speech, an abundant lexicon, and clear declamation; features that require control, even when it came to the ambiguities contained in concepts of fluency and eloquence.

Chapter Three intersects multilingualism studies and sound studies by examining Irish, Latin, and English. By considering these languages as nonlinguistic sounds in the ears of Welsh poets and their audiences, this chapter explains why English and Irish were heard as detestable and uncontrolled, whereas Latin, and to a lesser extent Greek and Hebrew, were heard as pristine and the most controlled languages of all.

The final chapter turns to music and focuses on the harp and the crwth; the two musical instruments with the strongest ties to medieval Welsh poetry. It briefly examines how each instrument was used in poetic performance, but it is mostly concerned with querying the more favourable depictions of the harp – and the favourable usages of harp-related imagery – in contrast with the crwth, which had a more chequered reputation. Suggested answers to the

question of why this was the case involve concepts of control and the social connotations of each instrument's players.

*

Form this list of chapters, one can see that not all aspects of the sound of medieval Wales are discussed here. The thesis does not claim to be comprehensive, primarily because of the magnitude of a topic such as 'historical sound'. These absences result from space constraints, though it is worth drawing attention to more specific reasons why some topics are not discussed.

Perhaps the most notable absences are in Chapter Four. This is primarily because this is the only aspect of the field of sound studies that has already been applied to medieval Wales in some form, and so, in terms of musicology, I draw the reader's attention to the works cited above. There, one can find more information about the musical instruments that are indeed referenced by the poets but cannot be explored here due to space constrains; in particular, these include horns, pipes, and organs.

One can also find there more information on religious music in medieval Wales, which is not studied here because of its relative absence in the poetic record. Even though the surviving sources for religious music are more abundant than those concerning secular music, there is hardly any concrete reference to liturgical music in the poetry of Beirdd yr Uchelwyr. What there is to know about important aspects of medieval Welsh music such as Sarum Use (a variant form of the Roman Rite adopted in Wales in the thirteenth century) and the only two extant liturgical Welsh books that contain musical notation (the Penpont Antiphoner and the Bangor Pontifical) is covered in *Music in Welsh Culture Before 1650* and *A History of Welsh Music.*[70]

[70] Harper, *MWC*, esp. 'Part II: The Latin Liturgy, its Chant and Embellishment', pp. 163–293; Harper, 'Music in Worship before 1650'.

The sounds of war have been omitted, again due to space constraints, even though several poets offer vivid descriptions of these sounds and even though fifteenth- and sixteenth-century poets experienced the devastating sound of the newly invented cannon: a man-made sound that far surpassed previous sounds in terms of volume.[71]

Animal sounds as well as mystical and mythical sounds have been largely avoided, even though there is much to say about them. Sounds such as those of the hounds of Annwn or of the birds of Llwch Gwin are absent, as are those of the 'Ychen Bannog' (*Horned Ox*).[72] More than one poet makes oblique references to this last sound, dwelling on the mysterious sound of the animal's lowing, connected, in some instances, to the sounds of dogs and cuckoos. Guto'r Glyn (*fl. c.* 1460–*c.* 1498), for example, hears these oxen 'o waith hudol' (*of a magical creation*) as 'wyth o ieuainc fytheiaid' (*eight young hounds*), before comparing them to cuckoos – 'yr aeth eu cerdd i waith cog' (*their song would become like that of the cuckoo*) – as they plough overnight; their euphonious, or disturbing, lowing filling the night sky.[73] In prose, especially in the Mabinogion, sound is a clear marker of liminal space: the mist that descends upon Dyfed in the Third Branch, leaving it almost barren, is signalled by a '[t]wrwf' (*a tumultuous noise*); the appearance of a plague of mice that floods Manawydan's field in the same tale is signalled by 'twryf mwyhaf yn y byt' (*the loudest noise in the world*); and the enormous claw that snatches away Teyrnon's foal in the First Branch is again accompanied by a 'twrwf' (*a loud noise*).[74]

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[71] See: Dylan Foster Evans, '"Y carl a'i trawai o'r cudd": ergyd y gwn ar y Cywyddwyr', *Dwned* 4 (1998), 75–105.

[72] On the Hounds of Annwn, see: Huw Meirion Edwards, *DGIA*, p. 282; and Eurys Rowlands 'Cyfeiriadau Dafydd ap Gwilym at Annwn', *Llên Cymru* 5 (1958–59), 122–35. On the Birds of Llwch Gwin, see: John Rhys, *Celtic Folklore, Welsh and Manx*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), I, p. 132; *The Poetical Works of Dafydd Nanmor*, ed. Thomas Roberts and Ifor Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1923), pp. 159–60; and T. Gwynn Jones, *Welsh Folklore and Folk-Custom* (Bangor: Cockatrice, 2020), pp. 54–55, 211–12.

[73] Guto'r Glyn, '108. Gofyn wyth ych ar ran Rhisiart Cyffin ab Ieuan Llwyd, deon Bangor', *GG.net*, ll. 45, 44, 48. For more examples of an ox-dog-cuckoo network see: Gutun Owain, '11. Cywydd i Howel ap Rhys o Rug i Ofyn Cwn Dros ei Nai Davydd ap Ieuan', *GO* I, ll. 21, 31–32; and Lewys Glyn Cothi, '77. Marwnad Tomos Fychan ap Tomas', *GLGC*, and p. 560.

[74] *PKM*, pp. 51, 60, 22; *Mab*, pp. 36, 42, 18.

These are all 'astrus' (*perplexing*) indeed, as Ann Parry Owen described the Ychen Bannog references in Guto'r Glyn's poem.[75] In order to make them less 'astrus', one would need a wholly separate theoretical framework, since these sounds existed beyond the real world and almost exclusively within the contemporary auditory imagination. Furthermore, additional sound studies theories would need to be applied and explained, such as, in the case of an oxen-sounding cuckoo, Schafer's concept of 'schizophonia', describing the disturbing dislocation of a sound from its original or natural source.[76] Finally, very little is known about many of these lost tales. These are all reasons why such intriguing sounds had to be set to one side.

VII. Conventions

On quotations, I cite sources in their original languages and give modern English translation in italics afterwards. Generally, quotations that are translated once are not translated a second time. Apart from in quotations from the works of Dafydd ap Gwilym, Guto'r Glyn, and Iolo Goch, and unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.[77] In bilingual quotations, the primary language is given as is, while the second is underlined. Personal discretion has been used when choosing whether modernising Middle English quotations was necessary. All quotations from the Bible are from the King James Version, found at www.biblegateway.com.[78] All online sources were accessed on 30th of March 2023. Welsh terminology that is used more than once in this thesis, such as 'Beirdd yr Uchelwyr', is given in single quotation marks and translated in the first instance but treated as any other word from then on. Modern titles for poems are used when appropriate and convenient.

[75] Guto'r Glyn, '108. Gofyn wyth ych ar ran Rhisiart Cyffin ab Ieuan Llwyd, deon Bangor', *GG.net*.
[76] Schafer, *The Soundscape*, pp. 90–91.
[77] With the works of these three poets, unless otherwise noted, translations are taken from: *IGP*; *DG.net*; and *GG.net*.
[78] *Bible Gateway* <https://www.biblegateway.com/>.

On the use of footnotes, this thesis responds to Philip Peek's appeal that 'we should no longer accept "silent" publications on sound'.[79] In the absence of the provisions for multimedia submissions for the DPhil in English at the University of Oxford, this thesis instead contains a rich directory of hyperlinks that will take the reader, or indeed listener, to a wealth of online audio and video resources.

[79] Philip Peek, 'The Sounds of Silence: Cross-world Communication and the Auditory Arts in African Societies', *American Ethnologist* 21.3 (1994): 474–94 (p. 488).

Chapter One

Bells

I. Introduction

In 1567, the first published grammar of the Welsh language was printed in Milan. The material text crossed several geographic boundaries to get from Wales to Italy and back again to Wales, but so too does the imagery in the prologue. As the voice of the Welsh language itself addresses the reader and laments its mongrelisation in recent times, it takes aim at the anglophiles whom it blames for this decline:

> Canys chwi a gewch rai yn gyttrym ag y gwelant afon Hafren, ne glochdai ymwithig, a chlowed sais yn doedyd unwaith good morrow, a ddechreuant ollwng i cymraeg tros gof, ai doedyd yn fawr i llediaith: i cymraeg a fydd saesnigaidd, ai saesneg (duw a wyr) yn rhy gymreigaidd.[1]
>
> *For you get those who, as soon as they see the River Severn, or the belfries of Shrewsbury, and hear an Englishman bid them 'good morrow', begin to forget their Welsh and speak it full of patois: their Welsh will be English, and their English (God knows) too Welsh.*

The Grammar's author, Gruffydd Robert, maps the boundary between England and Wales with three markers: a river, a belfry, and a language. Two of them evoke sound, the sound of the bells of Shrewsbury and the sound of the English language. Once you are within earshot of the former, the latter will soon follow, as will the Welshman's desertion of his home language and culture.

How bells and language can intertwine is the overarching question this chapter seeks to answer. It begins by outlining how bells were a 'keynote sound' of medieval Europe – a sound that was deeply embedded into the community consciousness – and why poets paid particular attention to certain individual bells in specific churches and to certain types of bells,

[1] Gruffydd Robert, *Dosparth byrr ar y rhann gyntaf i ramadeg Cymraeg* (Milan: V. Giardoni, 1567); Gruffydd Robert, '*Dosbarth Byrr Ar Y Rhan Gyntaf i Ramadeg Cymraeg* 1567', *Rhag*, pp. 46–48 (p. 47).

particularly the 'cloch aberth' (*sanctus bell*).[2] It then moves on to explore the applications of bells as metaphors, including their connection with death and birds, and their usage in certain common but curious phrases, such as 'haeddu'r gloch' (*to deserve the bell*) and 'mynd â'r gloch' (*to seize the bell*), to describe individual poets and patrons. Lastly, it explores the relationship between bellringing and time.

Several of the thesis's key concepts are introduced in this chapter. First and foremost, the importance of control is established. The chapter outlines the broader importance of control in the medieval auditory imagination, especially in differentiating 'good' and 'bad' sounds, or, alternatively, 'sound' and 'noise'. Hierarchies of intelligibility and intelligence with regard to sound production and perception are outlined, that is, how controlled human language was held in the highest regard and how the unregulated and thus unintelligible sounds of animals and inanimate objects were held in the least regard. The chapter also explains the contemporary belief in the physicality of sound: how sound could be felt by the sense of touch as well as hearing. Finally, how sound can be used to demonstrate authority is also examined as are the effects technologization and urbanisation had on the medieval auditory landscape.

A final word on theory. This chapter on bells and their meaning offers the most direct link to the work from which this thesis takes its theoretical framework, namely that of social historian Alain Corbin.[3] As mentioned in the Introduction, Corbin's *Les cloches de la terre* uses the changing perception of bells in nineteenth-century France to demonstrate the notion that while sounds themselves can stay the same for centuries, how they are perceived is highly variable across time and place.[4] Corbin's work is, in many ways, directly applicable to studying the Middle Ages, since a respectable number of medieval bells has survived to the present day. While many are now dormant artefacts – such as Britain's oldest surviving parish bell, the

[2] Schafer, *The Soundscape*, p. 48; See also: Truax, *Acoustic Communication*, passim.
[3] Corbin, *Village Bells*.
[4] Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, pp. 3–29.

thirteenth-century tenor at St Lawrence in Caversfield (Oxfordshire) or the ninth-century 'Cloch Gwyddelan' handbell at the Church of St Gwyddelan in Dolwyddelan (Conwy) – some are still in use, such as 'Great Tom' in Christ Church College, Oxford, albeit in a seventeenth-century recast.[5] With such tangible, audible contact with the past, one may assume that hearing a medieval bell would be synonymous with hearing the medieval past. This is a false assumption for the very reasons outlined in Corbin's central theory: while the sound of a bell does not change, where, when, and how it was heard changes each listener's perception of that sound as this chapter will demonstrate with regard to late medieval Wales.

Figure 1: 'Cloch Gwyddelan' (Llewelyn Hopwood, July 2019).

[5] Sharpe, *The Church Bells of Oxfordshire*, I (1949), pp. 72–81, and III (1951), pp. 227–86.

Figure 2: ‘Cloch Gwyddelan’ (‘Eglwys Gwyddelan Sant’, *Dolwyddelan.org* <http://www.dolwyddelan.org/eglwys-gwyddelan-sant/?lang=cy>).

Figure 3: ‘Great Tom’ next to E. G. Moore, Steward of the Oxford Society of Change Ringers. (W. Harris Morgan, reproduced in Frederick Sharpe, *The Church Bells of Oxfordshire*, 4 vols (Oxford: Oxfordshire Records Society, 1949–53), III (1951), pp. 227–86 (p. 274)).

II. Particular bells and particular places

In the Middle Ages, and up until the Industrial Revolution, bells could be heard for miles. In the altogether quieter world of medieval Wales – a far clearer auditory landscape wherein very few 'lo-fi' sounds cluttered the atmosphere – a bell's sound was piercing. As such, a church bell could delimit the boundaries of its parish as its sound waves percolated outwards.[6] Scientifically, sound waves are somewhat centrifugal in that they vibrate outwards. However, liturgical bells of this kind had a centripetal effect in that they attracted listeners inwards, signalling to those outside the church the miracles occurring inside (cf. L signum (*bell*)).[7]

It appears that this function of geographic labelling was a key meaning of bells for late medieval Welsh poets. Their description and differentiation suggest that each bell could be an 'aural signature' for a particular place; each could be unique and exemplary in its resonance, colour, and splendour.[8] Poets listened attentively to these bells.

Durham

According to Beirdd yr Uchelwyr, the paragon of campanological excellence was not in Wales itself, but in Durham cathedral. Tudur Aled (*fl.* 1480–1526) admired its bells greatly and uses them to flatter the bells of other towns. Oswestry was one such town. Although this was a Marcher town under the jurisdiction of the English earls of Arundel, 'it was prized by the Welsh urban community as a place of architectural, commercial, and religious

[6] In cases where it is claimed that bells have a similar function today, e.g., in the traditional definition of the East End of London being the area within earshot of the bells of St Mary le Bow in Cheapside – 'Bow Bells' – this is symbolic more than anything. No modern listener navigates by the sound of bells, partly because that sound has been drowned out by the louder mechanical and electrical sounds of modern life, but mostly due to the decline in that sound's significance.

[7] See Archbishop Lanfranc's constitutions for Christ Church, Canterbury (1070s), summarised in Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, pp. 69–70.

[8] A sound that locates and identifies places, (types of) people, and even national identity. Mark M. Smith, *Sensing the Past: Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching in History* (Los Angeles: University of California press, 2007), p. 45.

significance'.[9] This religious significance is described in a highly sensory passage that bears repeating in full:

> Cŵyr a sens oll, caer Sain Siâm,
> clochdy aruthr, clych Duram
> eglwyswyr yn galw Iesu,
> a'r organ fawr, a'r gân fu;
> a glyw sy fyw, eglwys fawr,
> araith well ar wyth allawr?
> Wyth gôr Duw, wyth gair dewis,
> ag un i'r Grôg, awn i'r gris.[10]
>
> (*All [sorts of] wax and perfumes, St James's town, / an astonishing belfry, Durham's bells, / churchmen calling Jesus, / and the great organ and the song; / did any living person ever hear, large church, / a better sermon upon eight altars? / Eight of God's choirs, eight choice words, / and one for the Cross, let us go to its step.*)

In other accounts, it is Oswestry's imposing fortress and castle that travellers notice first, but this poem shows that the town had aural as well as visual excellence.[11] The sounds of its brilliant, rich cathedral, full of well-educated men could be heard too. A slightly earlier poet, Guto'r Glyn, also pays particular attention to the town's superior bells: 'gorau eglwys gareglwych / ei horgan achlân a'i chlych' (*the best fine-chaliced church / [with regard to] its organ altogether with its bells*).[12]

As for the connection Tudur Aled draws between Oswestry and Durham – 'Clochdy aruthr, clych Duram' – it may begin with a simple similarity in numbers. Church records for Oswestry note that there were at least four bells in the church at the beginning of the sixteenth century.[13] This was the same number as Durham Cathedral's principal bells. Though it had three small silver bells in the central tower that called monks to prayer, the Cathedral's sixteenth-century inventory, the *Rites of Durham*, focuses on its four great thirteenth-century

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[9] Helen Fulton, 'Literary Networks and Patrons in Late Medieval Wales', *The Cambridge History of Welsh Literature*, ed. Geraint Evans and Helen Fulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 129–153 (p. 143).
[10] Tudur Aled, '65. Cywydd i Dref Groesoswallt', *GTA* I, ll. 15–22.
[11] See: D. J. Bowen, 'Croesoswallt y Beirdd', *Y Traethodydd* 135 (1980), 137–43; and Llinos Beverley Smith, 'Oswestry', in *Boroughs of Medieval Wales*, ed. Ralph A. Griffiths (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1978), pp. 219–42.
[12] Guto'r Glyn, '102. Moliant i Groesoswallt', ll. 27–28.
[13] T. O. Boulton, *The Story of Oswestry Parish Church* (Gloucester: The British Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 17–19.

bells that hung in the north-western tower and rang on special occasions. These bells were covered with a red and gold velvet cloth embroidered with green and gold silk images of flowers; a sight to behold as well as a sound to admire.[14] Perhaps this is one practical link.

The more striking link, however, is a symbolic one, since Durham's superior bells were noticed by more than one poet, including Gutun Owain (*fl. c.* 1460–*c.* 1498). Gutun's allusion to Durham is found in a poem requesting a pack of hounds. It incorporates the town's aural signature, namely its loud bellringing, into the poem's auditory imagery in an indirect and intriguing way. In his description of the excited dogs, he compares their barking to 'mussic' (*music*) and a 'karol' (*carol*), and he also hears them as 'klerwyr kyssonlef nevol, / klych Duran yn ŵlian ôl' (*clerics with heavenly cries in unison, / the bells of Durham busying along a track*).[15] The poet's admiration of the hounds is expressed in an auditory comparison that finds their panting and yelping as they vigorously search the prey's track similar to the festive peal of not just any church bell, but those of the land's best church bells: Durham.

More specifically, the sound of these dogs is compared to multiple bells ringing at the same time: 'kyssonlef'. The adjective in this compound word, 'kysson-', is a loanword carrying the original meaning of L consonus, namely *sounding together*. The notion of church bells ringing together was remarkable in itself as this was an unusual occurrence during the Middle Ages, including at Durham, as the *Rites of Durham* specify.[16] It was not until the turn of the seventeenth century that bells began to be mounted on wheels that could be turned steadily by rope pulling, thereby allowing multiple bells to sound out together in an accurate and rhythmic peal. Before the development of this technique, known as 'change ringing' or 'full circle

[14] *Rites of Durham: being a description or brief declaration of all the ancient monuments, rites, & customs belonging or being within the monastical church of Durham before the suppression* (Durham: Andrews & Co. 1903), pp. 26, 39–40, 93, 165–67. See also: 'Cathedral Bells', *Durham Cathedral* <https://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/explore/music-at-the-cathedral/cathedral-bells>; and 'Durham Cathedral Bells: History and Details', *Durham Cathedral Bell Ringers* <http://www.durhambellringers.org.uk/media/CathedralHistory.pdf>.
[15] Gutun Owain, '11. Cywydd i Howel ap Rhys o Rug i Ofyn Cwn Dros ei Nai Davydd ap Ieuan', in *GO* I, ll. 35–40.
[16] See: 'Durham Cathedral Bells: History and Details'; and *Rites of Durham*, p. 191.

ringing', bells were not as easy to regulate.[17] As such, even if the multiple bells in question were wrought or cast so that their notes would ring in harmony, playing them all at once resulted in an inevitably loud and somewhat chaotic sound: a fitting metaphor for the lively, wild cries of a pack of hunting dogs. Chaotic or not, there was still intention and purpose to this jubilant co-sounding of many bells namely to praise God: these 'klerwyr' are 'nevol' after all.

Rome, St Davids, and Llanddewi Brefi

While Durham held the finest bells in Britain, Ieuan ap Rhydderch (*fl.* 1430–70) turns our ears to the finest bells in Christendom: those of Rome. In a poem in which he walks the listener through the life of St David, Rome is one of three prominent locations at which Ieuan stops, each of which has its own aural signature in the form of bells. Ieuan discusses the bells of Rome in the same breath as its Welsh pilgrimage counterpart, St Davids Cathedral, as well as the location of an auditory miracle, Llanddewi Brefi in Ceredigion.[18]

Once David entered manhood, so Ieuan tells us, he travelled to Rome and was greeted by the miraculous ringing of the city's golden bells: 'clych Rhufain, eurgain ergyd, / a gant eu hunain i gyd' (*the bells of Rome, a peal lovely as gold, / sang all by themselves*).[19] A poem attributed to Hywel Dafi (*fl.* 1450–80) also describes the bells of Rome as 'y clych cyntaf heb lafur' (*the first labourless bells*): bells with a pure, euphonious sound, a golden appearance – a

[17] See: John Harrison, *Bells and Bellringing* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).
[18] According to William of Malmesbury (*c*. 1095–1143), Pope Calixtus II encouraged English pilgrims to go on pilgrimage to St Davids as it was safer than the long journey to Rome, adding that two journeys to St Davids was equivalent to one to Rome. By the fourteenth century, this seems to have then expanded to a belief that three pilgrimages to St Davids were as beneficial as one to Jerusalem. William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. and trans. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998–99), I (1998), §435. See also: Kathryn Hurlock, *Medieval Welsh Pilgrimage, c. 1100–1500* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 19–21, 27.
[19] Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '8. I Ddewi Sant', *GIRh*, ll. 45–46.

significance explored in greater detail below – and the same miraculous ability to ring on their own.[20]

The same auditory image of bells ringing unaided seems to appear in Tudur Aled's prophesy of Pirs Conwy, Archdeacon of St Asaph. After foreseeing his authority spread across Wales, Tudur believes Pirs will 'cau'r grafanc ar Gaer Rufain' (*close his talons on Rome*).[21] The poem ends by imagining how:

> Cais yr hap lle cawsai'r rhain,
> clyw, a chân clych eu hunain;
> cei aur fenig côr Fynyw,
> cawn d'alw'n ben cenedl, i'n byw![22]
>
> (*He will seize the [good] fortune in which he will get these, / he will hear, and bells will ring themselves; / you will seize the golden gloves of Menevia's chancel, / we will call you the nation's chief, so long as we live!*)

As Ieuan ap Rhydderch does later in his poem, it seems that Tudur also draws a connection between the bells of Rome and those of St Davids ('[M]ynyw'), which might also have had a golden sheen, if we can apply the 'aur fenig' to the 'clych eu hunain'. ('[M]enig' may refer to some sort of covering or to the triangular-like shape of a bell imagined as an upturned glove with a long sleeve.)

Later in life, St David gave his famous sermon at Llanddewi Brefi, during which the mound beneath his feet miraculously lifted him above the crowds so that all could hear. Ieuan ap Rhydderch includes this miracle in his poem at which point another bell sounds: 'clywad ef, clau wawd ofeg, / mal cloch yn Llandudoch deg' (*he was heard, clear expression [and] utterance, / like a bell in fine St Dogmaels*).[23] While this could be referencing a specific bell at St Dogmaels Abbey (Llandudoch), details of this abbey's history are sparse and there seem to be no other references in Welsh poetry to any noteworthy bells at the site. A more conventional reading of this couplet takes the bell to refer to David's clear voice; a voice that was so vibrant

[20] ?Hywel Dafi, 'Atodiad III. I Rufain a'i rhyfeddodau', *GHDaf* II, l. 33.
[21] Tudur Aled, '29. Moliant Pirs Conwy, Archdiagon Llanelwy', *GTA* I, l. 92.
[22] Tudur Aled, '29. Moliant Pirs Conwy, Archdiagon Llanelwy', *GTA* I, ll. 95–98.
[23] Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '8. I Ddewi Sant', *GIRh*, ll. 87–88.

in its projection it travelled some forty miles to St Dogmaels. This reading coincides with the Welsh and Latin lives of St David. Although neither specifically mentions St Dogmaels or bells, both the Latin author, Rhigyfarch (1056/7–1099), and the anonymous fourteenth-century Welsh translator mention that the audience's furthest listener could hear David's sermon just as well as the closest.[24]

Finally, Ieuan takes his reader-listener to David's resting place at St Davids Cathedral. The church is given a visual and olfactory description, taking note of its ornate roof and enchanting incense. Yet, once again, Ieuan invites his audience to listen by evoking the church's sounds as the bell motif reappears:

> Eglur gôr a gwiwlwyr gân
> o glaergerdd a gloyw organ,
> a chlywed cerdd iach lewych,
> a chlau lef miwsig a chlych.[25]
>
> (*A distinct choir, a full worthy song* / *of bright music and resplendent organ,* / *and hear healthy, radiant song,* / *and the loud cry of music and bells.*)

By bookending the poem with Rome and St Davids, and by linking the two places by the same aural means, the holiness of the latter is equated with the former. More practically, it is clear that bells in all three instances – with the possible exception of St Dogmaels – denoted three different locations.

Llanllwni

A particularly beautiful handbell is described in detail by Lewys Glyn Cothi as he praises the vicar Sir Morys ap Siôn and his church at Llanllwni near Lampeter:

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[24] 'Cum autem clara uoce omnibus et qui in proximo et qui in longinquo errant equaliter predicaret' (*While he preached, with a loud voice, heard equally by those who were nearest and those who were furthest*), Rhigyfarch, *Rhigyfarch's Life of St. David*, ed. J. W. James (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1967), pp. 23, 45 [Editor's translation]; 'A dechreu pregethu odyno a oruc Dewi […] a[c] yn amlwc hynny y bop dyn, y'r pellaf yn gynn egluret ac y'r nessaf' (*And David began preaching there […] and that was clear to everyone: it was as clear to the furthers [person] as it was to the closest*), *The Welsh Life of St. David*, ed. D. Simon Evans (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988), p. 10.
[25] Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '8. I Ddewi Sant', *GIRh*, ll. 111–14.

Uchel iawn yw cloch Lowni
a'i maen rhwym a'i hamner hi.
Y maen glas sy mewn y gloch
gloyw asur fal y gwelsoch.
Lle dêl y gloch fetelaur
y daw'r maen yn drwm o aur;
lle dêl y maen yn flaenawr
y daw y gloch deg i lawr.[26]

(*Extremely loud is the bell of St Llwni* / *and its bejewelled almoner.* / *As you saw, the clear,* / *azure-blue gem is within the bell.* / *Where the gold-metalled bell may go,* / *the jewel, heavy with gold, will follow;* / *where the jewel leads,* / *the fine bell will follow down.*)

The bell in question was a relic: a small handbell that once belonged to St Llwni himself. Moreover, a resonant, golden bell, carrying a heavy, azure-gemmed, golden hammer not only portrays its caretaker, Sir Morys, as a clearly wealthy vicar running a wealthy church, but it also makes for a dazzlingly visual image, 'fal y gwelsoch'. Indeed, precious relics such as these were hardly rung on a regular basis; they were kept for ceremonial occasions only. Thus, these were more often seen than heard, hence the attention paid not only to the appearance of the bell itself, but also to that of the covering under which it was kept for most of the year: 'a'i maen rhwym a'i hamner hi'.[27]

Nonetheless, attention is also paid to the bell's aural features. Beyond this bell being 'extremely loud', there may be a suggestion that its ringing was regular like clockwork. This can be heard in the possible punning within the word 'blaenawr' situated in the final four lines of the quoted passage, with their perfect balance of syntax: 'Lle dêl […] / y daw […]'. As well as the sense of regularity carried in this 'cymeriad geiriol' (*anaphora*), one could argue that 'blaenawr' manipulates the early MW suffix <awr> that had, in most instances, reduced to

[26] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '47. Moliant Syr Morys ap Siôn', *GLGC*, ll. 25–32.
[27] In *GLGC*, Dafydd Johnston suggested that W hamner was a borrowing from ME hamer (*hammer*) even though the presence of /n/ was difficult to explain. Another, though more minor, issue is that 'hammer' seems to have only developed a specifically campanological meaning in English during the middle of the sixteenth century, around sixty years after this poem's composition. Reading the word in question as W amner < ME aumener (*almoner*, i.e., a purse or small pouch) solves both these issues. Further discussion with Professor Johnston led us to agree that a small and, in this case, ornate purse would be a suitable cover to protect a rarely used and precious handbell such as that of St Llwni. See: *GLGC*, p. 547; *OED*, s.v. *hammer*[2a]; *MED*, s.v. *hamer*; *GPC*, s.v. *amner*[1].

<or> by the fifteenth century, when this poem was composed.[28] The word could thus mean 'blaen-awr' (*tip of the hour*) as well as 'blaenor' or 'blaenwr' (*leader*).[29] Together, these meanings may describe the two constituent parts of hammer ('maen') and bell-lip ('[c]loch') working in regular synchrony. When one reached the tip of its swinging arc ('lle dêl y gloch fetelaur') the other would chart the same movement ('y daw'r maen yn drwm o aur'). Then, switching roles, when one would lead the clock-like dance ('lle dêl y maen yn flaenawr'), the other would once again follow ('y daw y gloch deg i lawr'). This gives a regularised quality to the sound of this bell; an image that would chime well with the fact that bellringing was the principal timekeeper of its day, as we shall see later in the chapter.

In terms of resonance, the bell's materials cause some problems. The poem goes to great lengths to describe the gold of St Llwni's bell, perhaps causing the listener to wonder whether or not this particular bell was literally cast from gold and not just gold in colour. Not only is the bell '[m]etelaur', but its hammer is explicitly heavy with gold. It is also heavy because of its azure gem(s), which was apparently attached to the hammer, as it swung from one side of the bell's lip to the other. Even though 'golden bells' appear all over the poetic corpus of late medieval Wales – as we saw in Rome and St Davids – bells have never been cast from gold in the Western world. Were they actually golden, their resonance would be faint at best.[30] Instead, bells, especially large ones found in churches and clocks, tend, and tended, to be cast from a specific type of bronze appropriately called 'bell-metal'. This alloy has a higher than usual proportion of tin to copper, resulting in a distinctive ringing quality that persists for several seconds before fading away to silence. Although the bell-metal of older bells had a

[28] On the monophthongization of /au/ to /o/, see: David Willis, 'Old and Middle Welsh', in *The Celtic languages*, ed. Martin Ball and Nicole Müller (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 117–60 (pp. 124); and D. Simon Evans, *GMW*, §6.
[29] *GPC*, s.v. *blaenor, blaenwr, blaen, awr*.
[30] Though they are not 'bells' in the traditional Western sense, Tibetan bells and the so-called 'singing bowls' are occasionally said to be cast out of a multi-metal alloy that includes trace amounts of silver and gold. See: Alex R. Furger, *The Gilded Buddha: The Traditional Art of the Newar Metal Casters in Nepal* (Basel: Librum Publishers & Editors, 2017) pp. 276–78; and 'Brass, Bronze, Nickel & Chrome', *Classic Bells.com* <https://classicbells.com/info/brassbronze.asp>.

warm red-gold colour, redder than today's, it could also have a yellow-gold hue.[31] (This might account for the ubiquity of 'golden bells' in Welsh poetry.) Plating might also account for it: this process of putting a thin layer of gold (or silver) onto an object by mechanical means – later by chemical and electrical means – was possible by at least the twelfth century.[32] However, plating bells with gold seems to have been as rare in the Middle Ages as it is today.

A more common reading of '[m]etelaur' is, of course, based on symbolism. During this time, there was a clear belief that a golden bell was better than the usual bronze bell; a belief lodged in the age-old value placed on gold but perhaps also in biblical imagery specifically to do with bells. One of the Bible's very few references to bells is to explicitly golden bells. In Exodus, God tells Moses to adorn the priest's ephod with bells of gold:

> And thou shalt make the robe of the ephod of blue. […] and beneath upon the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about.[33]

Moreover, these golden bells are holy and protective: 'and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not'.[34]

Indeed, this shielding holiness may also be heard in the bell of Llanllwni. In answer to the question 'why does the exquisite bell ring?', Lewys answers 'i gadw'r côr gyda'r curas / y myn y gloch a'r maen glas' (*to keep the choir with the cuirass* / *he [Morys] wants the bell and the blue gem*).[35] Be it the metaphorical cuirass of Sir Morys or of God, or the more literal allusion to the Hebrew priests' breastplate-like ephod or the New Testament's 'breastplate of

[31] Bells used to have a higher proportion of copper in the casting alloy, giving it a reddish tint.
[32] The thirteenth-century scholastic, Bartholomaeus Anglicus warned that the presence of dust, moisture, and wind would prevent gold plate from bonding properly; Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *On the properties of things: John Trevisa's translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De proprietatibus rerum: a critical text*, trans. John Trevisa, ed. Michael C. Seymour, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), II, 16:4. In the sixteenth century people began to create vermeil or fire-gilded objects, gold-plating's more dangerous cousin, which involved amalgamating (dissolving) gold in liquid mercury, which was then bonded onto silver. See: 'Brass, Bronze, Nickel & Chrome'.
[33] Exodus 28:31–34.
[34] Exodus 28:35.
[35] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '47. Moliant Syr Morys ap Siôn', *GLGC*, ll. 39–40.

righteousness', these bells are clearly perceived to offer protection to Llanllwni church and its parish.[36] Thus, for all its pompous, ornate outward appearance, its sound still serves a religious, holy function as did most church bells, when rung correctly.

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It is clear, then, that Beirdd yr Uchelwyr listened attentively to bells and found a practical, semiotic significance in each one. Furthermore, a feature of church bells that poets seemed to wish to highlight was that their peal had purpose, and, in this sense, it was a regulated sound. How each bell looked, how it was rung, and where it sounded, could carry great geographical and spiritual significance. It is this spiritual significance that shall be explored next as we turn to the 'sanctus bell' of the Eucharist.

III. The sanctus bell

The protective and spiritual aura of bellringing was at its strongest when it was heard during the Eucharist. The 'cloch aberth' (*sanctus bell*, literally *sacrifice bell*), was the most spiritually significant bell heard in the Middle Ages. It was a small bell, or set of bells, also known as a 'tintinnabulum', used at the pinnacle of the celebration of the Eucharist when the bread was raised and broken, representing Christ's sacrifice, his 'aberth'.[37] On rare occasions, the bell might be suspended outside the church, in which case it was known as a 'campanella'.[38]

The 'cloch aberth' was heard first and foremost as a holy sound that had a blissful, protective aura, like the bells of the priests of Israel in the Old Testament, and an aural summoning to contemplate Christ's sacrifice and the salvation of mankind. Dafydd ap

[36] Ephesians 6:14. Some bells in medieval Wales had even greater holy powers, such as a bell belonging to St David called 'bangu' and residing at Glascwm church in Elfael (Radnorshie), which survived a fire at Rhaeadr Gwy castle: a fire that was itself caused by the same bell. See: Gerald of Wales, 'Itinerarium Kambriae', *GCO* VI (1868), 1:1.
[37] The practice of ringing a bell at this point in the service began around the turn of the thirteenth century. See: John H. Arnold and Caroline Goodson, 'Resounding Community: The History and Meaning of Medieval Church Bells', *Viator* 43.1 (2012), 99–130 (pp. 121–22).
[38] Arnold and Goodson, 'Resounding Community', pp. 121–22.

Gwilym's 'Offeren y Llwyn' (*The Woodland Mass*) – 'un o gerddi mwyaf soniarus Dafydd' (*one of Dafydd's most sonorous poems*) – gestures towards these connotations as the poet plays on the eponymous metaphor.[39] One May morning, Dafydd marvels in nature's auditory landscape populated by birdsong. This then brings to his mind the nurturing sounds of the Eucharist, leading him to blend the two:

> Codi ar fryn ynn yna
> afrlladen o ddeilien dda,
> ac eos gain fain fangaw
> o gwr y llwyn ger ei llaw,
> clerwraig nant, i gant a gân
> cloch aberth, clau a chwiban,
> a dyrchafael yr aberth
> hyd y nen uwchben y berth,
> a chrefydd i'n Dofydd Dad
> â charegl nwyf a chariad.
> Bodlon wyf i'r ganiadaeth,
> bedwlwyn o'r coed mwyn a'i maeth.[40]
>
> (*Then there was raised on an ash hill / a wafer-bread of a good leaf, / with a fine slender resonant nightingale / from the edge of a grove nearby, / poetess of the stream, ringing for all / the sanctus-bell, a piercing whistle, / and the Host was raised up / towards the sky above the grove, / and the Lord our Father was worshipped / with a chalice of desire and love. / I am content with the music, / it was nurtured by a birch-grove in the sweet woods.*)

There is a wealth of auditory images here, complete with a cock-thrush priest and a nightingale bellringer. The primary reason as to why the sound of birdsong was perceived to be pleasant is primeval: the presence of birds and birdsong indicates the absence of predators.[41] Moreover in the commonplace medieval binary between bipedal heaven-facing man and quadrupedal earth-facing beast, birds stand somewhere in between, especially since their wings resembled angels, and their literally elevated position meant they had closer connections to the heavens.[42] With regard to the nightingale-sanctus-bell in Dafydd ap Gwilym's poem, it is both significant and in line with contemporary theology that Dafydd claims to be nurtured ('maeth') by the nightingale's 'cloch aberth', evoking the nourishing experience of hearing the mass.

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[39] Johnston, *'Iaith Oleulawn'*, p. 209. This metaphor is fairly common in the medieval European literary canon, most notably in Jean de Condé's fourteenth-century poem *La Messe des Oiseaux*: *La Messe des Oiseaux et le Dit des Jacobins et des Fremeneurs*, ed. Jacques Ribard (Geneva: Droz, 1970).
[40] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '39. Offeren y Llwyn', ll. 25–36.
[41] Goldsmith, *Sound*, p. 109.
[42] Warren, *Birds in Medieval English poetry*, p. 12.

A century later, Lewys Glyn Cothi made even more complex use of the auditory power of the 'cloch aberth'. In his praise of one Dafydd Goch, Lewys depicts himself as a series of bells:

> Dafydd Goch, ariangloch wyf
> yn dy alw'r man y delwyf.
> Clych Osnai y'm galwai gant
> a dwy fil ar dy foliant.
> Cloch aberth a bair chwerthin
> wyf ar dy gerdd, frawd y gwin.[43]
>
> (*Dafydd Goch, I am a silver bell / calling you to wherever I come. / Two thousand and one hundred [people] would call me the bells of Osney / in praising you. / I am the sacring bell that causes laughter / with your poem, the brother of wine*.)

The bells become more significant with each couplet. Lewys begins with a general precious 'ariangloch', before moving on to two specific bells. The first of these, 'clych Osnai', refers to Osney Abbey and may well invoke the aforementioned 'Great Tom', which resided in Osney under the name 'Mary' during Lewys's lifetime: 'Mary' and her fellow bells were thus known to be particularly loud.[44] Given the magnitude and volume of these specific bells, and the summoning and attention-grabbing nature of church bells more generally, these effectively depict Lewys's bombastic praise of Dafydd Goch.

The third bell into which Lewys morphs is the 'cloch aberth'. Within the poem, this bell's main function is to summon laughter, which may strike us an implausibly irreverent reaction to the aural signal of Salvation. While nonlinguistic by-products of spiritual experiences, such as laughter, did arise among some, like thirteenth-century English mystic, Richard Rolle, who advocated what scholars today call 'affective piety', the secular context of Lewys's poem implies that this is not the same 'chwerthin'.[45] The same is true of the

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[43] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '173. Moliant Dafydd Goch ap Meredudd', *GLGC*, ll. 3–8.
[44] Sharpe, *The Church Bells of Oxfordshire*, III, pp. 227–86.
[45] On 'affective piety', the unmediated access to spiritual knowledge through sensory and emotional experience, see: Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); and Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). Adin E. Lears discusses Richard Rolle's concept of 'risus' (*laughter*) in detail in *WE*, pp. 48–57, including passages such as 'risus […] qui uero est ex hilaritate consciencie et leticia spirituali, laudabilis est' (*laughter […] which stems truly from cheerfulness*

‘chwerthin’ found in a scene of jovial feasting in a poem by Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen (*fl.* 1360–90). The scene features a nimble crwth, some bagpipes, a pack of excited greyhounds, a concert of clucking peacocks, and *sanctus bells and laughter* (‘a chlych aberth a chwerthin’).[46] It seems, then, that the sense of climbing the hierarchy of important bells in the passage from Lewys Glyn Cothi’s poem suggests that ‘cloch aberth’ simply represents a bell with great powers of inciting a response, here laughter, more so than a bell of great holy significance.[47]

IV. Funeral bells, ‘cnul’, and the physicality of sound

The link between bellringing and death is, in one sense, clear and expected, given our familiarity with the sound of church bells at funerals accompanying the passing from one life to the next. This sound was prevalent in the Middle Ages too, perhaps more so, as the chiming was considered to enact a protective aura at critical moments of transition, as we have already heard; this could include when a person was dying, during their funeral procession, or during the translation of their body.[48]

Bells also ring in this familiar manner in medieval Welsh poetry. Hywel Dafi’s elegy to Abergavenny noblewoman, Gwladus Gam, for example, reads ‘clywch dyrfau y clych dirfawr / gladdu mam arglwyddi mawr’ (*hear, great bells’ clamours, / the burial of the mother of great lords*).[49] A similar case is in Tudur Aled’s long list of resounding lamentations as he grieves the death of Tudur Llwyd of Yale: ‘a churo clych a chri clau, / a chan bloedd, uwch no

of conscience and joy of spirit is praiseworthy), Richard Rolle, *The Incendium Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*, ed. Margaret Deanesly (New York: Longman, 1915), p. 170.

[46] Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen, ‘8. Moliant Hywel a Meurig Llwyd o Nannau’, *GLlG*, ll. 61–64.

[47] All medieval bells effected action in pricking up one’s ears at the very least, but the ‘cloch aberth’ had a particular power in enacting a bowed head or a bended knee. See the 1281 Council of Lambeth, which ordered that ‘at the elevation of the body of the Lord, the bells should be struck on one side, so that the people, who do not have the time to concern themselves with the celebration of masses every day, wherever they are in their fields or houses, genuflect’. Arnold and Goodson, ‘Resounding Community’, p. 121.

[48] Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, p. 30.

[49] Hywel Dafi, ‘19. Marwnad Gwladus Gam’, in *GHDaf* I, ll. 51–52.

bleiddiau' (*and striking of bells and shrill laments, / and a hundred cries, louder than wolves*).[50] The bells in Tudur Aled's example are both funeral bells and the metaphorical bells of the mourners' laments ('[c]an bloedd'). (There is a hint of this same dual meaning in Hywel Dafi's use of '[t]yrfau' (sg. 'twrf', *clamour*), given its association with 'tyrfâu' (sg. 'tyrfa', *crowd*), though the difference in stress between the two – initial in 'tyrfau', final in 'tyrfâu' – prevents any true audible wordplay, however similar they might look on paper.)

*

A word concerning bellringing that seems to exclusively appear in the context of death is 'cnul', alternative form 'clul', both borrowings from ME knell, but more appropriately translated as 'death-knell' on most occasions.[51] When Tudur Aled mourned the death of Elin Bwlclai, he complained that he heard nothing but bells: 'oes amgen lais im, gan law, / na chlul neu uchel wylaw?' (*is there any other voice at hand / but bell-ringing or loud lament?*).[52] Lewys Glyn Cothi's understated elegy to Phelpod ap Rhys likewise refers to a 'cnul' as he opens with the following rhetorical question: 'Pan fu gnul Ifor Brulai / yno bu och. Pam na bai?' (*When the death-knell of Brulai's Ifor Hael [sounded], / there was a sigh. Why wouldn't there be?*).[53] Stating that, in Phelpod's locale of 'Brulai' (Brilley, Herefordshire), he was akin to the exemplary generous patron, Ifor Hael (*fl. c.* 1320–1360/1380), Lewys laments the funeral bells that he hears denoting his patron's passing.

'Cnul' also appears in the context of malicious intent: a sound that could actively be inflicted upon someone. On these occasions, the 'cnul' is presented as tolling the death of the antagonised target. This metonym for murder is certainly at play in Tudur Aled's rousing praise

[50] Tudur Aled, '79. Marwnad Tudur Llwyd o Ial', *GTA* I, ll. 27–28.
[51] The phrase 'cnul clust' (*a ringing or tingling in the ears often regarded as foreboding death*) only appears in modern spoken Welsh, and so the idea that the sound of bellringing could be a premonition of death as opposed to a sound heard following a death cannot be suggested with any certainty with the examples here cited. *GPC*, s.v. *cnùl, clùl*.
[52] Tudur Aled, '76. Marwnad Elin Bwlclai', *GTA* I, ll. 47–48.
[53] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '144. Marwnad Phelpod ap Rhys', *GLGC*, ll. 1–2.

of the Yorkist Sir Richard Herbert as he impels him to rid the Lancastrian Warwicks from the lands of York: 'cân, i wyrion cŵn Warwig, / clul hyd Iorc, cael olew dig!' (*ring, to the grandsons of Warwick's hounds, / the death-knell as far as York, bringing forth wrath's chrism!*).[54] I shall discuss phrases related to 'canu cnul' (*to ring the death-knell*) and 'canu cloch' (*to ring the bell*) in greater detail below. For the time being, it suffices to say that 'canu cnul (rhywun)' (*to sing [someone's] death-knell*) seems to have meant to bring about their death. Although *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* lists only 'to toll one's knell; give a very bad account of someone' as the meaning of 'canu cnul', in the context of the death-knell, it is attractive to join the dots of this metaphor.[55] In Tudur Aled's poem, Sir Richard is encouraged to inflict death-signalling bellringing on his enemies.[56]

Abergorlech poet, Dafydd Gorlech (*fl.* 1466/70–90) is another who regards the death-knell as a weapon to be wielded. Among the typical allusive and elusive imagery of the prophetic 'canu brud' (*prophetic verse*) genre to which Dafydd's poem belongs is the auditory image of a lamb that will rise to the sound of a swallow:

> Gŵyl Lug, o'i gwely eigion,
> gwennol hir a gân gnul hon.
> Oen a gyfyd o'n gefyn
> â thafod aur a thwf dyn.
> Gwedi darfod y nodau,
> gwanwyn hir, gwyn hen i'w hau![57]
>
> (*On the Feast of Saint Luke, from its ocean-deep bed, / a large swallow [Owen/Henry Tudor] will sing her [death] knell [that of the mole, i.e., Richard III]. / A lamb will rise from our chains / with a golden tongue in human form. / Once the [musical?] notes have finished, / a long spring [will come] and an old white-haired [man] will come to sow them!*)

In heraldry and in Welsh vaticinatory verse connected to the Wars of the Roses, the swallow is the sign of both Owen and Henry Tudor.[58] Thus, these leaders are prophesied to rise

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[54] Tudur Aled, '61. I Syr Risiart Herbart', *GTA* I, ll. 53–54.
[55] *GPC*, s.v. *canaf*.
[56] A few generations earlier, the head of the Warwick family, Richard Neville, 16th Earl of Warwick, had quarrelled with Sir Richard's father, the renowned William Herbert, 1st Earl of Pembroke.
[57] Dafydd Gorlech, '1. Cywydd brud', *GDGor*, ll. 85–90.
[58] Aled Llion Jones, *Darogan: Prophecy, Lament and Absent Heroes in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), pp. 8–11; *GDGor*, pp. 61, 66.

from the depths to wage war on the 'gwadd' (*mole*) – the genre-specific stand-in for Richard III mentioned earlier in the poem – and to bring death and destruction: a destruction signalled by the ringing brought about by the song. A similar image appears in a cywydd brud by Dafydd Llwyd o Fathafarn (*c.* 1420–*c.* 1500), in which the poet once again praises Henry Tudor, who, along with his uncle Jasper, will sing the death-knell of 'the English': 'cnul Saeson, wrth ddigoni, / a gân penrhaith ein iaith ni' (*the death-knell of the English, because it can be achieved, / does the chief of our people sing*).[59] It seems necessary, then, to add 'sing someone's death-knell; kill' to the dictionary definition of 'canu cnul'.

*

Returning to Lewys Glyn Cothi's elegy to Phelpod ap Rhys, later in the poem, bellringing is invoked in an intriguing manner that introduces us to a curiosity of the medieval Welsh auditory imagination concerning the scientific understanding of sound. In the relevant passage, Lewys lists the sounds heard as Phelpod lay dying, or shortly after he died, depending on how we read the ambiguous preposition 'wrth' (*near* or *because of*). The relevant passage reads thus:

> Ydd oedd wrth ei ddiwedd ef
> gan delyn gŵyn a dolef,
> clych yn ymffust i'm clustiau,
> cyrn a oedd utgyrn bob ddau.[60]
>
> (*There was upon his end / a lament and cry from a harp, / bells striking in my ears, / horns that were, every two of them, trumpets.*)

Here we have the auditory image of bellringing physically accosting the poet's ears. A century earlier, Iolo Goch also gives the sound of bells a physical, violent character, using the exact same verb. In Iolo's elegy to Tudur Fychan of Penmynydd, he describes the same sensation of bells accosting the listener at a time of death: 'Pa dwrw yw hwn, gwn gannoch, /

[59] Dafydd Llwyd o Fathafarn, '33. Brud', *GDLlF* ll. 13–14. See Chapter Two for more on the polysemy of 'iaith' (*language*/*people*/*culture*).
[60] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '144. Marwnad Phelpod ap Rhys', *GLGC*, ll. 49–52.

pa ymffust i'm clust fal cloch?' (*What commotion is this, I know a hundred groans, / what striking in my ear like a bell?*).[61]

On both occasions, the bells are heard to be beating the poet: an arresting metaphor, but to what extent this was thought to have been nothing more than a metaphor is a question that can be raised as we consider the contemporary belief in the physical properties of sound. The key verb 'ymffust' (*striking*) hints towards an aspect of the medieval understanding of sound waves that has become obsolete in modern science. For the most part, medieval theories on the nature of sound and the physiology of hearing are similar to our own. For example, the statement by the Stoics, Boethius, Geoffrey Chaucer, and many more that sound waves were like waves in a pool of water after dropping a stone is still used today.[62] Sound does indeed travel outward in concentric circles from its source. Spherical sound waves compress molecules of air with decreasing pressure as they get larger. If an ear is present, the waves strike the external ear (the 'pinna') and travel down the ear canal ('meatus') until they hit the eardrum which vibrates and triggers a sequence of lever-like bones and then the eardrum, which trembles and projects into an opening whence one 'hears' the sound.[63] What the brain does with that sound is another matter.

These last details are modern discoveries, yet, as well as the spherical motion, the breath-like aerial part of the theory was also known in the Middle Ages. Crucially, however, in medieval thought, this 'air' had added physicality. This was due to the long-lasting

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[61] Iolo Goch, '4. Marwnad Tudur Fychan o Benmynydd', *IGP*, ll. 7–8.
[62] Boethius, 'De institutione musica', 1:14; Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Book of the Duchess', *RC*, ll. 782–803; Mark Eli Kalderon, *Sympathy in Perception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 103–10. See also: Plato, 'Timaeus', in *Timaeus. Critias. Cleitophon. Menexenus. Epistles*, trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), §67b–67c; and Aristotle, 'On the Soul', in *On the Soul. Parva Naturalia. On Breath*, trans. W. S. Hett (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 2:8. For an overview, see: Frederick Vinton Hunt, *Origins in Acoustics: The Science of Sound from Antiquity to the Age of Newton* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978). Penelope Gouk notes, however, that today's use of the analogy is indebted to the greater detail clarified in the seventeenth century by the works of Constantijn Huygens and Isaac Newton: 'Some English Theories of Hearing in the Seventeenth Century: Before and After Descartes', in *The Second Sense: Studies in Hearing and Musical Judgement from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Charles Burnett, Michael Fend, and Penelope Gouk (London: Warburg Institute, 1991), pp. 95–113 (p. 98).
[63] Goldsmith, *Discord*, pp. 5–12; Goldsmith, *Sound*, pp. 52–68.

popularity of early grammarians' theories on sound as 'vox' (*voice*, discussed further in Chapter Two), which was ultimately 'aer ictus' (*struck air*) that came from 'spiritus' (*breath*).[64] According to this popular theory, the ear contained a 'spiritus animalia' (*animal spirit*) that received an impression of the 'aer ictus' by way of the eardrum, which was linked to the brain by two sinews and which conveyed the sound's likeness to the 'anima' (*soul*) for interpretation. The sound itself was merely the vehicle for the sense. (We shall return to this important binary between the semantic and somatic facets of language and sound later in this chapter.)

This belief in the tactile materiality of sound meant, then, that it could be physically harmful. Indeed, this notion may lie beneath how ModE noise is related to L nausea (*to upset*) or L noxia (*harmful behaviour*).[65] An even more direct sense of sound striking a physical blow is bound up in ME clappen, the ubiquitous Middle English verb of reported speech: *to say*, but also *to throb, to strike, to slam, to talk noisily*.[66] It may also be bound up in the aforementioned synaesthetic MW clybod, meaning primarily *to hear* but also *to touch*.[67] To add to the examples given in the Introduction, we may listen to Iorwerth Fynglwyd (*fl. c.* 1480–1527) using 'clywad' in both senses as he mourns the death of fellow poet Ieuan Gethin (*fl. c.* 1450):

> Cwympawdd holl lwyth y Collwyn:
> cleddyf cerdd, clyw addef cwyn.
> Clywad dros y wlad o'i law
> bwa'r awen yn briwaw.[68]
>
> (*Collwyn's entire tribe fell: / sword of song, hear the acknowledgement of [my] lament. / Throughout the land, the muse's bow was felt / shattering from his hand.*)

Physicality was, then, a crucial aspect of the medieval understanding of sound, including the sound of bells. Thus, was it possible for sound to be physically harmful? In some ways, the answer is no, since, in the Middle Ages, sound production was centuries away from

[64] For example, see sixth-century Priscianus Caesariensis: *Grammatici Latini ex Recensione Henrici Keilii*, ed. Heinrich Keil, 7 vols (Lipsiae: B. G. Teubneri, 1857–1880), II (1855), p. 5; Priscian, 'Priscian, *Institutiones grammaticae* and *Institutio de Nomine Pronomine Verbo*, ca. 520', in *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300–1475*, ed. and trans. Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 172–89 (p. 172).
[65] These are competing etymologies, with L nausea being the most likely, but both apply. See: *OED*, s.v. *noise*.
[66] *MED*, s.v. *clappen*; Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, p. 64.
[67] This polysemy can also exist in ModW clywed.
[68] Iorwerth Fynglwyd, 'Atodiad II: Marwnad Ieuan Gethin', *GIG*, ll. 11–4.

reaching the pain threshold of humans (around 130dB).[69] But pain is relative, and bells were among the loudest noise that populated the medieval auditory landscape. Furthermore, what about the sensation of ringing within the ear, as opposed to real world bellringing, i.e., the auditory affliction known today as 'tinnitus'? This was certainly a known condition in the Middle Ages – known at least by some – since thirteenth-century scholastic Bartholomaeus Anglicus describes a ringing sensation in the ear as one form of deafness.[70] With these considerations in mind, 'ymffust' becomes an entirely appropriate word for Lewys Glyn Cothi and Iolo Goch to have used to describe a sound: be it the real sound of bells, or the abstract sounds of grief. Such images, then, need not always be read as entirely or solely metaphorical.

V. 'Haeddu'r gloch' and 'dwyn y gloch'

In the early decades of the seventeenth century, Huw ap Dafydd (*fl.* 1550–1628) composed a eulogy for one Pirs Salbri of Bachymbyd. In this poem, Huw included an unusual campanological turn of phrase: 'swyddwr glân, os haeddi'r gloch, / swyddau d'ynys sydd danoch' (*fair officer, if [you] merit the bell, / the offices of your island are beneath you*).[71] In his elegy to nobleman Tudur Llwyd of Yale, Tudur Aled used the very same phrase: 'gwalch, a haeddai glych heddyw' (*a fine soldier, who did merit the bells of today*).[72]

Given the context, the phrase 'haeddu'r gloch' (*to merit the bell*) clearly has positive connotations. To our ears, the most instinctive way to define this phrase would be to associate it with the modern English phrase *to sing one's praises* and the Welsh 'canu clodydd'.[73] In

[69] 'The highest level of sound we can detect is one powerful enough to be fatal, but conventionally the upper limit is placed at the point when the experience of listening becomes one of pain (in the form of a disturbing sensation of tickling deep in the ear). A jet engine about 25 metres distant, or a pneumatic drill about a metre away, would generate such a level', Goldsmith, *Discord*, p. 8.
[70] Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *On the properties of things*, I, 3:18; Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, p. 64.
[71] Huw ap Dafydd ap Llywelyn ap Madog, '11. Moliant Pirs Salbri, Bachymbyd', *GHD*, ll. 31–32.
[72] Tudur Aled, '79. Marwnad Tudur Llwyd o Ial', *GTA* I, l. 89.
[73] *OED*, s.v. *sing, v.1*[12b]; *GA*, s.v. *praise*[1].

these phrases, we can easily imagine the bell as the singer in question. This definition is certainly at play, particularly when we remember that medieval Welsh poets would often style themselves as bells chiming the patron's praise, for example, in Lewys Glyn Cothi's aforementioned self-portrayal: 'ariangloch wyf'.[74] It is also certainly to do with how medieval Welsh poetry was something to be performed aloud to an 'audience' (< L audientia, *the act of listening*).[75] It was through this oral and aural medium that poets served their original social purpose: praise poetry and its antithesis, satire, served to publicise the reputations of fame and disgrace respectively.[76] This connection between praise and sound is represented in the related terminology, since 'clod' (*praise* < PCelt. *klut-on, cf. Gr. κλυτόν, OE hlūd) is semantically related to 'clybod' (*to hear*) and both contain the PIE element *ḱleu- (*to hear*).[77] It is the praise that one *hears* about someone that brings them fame, something that is also found in the Greek cognate 'κλέος' (*renown*; *glory*), which contains the same PIE 'hearing' element.[78] Thus, the poet's awareness of the aural nature of his praise lends itself to auditory imagery such as metaphors involving bells. In this sense, Pirs Salbri and Tudur Llwyd 'merit the fame' that will come to them as a consequence of the poets' resonant praise.

However, beyond these more intuitive connotations of bells, fame, and praise-poetry, the phrase 'haeddu'r gloch' seems to refer to a late medieval Welsh stock phrase that is more obscure to modern ears. Alaw Mai Edwards offers some helpful comments on the related phrase 'dwyn y gloch' (*to bear the bell*). These are found in her conclusions on the following couplet from Guto'r Glyn's praise of Maelor nobleman Mathau Goch: 'â'r bêl o ryfel yr aeth / â'i baladr o'i fabolaeth' (*since his youth he has returned from war / with victory with the help*

[74] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '173. Moliant Dafydd Goch ap Meredudd', *GLGC*, l. 3.
[75] *OED*, s.v. *audience*.
[76] Sally Harper, 'Dafydd ap Gwilym: Poet and Musician', *DG.net*. <https://dafyddapgwilym.net/essays/sally_harper/index_eng.php>; T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'The Authenticity of the *Gododdin*: An Historian's View', *Astudiaethau ar yr Hengerdd*, ed. Rachel Bromwich and R. Brinley Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1978), pp. 44–71.
[77] *GPC*, s.v. *clywaf*, *clod*; *EDPCelt*, s.v. **klus-ī-*, **kluto-*.
[78] *The Cambridge Greek Lexicon*, ed. James Diggle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), s.v. κλέος.

of his spear).[79] Edwards believes that the couplet deals with one of two near-homophonous phrases that were also similar in meaning: 'mynd â'r bêl' (*to take the ball*), with a close-mid front unrounded /eː/, or 'mynd â'r bel' (*to take the bell*), with the more open /ɛ/. Despite wavering between the two definitions, Edwards settles on the former as other editors have also done elsewhere, commenting that 'here *pêl* is taken to mean "ball" with the poet referring to Matthew taking the "prize, feat, mark of excellence" with him from the war; in other words, he was victorious'.[80]

Alternatively, it is worth entertaining the possible applicability of the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of 'to take the bell', which Edwards cites but disregards: 'to take the first place, to have foremost rank or position, to be the best, to bear or carry away the bell: to carry off the prize'.[81] This could also lie at the root of Welsh 'dwyn y gloch' and, subsequently, 'haeddu'r gloch'. Even though Welsh 'bel' as a loanword from English 'bell' does not seem to be attested anywhere else, using this definition as opposed to its 'ball' meaning seems preferable in these instances. This is because 'ball' here would simply mean some sort of prize, while, semantically, 'bell' is far richer, something that a deep analysis of sound and contemporary auditory perception reveals.[82]

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[79] Guto'r Glyn, '3. Moliant i Fathau Goch o Faelor', ll. 13–14.
[80] Guto'r Glyn, '3. Moliant i Fathau Goch o Faelor'; See also: Iolo Goch, *Gwaith Iolo Goch*, ed. Dafydd Johnston (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988), p. 317; and *Gwaith Lewys Môn*, ed. Eurys Rowlands (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1975), p. 376.
[81] *OED*, s.v. *bell*[1].
[82] As far as I am aware, Nerys Ann Jones and Erwain Haf Rheinallt are the only editors to prefer this meaning in a line of Beirdd yr Uchelwyr poetry, although the appropriateness of 'bell' over 'ball/prize' on this occasion is not explained. The couplet in question reads 'Rhisiart, nid gwaed rhy isel, / gwedy yntau, biau'r bel' (*Richard, no low blood, / after him [Gruffudd Maelor, son of Madog ap Maredudd, twelfth-century prince of Powys], owns the bell/prize*). However, even here, their suggestion to take 'bel' to mean *bell* is extremely hesitant. Gruffudd Fychan ap Gruffudd ab Ednyfed, '11. Gofyn telyn i Risiart ap Syr Rhosier Pilstwn o Emral', *GSRE*, ll. 71–72, and pp. 185–6. Owen Thomas mentions the meaning in analysing the couplet 'dy ryw, hefyd, o ryfel, / Awbrai, ar bawb, âi â'r bêl' (*your family, Awbrai, in war will also / seize the bell upon all*), but ultimately dismisses it. Dafydd Epynt, '17. Awdl foliant Hopgyn Awbrai o Abercynfrig', in *GDE*, ll. 11–12, and p. 161.

Firstly, as we have already seen, in medieval Wales, a ringing bell had strong overtones of praise-poetry and thus fame. Therefore, whoever 'seizes the bell' is seizing the praise of poets and is thus taking charge of their own reputation.

Secondly, the sound of bells was often synonymous with authority and power. As we saw earlier, more often than not, a parish church's jurisdiction was delineated by the audible circumference of its bells; the microcosmic sound of the Church's overarching authority. Beyond any subliminal authority, it also had a very real power in that it instigated action in others; those who heard the sanctus bell were expected to kneel as the Host was lifted. More generally in human society, that which has the loudest and most significant sound holds the most authority: 'the association of Noise [sic] and power has never really been broken in the human imagination'.[83] In the altogether quieter world of medieval Wales, the sound of bells was that sound. Thus, in Huw ap Dafydd, Tudur Aled, and Guto'r Glyn's use of phrases related to 'haeddu' and 'dwyn y gloch', the auditory image of a bell's authority can easily be transferred to the patrons; the bell-bearing authority that Pirs Salbri and Tudur Llwyd of Yale deserved, and that which Mathau Goch gained as he left the battlefield victorious. (An alternative connotation of status and power is in Andrew Breeze's suggestion that the phrases in question may have to do with a falconer giving the bell to his best bird – discussed further in the next section – though the absence of phrases similar to 'bear the bell' in medieval falconry handbooks hinders this argument.)[84]

The third symbolic power of bells and their authority in these auditory images, particularly in martial settings, lies in the aforementioned perception of bells signalling death: a signal that one could inflict upon enemies. This connotation is also at play in these phrases, as in Tudur Aled's prophesy regarding Rheinallt Conwy: 'ti ei â'r gloch, teirgwyl uchel' (*you*

[83] Schafer, *The Soundscape*, pp. 74–7. Confusingly, Schafer calls this type of sound a 'Sacred Noise'.
[84] Andrew Breeze, '"Bear the Bell" in Dafydd ap Gwilym and *Troilus and Criseyde*', *Notes and Queries* 39.4 (1992), 441–43.

will seize the bell, [upon] the three high feasts).[85] Elsewhere, Tudur Aled uses the phrase as an imperative, though his subject, Gruffudd Llwyd, is told to *sound* (lit. *sing*) rather than *seize* the bell: 'cyw Owain Glyn, cân y gloch!' (*Owain Glyn's youngling, sound the bell!*).[86] Mathau Brwmffild (*fl. c.* 1525–c. 1545) also commands 'clod ein iaith cludwn weithian, / cymer y gloch, Cymro glân' (*our nation's praise [do] we now increase, / take the bell, [oh] fine Welshman*).[87] Remembering the inflicting potential of the 'cnul', in Tudur's command, Gruffudd Llwyd seems to be encouraged to kill: to 'ring the bell' of others. These three soldiers are all encouraged to brandish the bell as a power-wielding sonic instrument that will bring them fame and authority.

VI. Bells and birds

The complex meaning of 'deserving' and 'seizing the bell' goes some way to explain another unusual campanological image employed in eulogies, namely the common epithet of the belled bird that is ascribed to patrons.

In the late Middle Ages, bells were associated with birds in two modes of hunting. The first was a form of night-time fowling that used a cowbell, a torch, and a net to dazzle and capture small birds such as larks, woodcocks or partridges: a practice occasionally known as 'low-belling'.[88] This practice has not left its mark on Welsh poetry. The second association, on the other hand, certainly has. This association came from the world of falconry and centred on the small bells that were tied to falcons and hawks trained to hunt small birds and wild game

[85] Tudur Aled, '31. Cywydd i Reinallt Conwy, O'r Bryn Euraid', *GTA* I, l. 76.
[86] Tudur Aled, '48. I Ruffudd Llwyd ab Elisau ap Gruffudd ab Ednyfed (Einion?) o Ragad', *GTA* I, l. 72. [I read 'cân' as a verb though it could be a noun.]
[87] Mathau Brwmffild, '13. Moliant Lewys Gwyn, Trefesgob', *GMBrwm*, ll. 17–18.
[88] The birds would be accustomed to the cowbell and so would not be startled as the hunters approached. As they got nearer, they would use the light to dazzle the birds, rendering them immobile and thus easily snared by casting a net. For more on the practice, see: Richard Almon, *Medieval Hunting* (Stroud: History Press, 2003), p. 104; John Cummins, *The Art of Medieval Hunting: The Hound and the Hawk* (London: Phoenix Press, 2001), p. 244; and H. A. Macpherson, *A History of Fowling* (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1897), pp. 60–61.

largely in order to keep track of their whereabouts but sometimes for ostentatious display only.[89]

On several occasions, patrons are given epithets based around these belled birds of prey. According to Tudur Aled, Maredudd ab Ieuan was 'gosawg y gloch' (*the belled goshawk*), and Rheinallt ap Gruffudd was similarly 'gwalch Ierwerth, glew a chariad, / Goch, edn y gloch wyd i'n gwlad' (*hawk of Iorwerth, beloved valiant one, / the Red, you are the belled-bird to our country*).[90] Occasionally, there is an attempt to enhance this stock image by promoting the bird in question to an eagle. Tudur Aled sees Sion ap Maredudd as an 'eryr glân, eurer i gloch' (*fine eagle, may his bell be gilded*), and Mathau Brwmffild sees Siôn Pilstwn as a 'ceiliog eryr, clog euraid' (*a male eagle, golden bell*).[91] Elsewhere, Tudur turns the epithet and its auditory associations into an extended metaphor:

> Arial gwalch ar awel gwynt,
> neu edn Llwch yn dwyn lluchynt;
> ewin y sarff wynias hir
> ar blanedau'r blaeneudir
> eryr y gloch ar wŷr Glyn,
> wyd a ddeffry dau ddyffryn.[92]
>
> (*In the nature of a hawk on the wind's breeze, / or Llwch's bird launching an attack, / the scorpion's long, white-hot claw / upon the planets in the land above, / you are the belled eagle for the men of Glyn [where] / you will awake two valleys.*)

This eagle is compared to the mythical birds of Llwch Gwin who tragically attacked and killed their master in a famously cacophonous scene; and if that was not enough, the eagle's bells, which are usually small and only audible to the nearby falconer, are loud enough to rouse the population of two entire valleys.[93]

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[89] See: Rachel Hands, *English Hawking and Hunting in 'The boke of St. Albans'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).
[90] Tudur Aled, '45. Moliant Rheinallt ap Gruffudd ap Hywel ab Einion', *GTA* I, ll. 7–8; Tudur Aled, '54. Moliant Maredudd ab Ieuan ap Rhobert', *GTA* I, l. 47.
[91] Tudur Aled, '81. Marwnad Sion ap Maredudd ab Ieuan Llwyd', *GTA* I, l. 65; Mathau Brwmffild, '6. Moliant Siôn Pilstwn, cwnstabl Caernarfon', *GMBrwm*, l. 22.
[92] Tudur Aled, '46. I Ddafydd Llwyd ab Elisau', *GTA* I, ll. 33–38.
[93] See: Introduction, n. 72.

The avian part of the epithet's imagery is easily explained. Birds of prey were highly prized possessions and falconry was among the most expensive, time-consuming, and noble of pastimes. Thus, comparing valiant men to vicious yet disciplined birds of prey is understandable. Indeed, 'gwalch' (*hawk*) had a secondary meaning that seems to stem from this association: 'fine soldier, brave fighter, nobleman, hero'.[94] (This probably explains why the practice of low-belling does not appear in praise poetry; the only praiseworthy trait of larks, woodcocks or partridges was their sweet birdsong, which was not a particularly desirable feature among brave, noble, or heroic patrons.)

As for the emphasis on the bell, the bell was only one of many valuable items needed to practice falconry. The poets could just as easily have dwelt on the masks or the gloves. Why do they focus on the bell? This question becomes more pressing when we realise that the bell is the steadfast part of the image, whereas the avian part is extremely pliable. Falcons, hawks, goshawks, and eagles appear interchangeably. On one occasion, Tudur Aled tailors the phrase to suit Sir Rhys ap Thomas and the bird that adorns his coat of arms, which is not even a bird of prey: 'barr Owain Glyn, brân y gloch, / bw holl Loegr, bwyall liwgoch' (*Owain Glyn[dŵr]'s defence, belled raven, / the fear of all of England, red-hued axe*).[95] Despite the raven's importance on Sir Rhys's coat of arms, in Welsh mythology – see Bendigeidfran in the Second Branch of the Mabinogi –, and as a common metaphor for a brave soldier in Welsh vaticinatory verse, it is significant that the raven could feature in this auditory image even though it was never used as a bird in hunting or in sport.

The reason for the constancy of the bell relates, once again, to its audible authority. As already explored, a ringing bell was one of the loudest noises in existence and so signalled authority. Thus, the fact that hawks and falcons made a sound as they hunted – with their bells

[94] *GPC*, s.v. *gwalch*[2a].
[95] Tudur Aled, '13. I Syr Rhys ap Tomas', *GTA* I, ll. 7–8.

bombastically ringing out loud, signalling their power – did not go unnoticed by the poets who wished to praise their patrons as equally unapologetically authoritative figures.

VII. Uncontrolled bells and Hell

In *Noise: A Human History of Sound and Listening*, David Hendy notes that 'when a bell was rung unexpectedly, this really caught everyone's attention: it signalled danger, or a death or perhaps a miracle having taken place'.[96] This assertion contains a vital aspect of medieval auditory perception that must be acknowledged in order to appreciate the function of sound in the Middle Ages and one that will prove key in our understanding of how Beirdd yr Uchelwyr perceived sound more generally, especially the sound of language and music. This aspect is the juxtaposition of expected, ordered, and controlled sound versus unexpected, disordered, uncontrolled noise.

The shocking effect of unexpected and unbridled bellringing belongs to this binary and the related distinction between sound and sense. Earlier, I briefly mentioned that standard church bellringing was regulated. At the opposite end of the spectrum lay unregulated, and therefore irrational bellringing, which was largely perceived as meaningless if not diabolical.

It is time now to outline the medieval theories behind this conclusion and to use them to explain the importance of bellringing in medieval Welsh perceptions of Hell. It will also prove essential to our understanding of how marginalised figures are portrayed by the poets studied, including the low-ranking minstrels known as 'beirdd y glêr' (*Clêr poets*), mendicant friars, peasant farmers, and English and Irish speakers. As already explained, these will be explored in Chapters 2 and 3.

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[96] David Hendy, *Noise: A Human History of Sound and Listening* (London: Profile Books, 2013), p. 111.

The semantic and somatic properties of sound have long been considered to be related. However, their relationship contained a distinct separateness. In the medieval understanding of sound, the sound itself only carried the spoken utterance of the 'sensus' or 'affectus mentis' (*mental sense/affection*) of the speaker until it struck the listener's ear, who then sought to grasp the initial 'sensus'.[97] This is, by and large, the same way sound and meaning are conceived of today. Each sound source has its own unchangeable wave structure.[98] What that sound, means, however, is much more susceptible to variation, since sounds change in meaning from individual to individual, culture to culture, and period to period; a loud sound has greater amplitude than a quiet sound, but this has very little to do with which one of these frightens us or delights us.

In the Middle Ages, this semantic side of sound was taken very seriously. Sense (the conceptual, semantic aspect of language) was privileged, while sound (the external, somatic, physical experience of language) was secondary.[99] Sense, therefore, had to be protected. Indeed, sound could even lead to sin should it excessively flatter the physical senses, thereby overwhelming its true purpose of conveying sense. This is why Augustine of Hippo confessed that, in the context of listening to the psalms, 'tamen cum mihi accidit, ut me amplius cantus quam res, quae canitur, moveat, poenaliter me peccare confiteor' (*when it happens to me that I am moved more with the song than with the thing itself, I confess that I sin gravely*).[100] This indulgence in external, sensory perception, which was vacuous and meaningless on its own, was worthless.

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[97] *Grammatici Latini*, II, p. 5; Priscian, 'Priscian, *Institutiones grammaticae*', p. 172.
[98] The waves are only changed by the environment into which they are released, affecting mutable aspects such as volume and texture.
[99] This shares certain characteristics with the 'signifier/signified' theory of structural linguistics as first postulated by Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Perry Meisel and Haun Saussy, trans. Wad Baskin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).
[100] Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. William Watts, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), II, 10:33; Lears's translation is preferred on this occasion: Lears, *WE*, p. 46.

This binary was ultimately believed to be a consequence of the biblical Fall, wherein Adam and Eve's transgression marked a descent from the direct interior communication of knowledge to an inferior, indirect, mediated knowledge.[101] After that, language and gesture became an obstacle between knowledge and intellect. Therefore, interior sensation, achieved through silent contemplation, should be sought whenever possible since this was the closest medium to the original way of knowing God. Augustine himself tried his best to listen and speak to God using the silent *ears* and *voice of his heart* ('aures cordis', 'voce cordis'), urging liturgical audiences to do the same.[102] However, the problem, acknowledged by Augustine, was that language was not only unavoidable but also the only real avenue to ultimate truth. This is related to one of Christianity's chief paradoxes: Christ was the Word of God made flesh, offering salvation for the sins of fleshly desire. The body, and the language it emitted, was a source of sin, but also, ultimately, of salvation. How does one square this circle? The answer: careful and correct engagement with sound, especially with human language.

This notion led to the formulation of various attempts to control and contain the physical, audible aspects of language, grammar and music theory being the two most important; both regulated sound so that it did not become meaningless noise.[103] Rules of pronunciation and meter became widespread, such as the grammatical doctrine of 'lectio', which choreographed the body so that the physical aspects of language would not overtake or interfere with meaning.[104] The same was true of music, the sound of which freely invited immoderate excess if not properly controlled. This is why sixth-century philosopher Boethius, like Plato before him, advocated music that was 'moderate,' 'simple,' and 'modest'. This last term, L modesta < modus (*measured amount*), reminds us of the arithmetical quality of music

[101] See: Eric Jager, *The Tempter's Voice: Language and the Fall in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).
[102] Augustine, *Confessions*, I, 1:5, and II, 9:12.
[103] Lears, *WE*, p. 139.
[104] Lears, *WE*, p. 139.

according to medieval philosophy, which kept true music in order. Indeed, for Boethius, any practitioner of music who did not hold an abstract knowledge of the mathematical proportions and ratios of music was not a true musician; they simply dabbled in a kind of muscle memory.[105]

*

The notion that sound could only be worthwhile when it was controlled in this way applied to the sound of bells. Standard bellringing was indeed controlled, and this is how most bellringing appears in the poetry of Beirdd yr Uchelwyr, either by explicit description or implicitly, by consulting medieval campanology manuals.[106] Occasionally, however, bells can be heard as an uncontrolled noise. This sound of disorder was one of the key elements of the imagined auditory environment of Hell.

We have already heard bells ring in relation to death in the form of funeral sounds and tolling one's death-knell. However, though associated with the afterlife, those bells were not explicitly linked to Hell, and no comment was made upon the way in which they rung; a meaningful, orderly ringing or a meaningless, unregulated clamour.

There seems to be only one reference to bells ringing in Hell in the poetry in question, and their sound is a terrifying commotion. Casnodyn (*fl.* 1320–40) was one of the earliest of the Beirdd yr Uchelwyr class. Indeed, his style and rejection of the new cywydd verse form groups him closer to the previous generations of royal poets, the so-called 'Gogynfeirdd', than to the emerging 'Cywyddwyr'. His awdl to the Trinity, 'a peak of religious poetry of the fourteenth century', demonstrates the perils of unbridled sound as meaningless and even diabolical.[107] Here, Casnodyn asks God to hear his prayer and save him from a raucous Hell,

[105] Boethius, De institutione musica', 1:34; Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, 1:34.
[106] *Rites of Durham*; Arnold and Goodson, 'Resounding Community'.
[107] D. Myrddin Lloyd, 'The Late Gogynfeirdd', in *A Guide to Welsh Literature*, ed. A. O. H. Jarman and Gwilym. R. Hughes, rev. Dafydd Johnston, 7 vols (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973–2003), II (1997), pp. 24–43 (p. 33).

complete with the unbearable groaning of tortured souls and the wild buzzing of wrinkled flies. Crucially, he directs our attention to 'afrwydd swydd soddlog trysglog treisglych' (*the cruel land of heeled [and] scabby [ones where there are] violent bells*).[108]

As we heard with the 'cloch aberth', the default connotations of bells were that they were heavenly, holy objects rung to praise God. Casnodyn's bells of Hell, on the other hand, are explicitly *violent bells* as we are informed by the modification of 'clych' into a compound 'treisglych': a far cry from the *labourless bells* of Rome.[109] The line in question is crowded with descriptions of the terrible environment in which these bells sound, perhaps suggesting that an explicit negative portrayal is needed in order to ensure that these bells are not heard in their usual regulated manner of a sacred summoning. The chaotic peal of these bells evokes certain connections between unregulated sound and the Devil; be it the character's generally deranged speech in medieval prose tales and drama, the word-collecting demon character, Tutivillus, explored in Chapter Two, or the noisy encounters with a nonsense-speaking Devil, as experienced by Julian of Norwich.[110] These are not the usual bells of a church, attractive in both sound and appearance; this is a terrifying, hellish clamour.

VIII. Bells and time

Sound coordinated the daily experience of medieval life, and it did so through bells. People navigated their way through the day by the canonical hours that sounded from the belfries of churches, monasteries, and town centres, rung initially by hand and later, from the

[108] Casnodyn, '7. Awdl i'r Drindod', *GC*, l. 14.
[109] ?Hywel Dafi, 'Atodiad III. I Rufain a'i rhyfeddodau', *GHDaf* II, l. 33.
[110] Brigitte Cazelles, *Soundscape in early French literature* (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Texts Studies, 2005); Margaret Jennings, 'Tutivillus: The Literary Career of the Recording Demon', *Studies in Philology* 74.5 (1977), 1–95; J. A. Burrow, 'Wasting Time, Wasting Words in Piers Plowman B and C', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 17 (2003), 191–202; Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, pp. 75–76, 98. Julian of Norwich 'understode nowte what they seid', *The Shewings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. Georgia Ronan Crampton (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994), p. 135. See also: Andrea Marculescu, 'The Voice of the Possessed in Late Medieval French Theater', in *Voice and Voicelessness in Medieval Europe*, ed. Irit Ruth Kleiman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

fourteenth century onwards, by mechanical clocks.[111] We shall discuss unmechanised bellringing as timekeepers first, before turning to mechanical clocks second.

Monastic timekeeping has already been mentioned in the possibly playful 'blaenawr' of Llanllwni's blue-gemmed golden bell. That bell's admirer, Lewys Glyn Cothi, also heard bells in the Augustinian priory at Carmarthen as he praised its prior, Morgan ab Owain:

> Ys gwell fu leisiau ei gôr
> erioed no llais yr adar,
> gan naw o glych, gan y glêr,
> i gan wyth organ o wŷr.[112]
>
> (*Ever better were the voices of his choir / than the voice of birds, / by nine bells, by the clerics, / by eight organs of men.*)

If we read the number of bells literally, it seems to be hyperbolic, given that we remember that Durham Cathedral – the model of British auditory excellence according to Gutun Owain and Tudur Aled – only had four large bells. Taken less literally, these nine bells may evoke the several different peals, if not bells, of the Benedictine order. Archbishop Lanfranc's eleventh-century constitutions for Christ Church, Canterbury, outlines this monastic order's famously strict rule and demonstrates bellringing at its most semiotically complex: a small bell ('parvulum signum') to rouse the monks, a large bell ('maius signum') to indicate the hour of terce, the smallest bell ('skilla') to escort the monks from the church to the chapter, and so on.[113] Although Carmarthen priory was Augustinian, not Benedictine, and although the poetic corpus shows no such multifarious and rigid campanological meanings in late medieval Wales, this context serves to demonstrate that regulated, ordered bell-ringing was used to punctuate a disciplined day.[114]

By another less literal reading, Carmarthen's nine bells also allude to the canonical hours, of which there were nine: vigil, matins, lauds, prime, terce, sext, nones, vespers, and

[111] Seb Falk, *The Light Ages: A Medieval Journey of Discovery* (London: Allen Lane, 2020), pp. 43–80.
[112] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '66. Moliant Prior Caerfyrddin', *GLGC*, ll. 9–12.
[113] Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, pp. 69–70.
[114] See: Falk, *The Light Ages*, p. 46.

compline. Church bells tolled at these fixed times calling 'y glêr' (*the clerics*) to prayer.[115] By the standards of modern science, these hours were not divided evenly over the day. One should also bear in mind that, even after the invention of the clock, time in the Middle Ages was 'solar time'.[116] This meant that the hour of prime, for example, was not the exact same time in different parts of the country, though in a parochial world in which only few people travelled at slow speeds, this hardly mattered.

Dafydd ap Gwilym hears the canonical hours in birdsong, and his poem to the summer demonstrates their currency as time-keeping audible guidelines. Dafydd lies in the 'deildy' (*house of leaves*) awaiting his beautiful girl, and there, beneath the treetops, sings the cuckoo:

> Cog yn serchog, os archaf,
> a gân ddiwedd huan haf,
> glasgain edn, glwys ganiadaf,
> gloch osber am hanner haf.[117]
>
> (*[The] cuckoo lovingly, if I ask it, / will sing at the end of a sunny [day] of summer, / fair blue-grey bird, I will gracefully allow [it], / vesper-bell at midsummer*.)

Likewise, in his panegyric to the skylark, Dafydd describes 'oriau hydr yr ehedydd / a dry fry o'i dŷ bob dydd' (*the powerful prayers of the skylark / turn upwards from his house every day*).[118]

Most significant to historical sound studies is the fact that Dafydd ap Gwilym's life spans the invention and dissemination of the mechanical clock.[119] In Europe, the first clock was set up in Italy in 1335, and the first in Britain in about 1370, around the same time as the earliest attestation of this meaning of MW cloc and ME clokke.[120] Remarkably, this new-

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[115] '[Y] glêr' means *the monks* on this occasion but see Chapter Two for its more common reference to the Clêr minstrel poets.
[116] Even clocks themselves were rarely accurate to more than half-an-hour in each twenty-four hours. See: Christopher Powell, 'Dafydd ap Gwilym's "The Clock" and the turret clock at Llanthony Priory', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* 26 (2020), 9–20 (p. 14).
[117] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '34. Yr Haf', ll. 21–24.
[118] Dafydd ap Gwilym. '44. Yr Ehedydd', ll. 1–2.
[119] John Scattergood, 'Writing the Clock: The Reconstruction of Time in the Late Middle Ages', *European Review* 11.4 (2003), 453–74.
[120] *GPC*, s.v. *cloc*[1]; *MED*, s.v. *clok(ke*. See: Scattergood, 'Writing the Clock', pp. 460, 465; and Gareth Evans, 'Cywydd y Cloc', *Y Traethodydd* 137 (1982), 7–16 (p. 7).

fangled machine that had only recently been invented features more than once in Dafydd's poetry.[121] Its sound clearly had a significant impression on him, conforming to the theories of R. Murray Schafer, and later Bruce R. Smith, that foreign sounds are heard more clearly than native sounds, even if the latter are louder than the former.[122]

It should be noted that the sound of a mechanical clock was not all that different from the sound of a bell. The fourteenth-century clock did not visually display the time at all; it had no face or arms. Instead, it simply rang a bell, which was its primary sound, though its cogs and mechanics may have added one or two ticking-like noises.[123] One of the most inspired usages of bell-chimes in our corpus demonstrates this intrinsic connection between clocks and bells. In a request poem, Huw ap Dafydd (*fl. c.* 1526–80) asks one Lewys ab Ithel for a bow and arrow, which he describes as a highly valuable item, something money could not buy:

> Ni chaid ef, a choed iefanc,
> ir ei bwys, o aur y banc.
> Gan hael haws, gwn hwylio hyn,
> garu mawl nog aur melyn.
> Eurgloch fal bwa, arglwydd,
> glân a roi o galon rwydd.[124]
>
> (*It cannot be acquired, [a bow made] with young trees, / fresh its weight, with gold from the bank. / With a generous [one], I know how to navigate this, / it is easier to woo [with] praise than [with] yellow gold. / A pure, golden bell, lord, / to give with a generous heart.*)

As we heard earlier, a golden bell was perceived as the most precious and sonorous bell of all, and so its exceptionally shrill cry evokes the 'twang' of the bow as it fires an arrow. Significantly, this bell is later attached to its mechanical, timekeeping ringer, the clock:

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[121] There are only two surviving examples of medieval Welsh clocks, both are in parts only. The earliest consists of the foliot and 2 stone weights of a turret clock at Llanthony Priory, an Augustinian priory near Brecon and Abergavenny, dating from the mid fourteenth century, 'probably concurrent with the first known clock in England, at St Alban's Abbey, and older than the three still extant mechanical clocks at Salisbury, Wells, and Exeter Cathedrals'. (See: Powell, 'Dafydd ap Gwilym's "The Clock"', p. 10). The second consists of fifteenth-century parts of the frame of a turret clock from St Davids Cathedral, dating otherwise from the seventeenth century (See: Iorwerth C. Peate, *Clock and Watch Makers in Wales*, 2nd edn (Cardiff: National Museum of Wales/Welsh Folk Museum, 1960), pp. 89–90.) For a description of the verge-and-foliot mechanism, see: Carlo M. Cipolla, *Clocks and Culture, 1300–1700* (London: Collins, 1967), pp. 39–40, 111–12.
[122] Schafer, *The Soundscape*, p. 211; Smith, 'Listening to the Wild Blue Yonder'.
[123] Note, however, that the clock desccribed by Dafydd ap Gwilym in 'Y Cloc' (*The Clock*, discussed in detail below) may have been an exception: 'Och i'r cloc yn ochr y clawdd / du ei ffriw a'm deffroawdd' (*Damn that black-face clock / in the side of the wall which woke me up.*). Dafydd ap Gwilym, '64. Y Cloc', *DG.net*, ll. 1–2.
[124] Huw ap Dafydd ap Llywelyn ap Madog, 'Erchi Bwa gan Lewys ab Ithel', *GHD*, ll. 43–48.

Lluosog yw y llais a gân;
pob ergyd fal pib organ,
mal cloc bêr ei lleferydd
yn nodi awr yn y dydd.[125]

(*Multifarious is the voice that sings; / each strike like an organ's pipe, / like a sweet-voiced clock / marking the hour during the day.*)

We might not think of a clock as being 'sweet-voiced', and this is because clocks have lost their once inseparable connection to bells, the sweetness of which is more understandable. The Welsh lexicon demonstrates this semantic connection: both 'cloch' (*bell*) and 'cloc' (*clock*) ultimately derive from L clocca (*bell*).[126] Indeed, such is the sonority of the 'clock' on this occasion that A. Cynfael Lake wondered whether 'cloc' was a scribal error for 'cloch'.[127]

Yet, despite the close relationship between the sounds of clocks and bells, clocks did affect Welsh poets in a distinctly audible manner, even though their sound consisted of their bells more than their ticking.[128] The fact that the clock's sound was perceived as a new sound can be deduced from a poem attributed to Dafydd ap Gwilym dedicated entirely to it and its sound: 'Y Cloc' (*The Clock*). In this sense, the clock's ticking and chiming was not yet a 'keynote sound', which we define as 'a regular sound underpinning other more fugitive or novel sound events'; the clock *was* the 'novel sound'.[129]

While the poem's ultimate narrative is Dafydd's oneiric adventure to visit his beloved, it is almost entirely taken up by the clock's noise disrupting Dafydd's sleep and scaring away his dream girl. As we shall see, elsewhere, Dafydd hears the clock as a pleasant sound. However, here, it is undoubtedly an irritating noise. Why this is so relates to the all-important

[125] Huw ap Dafydd ap Llywelyn ap Madog, 'Erchi Bwa gan Lewys ab Ithel', *GHD*, ll. 57–60.
[126] This was borrowed directly, in the case of 'cloch', and indirectly via ME clok in the case of 'cloc'. *GPC*, s.v. *cloch*, *cloc*.
[127] Huw ap Dafydd ap Llywelyn ap Madog, 'Erchi Bwa gan Lewys ab Ithel', *GHD*, p. 89.
[128] No explicit reference to ticking appears in Welsh poetry until the late sixteenth century when a clock owned by John Trefor (d. 1589) is described by at least four poets, including William Llŷn (1534/5–1580) who seems to compare its sound to drips from a pan: 'fal padell a dafnau' (*like a pan with drips*). NLW MS 5272 C. fol. 163b. This short poem and others are cited in Peate, *Clock and Watch Makers in Wales*, p. 16.
[129] Schafer, *The Soundscape*, p. 48.

concepts of control outlined in the previous section. The detailed relevant passage bears reproducing in full:

> Och i'r cloc yn ochr y clawdd
> du ei ffriw a'm deffroawdd.
> Difwyn fo'i ben a'i dafod
> a'i ddwy raff iddo a'i rod,
> a'i bwysau, pellennau pŵl,
> a'i fuarthau a'i forthwl,
> a'i hwyaid yn tybiaid dydd,
> a'i felinau aflonydd.
> Cloc anfwyn mal clec ynfyd
> cobler brwysg, cabler ei bryd,
> cleddau eurych celwyddawg,
> cnecian ci yn cnocian cawg,
> mynychglap mewn mynachglos
> melin ŵyll yn malu nos.
> A fu sadler, crwper crach,
> neu deiler anwadalach?
> Oer ddilen ar ei ddolef
> am fy nwyn yma o nef.[130]
>
> (*Damn that black-face clock / in the side of the wall which woke me up. / May its head and its tongue be useless, / and its two ropes and its wheel, / and its weights, blunt lumps, / and its casings and its hammer, / and its ducks which think it's day, / and its restless machinery. / Nasty clock like the clack / of a drunken cobbler, a curse on its face, / sword of a mendacious tinker, / the gnashing sound of a dog striking a basin, / the frequent clap of a phantom mill / grinding by night in a monastery cloister. / Was there ever a crazier saddler / (scabby strap) or tiler? / May its cry meet an evil fate / for taking me from heaven here.*)

The meticulous description of the clock's mechanics, with references to ropes, wheels, and weights, implies an intimate understanding of the contraption. The Science Museum's description of one of Britain's earliest surviving and functioning clocks, the clock in Salisbury Cathedral of 1386, paints a helpful picture:

> To the naked eye it appears to be an open box with teethed wheels inside, its sides about a yard long. Attached to the twelve iron bars that make up the outside of the box there are other bars, creating a sort of wall, dividing the box as if it had two compartments. In one are the wheels that tick and measure the time; in the other are the wheels that cause the striking of the bell. It has no face or arms, only by striking the bell are the hours announced.[131]

[130] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '64. Y Cloc', *DG.net*, ll. 21–38.

[131] Cited in Evans, p. 10. The turret clock described by Dafydd is likely to have been much smaller than the Salisbury clock, similar to, though perhaps not as small as, the following early German foliot clock, which gives a good sense of what Dafydd might have seen and heard: Schantall Schmitz, *Waagbalkenuhr - Foliot - Verge Clock*, YouTube, 12 December 2013 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugG1T5tBIfU>.

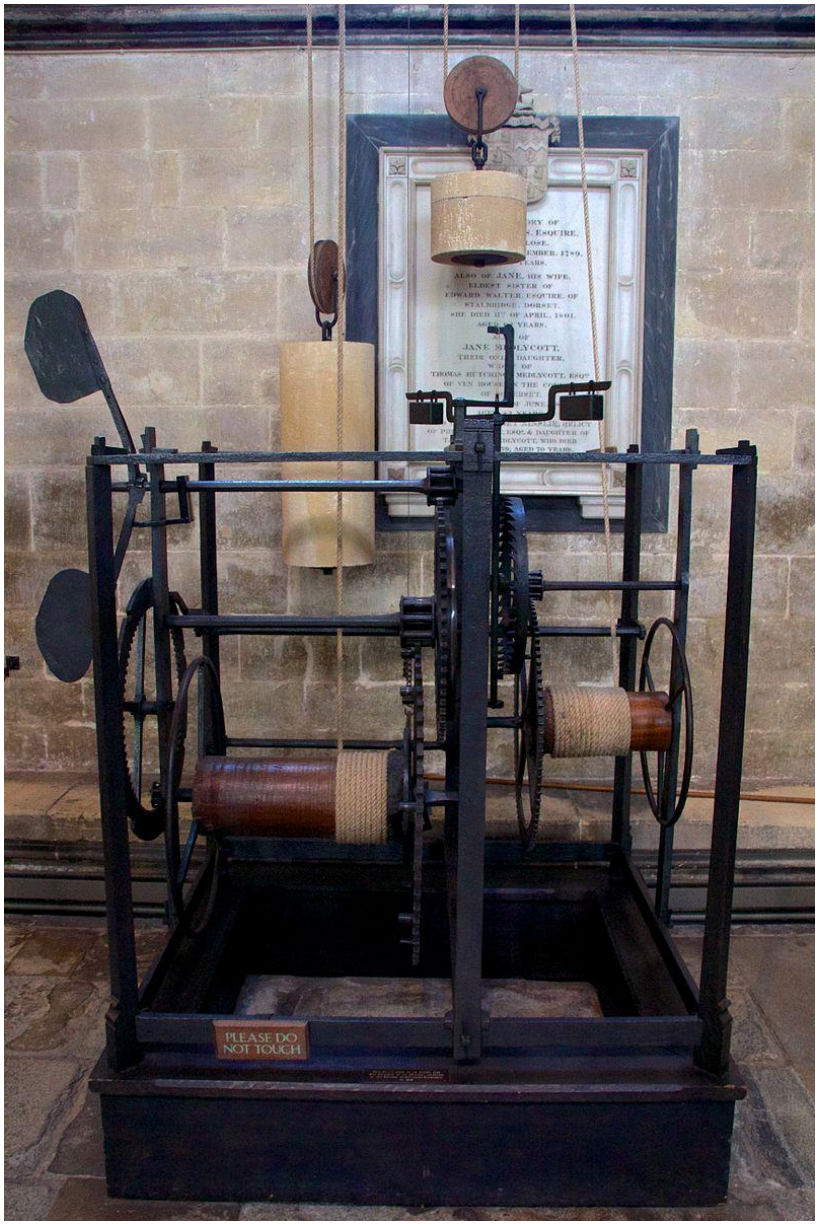

Figure 4: Salisbury Cathedral clock (CC-BY-SA-4.0, Mike Peel <www.mikepeel.net>).

At a time when clocks were rare in Britain, Dafydd's description is so impressively accurate in its depiction of the reality of early clocks that Gareth Evans, and later Dafydd Johnston, cast doubt upon his authorship, maintaining that the poem must have been written much later than the poet's plausible floruit.[132] John Scattergood, on the other hand, is happy to accept the poem as Dafydd's, taking that Dafydd was writing until about 1380, which would

[132] Evans, 'Cywydd y Cloc', p. 10; For Dafydd Johnston's arguments, see the explanatory notes at: Dafydd ap Gwilym, '64. Y Cloc', *DG.net*.

mean he could have seen a large public clock such as this in England if not Wales.[133] More recently, Christopher Powell argued that Dafydd saw the turret clock at Llanthony Priory in the 1340s, 'the only known turret clock in Wales in the fourteenth century'.[134]

Questions of authorship and of how exactly the poet may have seen and heard a clock aside, one thing is certain: the sound of this clock is placed within a distinctly urban soundscape. This clock was clearly perceived to be part and parcel of an urbanising Wales. The first mechanical clocks were public clocks and Dafydd indisputably associates this public sound with its public arena, populated by drunken cobblers, mendacious 'tinkers', clattering mills, and unstable saddlers.[135] The noisy associations of the urban world will be explored in subsequent chapters, proving vital to our understanding of how the Clêr poets and the English language in particular were perceived. But why were these noisy individuals applied to clocks? Why were clocks perceived to be noisy, and was this always the case?

The evidence elsewhere in Dafydd's poetry suggests not. While the sound and the presence of a clock was clearly a curiosity – each one was a unique, handmade, expensive display of wealth – it was in no way exclusively perceived as disruptively loud. To the contrary, its regularity and constancy offered a welcome conceit to praise those same two virtues.

That the clock was perceived as something that regulated sound came from the fact that with its invention, for the first time ever, time could be subdivided into equal parts.[136] This mathematical side of the clock might be what lies behind Lewys Glyn Cothi's phrase in his prophesy for Dafydd Goch ap Meredudd's descendants: 'calcio bûm wrth y cloc bach / dy oriau a'th bedeirach' (*near the small clock, I was calculating / your hours and your four lineages*).[137]

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[133] Scattergood, 'Writing the Clock', pp. 469–70.
[134] Powell, 'Dafydd ap Gwilym's "The Clock"', p. 13. Previous theories regarding the clock's location postulated Rouen (Evans, 'Cywydd y Cloc', p. 14), and Brecon more generally (Peate, *Clock and Watch Makers in Wales*, pp. 14–5; and '64. Y Cloc', *DG.net*).
[135] Peate, *Clock and Watch Makers in Wales*, pp. 2–3.
[136] Scattergood, 'Writing the Clock', p. 454.
[137] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '174. Ach Dafydd Goch ap Maredudd', *GLGC*, ll. 31–32.

Although 'cloc' could be carrying its older sense of any time-measuring object, including the perhaps fittingly astrological sundials and astrolabes, the mention of 'oriau' leads one to imagine a ticking clock that chimes a bell on the hour.[138] Indeed, this measured beating was the fundamental distinction between the mechanical clock and its predecessors, the sundial and the water clock. For Lewys, the clock was a dependable object by which one could visualise incessant time. (Lewys makes no mention of the clock's sound in his poem.)

This admiration of the twin virtues of regularity and constancy appears in Dafydd ap Gwilym's elegy to friend and fellow-poet, Gruffudd ab Adda. Dafydd describes the poignant loss felt when Gruffudd was accidentally killed by a friend's sword by turning again to birds, drawing an analogy between their constant birdsong, the clock's constant ticking and chiming, and Gruffudd's reliably beautiful poetry. He imagines how an apple grove would be at a great loss should its nightingale be suddenly shot down by a bowman. During their lifetime, both Gruffudd and the nightingale sang sweetly and regularly:

> Rhagor mawr ger mur gwyngalch
> lle bo berllanllwyn llu balch
> bod yn galw is afalwydd
> eos yn nos ac yn nydd,
> cathl olaes edn coeth loywlef,
> cau ei nyth, cerdd cyw o nef;
> euraid ylf ar we dalfainc,
> orlais goeth ar irlas gainc.[139]
>
> (*It is a great splendour by a whitewashed wall, / where there is the orchard grove of a splendid company, / that a nightingale sings under apple trees / by day and by night, / fine clear-voiced bird with flowing tune, / cosy his nest, song of a chick from heaven; / golden his beak [and] woven songs at the high table, / fine sounding clock on fresh green branch.*)

Unlike its behaviour in the real world, this imagined nightingale sings during the day as well as at night. This echoes the mechanical clock's great advantage over the sundial, which

[138] Ieuan ap Rhydderch's 'cloc pres, gwirles, ac orlaes' (*a brass clock, true benefit, and a dial*) refers to the astrolabe and quadrant, used in his astrological studies as part of the quadrivium at Oxford, and there also exists a fifteenth- or sixteenth-century anonymous cywydd requesting an hourglass. These are not discussed here, since they are not mechanical clocks, and their sounds are not mentioned. See: Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '3. Cywydd y Fost', *GIRh*, l. 74; and Ann Parry Owen, 'Cywydd gofyn cloc (*c*. 1502)', *Llên Cymru* 35 (2012), 3–18. See also: William Linnard and Ann Parry Owen, 'Horological Requests in Early Welsh poems', *Antiquarian Horology* 33.5 (2012), 631–36. For astrology in medieval Welsh literature see Mark Williams, *Fiery Shapes: Celestial Portents and Astrology in Ireland and Wales 700–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Pres, 2010), esp. pp. 125–27.
[139] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '21. Marwnad Gruffudd ab Adda', *DG.net*, ll. 1–8.

only worked in daylight, and over the water clock, which was equally finite and dependant on the water's flow rate. The new clock was governed by a regular motion that repeated itself over and over again. Just like the clock, Gruffudd's poetry and the nightingale's song offered a twenty-four-hour harmonious public service.

In one sense, Dafydd's approval of this new instrument's sound is expected as it is not uncommon for the mechanical sounds of industry to be admirable, particularly during the initial phases when they signify progress. Mark M. Smith demonstrated this perception by analysing the pride that nineteenth-century U.S. industrialists took in the noises that filled their cities, compared to the common twenty-first-century preference for rural silence, having grown tired of the old sound of noisy cities.[140]

Dafydd's admiration for the regularity and constancy of the clock's new sound may also dwell behind a related auditory image in another of his poems, 'Talu Dyled' (*Paying a Debt*). In this poem, Dafydd complains that he has been singing the constant praises of Morfudd the length and breadth of Gwynedd and yet she still has not returned his affection.

> Rhoais iddi, rhyw swyddau,
> rhugl foliant o'r meddiant mau,
> gwrle telyn ac orloes,
> gormodd rhodd; gŵr meddw a'i rhoes.[141]
>
> (*I gave her, some duties, / fluent praise from my possession, / the voice of a harp and a clock, / too much of a gift; a drunkard gave it.*)

The allusions to the voice of the harp and the 'orloes' (< ME orloge, *clock*) may seem elusive or trivial at first. However, by recognizing the contemporary perceptions of the clock's sound as regular and constant, it becomes a fitting image for Dafydd's incessant praise, just as the nightingale's song was incessant in Dafydd's elegy to Gruffudd ab Adda. This reading is corroborated by the role of the harp. More often than not, poets performed their verse to the subtle accompaniment of the harp or crwth. The instrument's melody was known as a 'cainc'

[140] Smith, *Listening to nineteenth-century America*.
[141] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '99. Talu Dyled', *DG.net*, ll. 9–12.

(*branch*), and while we know frustratingly little about these 'ceinciau', as discussed in Chapter Four, it would appear that they had a steady, regular rhythm. Thus, both the harp and the clock chime well together in this depiction of constant praise, as they do once more in Dafydd's 'Y Gainc' (*The Melody*): 'llafurlef tant, llef orlais' (*an industrious cry of a harp string, the sound of a clock*).[142]

With this in mind, the clock's regularity may be evoked in Dafydd's earlier comparison in 'Talu Dyled' between his own voice and that of the cuckoo: 'ni chân gywydd, lonydd lw, / nac acen onid "Gwcw!"' (*it does not sing a cywydd, happy oath, / nor an accent except 'Cuckoo!'*).[143] Resisting any anachronistic connections to a cuckoo clock, it seems as though Dafydd is reviving the analogical relationship between constant birdsong and the constant movement of a clock.

Theoretically, then, the clock was an endlessly functional machine, and its constant, regulated movement was admired by Dafydd and others. So, why the change of heart in 'Y Cloc'? The answer may well lie in the fact that these very qualities were, on this occasion, perceived to be absent. That is to say, this was heard as a faulty clock.

It seems crucial that this clock is described as 'anwadal' (*unstable*). In all its metallic materiality the clock was ultimately an inanimate, irrational noise machine; low on the scale of intelligibility explored in greater detail in Chapter Two. Moreover, it resided in or near town centres: it was the sound of the town, which Dafydd held in far lower regard than the natural harmony of his beloved 'deildy'. The clock's one redemptive quality was that its sound was regulated and constant, and yet this particular clock – whether it really existed or not – did not

[142] Thomas Parry's edition is used here, as the copy it uses – NLW MS Peniarth 54, fol. 73–75 – is the only one to highlight the harp and clock connection. Dafydd ap Gwilym, '142. Y Gainc', in *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym*, ed. Thomas Parry (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), l. 27. The editors of *DG.net* opt for the readings found in most other copies: 'llef eurloyw fygr llafurlais' (*the fine sound of a persistent voice, bright and splendid*), Dafydd ap Gwilym, '91. Y Gainc', *DG.net*, l. 27.
[143] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '99. Talu Dyled', *DG.net*, ll. 35–36.

possess these virtues. It was defective, and thus it had lost its privileged reputation as a praiseworthy sound.[144]

The irregularity of a faulty clock is also what triggers the auditory image presented by Guto'r Glyn and a common pun on the word 'tafod', meaning both a person's *tongue* and a bell's *hammer*, also known as a *uvula*. (Incidentally, as 'uvula' is the modern technical term for the small tongue-like appendage that hangs from the back of one's palate, known in some west Wales dialects as 'tafod bach' (lit. *small tongue*), the wordplay has come full circle.)[145] The description appears in a seemingly standard eulogy to one Abbot Rhys ap Dafydd from Strata Florida abbey, but which is in fact a fascinating discussion between the poet and his tongue.[146] Guto apologises for not having visited the Abbot recently and for having missed a prescheduled appointment on some feast day or other. In excusing himself, Guto blames his tongue for telling lies and making false promises. Our interest lies in the wording of Guto's reprimand:

> Tydi a ddyly'r dial,
> y tafawd teilyngwawd tal,
> cloc tewfydr, cliced dwyfoch,
> cleddau cerdd celwyddawg coch.[147]
>
> (*You are the one who deserves punishment, / you jaunty tongue with dignified song, / clock of thick metre, clicket of the cheeks, / red mendacious sword of song.*)

The audio-visual likeness of the bell and hammer to the mouth and tongue is adapted to the clock as we are now confronted with cheeks and clicket. Yet, it is the 'tewfydr' of this clock that is most telling. As a compound of 'tew' (*thick [speech]*, *inarticulate*, or *numerous*) and 'mydr' (*metre*), the rhythm of this clock is either nonsensical or dangerously varied.[148] These are the exact opposite of the qualities that usually give the clock its virtuous, regulated

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[144] For the possibility that the use of 'anwadal' refers to the unreliability of medieval clocks in general, see: Powell, 'Dafydd ap Gwilym's "The Clock"', p. 14.
[145] *GPC*, s.v. *tafod bach (fach)*.
[146] This literary topos is also found in the works of two other fifteenth-century poets. See: Eurig Salisbury, 'Tair Cerdd Dafod', *Dwned* 13 (2007), 139–68.
[147] Guto'r Glyn, '7. Moliant i'r Abad Rhys ap Dafydd o Ystrad-fflur', *GG.net*, ll. 13–16.
[148] Note that 'tafod tew' can refer to a form of lisping or rhotacism. See: *GPC*, s.v. *tafod tew (dew)*.

sound. A clock that does not follow a regular 'metre' is just like every other metallic noise: a 'vox confusa' (a *confused* or *nonsignifying sound*) that carries no meaning.[149] Guto goes further with this metaphor by calling his tongue a liar: the 'tincr', to whom the clock is compared, is 'celwyddawg'. Unlike the usual reliable sound of a functioning clock, we are here dealing with unreliable speech.

There are lies in Dafydd's 'Y Cloc' too, as there is deception in the very structure of the clock and in the sounds it thus mimics. As pointed out by Andrew Breeze, Dafydd takes a marvellously creative view on a piece in the clock's contraption called the 'foliot', which he describes as 'hwyaid yn tybiaid dydd'. The foliot was a bar with its ends bent upward and forward; the weights suspended from these ends moved the bar from side to side. To Dafydd, these bent ends looked like the heads of a bird, its constant waggle mimicking a duck's waddle, all cleverly playing on the Old French use of the term 'foliot': a dummy bird used in fowling to draw larks into the fowler's net.[150] Therefore, the very make-up of this faulty, dream-disrupting clock betrays its mendacious character, as it feigns to be the natural, avian timekeeper whose singing of the hours Dafydd elsewhere adored.

The fact that the clock is 'unbalanced' deprives it of what gave it a sense of rationality. Without its balance, it is no better than the host of urban noisemakers that work near it. These are all craftsmen who labour in metallic lines of work that echo their own irrational speech, like those that featured in the fifteenth-century anonymous English poem known as 'Complaint against the Blacksmith':

> Swart smeked, smeþes smateryd wyth smoke
> dryue me to deth wyth den of here dints
> swech noys on nyghtes ne herd men neuer.[151]

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[149] Martin Irvine, 'Medieval Grammatical Theory and Chaucer's *House of Fame*', *Speculum* 60.4 (1985), 850–76.
[150] Andrew Breeze, 'Dafydd ap Gwilym's "The Clock" and "foliot" "decoy bird" in "The Owl and the Nightingale"', *Notes and Queries* 40.4 (1993), 439–40.
[151] London, British Library, MS Arundel 292. See also Elizabeth Salter, 'A Complaint against Blacksmiths,' *Literature and History* 5.2 (1979), 194–215.

(*black-smoked smiths, smattered with smoke / drive me to death with the din of their blows / such a noise at night men have never heard.*)

These craftspeople are connected to unnatural noises, with the poem deriding their incomprehensible speech as they 'gnauen and gnacchen [and] gronys to gyder' (*gnaw, gnash, and groan together*), which soon collapses into reduplicative nonsense syllables as they 'lus bus, las das, rowtyn be rowr' (*lus bus las das [they] roar in a row*). The unpleasant noise of the urban auditory landscape also bleeds into Dafydd's portrayal of his craftspeople as the language is similarly littered with alliterative, hard-stop consonance. In this reading then, the fact that Dafydd evokes the contemplative, meaningful silence of the 'mynachglos' seems to further insult the language of these urban townspeople, highlighting exactly what their uncommunicative sound is not: a quiet calm punctuated only by a regulated, holy peal.

*

One final connection between bells and time returns us to the aforementioned physicality of bellringing, tiptoeing between a sound in the external world and a sound in the internal mind. The keynote sound of bells with relation to death could be regarded as the final sound that 'calls time' on someone's life. In his old age, Guto'r Glyn became blind. During that time, so John Jones Gellilyfdy tells us in an early seventeenth-century note, Guto was taken to a monastery to live out his final years. Jones relays an anecdote concerning how Guto once slept in late and was informed by a young lad attending to him that it was past mid-day:

> Ac yno y dywad Gvtto pam na chlowswn i y klych yn kanv: pam na chlowswn i ganv yr organ: sef a attebodd i was: ef a ganwyd y klych yn ddigon vchel ac a ganwyd yr organ hevyd: chwi a allessech i klowed.[152]
>
> (*And then Guto said 'why had I not heard the bells peal? Why had I not heard the organ playing?' His servant answered thus: 'the bells did ring loud enough and so did the organ: you could have heard them'.*)

According to Jones and other copyists, this despondent epiphany led Guto to compose the following 'englyn' (a four line poetic form), possibly his last:

[152] NLW MS 3039B.

Gwae'r gwan dau oedran nid edrych, – ni chwardd,
ni cherdda led y rhych,
gwae ni wŷl yn gynilwych,
gwae ni chlyw organ a chlych![153]

(*Woe to the weak man, two lifetimes old, who doesn't look, – who doesn't laugh, / who doesn't walk further than the furrow's width, / woe to him who doesn't see distinctly, / woe to him who doesn't hear an organ and bells!*)

It was an auditory event, or lack thereof, that inspired this poem. According to one reading, we are dealing with the orderly, time-keeping bells of the monastery, such as those of the Benedictines or of Carmarthen Priory. However, I should like to raise the question of the death-knell. Could Guto not instead be referring to 'hearing the bells of death'? Might this be an alternative or at least additional reason why Guto is so frustrated that he could not hear the bells? He wants to die, but his time has not yet come.

This notion of the final chiming of the hours is one of many meanings entangled in an auditory image that Tudur Aled includes in his praise of Denbigh nobleman, Roger Salisbury. He concludes his eulogy with the following wish:

Hir yw oed derw, yn hwyr y tarioch,
hyd y tywyn sêr, hyd y clywer cloch!
Hyd hynny pery, wedi paroch, – sôn
yn oes y dynion nis adwaenoch.[154]

(*Long is the life of an oak, may you remain until late in the day, / as long as the stars shine, until the/so long as a bell is heard! / Until then shall your fame – once you continue/pass away/change quality – / live on in the age of men whom you shall not know.*)

'Hyd' can be a noun meaning *a duration of time*. Yet it can also be a preposition and, as with most prepositions, it can be somewhat flexible in meaning, meaning both *so long as* and *until*; this is crucial to the genius of this englyn, since it offers three readings. Read as *so long as bells are ringing*, the englyn suggests eternity in a seemingly unique auditory image; read as *until the death-knell is heard*, it implies old age and death; and read as *until the bells of heaven are heard*, it implies a Christian death and ascension. This is a fitting final example of

[153] Guto'r Glyn, '119. Ei englyn olaf', *GG.net*, ll. 1–4.
[154] Tudur Aled, '5. Awdl i Roser Salbri o Ddinbych', *GTA* I, ll. 67–70.

how, by failing to tune into the auditory imagination of late medieval Welshmen and women, we run the risk of falling deaf to the rich imagery offered in their poetry.

IX. Conclusion

Bells were a keynote sound of medieval Wales. As such, they reflected a wide horizon of meanings. Not only did they serve a practical purpose in delineating church jurisdictions, but they emitted a holy, protective sound. This, then, was the reality of bellringing that poets used in countless ways in their poetic imagery, most notably in order to praise individuals and describe abstract concepts, such as Hell. Their use in timekeeping was a further rich source that poets mined in order to describe several different peoples and situations. In all these metaphors of bellringing, there is a sense of control; the sound of bells – and clocks – was praiseworthy and useful since it was constant and regular. When it was not so, it could be used to describe unpraiseworthy situations and individuals. The importance of this binary continues in all subsequent chapters, starting with two on the sound of language.

Chapter Two

The Sound of Language: Welsh

I. Introduction

'1.5 Dylid anelu fel rheol at ieithwedd syml ond cywir, ac at ynganu eglur ond naturiol'
(*1.5 As a rule, simple yet correct language should be used, with clear and natural pronunciation.*)

– S4C's current language guidelines[1]

Barbra, daughter of John Brent of Cossington (Somerset), was the wife of Siors Mathau MP (d. 1557) of the Mathew family of Glamorgan. Little else is known about Barbra, apart from one detail: she had excellent Welsh. Lewys Morgannwg, a prolific sixteenth-century poet, spends the majority of his eulogy to her husband, praising her instead, and specifically her speech: 'dilediaith di-ŵyl ydyw, / ym mrig iaith Gymräeg yw' (*without patois, brave is she, / she is at the height of the Welsh language*).[2] This is not an uncommon description. Mathau Goch is described as a 'Cymro da ei Gymräeg' (*A Welshman with excellent Welsh*), and Sir Huw Iolo is 'Syr Huw, dda ei Gymräeg' (*Sir Huw, good his Welsh*).[3]

What does this mean? What does having 'good Welsh' mean? Did it mean having grammatically correct Welsh? Did it mean speaking in a certain tone, or using certain words? This chapter explores how 'good Welsh' involved all of these features and presents the case that the connection between all descriptions of good speech and good language use is a sense of control. As always, to appreciate what is meant by this medieval sense of control we must strive to listen with late medieval Welsh ears.

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[1] 'Canllawiau Iaith', *S4C/Cynhyrchu*, April 2015 <https://www.s4c.cymru/cy/cynhyrchu/page/1154/canllawiau/>; 'Language Guidelines', *S4C/Production*, May 2022 <https://www.s4c.cymru/en/production/page/1154/guidelines/>.
[2] Lewys Morgannwg, '5. Moliant Siors Mathau, Radur, a Barbra ei wraig', *GLM* I, ll. 39–40.
[3] Guto'r Glyn, '3. Moliant i Fathau Goch o Faelor', *GG.net*, l. 71; Lewys Glyn Cothi, '154. I Ofyn Cyfrwy a Harnais March gan Syr Huw Iolo a Hywel ab Ieuan', *GLGC*, ll. 5–6.

*

Chapters Two and Three follow many sound studies scholars in beginning with the premise that language is sound. A particularly inspiring demonstration of this fact is the sound art piece by experimental musician Alvin Lucier, *I Am Sitting in a Room* (1969). In this piece, Lucier sits in a room and speaks a paragraph into a microphone that instantly plays the sound back into the same room on repeat, thereby creating a feedback loop. The effect on the listener's perception of Lucier's English is explained in the first half of the paragraph itself:

> I am sitting in a room different from the one you are in now. I am recording the sound of my speaking voice and I am going to play it back into the room again and again until the resonant frequencies of the room reinforce themselves so that any semblance of my speech, with perhaps the exception of rhythm, is destroyed.[4]

Broadly, it is this breakdown of a semblance of speech that will be explored in this chapter on Welsh and the following chapter on non-Welsh languages. As we shall see, the perception of language as nonlinguistic sound is particularly important when understanding medieval Welsh poets' presentation of non-Welsh languages, which I shall henceforth refer to as 'foreign languages'. Although the principal languages studied were not necessarily 'foreign' to Wales in the late medieval period – English, Latin, and Irish – nor in the modern period in the case of English, because I am using this term to describe languages that a listener did not speak or understand and languages that medieval Welsh listeners would have considered to be 'foreign', it remains a convenient and accurate term. However, the perception of language as

[4] There is no one definitive edition of *I am Sitting in a Room* given that it exists as a published score, as commercial recordings, as live performances, and as museum exhibitions. The most recent recording with Alvin Lucier's voice, before he passed away in 2021, is Alvin Lucier, *Alvin Lucier: Two Circles*, (Mode Records, 2016); the text is taken from Alvin Lucier and Douglas Simon, *Chambers* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1980), pp. 30–31. The piece was composed and first recorded in 1969 at Brandeis Electronic Music Studio, Brandeis University (Waltham, MA), but Lucier discarded this recording because he did not like how it sounded. Therefore, the earliest surviving recording was his second attempt the following year: Alvin Lucier, *I am sitting in a room*, (Source Records, 1970). For more on the history and afterlife of this piece, see Daniel Fox, 'The Modes of Intervention in Alvin Lucier's *I Am Sitting In A Room*' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, The City University of New York, 2020), esp. pp. 75–82. Although its performance details cannot be traced exactly, the following version provides a useful demonstration: A channel, *Alvin Lucier - I Am Sitting in a Room*, YouTube, 24 June 2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhtO4DsSazc&t=59s>.

nonlinguistic sound is also an important question when considering standards of diction in a language that these listeners did speak and understand: Welsh.

In this sense, I am also following Adin E. Lears's study of Middle English mystical writing, which finds its most complete expression in *World of Echo: Noise and Knowing in Late Medieval England*. Lears, who, in turn, takes her lead from Veit Erlmann's work on resonance and the associative and sympathetic properties of sound, notes that 'throughout this book I am conceiving of noise broadly as an extrasemantic experience and expression of sound'.[5] For the next two chapters, switching Lears's 'noise' to 'language', this is exactly how I shall be conceiving of language: an extrasemantic experience and expression of sound.[6]

This conception of language as sound is particularly necessary when gauging language standards in the medieval period, since what made Welsh 'good' or 'bad' is necessarily a sound studies question because language usage was, for most vernacular speakers at this point in time, a spoken language. This means that these two chapters will not be concerned with orthographical concerns, such as correct spelling. Written Welsh was yet to be fully standardised even towards the very end of this thesis's timeframe when the language made it to the printing press. That there was little consensus on 'good' and 'bad' *written* Welsh even in the late sixteenth century is demonstrated by Humphrey Llwyd's amusingly pompous remarks regarding the spelling of Welsh /ɬ/: 'We have also a peculiar Letter to our selues, whiche the ruder sort fashion lyke LL, but the better learned wryte with LH'.[7]

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[5] Lears, *WE*, p. 4. See also: Erlmann, *Reason and Resonance*.

[6] It is extremely difficult for native speakers to imagine how their own language would sound if they were not able to understand it. Nonetheless, there have been some artistic efforts to demonstrate this perception, most notably Brian Fairbairn and Karl Eccleston's 2011 short play *Skwerl*: Brian and Karl, *How English sounds to non-English speakers*, YouTube, 8 October 2011 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vt4Dfa4fOEY>, with the script later published as a post on their Tumblr account: @briandkarl, *SKWERL*, tumblr.com, 9 February 2015 <https://www.tumblr.com/brianandkarl/110560981278/we-get-a-lot-of-emails-asking-for-the-skwerl>. See also Adriano Celentano's 1973 single *Prisencolinensinainciusol* composed in American English from a monoglot Italian speaker's perspective: Adriano Celentano, *Nostalrock* (Clan Celentano, 1973).

[7] Humphrey Llwyd, *The Breviary of Britain*, trans. Thomas Twyne, ed. Philip Schwyzer (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2013), p. 52.

Llwyd's comment comes from a short grammatical tract at the beginning of his history of Wales – *Commentarioli Britannicae descriptionis fragmentum* (1572) and its popular English translation by Thomas Twyne, *The Breuiary of Britayne* (1573) – and is part of the wider humanist trend of seeking to find order in the Welsh language by publishing grammars, dictionaries, and pronunciation guides. But Welsh grammars existed before the advent of printing and go back a few centuries before that to a series of texts known in Welsh as 'gramadegau'r penceirddiaid' and in English the bardic grammars. These texts will be the second principal body of material that I shall be drawing upon for the remainder of this thesis, along with the poetic corpus.

As seen in the above quotations, poets explicitly use the term 'Cymraeg da' (*good Welsh*). Before turning to examples of Welsh that would receive similar praise, and in order to fully appreciate the good features of such speech and language use, we begin by looking at what was perceived to be bad features. For this discussion I use the convenient term 'bad Welsh', though this is absent in both the poetic record and the bardic grammars themselves. We begin with 'bad Welsh', because, in many ways, this is an easier starting point since there are more detailed descriptions of 'bad Welsh' in the poetic corpus than there are of 'good Welsh'. Once these features have been outlined, we shall then turn to 'good Welsh', beginning with metaphorical descriptions, before turning to more detailed ones.

II. 'Bad Welsh': general features

The bardic grammars

The period 1300–1600 was a period of growing anxiety within the Welsh bardic order. The Edwardian Conquest in the late thirteenth century saw a new class of Welsh nobles now serving the English crown plugging the gap for poetic patronage left by the disbanded Welsh royal families. Despite this fruitful substitution, poets continued to express fears that an end to

their privileged way of life was on the horizon. They feared the new technology, new people, and new sounds that came with the urbanisation and anglicisation of Wales.[8] Traditional strict-metre poetry was in competition with minstrelsy, music, and many aspects of foreign culture, which was seen to undermine, sully, and ultimately threaten the high standards of Welsh bardism.

One effect was that these high standards were increasingly expressed and enforced among Welsh poets composing in strict metre. This displayed itself in certain metrical features, such as the increased use of the more demanding 'cynghanedd groes', but more clearly in the actual codification of these standards. This codification produced the aforementioned series of texts known as 'the bardic grammars'.[9] Copies of the texts proliferated as the Middle Ages came to a close. While parts of at least one section – that on letters – were likely compiled in the early thirteenth century, i.e., before the Edwardian Conquest, surviving copies date from *c.* 1330 and many more date from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It seems that two may have been compiled in the early fourteenth century; two later that century; four in the fifteenth century; and eighteen in the sixteenth century.[10]

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[8] *Urban Culture in Medieval Wales*, ed. Helen Fulton (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), passim.

[9] David N Klausner, 'The "Statute of Gruffudd ap Cynan": a window on late-medieval Welsh bardic practice', in *Gablánach in scélaigecht: Celtic studies in honour of Ann Dooley*, ed. Sarah Sheehan, Joanne Findon, Westley Follett (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013), pp. 265–75; On the increased use of 'cynghanedd groes', especially the 'cynghanedd groes o gyswllt', 'the most complex form of *cynghanedd*', see: *Poems of the Cywyddwyr: a selection of cywyddau, c. 1375–1525*, ed. Eurys I. Rowlands (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1976), p. xlvii.

[10] See: Michaela Jacques, 'The Reception and Transmission of the Bardic Grammars in Late Medieval and Early Modern Wales' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 2020), esp. pp. 28–29 and Table 0.2 (pp. 22–26). Jacques summarises many of the arguments concerning dating. On the early dating for circulation of parts of the grammars, see: T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'Bardic Grammars on Syllables', in *Celts, Gaels, and Britons: Studies in Language and Literature from Antiquity to the Middle Ages in honour of Patrick Sims-Williams*, ed. Erich Poppe, Simon Rodway, and Jenny Rowland (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022), pp. 239–56; T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'The Welsh bardic grammars on *Litterae*', in *Grammatica Gramadach and Gramadeg: Vernacular grammar and grammarians in medieval Ireland and Wales*, ed. Deborah Hayden and Paul Russell (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2016), pp. 149–60; and T. M. Charles-Edwards and Gifford Charles-Edwards, 'The continuation of Brut y Tywysogion in Peniarth ms. 20', in *Ysgrifau a cherddi cyflwynedig i Daniel Huws*, ed. Tegwyn Jones and Edmund Boleslav Fryde (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1994), pp. 293–305. For the most recent dating of the manuscripts that contain these copies, see: Daniel Huws, *A Repertory of Welsh Manuscripts and Scribes* (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales and University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2022).

Whether or not the grammars came into existence in some form – oral or written – before or after the great social changes brought about by the Conquest does not particularly matter for our purposes. This is because numerous copies are found from the fourteenth century onwards, confirming that they came to be – even if they were not so at the beginning – a manifestation of the literary classes' concern with the preservation and codification of traditional material, and of the re-definition of panegyric poetry after the loss of its traditional patrons.[11] This is also true even when considering the fact that they appear to be closer to philosophical essays on the nature of Welsh bardism rather than practical handbooks.[12]

This proliferation of copies coincides with a tightening of bardic discipline and standards, enabled in part by eisteddfodau at which rules would be agreed upon, and prizes given to the best poets. The most significant eisteddfodau were at Carmarthen in 1451 and Caerwys in 1523 and 1567, and the most significant document – other than the grammars – is one formulated at one of these eisteddfodau (the first Caerwys eisteddfod): a document known as *The Statute of Gruffudd ap Cynan*.

> There is no question that the profession of bard suffered a serious downturn in its reputation and social standing around the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century, and that the Statute of Gruffudd ap Cynan was intended to remedy this situation.[13]

The very conception of these events and institutions strongly suggests that there was a need at this time to outline the unique features of the professional poets, namely their education. Some form of bardic guild is likely to have existed in Wales in the central Middle Ages, but there is no clear evidence for this until the fifteenth century, where the eisteddfodau and the Statute can be viewed as the gradual formalisation of the bardic guild in light of social change.

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[11] Ann Matonis, 'Problems Relating to the Composition of the Early Bardic Grammars', in *Celtic Language, Celtic Culture: A Festschrift for Eric P. Hamp*, ed. Ann Matonis and Daniel Melia (Van Nuys, CA: Ford and Bailie, 1990), pp. 273–91 (pp. 287–88); Ann Matonis, 'Gutun Owain and His Orbit: The Welsh Bardic Grammar and Its Cultural Context in Northeast Wales', *Zeitschrift Für Celtische Philologie* 54 (2004), 154–69 (pp. 155–56); R. Geraint Gruffydd, 'Wales' Second Grammarian: Dafydd Ddu of Hiraddug', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 90 (1995), 1–28 (p. 20).
[12] Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr*, pp. 23–24.
[13] David N Klausner, 'The "Statute of Gruffudd ap Cynan"', p. 272.

One of their primary functions was to make it much harder for uneducated, amateur poets to practice the profession. The Statute describes in detail the six- to nine-year education that was required of a trainee poet, including what steps they must take and what poetic skills they must obtain, e.g., which metres they had mastered, before they could climb the profession's ladder to reach the highest position: 'pencerdd' (*chief poet*). This poet was expected to be able to compose in every metre, every genre, and know everything there was to know: 'Penkerdd a ddyly gwybod y kwbl' (*The pencerdd should know everything*).[14]

Human and nonhuman 'vox'

The grammars – compiled centuries before the Statute – are equally concerned with bardic education, and quite clearly for similar reasons: to dissuade uneducated poets from interfering with the professional poets' profession. Crucially for a sound studies analysis of medieval Wales, this formalisation of the education, discipline, and even moral standing of poets concerned standards of speech and diction. In other words, the sound of the poets' language.[15] In emphasising the education of professional poets in contrast with the uneducated verse of all other poets and entertainers, there is an emphasis on control; there was order to the true poet's verse and speech.

Indeed, in this sense, it may be significant that the bardic grammars are largely modelled on the texts of two early Latin grammars that were very popular in the Middle Ages: those of the fourth-century Roman, Aelius Donatus, and the sixth-century north-African, Priscianus Caesariensis (Priscian). This is because these taxonomized all the world's sounds in order to describe how much meaning each carried, thus reminding us of the sound-sense distinction.

[14] *The Statute of Gruffudd ap Cynan* (1532), as given in: David Klausner, *Records of Early Drama: Wales* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. 160.
[15] For more on the conception of language as sound in the bardic grammars, see: Furtchgott, '*Musique Naturelle* and *Cerdd Dafod*', pp. 14–62.

This taxonomy revolved around the concept of 'vox' (*voice* or, more broadly, *sound*) and more specifically the difference between a 'vox articulata' (*a signifying sound*) and a 'vox confusa' (a *confused* or *nonsignifying sound*).[16] The 'vox confusa' was unstructured by reason and therefore could not be written, whereas the rational 'vox articulata' could. Donatus's succinct definition was usually supplemented by Priscian's expansion of the spectrum, which tied it to hierarchies of intelligence and animacy and solidified the twin axes of *writeability* ('literata' and 'illiterata') and *signification* or *meaning* ('aritculata' and 'inarticulata').[17]

Refined human speech was the most meaningful 'vox' as it was bound by the rules of grammar and was able to be captured in writing; 'articulata-literata'. (This is in line with the long-standing Christian distinction between human and animal that had been in place since Genesis 2:19 in which Adam names the animals: humans could talk, and thus had the authority to name things, everything else could not.)[18] Next came involuntary human sounds like hissing and wailing, which could not be written but did carry some meaning, e.g., the 'sense' of pain in a scream; 'articulata-illiterata'. Then came the two types of 'vox confusa'. The first included animal sounds that could be written down by inventing onomatopoeic representations, but ultimately carried no meaning: we may add Middle Welsh 'hw ddy hw' to the original Latin examples of the frog's 'coax' or the raven's 'cra'; 'inarticulata-literata'.[19] Lastly came mostly nonhuman sounds, like rattling, and some animal sounds, like roaring, which had words that could only be partially or inaccurately represented in the written word but certainly could not be understood to be meaningful; 'inarticulata-illiterata'. This last 'vox' was the lowest form of sound and was indisputably 'noise'.

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[16] See: Irvine, 'Medieval Grammatical Theory'.
[17] *Grammatici Latini*, II, p. 5; Priscian, 'Priscian, *Institutiones grammaticae*', p. 172. See also: Aelius Donatus, 'Aelius Donatus, *Ars minor*, *Ars maior*, *Life of Virgil*, ca. 350', in *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300–1475*, ed. and trans. Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 86–103.
[18] Genesis 2:19; Crane, *Animal Encounters*, p. 4.
[19] *Grammatici Latini*, II, p. 5; Priscian, 'Priscian, *Institutiones grammaticae*', p. 173.

Therefore, the capacity for meaningful sound – language – was the primary means for articulating the conceptual boundary between human and nonhumans.[20] Following Aristotle, many medieval thinkers such as the thirteenth-century philosophers Thomas Aquinas and Bartholomaeus Anglicus found this to be represented in the word 'language' itself, equating humanity's monopoly on 'λόγος / logos' (*word, language*) with humankind's unique ability to reason ('λόγος', *reason*).[21] Language was what elevated humans above brute beasts.[22]

But bearing in mind that language was still sound, and that sound was not meaningful in and of itself – it simply carried varying degrees of meaning – we begin to grasp the importance of control for humans in particular. Without properly controlling one's use of language, one runs the risk of allowing that language to cease to be meaningful, thereby allowing it to get closer and closer to the meaningless sounds of animals and nonhuman objects. How this way of thinking impacts our understanding of the portrayal of controlled and uncontrolled language in the poetry of Beirdd yr Uchelwyr permeates the remainder of this thesis.

*

The quadripartite division of 'vox' based on axes of articulate-inarticulate and literate-illiterate sounds proved particularly popular in later medieval grammatical theory, including in the works of fourteenth-century music theorist Marchetto of Padua and indeed Geoffrey Chaucer. However, despite being modelled on the Latin grammars, especially in terms of arrangement and structure, it is never mentioned in the Welsh grammars.[23] Nonetheless, there

[20] Alison Langdon, 'Introduction', in *Animal languages in the Middle Ages: representations of interspecies communication*, ed. Alison Langdon (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), pp. 1–9 (p. 2).
[21] Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *On the properties of things*, I, 5:13. For the vast smenatic range of λόγος, see: *The Cambridge Greek Lexicon*, s.v. λόγος.
[22] The is the same reason that birdsong was not considered to be music in the medieval period however pleasant it might be: 'meaning is defined as verbal or linguistic in content, and thus melody, for all its numerical rationality, is meaningless without text […] Birdsong, in these terms, is meaningless, nothing more than instinctive imitation', Leach, *Sung Birds*, p. 40.
[23] On structure, the first five sections, for example, follow Prisican's closely: letters, syllables, parts of speech (nouns, verbs, pronouns, etc.), sentence, and figures of speech.

is still a wider conception of language as sound here, and an explicit sense of the importance of retaining control over one's language.[24]

The most useful – and uniquely Welsh – section of the grammars that demonstrates its conception of language as sound and its emphasis on the importance of control is the final section, consisting of a set of 'trioedd cerdd' (*poetical triads*). Particularly revealing are the 'conceptual triads', as Paul Russell calls them – those that, in Morfydd Owen's words, are 'chiefly concerned with what might be called the ethics of the poetic profession' – as opposed to the 'factual triads', which 'simply provide a classification of the rules of grammar and prosody', for example, 'Teir rann ymadrawd yssyd: henw, a rachenw, a beryf' (*There are three parts of speech: noun, and pronoun, and verb*).[25]

Crucially, this first type of triad, concerned with the rights and wrongs of poetry, becomes more common in later recensions, coinciding with the increased concern for the standards of professional Welsh poets. As Paul Russell puts it: '[W]hile the Peniarth 20 triads seem […] to be concerned with how to compose verse, the triad collections appended to the other versions are more interested in how to be a poet'.[26]

Most importantly from a sound studies perspective, these 'conceptual triads' include sets of triads on what type of performances and sounds can adorn or sully a poem. Here, it becomes instantly apparent that clear declamation was essential. The sound of good poetry is described as an unhindered, fluent performance, because '[t]ri pheth a anghyweiriant gerdd nev ymadrodd: pwl ddadkaniad, ac anghywraint ssynnwyr, ac annystyriol ddyall y parablwr' (*three things disturb a poem or speech: dull declamation, and crude sense, and the speaker's*

[24] See: Furtchgott, '*Musique Naturelle* and *Cerdd Dafod*', pp. 14–62. For theories on the relationship between the Welsh grammars and their Latin models, see: Jacques, 'The Reception and Transmission of the Bardic Grammars'; and Michaela Jacques, 'The Grammatical Sources of the *Dwned*', *Celtica* 31 (2019), 163–90.
[25] Paul Russell, 'Poetry by numbers: The poetic triads in *Gramadegau Penceirddiaid*', in *Grammatica, Gramadach and Gramadeg: Vernacular grammar and grammarians in medieval Ireland and Wales* ed. Deborah Hayden and Paul Russell (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2016), pp. 161–80 (pp. 163–64); Morfydd E. Owen, 'Welsh Triads: an overview', *Celtica* 25 (2007), 225–50 (p. 238); *GP*, p. 17 (*RBH*).
[26] Russell, 'Poetry by numbers', p. 177.

thoughtless understanding).[27] '[A]nghyweiriant' can also be translated as 'bring disharmony to', thus emphasising both the controlled and auditory nature of cynghanedd (*harmony*) poetry.

Among other things that 'spoil' and 'disgrace' poetry are 'sluggish' and 'untimely' declamations:

> Tri pheth a anhoffa kerd: llesc datkanyat, a sathredic dychymic ac anurdas y prydyd.
> Tri pheth a warthruda kerd ac a'e hanurda: y datkanu yn anamser, a'e chanu yn amperthynas, nyt amgen noc y'r neb nys dylyei, ac eisseu kerdwyr y barnu.[28]
>
> (*Three things spoil a poem: sluggish declamation, vulgar imagination, and a poet's dishonour. / Three things disgrace and sully a poem: its untimely declamation, and its inappropriate performance, namely not to those who do not deserve it, and the poets misjudgements.*)

These prohibitions all point to the importance of regulation and order in one's speech, none more so than those against 'anwadalwch' (*inconstancy*) – one of the 'Tri pheth ny chynghein mywn kerd' (*three things [that] are not admissible/do not harmonise in a poem*) – and against poetry that is 'anosparthus' (*disorderly*). This includes the poetry of the lower Clêr poets: 'ny ellir dosparth ar glerwryaeth, kanys kerd anosparthus yw' (*it is not possible to impose order on Clêr minstrelsy, for it is a disorderly verse*). The significance of this association will be explored in due course, but for now it can simply be noted that their verse was perceived as *inconstant* and *disorderly*: words that emphasise the uncontrolled and uneducated nature of their poetry, speech, and performance in comparison to their professional counterparts.[29]

In terms of poetic performance and the importance of clear declamation, the most recently discovered fragment of the grammars is also, in many ways, the most revealing. The so-called *Gramadeg Gwysanau*, found in the Flintshire Record Office and published for the first time by Ann Parry Owen in 2016, reveals that it was in fact quite common for Beirdd yr Uchelwyr to write down their poetry, contrary to previous belief, and that correct recording was key for correct declamation: *Gramadeg Gwysanau* seeks to stress that 'poets must realise that they also have a responsibility to convey their poems as clearly and intelligibly as possible,

[27] *GP*, p. 135 (*PLlK*); *GP*, p. 36 (*Llst3*).
[28] *GP*, p. 17 (*RBH*).
[29] *GP*, p. 17 (*RBH*).); *GP* p. 135 (*PLlK*); *GP*, pp. 35–36 (*Llst3*).

and if they fail to do that, then they are partly responsible for the failure of the poem'.[30] This relationship and the importance of written transmission – at one point demonstrated rather remarkably in the uselessness of an englyn without spaces between words – is the take-home message of the fragment that has survived from this standalone and colourful recension of the grammars.

Nonetheless, its emphasis on clear declamation is astonishing in its clarity and in its seemingly original imagery:

> Dyrchauel [y]r adeilat y vyny yw y datkanv yn vchel groyw [ ] eglur a gwniaw pob geir yn y le yn hirlaes, ac ar wahan, yspys, didra[m]gwyd, val y gallo dynyo[n] hydysc y gwy[b]ot a'e dysgv. Ac onys datkenir yn da yspys, tebic yw hynny y rodi kledeu yn llaw dyn a'r parlis arnaw – y kledeu yn da ac yn llym, yntev heb allel d[im] ac efo – am na ellir dyall peth a dywetto.[31]
>
> (*The raising up of the building is the loud and clear reciting of it [i.e. the poem] ... distinctly, binding each word in its place long and at full length, separately, clearly, without impediment, so that skilled men can understand and learn it. And if it is not recited well and clearly, it would be like placing a sword in the hands of a paralyzed man – the sword being good and sharp, but he being unable to do anything with it – because one cannot understand what he [i.e. the reciter] is saying.*)

According to all recensions of the bardic grammars, then, bad-sounding poetry had very little semblance of control. The descriptions of poor speech and poor poetic declamation in the *Gramadeg Gwysanau* and in other bardic grammars recensions match those found in the poetic corpus itself, which is what shall be explored next. The significance of 'croyw' (*pure*) and 'eglur' (*clear*) that feature in the above quotation from *Gramadeg Gwysanau* shall be analysed in a later section on 'good Welsh', but we shall first pay attention to metaphors of disability and impediments – as mentioned above in 'dyn a'r parlis arnaw' and 'didra[m]gwyd' – as we consider the key adjective 'cryg' (*hoarse, stuttering*).[32]

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[30] Ann Parry Owen, 'Gramadeg Gwysanau: A fragment of a fourteenth-century Welsh bardic grammar', in *Grammatica Gramadach and Gramadeg: Vernacular grammar and grammarians in medieval Ireland and Wales*, ed. Deborah Hayden and Paul Russell (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2016), pp. 181–200 (p. 190); cf. Daniel Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales/Cardiff: University of Wales press, 2000), p. 19: 'Until the fifteenth century the writing of poetry in books belonged more to the realm of the antiquarian enthusiast than to that of the practising poet'.

[31] Text edited and translated in Owen, 'Gramadeg Gwysanau, pp. 198–99.

[32] I shall be using the term 'disability' advisedly in this thesis, recognising that physical conditions such as deafness, muteness, or speech impediments only become disabilities through social and environmental factors. While some medieval authors treated these conditions with a remarkable degree of sympathy and nuance, very few of these are among the Beirdd yr Uchelwyr poets. In any case, I shall be focusing on the descriptions of these

‘Cryg’ voices and stuttering

Once a person’s language is heard as seemingly out of their control, it quickly ceases to be understood as ‘sound’ and soon becomes non-human, uncontrolled ‘noise’. A famous example of this type of ‘bad Welsh’ is in the ‘ymryson’ (*poetic debate*) between fourteenth-century poets Gruffudd Gryg (*fl.* 1350–80) and Dafydd ap Gwilym.[33] Gruffudd’s surviving corpus is of a respectable size and it seems that he was a talented and respected individual.[34] However, he is best known for his poetic debate with his more famous contemporary, Dafydd ap Gwilym.

Here, Dafydd accuses Gruffudd of plagiarism and low standards of poetry. As we have seen, the second of these was a growing concern, and although this debate was light-hearted – or at least began in a light-hearted manner before Dafydd took insult – the underlying concerns regarding a poet who is bringing down the standards of the bardic guild were in fact very real.[35] One of the main ways Gruffudd is presented as a poet who is ‘bringing down the standards’ is through his inability to perform his own poetry in a fluent and clear voice, perhaps due to his suffering from some sort of speech impediment.

Here, we remember that ‘inconstant’, ‘sluggish’, ‘dull’ and ‘disorderly’ declamation were contrary to the expected standards of ‘good poetry’. A detailed examination of the accusations in this ymryson reveals the correspondence between the grammars’ and the poets’ descriptions. Firstly, Gruffudd’s name (‘Gruffudd Gryg’) carries a meaning similar to *Hoarse Gruffudd* or *Stuttering Gruffudd*, which is exploited in this debate.[36] The spectrum of deafness,

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conditions that associate their sound (or lack thereof) with social stigma. For more on the topic, see: Jonathan Hsy, ‘Symptom and Surface: Disruptive Deafness and Medieval Medical Authority’, *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry* 13.4 (2016), 477–83; and essays in *Disability in the Middle Ages: Reconsiderations and Reverberations*, ed. Joshua Eyler (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

[33] Poems 23–30, *DG.net*. The famous Middle English example would be Margery Kempe. See: Julie Orlemanski, ‘Margery Kempe’s “Noyse” and Distrusted Expressivity’, in *Voice and Voicelessness in Medieval Europe*, ed. Irit Ruth Kleiman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 123–38.

[34] See: *GGG*.

[35] On the seriousness of the debate, see: *GGG*, pp. 10–19.

[36] *GPC*, s.v. *cryg*.

muteness, and speech impediments should be noted here, alongside their medieval associations, at a time before disabilities became an object of scientific investigation (in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), when it was widely believed that rational thought was dependent on speech.[37] As Mara Mills puts it, bearing in mind the aforementioned spectrum of deafness, muteness, and speech impediments: 'prelingual deafness seemed inextricably linked to muteness; in turn, deaf people seemed incapable of intelligence and moral reason'.[38] As we shall see, then, comparing bad poetry to stuttering speech was a serious accusation.

Dafydd opens by addressing his opponent as 'Gruffudd Gryg, wŷg wag awen, / Grynedig, boenedig ben' (*Gruffydd, empty and worthless muse, / with his painful trembling mouth*), before later labelling him 'y mab ataliaith' (*the stuttering lad*) and 'cryglyfr bost, craig lefair beirdd' (*the cowardly stuttering boaster, echo-stone of the poets*).[39] It seems that the cruel auditory imagery in this last line plays on the sonic features of a stutter, namely repeating parts of a word over and over again. In the context of accusations of plagiarism, this is what Gruffudd does to other poets' works: he steals their work and repeats it again and again but in an inferior and incomplete form.

There seems to be a similar multi-layered joke in a later comparison to a red grouse: 'grugiar y gerdd' (*poetry's red grouse*).[40] A red grouse is a bird that makes a repetitive, gulping-like sound and one could argue, as Dafydd ap Gwilym does, that this is similar to a human speaking with a stutter.[41] What's more is that this bird's name may bring to mind the same adjective of sound as that which is applied to Gruffudd: 'cryg'. 'Grugiar' (*red grouse*) derives from 'grug' meaning *heather* or *heath* and 'iâr' meaning *hen*, making this a *heather hen* or a

[37] Mara Mills, 'Deaf', in *Keywords in Sound*, ed. David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), pp. 45–54 (p. 46).
[38] Mills, 'Deaf', p. 46.
[39] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '24. Cywydd Ymryson Cyntaf Dafydd ap Gwilym', *DG.net*, ll. 1–2, 61, 60.
[40] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '28. Trydydd Cywydd Ymryson Dafydd ap Gwilym', *DG.net*, l. 2. My translation.
[41] To hear the red grouse's call, visit: 'Red grouse', *RSPB* <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/red-grouse/>.

heath hen. This first element, 'grug', may hint, albeit fleetingly, at the near-homophonous adjective found in Gruffudd Gryg's sobriquet – 'gryg', the mutated form of 'cryg' (*hoarse* or *stuttering*) – emphasising the stuttering nature of the bird's call and thus its applicability to Gruffudd's voice.[42]

This stuttering, or indeed 'gulping', sound returns in the most complete picture yet of Gruffudd's impeded declamation: one that confirms that Gruffudd's name is more likely to refer to a stammer or a 'tick' rather than a hoarse voice. In a rare instance of Middle Welsh onomatopoeia, Dafydd's use of 'cuc cuc' seeks to convey the guttural sound of *glug glug*, followed then by the sound of a drunken dog eating a crow: 'cuc cuc yn yfed sucan, / ci brwysg yn llyncu cyw brân' (*a glug glug noise like someone drinking gruel, / or a drunken dog swallowing a crow chick*).[43] Bearing in mind that sounds represented by onomatopoeic inventions – the 'vox inarticulata-literata' – were mostly the 'vox confusa' of animals, it is significant that Gruffudd's speech is captured in this way; a sound that carries far less meaning, and thus connotations of reason, than refined human speech.

Comparing Gruffudd's poetry to canine sounds is a clear instance of the dehumanising effect of comparing human speech to animal sounds; denying his language of its human features, and dragging it down the hierarchy of 'vox'. Indeed, the word 'cryg' is often associated with the harsh sounds of animals and crows and ravens in particular. In Dafydd Gorlech's debate with this bird, among the various descriptions of its voice are its 'harsh' and 'raucous' tones: 'garw ei thôn a'r greulon greg' (*harsh its tone, cruel and raucous*).[44] In a prophetic poem in conversation with Yr Wyddfa, the same poet again foretells the coming of a crow – representing Rhys ap Tomas of Abermarlais – who will vanquish the English and who

[42] For more on wordplay in the poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym, see Johnston, *'Iaith Oleulawn'*; *GPC*, s.v. *grugiar*.
[43] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '30. Pedwerydd Cywydd Ymryson Dafydd ap Gwilym', *DG.net*, ll. 41–42. cf. John Davies, *Antiquae Linguae Britannicae, Nunc vulgo dictae Cambro-Britannicae, a suis Cymraecae vel Cambricae, ab aliis wallicae, et Linguae Latinae, Dictionarium Duplex* (London: R. Young, 1632), s.v. *cùcc*: 'vox fictitia à sono bibentis' (*an artificial voice from the sound of drinking*).
[44] Dafydd Gorlech, '7. Cywydd y gigfran', *GDGor*, l. 13.

is described as a 'brân 'gân fal gŵydd / lais hygref luosogrwydd' (*crow that cries like a goose / a host's very harsh voice*).[45] While the crow itself is admirable on this occasion – since it was the heraldic symbol of Rhys ap Tomas who fought alongside Henry Tudor in the Battle of Bosworth – its call remains harsh.

However, in his example, Dafydd ap Gwilym takes this animalistic association further in his allusion to the dog. In the vast majority of cases, dogs are unpleasantly loud and noisy in the Welsh poetic corpus: 'ci glew llwfrddrew llafarddrud, / cynddrwg sôn, cynddeiriog sud' (*a strong damp-stinking fierce-barking dog, / awful noise, rabid manner*) is how Dafydd describes them elsewhere.[46] Moreover, this is a drunk dog; a dog that has lost all control of its physical and mental capacities, and one that is gorging on a particularly noisy bird. This surely ensures that we hear Gruffudd Gryg's poetry as sub-standard at best.

Of course, accusations of Gruffudd's stammer are likely to have been exaggerated, not least because it must have been impossible for someone to have made a living as a poet without being able to speak and perform poetry in an unhindered voice; an odd choice of profession for someone with a stutter. Nonetheless, while Dafydd may be making a mountain out of a molehill, it is revealing that stuttering speakers were go-to reference points for satirising poets deemed to have produced unacceptable poetry.

The fact that stuttering humans were a point of ridicule and were ostracised in medieval Wales is reflected in their reduced legal rights. For example, one passage in a Blegywryd redaction of the Law of Hywel Dda reads:

> Tri dyn yssyd ny dicha6n vn ohonunt bot yn vra6d6r teil6ng tr6y gyfreith: vn ohonunt y6 dyn anafus, megys bydar, neu dall, neu glaf6r, neu dyn gorff6lla6c a orffo r6yma6 vn 6eith am y ynuytr6yd, neu dyn ny allo dy6edut yn ia6n, megys cryc anyana6l.[47]
>
> (*There are three persons not one of whom can be a qualified justice by law: one of them is a person with a defect, such as a deaf man, or a blind man, or a leper, or any madman who has been forced to be bound once for his madness, or a man who cannot speak properly, such as a congenital stammerer*.

[45] Dafydd Gorlech, '6. Ymddiddan rhwng y bardd a'r Wyddfa', *GDGor*, ll. 53–54.
[46] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '68. Tri Phorthor Eiddig', *DG.net*, ll. 7–8.
[47] Sara Elin Roberts, *The Legal Triads of Medieval Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), §Q212. See also: §X42 and §Q78. [Editor's translation.]

A stammerer was, thus, a 'dyn anafus'. Therefore, when Dafydd later asserts that Gruffudd has *corrupted the world's poetry with his mouth* ('gwyrodd â'i ben gerdd y byd'), we hear that the corruption comes as much, if not more, from his defective voice as from the primary fault; his alleged plagiarism.[48]

*

A good parallel example is Ieuan ap Rhydderch's description of a poet named Y Prol (*fl. c.* 1345–*c.* 1450), since the portrayal of this 'llwfr geirffrom, llafar garwffraeth' (*coward with an angry tongue, a harsh, plain-speaking voice*) seems, again, to target both the content and the declamation.[49] In terms of content, the issue on this occasion is that Y Prol's initial satire against Ieuan Gethin (*fl. c.* 1450) – probably composed during an ymryson at Baglan – was considered too harsh. This is revealed in an irate line overflowing with labial and velar stops: 'Prydaist, gwyriaist gân, prydwaith braeniaith brân' (*You composed, you distorted a song, a poem of a crow's rotten language*).[50] The ideal poet, according to the grammars, never engaged with satirical verse:

> Ni pherthyn ar brydyd ymyru ar glerwryaeth, er aruer ohoni, kanys gwrthwneb yw y greffteu prydyd. Kanys ar glerwr y perthyn goganu, ac agloduori, a gwneuthur kewilid a gwaradwyd, ac ar prydyd y perthyn kanmawl, a chloduori, a gwneuthur clod, a llewenyd, a goganyant. A chyda hynny, ny ellir dosparth ar glerwryaeth, kanys kerd anosparthus yw, ac am hynny, nac ymyred prydyd yndi.[51]
>
> (*A prydydd should not dabble in the custom of clerwriaeth, for it is to the contrary of a prydydd's craft. Because satire, dishonour, and causing shame and disgrace belong to the clerwr, whereas praise, laudation, bringing about honour, joy, and glory belongs to the prydydd. At that, there is no order upon clerwriaeth, since it is a disorderly art, and, therefore, the prydydd should not dabble in it.*)

Of course, the vast amounts of satire found in the Beirdd yr Uchelwyr corpus demonstrates that the grammars were often far removed from the reality of bardic practice: a text that outlines an ideal philosophy rather than a manual used by the poets themselves.[52] Yet,

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[48] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '24. Cywydd Ymryson Cyntaf Dafydd ap Gwilym', *DG.net*, l. 34.
[49] Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '10. Dychan i'r Prol', *GIRh*, l. 86.
[50] Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '10. Dychan i'r Prol', *GIRh*, l. 25. See also: G. J. Williams, *Traddodiad Llenyddol Morgannwg* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1948), p. 26.
[51] *GP*, p. 35 (*Llst3*).
[52] Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr*, pp. 23–24.

Y Prol's upbraiding suggests that poets could pick and choose when to enforce certain standards and rules; while satire was rife, it was technically against at least some rules. On paper, satirical, humorous, and erotic verse, belonged to the Clêr poets, and so, if a professional poet overstepped the line of the acceptability of rule-bending, as Y Prol seems to have done here, the rules could then be enforced.

It is fitting, then, that this harsh, possibly 'illegal' poem, is said to have had a harsh and immoral sound: 'trwst anfoesau' (*ill-mannered noise*).[53] This is especially the case when it is compared to the far sweeter-sounding verse of his opponent; a poet who was 'tirion ei rwyddiaith' (*gentle his fluent language*) in his initial poem.[54] Like Dafydd's portrayal of Gruffudd Gryg's declamation, Ieuan ap Rhydderch ensures that we hear Y Prol's performance as the total opposite of the unimpeded, clear sound of good Welsh poetry. Also similar to Dafydd's description is the portrayal of Y Prol in terms of animalistic drunkenness: 'ŵyll eleidr – chwerwbwnc' (*a bronze-feathered screech owl with a bitter song*) and a 'brwysg bryf' (*drunken animal*).[55] Bad, in this case spiteful, poetry has bad sound.

*

An even closer analogue to Gruffudd Gryg's debate with Dafydd concerns a poet whom we only known as 'Ieuan', who is also described as 'cryg', seemingly yet another reference to some speech disability. In an anonymous satire, probably a product of a 'cyff clêr' (*the butt of bards*) – a carnivalesque feast event in which an established poet would be mocked by lesser fellow-poets (the Clêr) – Ieuan is mocked about how he trips over his words and is referred to as 'cryg' on several occasions: 'gwae ef, crog lef cryglafar' (*curse him, with his loud, hoarse croak*) and 'cranc crynryw, croglyw cryglef' (*a shivering crab, harsh-voiced hangdog*).[56] We conjecture that this may be a reference to some speech impediment due to the fact that many

[53] Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '10. Dychan i'r Prol', *GIRh*, l. 79.
[54] Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '10. Dychan i'r Prol', *GIRh*, l. 49.
[55] Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '10. Dychan i'r Prol', *GIRh*, ll. 15, 18.
[56] Anonymous, '9. Dychan i Ieuan', *GPB*, ll. 30, 54. On 'cyff clêr', see: Edwards, *DGIA*, pp. 48–49.

physical defects to do with his '[m]inllyth' (*feeble mouth*) are either mocked or wished upon Ieuan, e.g. 'nef ni'th fydd, dwyll feddydd dall, / neb ni'th gâr, byddar bawddull' (*there will be no heaven for you, deceitful, blind drunkard, / nobody loves you, filthy deaf man*).[57] Onomatopoeia returns, 'dwp-dap, a'i glap a'i naper' (*dip-dap, and his clapper and his linen*), possibly in reference to the clapper used to warn others of a leper's presence, judging by accusations of leprosy elsewhere in the poem: 'molog moel ddosog ddisech' (*ulcer-eyed bald man with dripping with sweat*).[58]

Two significant features are also present. Firstly, scatological, and animalistic auditory imagery floods the poem. Ieuan's terrible voice and terrible poetry are compared to flatulence: 'min tarandin toryndwll' (*arse-farting mouth [rips a] hole in your mantle*).[59] Secondly, and more importantly, this imagery filters into how the bad poet is once again linked to the lowly Clêr: 'clerwriaidd fab ab ebwch' (*clerwr-like son, with an ape's howl*).[60] Ieuan's poetry and his speech are no better than those of a flatulent, uneducated poetaster.

Unruly tongues

The reference to Ieuan's 'clapper' was also a common way of describing one's tongue. As explored in Chapter One's discussion on mechanical clocks, parallels were frequently drawn between tongues in mouths and clappers in bells, partly given the word playing opportunity in the fact that 'tafod' meant both *tongue* and *a bell's hammer*. Indeed, a small sub-genre within Welsh poetry of this period is one in which poets berate their own tongues for speaking out of turn, usually to a woman, as if their tongues had a life of their own.[61] The importance of restraint and control in diction helps to explain the meaning behind this small

[57] Anonymous, '9. Dychan i Ieuan', *GPB*, ll. 1, 61–62.
[58] Anonymous, '9. Dychan i Ieuan', *GPB*, ll. 36, 110.
[59] Anonymous, '9. Dychan i Ieuan', *GPB*, l. 69.
[60] Anonymous, '9. Dychan i Ieuan', *GPB*, l. 91.
[61] On this sub-genre, see Salisbury, 'Tair Cerdd Dafod'.

group of poems. In each instance, the poet has let his tongue get the better of him, i.e., he has lost control of his tongue, and so, as if independent of the poet's own mind, it has ended up speaking out of turn without the poet's permission.

A creative take on the eulogy and 'apology poem' that uses this model of the unruly tongue has already been explored, namely Guto'r Glyn's apology to Abbot Rhys of Strata Florida, chastising his tongue as 'cloc tewfydr, cliced dwyfoch, / cleddau cerdd celwyddawg coch' (*clock of thick metre, clicket of the cheeks, / red mendacious sword of son*).[62] Begging his tongue to confess – 'cyffesa 'ngorseddfa saint / dy ferw drwy edifeiraint' (*confess in the shrine of saints / your babble in contrition*) – this clever twist gives Guto a get-out clause to explain why he had missed an appointment with the Abbot Rhys, as the tongue goes on to reprove the poet and praise the Abbot, asking for his forgiveness on the poet's behalf.[63]

The most well-known example of this sort of poem, however, is probably that of Llywelyn ab y Moel (*fl. c.* 1395–1440), which is certainly the one with the greatest element of self-deprecation. Llywelyn wishes his tongue would stay quiet:

> 'Pa ddiawl a wnei pan ddêl nos,
> na fedri, eithr ynfydrym,
> yleni dewi er dym?
> Adde'r wyd, o ddireidi,
> addail tir i ddiawl i ti,
> awr daw hyd ar dalm o'r dydd
> aml ferw yn ymleferydd;
> mwy no rhegen mewn rhagnyth,
> am nith Fair, ni thewi fyth,
> aelod fochawl ddiwala,
> yn sôn am ferch dynion da.'[64]
>
> (*What devil must you do when night comes, / you cannot, foolish alien, / shut up for anything's sake this year? / You confess to be, by mischief, / worthless leaves, Devil take you, / when daytime comes / greatly do you bubble and babble / more than a quail in a nest, / by Mary's son, you never shut up, / insatiable cheek-walled organ / making noise about the daughter of good men.*)

But the precocious tongue refuses to be silent:

[62] Guto'r Glyn, '7. Moliant i'r Abad Rhys ap Dafydd o Ystrad-fflur', *GG.net*, ll. 15–16.
[63] Guto'r Glyn, '7. Moliant i'r Abad Rhys ap Dafydd o Ystrad-fflur', *GG.net*, ll. 15–16, 19–20.
[64] Llywelyn ab y Moel, '12. I'r Tafod', *GDBMW*, ll. 10–14.

> ‘Ni thawaf,’ heb y tafawd,
> ‘ni thau gwynt yn nithiaw gwawd.
> Y berw a ddwg, fal mwg mawr,
> O’r cylla megis callawr…’[65]
>
> (*‘I won’t shut up,’ said the tongue, / ‘the wind doesn’t shut up when winnowing praise. / Bubbling comes, like a great smoke, / From the stomach like a cauldron…’*)

Again, the noisy tongue (‘mawr yw dy sôn’) is described as having lost its sense of control through being ‘meddw’ (*drunk*).[66]

These are comic poems and so they should not be taken too seriously. But, as with Dafydd ap Gwilym and Gruffudd Gryg’s debate, an underlying message remains: the aim of every speaker was total control over what they said at all times. Comic hyperbole was a light-hearted way to ensure that everyone was aware of the standards expected of a poet’s speech. The tongue was the very producer of a poet’s poetry, and so, if that tongue was disabled in any way, it hindered the poetry.

*

Far less humorous is the extreme end of the negative connotation of loose tongues, stammering, and hoarseness, which is diabolic. The previous chapter explored how uncontrolled sound could be hellish, and earlier in this chapter we saw how stammering was regarded as uncontrolled speech: the product of a lazy tongue. Here, the two come together.

In auditory terms, the devil’s presence within cursed humans was often expressed through their ‘speaking in tongues’. For example, a ‘teeth-gnashing’ madwoman from Ledbury brought into the church of thirteenth-century Bishop of Hereford, Thomas of Cantilupe, who claimed she was surrounded by demons.[67] It was also expressed through careless speaking. One fifteenth-century English treatise asserts that ‘sylablys & woordys, overskyppyd and

[65] Llywelyn ab y Moel, ‘12. I’r Tafod’, *GDBMW*, ll. 15–18
[66] Llywelyn ab y Moel, ‘12. I’r Tafod’, *GDBMW*, ll. 50, 53
[67] Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana MS Lat. Vat. 4015, ff. 106v–107r; Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, p. 77.

synkopyd' belonged to the Devil.[68] This was a sin punished by 'Tutivillus', a word-collecting demon, often cited in homilies and moral treatises to illustrate the sin of sloth and 'idle' talk, who trailed lazy speakers.[69]

Though Tutivillus himself is absent in the Welsh poetic record, there are occasional links between idle talk, tongues, and the Devil. A particularly gruesome example of the tongue being targeted as the source of devilish sound comes through Llywelyn ap Gwilym Lygliw (*fl.* late fourteenth century). As has been mentioned in previous chapters, Hell was a raucous place in the medieval auditory imagination.[70] In his cywydd on St Paul's vision of Hell, Llywelyn expresses the incessant wailing of its sufferers and dwells on the tortured state of their tongues. Among the croaking crows and hissing snakes, he hears 'mil o eneidiau mân, / ochi anferth a chwynfan' (*a thousand little souls, / great groaning and lamentation*), before revealing that the sinners have hooks hammered into their tongues:

> Ynghrog pob gradd onaddun
> a bach drwy dafod pob un:
> rhai yn griddfan rhag annwyd
> a rhai dan blwm tawdd mewn rhwyd
> a chythraul ar ei chwethroed
> â bêr cam mwy no bar coed.[71]
>
> (*Each class of them hanging / with a hook through each of their tongues: / some of them groaning from cold / and some in a net under molten lead / and a demon upon his/her six-feet / with a skewer larger than a bar of wood.*)

Tongues, teeth, and the mouth in general, played an important part in early visions of Hell, beginning with Luke 13:28 – 'There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth' – and developing into a grotesque feature of demons, such as the terrifying beasts in Tundale's

[68] *Jacob's Well, an English treatise on the cleansing of man's conscience*, ed. A. Brandeis (Oxford: Early English Texts Society, 1900), p. 115.
[69] Jennings, 'Tutivillu'; Kathy Cawsey, 'Tutivillus and the "Kyrchateras": Strategies of Control in the Middle Ages', *Studies in Philology* 102.4 (2005), 434–51.
[70] For further examples beyond the medieval Welsh corpus, see: *Visions of Heaven and Hell before Dante*, ed. Eileen Gardiner (New York: Italica Press, 1989).
[71] Llywelyn ap Gwilym Lygliw, '2. Gweledigaeth Pawl yn Uffern', *GLlyg*, ll. 39–40, 55–60; cf. 'Breuddwyd Pawl Epostol', in *The Elucidarium: and other tracts in Welsh from Llyvyr Agkyr Llandewivrevi, A.D. 1346 (Jesus College MS. 119)*, ed. J. Morris Jones and John Rhys (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1894), pp. 152–56.

Vision, or the theatrical 'mouth of hell' motif seen on the medieval stage.[72] Sinners being hung from their tongues was also a fairly common image, often a symbolic punishment that fitted the crime, usually blasphemy. However, it is fitting that Llywelyn focuses particularly on the sound that would come from these now disabled sinners.

Muteness

An unstoppable torrent of speech, caused occasionally by laziness, is one extreme of having no control over one's language; 'speaking in tongues'. On the other extreme, a lack of control could mean no speech whatsoever; 'being tongue-tied'.

*

Before examining the negative connotations of unintentional human silence, it should be noted that muteness was not always a sign of 'bad Welsh'. Muteness often has neutral connotations as it can be a stock auditory image in elegies; corpses and mourners could become 'mute' in these episodes. Nonetheless, while literally or metaphorically becoming 'mud' (*mute*) in death and mourning is in no way regarded to be a failing in one's physical condition, nor is it linked to concepts of stupidity such as in the words 'dumb' and even 'mute' today, it is still an involuntary act, something that is out of the speaker's control, unlike, for example, monastic silence.[73]

Mourners can be dumbstruck in their grief, as is the case when Lewys Glyn Cothi laments the loss of Hywel ap Goronw: 'mudion ŷm fis Mai dan iâ' (*we are mute, this May,*

[72] 'Tundale's Vision', in *Visions of Heaven and Hell before Dante*, pp. 149–195; Sandy Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues: Speech and Gender in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), pp. 36–43. For more on the Old Testament background, see: Alan E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 203–265.

[73] Note that there are no direct references to monastic silence in the Welsh poetic record. See: Paul F. Gehl, '*Comptens Silentium*: Varieties of Monastic Silence in the Medieval West,' *Viator* 19 (1987), 125–60; Scott G. Bruce, *Silence and Sign Language in Medieval Monasticism: The Cluniac Tradition 900–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and George Devereux, 'Ethnopsychological Aspects of the Terms 'Deaf' and 'Dumb'', *Anthropological Quarterly* 37.2 (1964), 68–71.

under ice).[74] Indeed, the whole world can fall silent on this occasion, especially when the individual in question was a poet, musician, or a patron of poetry and music; when they died, the sound of those forms of entertainment died too. This is certainly the sentiment in Dafydd Epynt's elegy to his fellow poets Hywel Dafi and Huw Cae Llwyd in which birds cease to sing and the court becomes lifeless as the pathetic fallacy brings an unnatural icy summer month: 'mud yw'r byd ym mhedwar ban / am ddiweddu ymddiddan (*mute is the world in its four corners* / *because of the end of entertainment*).[75]

Perhaps more striking is the fact that dead people themselves are often described as 'mute'. It remains poignant to hear a person who made a living out of speaking mourning the passing of someone they can no longer speak to. Poets mourn the fact that a patron or fellow poet who was once so eloquent is now totally silent: 'nid hawdd ymadrawdd â mud' (*it is not easy to converse with a mute*) is a phrase that echoes throughout the Beirdd yr Uchelwyr corpus. As we heard in the Introduction, proof by vision is a product of the Enlightenment, and so acoustemology was far more prevalent in the medieval period; existence and truth were signalled by sound. And so, in an oral and aural society, a speaking human was a healthy human. A completely silent human was as good as dead. That 'muteness' was equated with 'lifelessness' in late medieval Welsh poetry, then, stands to reason within the contemporary auditory imagination.

The image of a mute corpse or of the world having become mute now that the subject of the poem has passed away feature in several surviving elegies from late medieval Wales. One of the period's most famous elegies, Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen's to his beloved Lleucu Llwyd, is no exception as it mourns the death of 'y fud ferch' (*the mute girl*):

[74] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '217. Marwnad Hywel ap Goronwy', *GLGC*, l. 7.
[75] Dafydd Epynt, '22. Marwnad Hywel Dafi a Huw Cae Llwyd', *GDE*, ll. 1–2.

Ni chiglef, sythlef saethlud,
air ond y gwir, feinir fud,
iawndwrf rhianedd Indeg,
onid hyn, o'th enau teg.[76]

(*I didn't hear, a straight cry that strikes like an arrow, / a word, save for the truth, beautiful, mute maiden, / the good form of Indeg's daughters / but for this from your fine mouth.*)

Another exemplary poem in this regard is Dafydd ap Gwilym's elegy to his uncle, Llywelyn ap Gwilym. Throughout the poem, Dafydd repeats the idea that Llywelyn's death was his 'muting': 'gwae fi, Geli pob golud, / gŵyl fy nghyflwr am ŵr mud' (*woe is me, Lord of all wealth, / behold my plight because of a mute man*).[77] He stresses on several occasions the irony of Llywelyn's silent state in death, since, in life, he was eloquent, surrounded by good conversation, and fostered the sounds of fine music and poetry. Indeed, the elegy opens with the statement that 'Doe wiwdymp yn dywedud, / hyddawn fur, a heddiw'n fud' (*Yesterday, happy time, he was speaking, / most gifted bulwark, and today he is mute*).[78] This contrast contains the aforementioned phrase 'nid hawdd ymadrawdd â mud' that, as already noted, resounds throughout late medieval Welsh elegies:

Neud dwfn dy alar, neud difyd – fy llef
am fy llyw cadarnddrud,
nid diboen na'm atebud,
nid hawdd ymadrawdd â mud.[79]

(*Grief for you is deep, my cry resounds / for my strong bold lord, / it is not unpainful that you would not answer, / it is not easy to converse with a mute.*)

Guto'r Glyn's take on the same motif offers an alternative auditory image. His elegy to Llywelyn ab y Moel contains a familiar sonic contrast, but this time not between the wailing mourners and the silent dead, but between the sound of the coffin being lowered and the silent dead:

[76] Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen, '12. Marwnad Lleucu Llwyd', *GLlG*, ll. 30, 35–38.
[77] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '6. Marwnad Llywelyn ap Gwilym', *DG.net*, ll. 17–20.
[78] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '6. Marwnad Llywelyn ap Gwilym', *DG.net*, ll. 3–4.
[79] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '6. Marwnad Llywelyn ap Gwilym', *DG.net*, ll. 25–28.

Clywed y mae merched Môn
cloi derw am serch clod Euron,
a bwrw gordd berw ac urddas
awen dan gelynnen las,
a thewi bronfraith Owain
yn ŵr mud yn nerw a main.[80]

(*The girls of Anglesey hear of* / *the closing of an oaken lid on the love songster of Euron's praises,* / *and of the placing of a tumultuous and noble muse's champion* / *beneath green holly,* / *and of the silencing of Owain's thrush* / *to be a mute man in oak and stone.*)

The whole trope of 'the silent dead' is the reason why Ieuan ap Rhydderch is so terrified when he encounters a ghost in 'Ymddiddan â'r ysbryd' (*Colloquy with the spirit*). It is not the spectral presence of the spirit that frightens him but the fact that this 'mud tybus' (*suspected mute*) can speak.[81] Furthermore, the ghost recounts his adventures when he was alive: an exciting career as a handsome soldier with a full head of hair and beautiful, sharp eyes, travelling the land and courting girls. When the ghost gets to the part of the story in which he dies, this is expressed as his silencing – 'o'r diwedd gorfu ym dewi' (*in the end, I had to become silent*) – and the beginning of his period under the mute earth: 'treulio fy ngwallt fal alltud / dan y ddaear fyddar fud' (*wasting away my hair as an exile* / *under the deaf, mute earth*).[82]

*

Despite these neutral and despondent connotations of silence among dead people in these examples, the same connection between muteness and death leads us to its negative connotations. In the Four Branches of the Mabinogi, silent humans are rarely powerful or in control. In the Third Branch, Pryderi and then Rhiannon become mute and disappear after touching a magical bowl in an enormous white fort with chains reaching upwards: 'ac y gyt ac yd ymeueil a'r cawc, glynu y dwylaw wrth y cawc, a'y draet wrth y llech yd oed yn seuyll arnei, a dwyn y lyueryd y gantaw hyt na allei dywedut un geir' (*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*

[80] Guto'r Glyn, '82. Marwnad Llywelyn ab y Moel', *GG.net*, ll. 31–36.
[81] Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '6. Ymddiddan â'r ysbryd', *GIRh*, l. 20.
[82] Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '6. Ymddiddan â'r ysbryd', *GIRh*, ll. 37, 39–40.

speech is taken from him so that he could not utter a single word).[83] While there are no explicit deaths in this scene, one wonders whether their muting was understood to be synonymous with their temporary deaths and temporary loss of self-control. Pwyll's silent reaction to Gwawl ap Clud's taking of his wife is another example, explored further below.

An exception to this trend would be the Irish men killed and revived in the Cauldron of Rebirth in the Second Branch who are mute when they return to life. Nonetheless, this still shows how an understanding of the contemporary auditory imagination can offer explanations to an otherwise mystical occurrence. Why are they mute? Because it is a hangover from their dead state.[84]

Returning to the poetic record, apart from in elegies and funeral scenes, muteness was always a weakness, even though this connotation involves the same powerlessness of the silent deceased. Iolo Goch's 'Ymddiddan yr Enaid â'r Corff' (*The Soul's Conversation with the Body*), which sees the soul chastising the sins of the flesh and the danger they pose to a man's soul, provides a good example. The poem echoes the familiar phrase 'nid hawdd ymadrawdd â mud', but on this occasion, this 'mute' 'body' is not yet dead; instead, it simply lies in a drunken stupor. Thus, it would seem that when the audience heard the couplet 'ni wyddiad neb p'le'dd oeddud, / nid hawdd ymadrawdd â mud' (*no one knew where you were, / it is not easy to converse with a dumb man*), they were likely to have understood that this man was so drunk, he was as good as dead.[85] As we have heard before, drunkards in Welsh poetry are never in control. Thus, here, muteness was certainly a sign of sound being out of one's control.

Lastly, and connected to Iolo Goch's drunkard, muteness could also be embarrassing. Rhys ap Dafydd Llwyd ap Llywelyn Lygliw (*fl.* late fourteenth–early fifteenth century) recounts the humiliation of such unintentional silence during a failed adventure to meet a girl.

[83] *PKM*, p. 56; *Mab*, p. 40.
[84] *PKM*, p. 44; *Mab*, p. 32.
[85] Iolo Goch, 'Ymddiddan yr Enaid â'r Corff', *IGP*, ll. 25–26.

After trudging through overgrown fields for hours, he finally reaches her house, but despite his plans to charm her with his wit and eloquence, once he finally meets her, he is dumbstruck and cannot muster a single word:

> A phan ddeuthum y bûm bŵl
> fegis dyn hurt ryfygwl;
> ni ddôi o'm pen air gennyf,
> ni chawn lun iawn gan liw nyf.
> Ffraeth yn ei habsen, wenferch,
> fyddwn pan soniwn am serch,
> ac yn ei gŵydd ni lwyddai
> barabl ym, a'm berw, by lai?[86]
>
> (*And when I came, I became dim / like a frightened fool; / not a single word came from my mouth, / I could not get a full phrase, on account of the one with the colour of heaven/Nyf. / In her absence, pure girl, I was witty / speaking about love, / and in her presence, not a word / came to me, and my [usual] fluency, why not?*)

'Mud' in this sense is likely to be in alignment with medieval concepts of 'muteness' referring to any sort of speech limitation from complete silence to a stutter: from Bede's story of a young man 'qui ne unum quidem sermonem umquam profari poterat' (*[who] had never been able to utter a single word*) cured by Bishop John, to the biblical story of the deafmute man in Decapolis cured by Jesus.[87] Furthermore, we note the adjective 'pwl', found also in the grammars: a highly significant word, given its association with sensory disabilities. Its principal and etymological meaning is *dim* or *dull* in terms of light, but this can broaden to cover *dull (of senses)*, *dim(-sighted)*, and *hard of hearing*.[88] The poem's comedy, then is based on the audience's shared understanding that not being in control of your speech was a failing, albeit a humorous and embarrassing one on this occasion.

[86] Rhys ap Dafydd Llwyd ap Llywelyn Lygliw, 'I Ferch', *GLlyg*, ll. 13–20.
[87] Bede, *Bede's ecclesiastical history of the English people*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 5:2; Mark 7:31–37; *Medieval Disability Sourcebook*, ed. Cameron Hunt McNabb et al. (Brooklyn, NY: Punctum Books, 2020).
[88] *GPC*, s.v. *pŵl*[1].

III. Bad Welsh: groups and individuals

The above examples of 'bad Welsh' mostly concern poets describing each other. However, uncontrolled sound is used to a far greater extent to portray groups and individuals that remained outside the bardic institution. As Dafydd Johnston notes: 'Dirmygus ar y cyfan yw'r ychydig gyfeiriadau sydd at y werin gyffredin yn llenyddiaeth hynod annemocrataidd y cyfnod' (*The few references towards common people in the period's extremely undemocratic literature are largely disdainful*).[89] For most of the poetry studied in this thesis, it appears that this statement can be expanded to anyone who was not a poet or a patron: minstrels, peasant farmers, and mendicant friars. These are the three marginalised groups that this section examines. Moreover, this section also shows how the poets' marginalisation of such groups and individuals consistently targeted their sounds.

As we investigate the unacceptable speech of these three groups, the importance of controlling sound to protect its sense is more important than ever. The authors – professional poets anxious to highlight their linguistic skill – seek to show how the speech of these groups was wholly lacking in control, rendering it meaningless and nonhuman, or at least in no way comparable to their own controlled, educated speech and poetic skill.

Bells also return in the case of the Clêr poets and the mendicant friars. Both had a real-world connection to bells and the poets took advantage of this connection to draw comparisons between the nonhuman noise of their bells – here heard as a 'vox confusa' without any of the redeeming holy features discussed in Chapter One – and the 'nonhuman' sounds of their meaningless speech. More applicable than ever is the work of Adin E. Lears on how sound was used to alienate marginalised figures in late medieval English literature. As in Lears's work,

[89] Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr*, p. 3.

this section 'attunes itself to noise and voice in order to probe how we have historically encountered difference'.[90]

'Beirdd y glêr'

The first group is one that has already been mentioned; one that existed outside the bardic institution in the grammars ('ny ellir dosparth ar glerwryaeth'), and one that was invoked in order to satirise inferior poetry ('clerwriaidd fab ab ebwch'). But who exactly were 'beirdd y glêr' (*the Clêr poets*)?

The simplest answer is that they were popular poets or minstrels who can be regarded as the Welsh, secular, and poetic equivalent of the 'clerici vagantes', the 'joculatores', and the goliards found elsewhere in medieval Europe.[91] Beyond that, the answer is far from simple, since, despite the rigid appearance of the bardic hierarchy in the bardic grammars, the reality of this distinction was much more fluid. The Welsh Laws and the bardic grammars imply that medieval Wales recognised three classes of poets, known variously as a 'pencerdd' or 'prydydd'; a 'bardd teulu' or 'teuluwr'; and a 'clerwr' or 'cerddor'.[92] This last class is the group currently under scrutiny: the Clêr poets.

On paper, these groups were distinguishable in three ways: their subject-matter, their verse-form, and their training. In practice, however, these distinctions were immensely porous. As regards subject-matter, the 'pencerdd' and 'bardd teulu' were expected to praise God and the patron on different occasions, while all other genres of composition – satirical, humorous, and erotic verse – belonged exclusively to the lower-class 'clerwr': 'Ni pherthyn ar brydyd ymyru ar glerwryaeth […] kanys gwrthwneb yw y greffteu prydyd. Kanys ar glerwr y perthyn

[90] Lears, *WE*, p. 4
[91] Helen Fulton, *Dafydd ap Gwilym and the European Context* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1989), pp. 32–46; Edwards, *DGIA*, pp. 1–7.
[92] See, for example: *GP*, p. 6 (*RBH*). See also: Dafydd Jenkins, '*Bardd Teulu* and *Pencerdd*', in *Welsh King and his Court*, ed. T. M. Charles-Edwards, Morfydd E. Owen, and Paul Russell (Cardiff: University of Wales Press), 2000, pp. 142–66.

goganu, ac agloduori, a gwneuthur kewilid a gwaradwyd'.[93] That many professional poets of this period did in fact contain satire, comedy, and eroticism in their poetry is made clear throughout the examples cited in this thesis.[94]

The second and third distinctions – verse-form and professional training – are interrelated and the most important for this thesis's examination of sound and control in medieval Wales. The two highest positions in this hierarchy were the most demanding in terms of training, since these poets composed in strict-metre: the 'awdl', 'englyn unodl union', and the cywydd being the most popular forms during the late Middle Ages. The 'clerwr', on the other hand, received no formal training, and some of them were not even full-time poets.[95] They wrote in free metre forms that were regarded as less demanding by their professional counterparts, e.g., the 'englyn unodl cyrch', the 'cywydd deuair fyrion', and the 'awdl-gywydd' – and some of which were free metre.[96] While the distinction between trained and untrained seems to hold true, the boundaries of verse-form once again blur since even the ubiquitous cywydd deuair hirion used by Beirdd yr Uchelwyr is indebted to a once lower-grade metre used by the Clêr: the 'traethodl'.[97]

Another blurring comes in the terminology itself. The words 'clêr' and 'clera' seem to refer to the practice of roaming, i.e., roaming poets, musicians, or indeed priests, as seen in the bells rung 'gan y glêr' in Carmarthen priory (cf. L clerus (*clergy*), and Ir clíar (*clergy*, but also *roaming band [of poets]*)).[98] As such, given that the role of the household poet more or less disappeared after the collapse of the royal patronage of poetry in the 1280s, all poets took to

[93] *GP*, p. 35 (*Llst3*). See also: Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr*, pp. 28–30.
[94] For further examples, see: *Canu Maswedd yr Oesoedd Canol = Medieval Welsh Erotic Poetry*, ed. Dafydd Johnston (Cardiff: Seren, 1998).
[95] Edwards, *DGIA*, p. 47.
[96] Anthony Conran, *Welsh Verse: Fourteen Centuries of Poetry*, 3rd edn (Bridgend: Seren, 2017), pp. 321–23.
[97] On bardic training, note, however, that the reality of this distinction was not so stark: being an amateur poet did not necessarily mean being an untrained poet. Some amateur poets do seem to have received some sort of formal or informal training. See: Dafydd Johnston, *'Canu ar ei fwyd ei hun': golwg ar y bardd amatur yng Nghymru'r Oesoedd Canol: traddodwyd yn y Brifysgol ar 27 Ionawr 1997* (Swansea: University of Wales, Swansea, 1997).
[98] *eDil*, s.v. 'clíar'.

roaming in the land, undertaking bardic circuits ('clera') to make a living. In time, then, the term 'clêr' and its related vocabulary became 'a comprehensive and entirely non-committal term'.[99] (As a reminder, this is why I am using the capitalised form 'Clêr' when discussing the untrained poets despised by their trained, professional counterparts.)

Despite the blurring, many poets sought to maintain a distinction between one type of poet, who was a trained professional, and another who was an untrained minstrel. As mentioned in the Introduction, the former believed themselves to be in competition with the latter for poetic patronage; a group of unskilled poetasters whose rising popularity 'seriously threatened to undermine the professional bards' position' and indeed the entire professional "guild"'.[100] Therefore, in this context of crosspollination and competition, the first group of professional poets felt it necessary to single themselves out by emphasising their distinguishing features – their education and more intricate verse-forms – and by relentlessly mocking the second group of untrained poets, highlighting the ways in which they were different. (Despite the occasionally neutral meaning of 'clêr', its use as a disparaging term to describe this lower form of poetry never fell out of currency.) Professional poets entertained nobles at feasts and banquets, while the disreputable Clêr performed to peasants at town centres and marketplaces; professional poets were gifted horses, hawks, and harps, while the Clêr settled for scraps ('beirdd y blawd' (*the flour poets*)); and professional poets received a formal education, while the Clêr received no such training:

> Ai ar y briffordd yr aethost yn broffwyd
> heb fedru darllen, hen gleiriach cedorllwyd?
> Fo ŵyr pawb ar ddadl nad prydydd ydwyd
> ond llygad tin clêr holl wŷr Dyffryn Clwyd.[101]

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[99] Rachel Bromwich, 'Dafydd ap Gwilym', in *A Guide to Welsh Literature*, ed. A. O. H. Jarman and Gwilym. R. Hughes, rev. Dafydd Johnston, 7 vols (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973–2003), II (1997), pp. 95–125 (p. 104).
[100] Ceri W. Lewis, 'The Content of Poetry and the Crisis in the Bardic Tradition', in *A Guide to Welsh Literature*, ed. A. O. H. Jarman and Gwilym. R. Hughes, rev. Dafydd Johnston, 7 vols (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973–2003), II (1997), pp. 72–94 (p. 84).
[101] Iolo Goch, '37. Dychan i'r Gwyddelyn', *IGP*, l. 53; Robin Cildro, 'Atodiad II. Penillion Robin Cildro i Raff ap Robert', *GRR*, ll. 1–4.

(*Was it on the highways that you became a prophet / without being able to read, you decrepit old man with greying pubic hair? / Everyone knows that you are not a poet / but a Clêr's arse hole for all of the Clwyd Valley's men*.)

In this process of distinguishing, the most potent weapon in the Beirdd yr Uchelwyr's arsenal was to target the very sound of these minstrels. The outward disdain they held towards the Clêr's subject-matter and their verse-forms is encapsulated in their constant portrayal as noisy, inhuman beings. These were minstrels whose poetry was not perceived as poetry at all; this insult was then transferred to their speech, which was not perceived as language. They were poets who, just like the uncontrolled tongues of Gruffudd Gryg or Ieuan, or the uncontrolled cacophony of Hell, had no sense of the virtuous aspect of restrained, rational sound. Their satire was unmoderated, their arrogance unrestricted, and their verse-forms unregulated.

To portray this inferiority, Beirdd yr Uchelwyr employed two degrading and dehumanising auditory images. It is to these that we turn next: metaphors that played on the Clêr's lexical connection to flies and their literal connection to bells.

*

Poets often compare the Clêr to flies; animals that are known for being an irritating presence and for having an irritating sound. This may be to do with wordplay, since 'clêr' could also mean *flies*, but this section seeks to show how the fly-based imagery goes beyond wordplay as it targets the animalistic 'vox confusa' of the Clêr themselves.[102]

In the poetry studied, 'clêr' can mean *flies* alone, with no connection to poets. Hywel Dafi's request for a beehive from a patron uses it in this way as he draws our attention to the beautiful buzzing of his bees in the charming epithet: 'clêr a wna sŵn clariwns haf' (*flies that make the noise of summer's clarions*).[103]

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[102] *GPC*, s.v. *clêr*[2].

[103] Hywel Dafi, 'Gofyn bydafau gan Lywelyn Goch ab Ieuan', *GHDaf* II, l. 46. The religious undertones in this poem, e.g., 'parau Grist yn pori grug' (*Christ's bolts grazing on the heath*) and 'engylion gwylltion mewn gwellt' (*wild angels amid the hay*) (ll. 43, 53), the monastic symbolism of bees, and the contemporary belief in the heavenly provenance of bees – 'Bonhed gwenyn o paradwys pan yw ac o achaws pechawt dyn y doethant odyno'

The same is true of the 'clêr' that Hywel Dafi hears in another poem in which he courts an unnamed woman whom he saw reading the psalms at church, imagining the two of them lying together in the bucolic 'deildy'. Among the harmonies of nature, there is twittering birdsong, a nightingale's silky melody, a harp's plaintive cry, and 'clywir yno, clêr anant, / cydlais pêr mewn coedlys pant' (*there are heard minstrel flies / sweet-sounding unison in a forest-court's hollow*).[104] Despite the 'flies' of 'clêr' here, we are undoubtedly introduced to the semantic interplay this word holds between the meanings *flies* and *minstrels*/*poets* because of the presence of 'anant'; a general word for *minstrel*.

We are also, therefore, introduced to the interspecies nature of this word, especially when used to dehumanise the Clêr poets. The sound of any animal was among the lowest forms of 'vox' in terms of how much meaning it carried. Therefore, applying this to a human could have far-reaching and disturbing implications, depicting the human in question as sub-human. If the Clêr were perceived as flies, as their name suggested and their vulgar subject-matter and lawless meters confirmed, then they were irrational beings that produced an irrational sound. (If the 'vox' of the Clêr is indeed 'inarticulata-illiterata', it is an ironic coincidence that so little of their poetry has survived in the written record.)

The noble Beirdd yr Uchelwyr delighted in exploiting this subhuman connection. A prime example of this malicious exploitation is in a poem by Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen which we briefly encountered in Chapter One's discussion of the 'cloch aberth'. Towards the end of the poem, the ageing Llywelyn outlines what he believes is his educational, avuncular duty to his nephews. Among his responsibilities, he mentions 'clau ddychanu llu lletffrom, / clywir ei dwrf, clêr y dom' (*to loudly satirize a foolish bunch, / its din is heard [far and wide],*

(*The origin of bees is from paradise and because of the sin of man they came thence*) – remind us of the third meaning of 'clêr' (*clergy*). See: *Welsh Medieval Law*, ed. Arthur W. Wade-Evans (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), pp. 81, 225.

[104] Hywel Dafi, 'Cywydd Merch', *GHDaf* II, ll. 45–46.

Clêr of the dung-heap).[105] These 'clêr' are unambiguously the lower-class minstrels of the Welsh bardic hierarchy, though they are here compared to the flying insects with whom they share a name. In this scatological pun, it seems that Llywelyn feels a responsibility to ensure that his nephews recognised good poetry from bad, high class from low, an anxiety we saw shared by the grammarians. The disparaging epithet 'clêr y dom' (*Clêr of the dung-heap*) – one of the most common epithets for these poets – states that the Clêr's compositions were bad poetry. Indeed, it was worthless; it was as lacking in sense and meaning as the buzzing of a fly.[106]

As one of the upper-class Beirdd yr Uchelwyr, Llywelyn is here reinforcing a standard of literate articulacy over those who are likely not to have been literate, or at least not in the same way as Llywelyn, who would have been educated in the poetic art of cynghanedd. Llywelyn is flexing his social authority and poetic might by demonstrating that he is the type of high-class poet that gets to decide which type of speech is meaningful and therefore laudable, and which is noise. A comparable English example might be John Gower's 'Visio Anglie', deriding those who participated in the Peasant's Revolt of 1381 by similar auditory and animalistic imagery: amid the hubbub of animalistic mooing, grunting, and barking, the rebels' speech is not language, but 'monstrorum vocibus altis' (*the shrill voices of monsters*).[107] Like the '[t]wrf' of Llywelyn's *glêr*, this is confused, unregulated animal sound.

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The second auditory image used to mock the Clêr poets in order to shore up the security of the professional poet's own esteemed high rank, is one that is again based on nonhuman sounds: bellringing. This played on the fact that the Clêr poets often rang bells as they roamed

[105] Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen, '8. Moliant Hywel a Meurig Llwyd o Nannau', *GLlG*, ll. 49–50.
[106] 'Clêr y dom' is second only to 'clêr ofer' (*worthless Clêr*) in terms of number of references in the surviving of record. See: Edwards, *DGIA*, p. 24.
[107] John Gower, *Poems on Contemporary Events: The Visio Anglie (1381), and Cronica Tripertita (1400)*, ed. David R. Carlson, trans. A. G. Rigg (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2011), l. 797.

from town to town and appeared to use these to accompany their own poetic performances. This then provided a ready-made conceit that the poets could use to further dehumanise the quality of the Clêr's poetry because, as we saw in Chapter One, bells could be heard as nourishing and holy sound, but only if their peal was controlled; if it was not, it reverted to its original state of being a metallic 'vox inarticulata-illiterata'.

We know that Clêr poets would often carry bells of some sort as they travelled and performed due to explicit descriptions associating the two in the late medieval Welsh corpus: 'melltith clêr, lle clywer clych, / sydd enbyd i Swydd Ddinbych' (*the curse of the Clêr, where bells are heard, / is harmful to Denbighshire*) as one sixteenth-century poet complained.[108] This is corroborated by the fact that other public performers across medieval Europe carried bells, such as the Latin 'praeco' (*public crier*); bells would be a perfectly natural way to draw attention to an announcement or a performance.[109]

Figure 5: A bell-wielding minstrel (Bodleian Library MS 264, fol. 188v: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/ae9f6cca-ae5c-4149-8fe4-95e6eca1f73c/surfaces/322467c1-a165-426f-add7-dcbc82906e4d/#>).

[108] Anonymous sixteenth-century poet, cited in D. J. Bowen, 'Y Cywyddwyr a'r Dirywiad', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 29 (1982) 453–96 (p. 475).
[109] Huw Meirion Edwards credits Helen Fulton with the connection to the 'praeco'. See: Edwards, *DGIA*, p. 45.

It would seem, then, that bells were the aural signature of the Clêr. For the professional Beirdd yr Uchelwyr who sought to denounce the quality of their poetry, this was a welcome coincidence which could easily translate into a convenient yet biting metaphor for the subhuman nature of their speech. This harsh accusation has not yet been fully recognized. Huw Meirion Edwards drew attention to this but did not draw conclusions from it. He draws attention to the significance of Tudur Penllyn's description of fellow-poet Hywel Cilan: 'Hywel, galw uchel dan glochau – ystaen / ac estyn ei weflau' (*Hywel, calling loudly under tin bells / and stretching his jaws*).[110] As Edwards notes, the context of satire means that the image does not refer to Hywel as a bell-poet singing someone's praises, cf. 'Dafydd Goch ariangloch wyf'.[111] Instead, 'the word may have been used […] in another metaphorical sense, to convey the loudness of the *Clêr*'s public declamations […] [R]eference to bells does seem particularly appropriate when applied to popular entertainers'.[112] Edwards, however, does not expand on the greater significance of this other 'metaphorical sense'.

This greater significance, as mentioned, is that comparing the sound of the Clêr's poetry to the inanimate noise of the bell was a serious dehumanising act. It shows that Beirdd yr Uchelwyr did not consider their poetry to be the speech of a living being, let alone human speech, and certainly not poetry. The Clêr's worthless poetry was as nonsensical and devoid of any human meaning as the bells they carried.

Dafydd ap Gwilym is one of many poets who capitalised upon the minstrels' literal association with bells by employing it in his satire on the lustful and gluttonous poet Rhys Meigen who claimed to have slept with Dafydd's mother. Rhys's voice and flatulence are compared to the jangling of the Clêr, with specific reference to their bells: 'rhefrgoch gloch y glêr' (*red-arsed bell of minstrels*).[113] According to tradition, Rhys Meigen, who may himself

[110] Tudur Penllyn, '36.7. Tudur Penllyn yn Neithior Dafydd Amhredudd Fychan', *GTP*, ll. 5–6.
[111] Edwards, *DGIA*, pp. 45–46.
[112] Edwards, *DGIA* p. 46.
[113] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '31. Dychan i Rys Meigen', *DG.net*, l. 74.

have been a clerwr, died after hearing this satirical response, such was its potency. That the Clêr poets should be the point of comparison for a fart speaks volumes about the noble poets' opinion of them, even that of Dafydd ap Gwilym who had more sympathy towards them than most.[114]

One could make the case that Casnodyn had the same idea in his grotesque satire on the equally boisterous, unsightly, and flatulent poet Trahaearn Brydydd Mawr (early fourteenth century) and his 'sarffaidd roch, bloedd hengloch blwm' (*snakelike hiss, the cry of an old, lead bell*).[115] That Casnodyn has the Clêr in mind when he is invoking this bell is suggested by the fact that this sound is explicitly qualified as being senseless, devilish, and dull, all of which are associated with the Clêr elsewhere.[116] More explicitly, earlier in the same poem, Casnodyn associates Trahaearn's raucousness with the Clêr's chaotic performance on a crwth: 'côr cewri, bleiddgi bloeddgwm, – câr clergrwth' (*a choir of giants, wolfhound belly's belch, kin of a minstrel's crwth*).[117]

The combination of the Clêr as flies and bell-bearers may help explain the insult found in a less jocular satire by Gruffudd ap Maredudd (*fl.* 1352–82) on a well-known Anglesey thief called Dafydd: 'llygliw dy flew yn drewi, / llef cloch, tom moch, taw â mi (*your mouse-brown [arse] bristles stink, / a bell's cry, pig shit, be silent with me!*).[118] As Gruffudd spits out these dehumanising references to bells, mice, and excrement in a graphic passage that dwells on Dafydd's contorting body hanging from the gallows, one wonders whether he is alluding to the

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[114] Ifor Williams famously suggested that Dafydd may even have considered himself a member of this lowly order: 'Dafydd ap Gwilym a'r Glêr', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1913–14), 83–204 (p. 143).
[115] Casnodyn, '11. Dychan i Drahaearn Brydydd Mawr', *GC*, l. 135.
[116] At room temperature, lead is a soft metal that absorbs a strike, resulting in a dull knocking sound rather than a lively ring. That it is a particularly unsuitable bell-metal was demonstrated by twentieth-century inventor Rex Garrod's lead handbell. See: Zoe Laughlin, 'Beyond the Swatch: How can the Science of Materials be Represented by the Materials Themselves in a Materials Library?' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, King's College London, University of London, 2010) p. 158; and 'Lead bell', *Institute of Making, University College London* <https://www.instituteofmaking.org.uk/materials-library/material/lead-bell#gallery-window>.
[117] Casnodyn, '11. Dychan i Drahaearn Brydydd Mawr', *GC*, l. 137. The crwth and its players are explored in greater detail in Chapter Four.
[118] Gruffudd ap Maredudd, '9. Crogi Dafydd', *GGM* III, ll. 11–12.

two audible associations of the Clêr: the aural signature of the Clêr (poets) and the scatological homes of 'clêr' (flies). As he struggles for his life, the criminal issues a groan that is as subhuman as the fly-like, bell-bearing minstrel.

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It should now be clear that for the noble poets who sought to shore up the defences of their high rank, concentrating on the sonic connections between flies, bells, and the Clêr poets was much more than simple punning and mocking. These were ways to dehumanise. Through these convenient metaphors, the Clêr could be portrayed as lowly, subhuman soundboxes who were incapable of expressing rational speech. This was all in order to sharpen the distinction between the poet's educated form of poetry, which artfully shaped phrases in a controlled manner, and the speech of the untrained minstrel who dares to call himself a poet, despite composing in unchallenging and unrefined metres, and performing with a chaotic bell. As Dafydd ap Gwilym states in his praise of Hywel, Dean of Bangor: 'nid un claer araith dyn clerẃraidd / â llwybr gŵr ewybr yn garuaidd' (*the loud utterance of a lowly minstrel* / *is not the same as the admirable manner of an eloquent man*).[119]

'Rhugl groen', percussive sounds, and peasant farmers

The second group whose speech was targeted by the poets is peasant farmers. In mocking the language of farmers, poets often compare it to percussive sounds, especially an agricultural tool called a 'rhugl groen' (*rattle-bladder*). As such, it seems entirely fitting that, in the early grammarians' hierarchy of intelligible sounds, rattling ('crepitus') is given as an example of the lowest form of sound: a 'vox inarticulata-illiterata'.[120] Comparisons to animal sounds have already been explored, so too have comparisons to disorderly bellringing; rattling

[119] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '8. Moliant Hywel, Deon Bangor', *DG.net*, ll. 33–34.
[120] *Grammatici Latini*, II, p. 6. This correspondence is likely to be a coincidence, given that we are unsure of how many of the Welsh poets were aware of Priscian's grammar. See: Jacques, 'The Reception and Transmission of the Bardic Grammars'.

sounds is the third 'vox confusa' used to describe the unintelligible or unacceptable speech of others.

The rhugl groen was a bag made of leather or a pig's bladder, filled with small rocks, and tied to the top end of a long staff. It was used primarily to frighten birds and other animals away from crop fields and would have been a common tool for any farmer. Indeed, it seems to have been their aural signature. Understanding this connection is key to unlocking several auditory images in the poetry of Beirdd yr Uchelwyr.

Medieval farmers were peasants and peasants were classed as inferior: 'alien beings of a lower order'.[121] Paul Freedman's study of the medieval peasant, whose depictions 'formed an extensive vocabulary of contempt', shows how they were frequently portrayed as ugly, dull-witted, coarse, materialistic, cowardly, and lowly, even animalistic or subhuman.[122] What Freedman does not explicitly identify as an aspect of this contempt is that peasants, as was true of all outsiders – including the *Clêr* poets of the previous section and the Irish and English speakers of the next chapter – were often derided by auditory means.

As mentioned, rattling sounds were heard as the opposite of human language when it came to meaningfulness. Therefore, like the Clêr's bells, the fact that peasant farmers carried a noisy rattling tool made it a ready-made conceit for poets who wished to deride their coarse speech. Furthermore, this conceit proved particularly useful in mocking the speech of other speakers who were not themselves peasant farmers, including fellow poets.

But why did poets hear farmer speech as a nonhuman rattling? With the Clêr's speech, it was in the poet's socio-economic interest to mock their inferior poetry; branding their language as uncontrolled noise was part of a smear campaign to dissuade patrons from giving

[121] Paul Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 1.
[122] Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant*, p. 1.

them any time, money, food, or accommodation. Farmers hardly threatened the poet's way of life in the same way.

Two reasons can be suggested for why peasant farmers' speech was ridiculed and compared to nonlinguistic and nonhuman rattling sounds. Firstly, all lower-class individuals needed to be portrayed as less educated and less in control of their language than the educated wordsmiths who prided themselves on high standards of speech. Their negative portrayal, then, may be regarded as part of the aforementioned anxiety regarding the perceived diminishing status of the professional poet, though not directly linked to competition for poetic patronage as in the case of the Clêr poets. Secondly, as seen below, it seems that the peasant farmer could be targeted as a symbol of the urbanization and anglicization of Wales, though how exactly poets were able to associate a rural individual with urban immigration remains unclear.

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The rhugl groen's most notable appearance in medieval Welsh poetry is in Dafydd ap Gwilym's poem dedicated entirely to it and its sound. With sixty copies to its name, this is one of the most popular medieval Welsh poems.[123] The opening lines set a typically bucolic scene wherein Dafydd converses with a beautiful maiden upon a hillside. This is before a farmer comes along with his rattle-bag and disturbs the calm opening. Most of the poem is set upon reprimanding this peasant and his rattle-bag and bears reproducing in full:

[123] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '62. Y Rhugl Groen', *DG.net*.

A ni felly, any oedd,
yn deall serch ein deuoedd,
dyfod a wnaeth, noethfaeth nych,
dan gri, rhyw feistri fystrych,
salw ferw fach, sain gwtsach sail,
o begor yn rhith bugail.
A chanto'r oedd, cyhoedd cas,
rugl groen flin gerngrin gorngras.
canodd, felengest westfach,
y rhugl groen; och i'r hegl grach!
Ac yno heb ddigoni
gwiw fun a wylltiodd, gwae fi!
Pan glybu hon, fron fraenglwy,
nithio'r main, ni thariai mwy.
Dan Grist, ni bu dôn o Gred,
cynar enw, cyn erwined:
cod ar ben ffon yn sonio,
cloch sain o grynfain a gro;
crwth cerrig Seisnig yn sôn
crynedig mewn croen eidion;
cawell teirmil o chwilod,
callor dygyfor, du god;
cadwades gwaun, cydoes gwellt,
croenddu feichiog o grinddellt.
Cas ei hacen gan heniwrch,
cloch ddiawl, a phawl yn ei ffwrch.
Greithgrest garegddwyn grothgro,
yn gareiau byclau y bo.
Oerfel i'r carl gwasgarlun,
amên, a wylltiodd fy mun.[124]

(*And as we were thus (she was modest) / the two of us understanding love, / there came (a feebleness bereft of [good] nurturing) / with a cry (some stinking feat) / a small ugly noisy (the bottom of a sack [making] a sound) / creature in the guise of a shepherd. / And he had (hateful declaration) / a rattle-bag, angry, with a withered cheek [and] harsh-horned. / He sounded (yellow-bellied lodger) / the rattle-bag; woe to the scabby leg! / And then without gaining satisfaction / the fair girl was frightened, woe me! / When she heard (breast made brittle by a wound) / the winnowing of the stones, she would stay no more. / Under Christ, there was never a sound in Christendom / (a sow's fame) as harsh: / a bag sounding on the end of a stick, / a bell's sound of small stones and gravel; / a shaking vessel of English stones making a sound in a bullock's skin; / a basket of three thousand beetles, / a surging cauldron, a black bag; / guardian of a meadow, cohabitor of grass, / black-skinned [and] pregnant with dry wood-chips. / Its voice [is] hateful for an old roebuck, / a devil of a bell, with a pole in its crotch. / A scarred scab with a stone-bearing gravel-womb, / may it be buckle-laces. / [May] coldness be on the shapeless churl, / (amen) who frightened my girl.*)

As the rattle-bag tears through the love-tryst under trees between mountain and meadow, Dafydd takes on an energetic, vindictive voice, bringing about a distinct change of pace and diction. Instead of the tongue-in-cheek frustration of 'Trafferth Mewn Tafarn' or 'Y

[124] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '62. Y Rhugl Groen', *DG.net*, ll. 11–40.

Cwt Gwyddau', we find unchecked ire, that is more akin to the abuse directed towards the mechanical clock in 'Y Cloc'.[125]

What sparked this anger? Why was the rattle-bladder so loud and so frightening? In our minds, one would not expect a small agricultural tool to produce a great tumult. However, we must first bear in mind the smaller range of sounds in the medieval auditory landscape, meaning that each sound was much more distinct, audible, and 'loud', so to speak. This is why, it seems, it could be used to describe a fourteenth-century storm; still one of the loudest natural sounds that exist today and one of, if not the, loudest sound in the medieval auditory landscape.[126] In a poem of uncertain authorship, a mixture of animal sounds and unpitched percussion instruments are used to evoke a storm. As in 'Y Rhugl Groen', this storm is berated for disturbing a similar summer dalliance:

> Braw a ddisgynnodd i'm bron,
> bwrw deri i'r wybr dirion.
> Gwyllt yr af a'm gwallt ar ŵyr
> gan ruad gwn yr awyr.
> Gwiddon goch yn gweiddi'n gau,
> gwrach hagr, dan guro'i chwagiau.
> Rhygn germain rhyw gŵn gormes,
> rhugl groen yn rhoi glaw a gwres.
> Torri cerwyni crinion
> a barai Grist i'r wybr gron.
> Canu trwmp o'r wybr gwmpas,
> curo glaw ar bop craig las.
> Croglam yn dryllio creiglawr,
> crechwen o'r wybr felen fawr.
> Trwy ei hun y trawai hwrdd,
> tebig i ganu tabwrdd.[127]
>
> (*Fear fell to my breast, / it batters oak-trees up into the tender sky. / I go crazy, and my hair stands askew / because of the roar from the sky's cannon. / A red hag screaming deceit, / an ugly witch, hammering her basins. / The crying chafing of some wild dogs / a rattle-bladder causing rain and heat. / It breaks brittles barrels / that turned Christ to the vast sky. / It plays a trumpet's blast from the curved sky, / It hammers rain upon each grey stone. / A stepping-stone shattering the rocky ground, / a guffaw from the great yellow sky. / A ram ruts through / like the noise from a tabor.*)

[125] Poems 73, 67, and 64, *DG.net*; The great coarseness and less self-deprecating tone of the humour led Gilbert Ruddock to suggest that the poem's adventures may have been based on true events: Gilbert Ruddock, 'Rhagor o Eiriau Mwys?', *Llên Cymru* 11 (1970), 125–26 (p. 126).
[126] Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, p. 66.
[127] Anonymous, '47. Y Daran', *Cywyddau Dafydd ap Gwilym a'i Gyfoeswyr*, ed. Ifor Williams and Thomas Roberts, 2nd edn (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1935), ll. 35–50; [NB. The edition misprints the poem's sequential number as 42 (XLII), whereas it is, in fact, 47 (XLVII)]. See also: Ann Buckley, '"and his voice swelled like a terrible thunderstorm...": Music as Symbolic Sound in Irish Society', in *Music and Irish Cultural History*, ed. Gerard Gillen and Harry White (Blackrock: Irish Academic Press, 1995), pp. 13–76.

A handful of animal sounds are used to describe the sheer noise of this great thunder, such as hounds, rams, and, later on, horses; sound that scare away the poet's female companion: 'y fun wen, ofni a wnai / awyr arw, ban weryrai' (*the white lady was greatly frightened / by the harsh sky when it whinnied*).[128] However, it is to sounds that can best be described as percussive that the poet turns most: basins, barrels, stones, drums, and, of course, the rattle-bladder, since the storm is a 'rhugl groen yn rhoi glaw a gwres'.

Beyond Wales and beyond the poetic record, it seems that a rattle-bladder could be used in warfare as a scare tactic, such was its noise. The sixteenth-century historian Willam Patten recounts in 1547 how, having forced Scottish forces to flee, the English soldiers came across 'weapons' on the battlefield, including one which was very similar to the rattle-bladder:

> And with these, found we great rattels swellyng bygger then the belly of a pottell pot, coouered with old parchement or dooble papers, small stones put in them to make noys, and set vpon the ende of a staff of more then twoo els long: and this was their fyne deuyse to fray our horses when our horsmen shoulde cum at them.[129]

Patten laughs off the attempt to use such devices to frighten the English troops 'bycaus the ryders wear no babyes, nor their horses no colts: they coold, neyther duddle the tone nor fray the toother, so that this pollecye was as witles as their powr forceles'.[130] However, setting Patten's pride and one-sided praise of his own men to one side, the fact that Scottish forces believed these 'sound weapons' to be appropriate for the battlefield is suggestive of its loud, frightening potential.

It is likely that the 'loud' nature of this noise, however, came from another aspect. Here, the definition of 'noise' as both 'unwanted' and 'unexpected sound' becomes useful.[131] In the scene set by Dafydd, he was not expecting any disturbance, particularly from the uncontrolled language of an inferior speaker, and one that represented an aspect of the changing world this

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[128] Anonymous, '47. Y Daran', *Cywyddau Dafydd ap Gwilym a'i Gyfoeswyr*, ll. 59–60; NB that '[c]ŵn gormes' probably refer to the folkloric 'Hounds of Annwn', see: Introduction, n. 72.
[129] William Patten, *The expedicion into Scotla[n]de of the most woorthely fortunate prince Edward, Duke of Soomerset* (London: Richard Grafton, 1548), pp. 222–23.
[130] Patten, *The expedicion into Scotla[n]de*, pp. 222–23.
[131] Goldsmith, *Discord*, passim.

poet did not seem to welcome with open arms: the urbanisation and anglicisation of Wales. These are the connotations that we shall next discuss.

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'Y Rhugl Groen' gives the impression of a scatter-gun rush of metaphors attacking the peasant farmer, and yet one thing is clear: this individual was perceived as aurally other. His dehumanisation centres on sound. It is significant that we never hear the farmer speak in the poem. Whatever sounds he made were not perceived by Dafydd as human language. The only sound made by the farmer is the repelling noise of the rattle-bag. Bearing in mind, then, that animal sounds were low on the 'vox' hierarchy, that the rattle-bladder was a leather or pig-bladder object, and that the farmer himself is described as a 'begor' (*creature*), everything about this man is perceived as aurally animalistic. His sound, including his speech, is not perceived as language, and does not come close to the refined language of the upper-class poet.

This seems to have been a common depiction of other agricultural workers too, including the shepherd to which the poem's peasant farmer is compared: 'begor yn rhith bugail'. This is a visual comparison at first – the long staff at the top of which the rattle-bladder was fastened resembles a shepherd's crook – but it also plays on the poor reputation of shepherds, since compound terms containing 'bugail' (*shepherd*) are rarely positive in meaning and often involve sound. Words like 'bugeilson' (*shepherd-noise*), 'bugeilgerdd' (*idle talk*, though lit. *shepherd-poem*), and 'bugeilrhes' (*vain talk*, though lit. *shepherd-list*) demonstrate how shepherds were generally held to be uncouth, coarse, vulgar, and vociferous.[132] As with Dafydd's peasant farmer, shepherds are also very rarely given a voice that demonstrates their grasp on language. In Madog Benfras's anecdotal cywydd describing how he switched clothes with a salt seller in order to fool Eiddig into giving him access to his house and thus a private romantic audience with his wife, the highlights of the loud brawl caused by the poet's arrival

[132] Ruddock, 'Rhagor o Eiriau Mwys?', p. 125; *GPC*, s.v. *bugeilson*, *bugeilgerdd*, *bugeilrhes*.

are *the barking cry of a pack of yard dogs* ('cyfarth lef cŵn buarth lu') and *great foolish shepherds' commotion* ('rhysyml ryfel bugelydd').[133] The unspecified, language-less nature of this 'noise' portrays the shepherds as more similar to the nearby dogs than to the speaking humans who feature later in the poem.[134]

Unlike the Clêr poets, peasant farmers, and indeed shepherds, had no clear connection to the precarious social situation in which professional poets perceived themselves to be. Why, then, were they heard as producers of nonhuman noise by the poets? As mentioned, and as will be explored in greater detail in the next section on perceptions of 'good Welsh', standards of good speech – and good poetry – were a growing concern. It became increasingly important for poets to demonstrate that they held firm control over their language use and maintained high standards of good diction. Highlighting their unequalled skill in this regard was important to secure poetic patronage that could otherwise go to alternative entertainers such as the Clêr poets. Ridiculing speech, language, or poetic skills that were deemed to be sub-par was part of this defence and was applied to speakers within the bardic institution, i.e., fellow poets who, in this way, policed each other by calling out instances of careless poetry or speech, but even more so to speakers outside the bardic institution, especially those of a lower social class, such as peasant farmers. The rattling, percussive associations of farmers' language find their way into several satirical poems, some mocking Clêr poets, others mocking fellow professional poets in order to police the expected and necessary high standards of poetry and speech within the profession.

The percussive sounds associated with inhuman language are weaponised in several satirical poems directed at fellow poets. For example, the 'tabwrdd' (*tabor*, a small drum), frequently accompanies descriptions of nonlinguisitc sounds, e.g., in Tudur Penllyn's depiction

[133] Madog Benfras, '5. Cywydd yr Halaenwr', *GMBen*, ll. 34, 41.
[134] Madog Benfras, '5. Cywydd yr Halaenwr', *GMBen*, ll. 34, 53–56.

of a particular bull: 'tabwrdd dadwrdd Cwmdadu' (*the noisy tabor of Cwmdadu*).[135] However, more pertinently to our discussion on language, this auditory image is then applied to humans, including poets. It is used twice by Casnodyn's aforementioned satire on Trahaearn Brydydd Mawr. In an ymryson context, the poem responds to accusations by Trahaearn that Casnodyn's opening poem was imitative and derivative. Casnodyn is also accused of not dutifully praising their patron, Llywelyn ap Cynwrig, Lord of Llantriddyd and Radyr. Casnodyn responds to the accusation of not having composed a poem of a high enough standard, by accusing Trahaearn of the very same crime. This, however, spirals into accusations of Trahaearn being an adulterer, a drunkard, a glutton, a cowardly soldier, overweight, vulgar, and flatulent. All of these, however, still serve to insult Trahaearn's poor quality of poetry. Significantly, his poor poetry and poor speech is described by percussive means:

> Tabwrdd mal godwrdd, moel gidwm – bratog
> mywn brytys ofergwm,
> sarffaidd roch, bloedd hengloch blwm,
> safn baedd mywn ennain baddwn.[136]
>
> (*[Trahaearn's noise is like a] tabor [making a noise] like a turbulent tumult, bald, tattered wolf* / *In breeches [that cover] a fruitless valley,* / *satanic roar, the cry of an old, lead bell,* / *[one with] a boar's mouth bathing in a tub.*)

Later, the 'tabwrdd' reappears, this time making the connection between percussive sounds and nonsense, nonhuman speech clearer than ever:

> Blin yw maint ei fin, anfaniar – ribwd,
> rhyw bydew cerdd watwar,
> dwrdd dwfn, dabwrdd dan dabar,
> dyrdan, llanw o dân mywn dâr.[137]
>
> (*The size of his mouth is tiresome, boisterous ribald,* / *some mire of imitative poetry,* / *deep noise, tabor under tabard,* / *bonfire, a filling of fire in oak trees.*)

Hearing about Trahaearn's 'cerdd watwar' in the same breath as his 'dabwrdd dan dabar', clarifies that the drum-like noise of Trahaearn's flatulence and the noise of his sub-par poetry are one and the same.

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[135] Tudur Penllyn, '32. I Erchi Tarw Du gan Rheinallt ap Gruffudd ap Bleddyn', *GTP*, l. 35.
[136] Casnodyn, '11. Dychan i Drahaearn Brydydd Mawr', *GC*, ll. 133–36.
[137] Casnodyn, '11. Dychan i Drahaearn Brydydd Mawr', *GC*, ll. 173–76.

An anonymous fourteenth-century satirical poem mocks a poet, possibly a clerwr, named Einion in a similar way. The man in question is 'alwar cig pennyg pynial, – lwyth murmur, / eri greadur hersu horsal' (*meat intestine purse, a grumbling load* / *a choleric, bitter-arsed beast, ugly as lice*), immediately introducing an animalistic element. This complements the percussive sounds heard earlier in the poem, which may well evoke the rattle-bladder once more:

> Grawngwd us myngus, myngial – ci cwta,
> yn rhoch ddiota, rhech ddiatal
> gröeg loyw dwyseg, dwsel mal – mymlws,
> gruddlwyd bonws mws, mysfain weinial.[138]
>
> (*A grain bag full of muttering rubbish, a short dog's mumbling* / *grunting as he drinks, ceaseless fart,* / *mountainous man, loud din, penis like stag stew,* / *grey-faced, stinking arse, dirty thin penis.*)

Despite not explicitly mentioning the rattle-bladder, it seems fairly clear that this is the same instrument and that it serves the same function as it did in Dafydd's attack on the peasant farmer. The passage compares a man's deranged speech – or, more likely, his disreputable standard of poetry – to a meaningless rattling sound: a 'vox inarticulata-illiterata' that carries even less meaning than an animal noise. This sense is heightened in the vocabulary too, due to the onomatopoeic element 'mwng-' featuring in both key adjectives: 'myngus' and 'myngial'.

Therefore, rattling noises were used to ridicule all sorts of poor forms of speech, of both farmers and poets, and all in order to disgrace their language usage so that the high standards of the poets could remain respected.

A second reason why peasant farmers in particular were ridiculed and linked to rattling, nonhuman sounds, relates to the definition of noise as 'sound out of place'; the idea that the disruption brought about by the farmer's speech represents the increased disruption of a certain way of life brought about by urbanisation and anglicisation.[139] Referring to Dafydd ap Gwilym's 'Y Rhugl Groen', Helen Fulton argues that the poem 'clearly represents the

[138] Anonymous, '7. Dychan i Einion', *GPB*, ll. 39–40, 35–38.
[139] Goldsmith, *Discord*, passim.

imposition of the material world of man upon an idyllic natural scene' where 'the world of nature is no longer an idealized metaphor of the court, but rather a representation of socialized reality, with its failures, disappointments, discomforts and reminders of moral obligations'.[140] The farmer does not come from an urban setting, yet the disruption caused to the natural auditory landscape by a tool-wielding human holds striking parallels to the influx of sounds brought about by the growth of towns in medieval Wales: sounds that were not always welcomed by Dafydd, as we saw in his exasperated relationship with mechanical clocks.

English immigration came part and parcel with the growth of towns, and perhaps this is another reason why Dafydd disliked the sound of the rattle-bladder. The association is even made explicit at one point: 'crwth cerrig Seisnig yn sôn'. Dafydd rarely casts English people and the English language in a positive light, and so it is no surprise that 'English' is used to describe this nonhuman sound; a sound associated with a peasant and his nonhuman language. Chapter Three delves deeper into the portrayal of foreign languages as nonlinguistic sound used to other its speakers. However, it is worth noting at this point that Dafydd was not the only one to use the rhugl groen to ostracise a group of speakers by targeting their speech. In 1595, Maurice Kyffin also used the rattle-bladder to describe Henry VIII's Catholic adversaries: 'drwy waith bwbachod a rhygl-grwyn yrru braw ar frenin mor alluog ag oedd ef' (*by means of scarecrows and rattle-bladders sought to frighten such a capable king as was he*).[141] Moreover, as explored in Chapter Four, the crwth was often an inferior instrument, and one that could also signify something 'crooked' or 'full'. By adding these meanings to how 'cerrig' could mean testicles, we find ourselves dealing with a crooked English scrotum. It seems clear, then, that the 'noise' of this peasant farmer's rhugl groen is also the noise of the urban English language disturbing an otherwise idyllic setting.

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[140] Helen Fulton, *Dafydd ap Gwilym and the European Context*, p. 204.
[141] Maurice Kyffin, *Deffynniad Ffydd Eglwys Loegr*, ed. W. Prichard Williams (Bangor: Jarvis & Foster, 1908), p. 198.

Mendicant friars

The third figure whose speech is described as subhuman is the mendicant friar. Here, as we hear poets mocking the nuisance noise of these friars' unsolicited preaching, we return to the negative connotations of unregulated bellringing. The auditory imagery is even more symbolic here than it was when applied to the Clêr poets. Firstly, on this occasion, it is directly and unquestionably to do with language, since it plays on the dual meaning of 'tafod' (*tongue*, and *hammer (of a bell)*), and secondly, because of the irony in using the holy auditory objects of the Church against one of its members. We are also introduced to the matter of lying and return to the issue of lazy articulation. Again, by tuning into the contemporary auditory imagination, the metaphor grows beyond being merely whimsical wordplay.

Dafydd's debates with the Franciscan and Dominican monks are perhaps the most famous examples of antimendicant Welsh verse. His bone of contention is with the monks' opposition to love lyrics, which Dafydd justifies by presenting detailed arguments taken from the Bible, from Welsh sayings, and from the Church's own praise of God, which is no different from Dafydd's own praise of women, so he argues. Language and sound play an important role in the irony of these debates, as is next explored.

In the first poem, 'Y Bardd a'r Brawd Llwyd' (*The Poet and the Grey Friar*), Dafydd is accused of being one of the noisy Clêr. This is expressed in a way that is directly related to the sub-human sound of those poets and their most popular epithet, 'y glêr ofer': 'nid oes o'ch cerdd chwi, y glêr, / ond truth a lleisiau ofer' (*your songs, you minstrels, / are nothing but nonsense and vain voices*).[142] Although Dafydd is indeed composing in a metre that was originally a favourite among the Clêr, the 'traethodl', betraying his ambivalent allegiance to them, and although he later argues for a 'gaudeamus' approach to life found in goliardic verse, the presence of 'lleisiau ofer' clarifies that this accusation is certainly perceived as an unfair

[142] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '148. Y Bardd a'r Brawd Llwyd', *DG.net*, ll. 29–30.

debasement of his poetry.[143] By mentioning 'lleisiau' in the context of noise, one cannot but think of Priscian's twin axes of *voces*. Yet, in this sense, it would seem that Dafydd, the author of the Grey Friar's words, is teeing himself up to satirize the sermons of mendicant friars themselves as the 'vox inarticulata-illiterata' of a chaotic peal. It is the friar, not Dafydd, who speaks with 'lleisiau ofer' like one of the Clêr.

This satire comes in 'Rhybudd y Brawd Du' (*The Black Friar's Warning*), which holds even less sympathy towards the friar than in Dafydd's debate with the Franciscan. Although this friar is from a different order, the Dominicans, his reproach is similar: Dafydd is accused, once again, of having been wasting his time in sinful praise of a woman when he should have been praising God, to which he responds by launching into a diatribe against the friar's 'amarch' (*disrespect*), his 'ffydd ffalsddull' (*deceitful faith*), and his 'serth sôn' (*insolent talk*).[144] Before the friar's initial accusations, however, he is introduced as 'y brawd â'r prudd dafawd pres' (*the friar with the sombre brass tongue*).[145]

Just as several poets played with the dual meaning of 'clêr', Dafydd is one of many poets to relish the aforementioned semantic overlap offered by the noun 'tafod'.[146] Dafydd recognizes that the hammer within the bell chamber is similar in both appearance and function to the tongue within the mouth. The great irony, of course, is that however many human-like features a bell may have, it cannot produce sound that is as semantically meaningful as that of humans, and even this meaningful human sound production takes great care to achieve. These incessant preachers, whose sermons had developed a reputation for being too long, too virulent, and too quick to brazenly brandish all listeners as sinners, were just as incapable of speaking

[143] Dafydd ap Gwilym, *Selected Poems of Dafydd ap Gwilym*, ed. Rachel Bromwich (Bungay: The Chaucer Press, 1985), p. 162.
[144] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '149. Rhybudd Y Brawd Du', *DG.net*, ll. 2, 6, 32.
[145] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '149. Rhybudd Y Brawd Du', *DG.net*, l. 14.
[146] Gwerful Mechain has a profane take on the image, though hers is not auditory. She compares Dafydd Llwyd of Mathafarn's penis to the hammer of one of Llabadarn Fawr's church bells: 'braisg yw dy gastr, bras gadarn – tyfiad / fal tafod cloch Badarn' (*sturdy is your cock, stout strong growth / like the clapper of Padarn's bell*), 'Ymddiddan Rhwng Dau Fardd', *Canu Maswedd yr Oesoedd Canol*, pp. 40–41, ll. 5–6. [Editor's translation.]

meaningfully. Bells are helpfully bereft of linguistic meaning and were thus the perfect auditory image to capture the perceived 'vox confusa' of these vociferous friars.

The metaphor corresponds almost directly to the confessor's attack on the prideful person whose tongue 'clappeth as a bell' in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*.[147] There is an even closer correspondence in Geoffrey Chaucer's Monk's Tale, when, towards the end of the tale, the Host laments the Monk for the turgid didacticism of his story of relentless tragedy, swearing that 'Ye […] by Seint Poules belle! / Ye seye right sooth; this Monk he clappeth lowde'.[148] Ironically enough, the only thing that manages to rouse the company from the stupor induced by the Monk's tale is the clinking of his bridle bells. However, lexical difference meant that these English examples could not take advantage of the two tongues. Indeed, the Welsh double-entendre in 'tafod' also allowed the poets to accuse the friars of sin, since the tongue was regarded as a dangerous organ: a common image in medieval sermons was to stress how the tongue was naturally guarded by the double walls of the teeth and the lips.[149]

The fourteenth-century poet Madog Benfras fine-tunes this auditory image further. Madog opens his debate with a Dominican friar with a programmatic statement that unapologetically proclaims his contempt towards the friar's preaching in particular: 'casbeth gennyf bregeth brawd' (*I despise a friar's sermon*).[150] The contemptible descriptions continue before the friar gives a familiar warning against the perils of love lyrics, which in turn provokes a response of unbridled satire. Structurally, the poem is similar to Dafydd ap Gwilym's two poems, but so too is its irony, for as with Dafydd's Grey Friar who accuses Dafydd of 'lleisiau ofer', Madog's Black Friar accuses him of the very criticism he is about to unleash upon him: unrefined or 'discordant' sound. As the friar concludes his chastising, he remarks: 'a phaid, er

[147] John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, ed. Russel A. Peck, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2006), I, 1:8 (l. 2391).
[148] Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Canterbury Tales', *RC*, ll. 2780–81.
[149] Lears, *WE*, p. 169.
[150] Madog Benfras, '2. Cyngor y Brawd Du', *GMBen*, l. 2.

mawrfraint Mair, / â'th gywydd iaith ddigywair' (*and cease, for Mary's great blessing, / with your cywydd in a discordant language*).[151] Madog's response employs the auditory image of the bell-like monk in a more extended manner than most, and it is worth reproducing in full:

> Gwan iawnllun frawd, gwn wawd wiw,
> gwenynllestr nid gwawn unlliw,
> nid un rheol â Iolo,
> nid â felly, glochdy glo,
> ffriw debyg, Sain Dom'nig swyn,
> ffrwyth o fwyarllwyth irllwyn,
> brân ar lled yn ehedeg
> a'i bryd ar nef dangnef deg,
> gefail o gochl a heulrhod,
> geuedd cloch am gywydd clod,
> tafod i gloch bres Iesu,
> taer y'n dysg gŵr torwyn du,
> moeluriad o baradwys,
> mulfran yr Ysbryd Glân glwys.
> Am warafun i'r fun fawl
> o'r brawd du oerbryd dwywawl,
> ceiliog a chloch y dangnef,
> calon oer i'r cul o nef![152]
>
> (*A friar of a suitably frail demeanour, I know [how to sing] fine praise, / beehive not the same colour as gossamer, / not the same rule as Iolo, / he [the monk] does not go [by this rule], belfry [the colour of] coal, / [with a] face similar to, the blessing of St Dominic, / the fruits of heap of blackberries in a green bush, / outstretched bird in flight / with its mind on reaching heaven's fine tranquillity, / a forge [made] of cloak and cap, / the falsity of a bell [complaining] about a praise poem, / his brass-bell's tongue, Jesus, / earnestly does the white-bellied black man teach us, / bald alderman of paradise, / the Holy Spirit's holy vulture. / Because the godly, numb-faced friar / forbade the woman's praise, / tranquillity's cockerel and bell, / may the narrow man of heaven have a cold heart!*)

Though they have holy connotations, the imagery of the crow attempting to fly to heaven and the reference to bees in particular remind us of the animalistic noise of the Clêr. Despite his withered demeanour, the monk is also 'praff' (*burly*) and thus his cassock is fittingly compared to a stout belfry and, later, a forge. This portrays the friar as an echo chamber of the type of metallic noise Priscian would place at the bottom of his spectrum, and the type we heard in the Middle English 'Complaint against Blacksmiths' cited in Chapter One. Madog's friar is portrayed as having a deformed, impure body, captured in his crow-like, bee-like qualities, his large yet withered stature, but most of all in his dull, swollen, brass tongue, once again playing on the dual meaning of 'tafod'.

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[151] Madog Benfras, '2. Cyngor y Brawd Du', *GMBen*, ll. 19–20.
[152] Madog Benfras, '2. Cyngor y Brawd Du', *GMBen*, ll. 21–38.

Incidentally, this sharpens our understanding of the perception of Gruffudd Gryg's disability as mentioned in his debate with Dafydd ap Gwilym. Dafydd's physical description of Gruffudd 'a blaen ei dafod yn blwm' ('tongue-tipped with lead') mirrors Dafydd ap Gwilym's Grey Friar and his 'prudd dafawd pres'. Both are heard as linguistically meaningless dull bells.[153]

A crucial phrase in Madog Benfras's debate with the Black Friar is one that describes the latter's falsehoods and may also gesture towards his hollow words with 'geuedd cloch' (*bell's falsity*) hinting towards 'ceuedd gloch' (*bell's cavity*) in its mutated form. Once again, we are dealing with a suggestion of wordplay between these two words, but its significance goes far beyond wordplay alone. To unpick this, it will be helpful to turn to one final conception of senseless sound in Welsh poetry: the word 'lol' and lazy articulation.

This word appears in a prophecy poem by Dafydd Gorlech in which he hopes for the return of the famed 'mab darogan' (*the son of prophecy*). The poem takes the common form of a conversation between a poet and a bird, here a raven. In the first half of the poem, Dafydd pricks up his ears as he introduces the raven with its harsh yet admirable cry: 'y gigfran syfrdan ei sŵn, / greg unig o graig Annwn' (*the raven, astonishing its noise, / lonely and harsh from the rock of Annwn*).[154] Perhaps it is unsurprising that this bird, so often linked with death and horror, should be linked to the mythical kingdom of Annwn in a diabolical guise, rather than Annwn's alternative elysian attire.[155] The poet is persistent in this connection with the Otherworld, and brings a hitherto unknown auditory image into play: 'gythreules gwaetha'i rhylol, / cloch Annwn mawrswn ei siol' (*she-devil, worst of all in her over-prattle, / the Bell of Annwn, a great noise [from] her head*).[156] Though I have not found any reference that is more

[153] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '30. Pedwerydd Cywydd Ymryson Dafydd ap Gwilym', l. 38.
[154] Dafydd Gorlech, '7. Cywydd y gigfran', *GDGor*, ll. 1–2.
[155] On possible meanings of 'Annwn' (*Otherworld*, *Inworld*, or *Unworld*), see: Mark Williams, 'Magic and Marvels', in *The Cambridge History of Welsh Literature*, ed. Geraint Evans and Helen Fulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 52–72 (p. 58).
[156] Dafydd Gorlech, '7. Cywydd y gigfran', ll. 9–10.

extensive than the simple phrase ‘cloch Annwn’, by considering Annwn as a hellish place on this occasion and by remembering Casnodyn’s sonorous vision of Hell, we may conceivably hear this bell as an unbridled, unordered chiming.

However, as mentioned, the most important word for our current discussion is in the compound noun ‘rhylol’ (‘rhy’, *too [much]*; ‘lol’, *prattle, idle chatter*). Our understanding of this word affects how we hear the hollow words and vacuous lies of Madog Benfras’s friar and the indeed the nonsense of Dafydd ap Gwilym’s friars.

One meaning that *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* gives for ‘lol’ is a *shrill, discordant cry*; a description that fits the crow’s call nicely. Yet, it is the first, more widespread meaning that is more useful: *meaningless, vain talk, chatter*.[157] The dictionary tells us that this meaning entered Welsh in the sixteenth century, making Dafydd Gorlech’s compound use of the word in the fifteenth century an early attestation. It is likely to have been borrowed from E loll, found in northern dialects and/or Scots, and which was a word that emerged ‘apparently due to a sense of the expressiveness of the sound (with the repeated *l*) suggestive of rocking or swinging’.[158] The original somniferous sense for this ideophone implies slothfulness, which later spread to slothful speech; the very, reduplicative sound of the word applies the laziness it signifies to the tongue and teeth (cf. Middle Dutch ‘lollaert’, *mumbler*). This slothful speech could be sinful, as we heard in the actions of homiletic ‘Tutivillus’ but more clearly in the dangerous preaching of John Wyclif’s followers, which is what ultimately gave them their name: ‘Lollards’.[159] This sense of meaningless speech is entrenched in Dafydd Gorlech’s use of ‘rhylol’ for the crow’s slothful will, which has led it to produce a meaningless shriek.

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[157] *GPC*, s.v. *lol*.
[158] *DSL*, s.v. *loll* v[1]; *OED*, s.v. *lol*.
[159] Edwain Craun, *Lies, Slander and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature: Pastoral Rhetoric and the Deviant Speaker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Edwain Craun, ‘Wycliffism and Slander’, in *Wycliffite Controversies*, ed. Patrick Hornbeck and Mishtooni Bose (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), pp. 227–42; *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. Andrew Louth, 4th edn (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022), s.v. *lollards*.

Lazy articulation can be brought back to the aforementioned long-standing philosophical concern for how sound could overtake sense if no effort was made to ensure that the sound was regulated and that its sense was clear. Sound overpowering sense is at the heart of William Langland's use of the term 'lollare' in *Piers Plowman*.[160] On the whole, Langland*'s* 'lollares' are 'lewed ermytes' who wander about town, loudly feigning religious authority for personal profit. This is in contrast to the idealised, prelapsarian silence of the 'holy ermytes' who live in the wild, akin to Madog Benfras's silent heaven: 'nef dangnef deg'.[161] For Langland, the word signals the empty and duplicitously theatrical speech that he associates with certain false religious figures; figures exactly like the friars in Dafydd ap Gwilym and Madog Benfras's poems.

These friars are preoccupied by the sound of their own voice, regardless of whether or not it contains any truth. Having slothfully avoided putting any effort into considering *what* they are saying and concentrating entirely on *how* they are saying it, they produce the sinful sounds of idle speech. They preach something that *sounds* like fire-and-brimstone but has precious little spiritual value and is ultimately meaningless. They claim the ecclesiastical authority of the bell, but its peal is hollow ('ceuedd') and devoid of any meaning or truth, which it has replaced with falsity ('geuedd'). The bellringing falsity of the speaker of empty words was known to St Paul, who stated, in a passage that is the New Testament's closest reference to bells, 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal'.[162]

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[160] It is worth noting that this was one of John Wyclif's criticisms of the Catholic Church, namely that it ignored the merely representative nature of language and privileged its (Latinate) sound, which was, to him, the sound of exclusivity. Wyclif was the leader of the proto-Protestant movement with whom 'loll' has its closest associations in medieval English history, given their derogatory nickname: the Lollards. Any connection between Dafydd Gorlech's poem and Lollardy itself is unlikely, given that there is very little evidence that the movement was active in Wales, especially at this point in time when the movement was barely in its infancy; William Langland, *Piers Plowman: A New Annotated Edition of the C-text*, ed. Derek Pearsall, 2nd edn (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2008), passim.
[161] Langland, *Piers Plomwan*, 9:202. See also: Lears, *WE*, pp. 102–05.
[162] 1 Corinthians 13:1.

Clêr poets, peasant farmers, and mendicant friars were each mocked by Beirdd yr Uchelwyr. This section has shown that this mocking concentrated largely on sound, and on the unacceptable sound of their speech in particular. While the motive behind targeting each group was slightly different on each occasion, they were all described as having speech that was considered poor in some way or another in order to emphasise that the poet's speech was rich, controlled, and, therefore, superior.

IV. 'Good Welsh'

The above exposition of the features of 'bad Welsh' has revealed that control was key. If a speaker was not perceived to have control over how they spoke, they had little chance of being respected as a measured individual. These are valuable insights when seeking to answer this chapter's initial question: what was 'good Welsh'? Because, for the most part, good language use is described in much vaguer, more abstract, and metaphorical terms. This is what we shall consider first before turning to the descriptions that offer more clarity and detail.

Golden speech

Descriptions on the theme of 'gold' are common. Guto'r Glyn describes Ieuan Gethin as having golden lips as he tried to charm one 'Gwladus' from Glyn-nedd and Harri Gruffudd's words were so beautiful that they bathed the same woman in gold when he praised her:

> Gweithio mae Ieuan Gethin
> ac aur fydd pob gair o'i fin.
> Harri a wnaeth ei heuraw
> â'r glod yn amlach no'r glaw.[163]
>
> (*Ieuan Gethin is striving / and every word from his lips are golden. / Harry has made her golden / with praise more profuse than rain.*)

[163] Guto'r Glyn, '34. Ymrafael Harri Gruffudd o'r Cwrtnewydd ac Ieuan Gethin am serch Gwladus o Lyn-nedd', *GG.net*, ll. 15–18.

Guto'r Glyn also described Hywel ab Ieuan's language as golden, employing the common motif of the golden tongue: 'â'th roddion ym o'th ruddaur, / wythfed wyd â thafod aur' (*with your gifts to me from your red gold, / you're the eighth with a golden tongue*).[164] This motif was also applied to Tudur Aled in elegies by both Huw ap Dafydd and Siôn ap Hywel. Indeed, by the fourteenth century, 'euriaith' (*golden language*) had developed into a standalone word, such as in Mathau Brwmffild's praise of Rhisiart ap Rhys: 'y mae i'r carw, marc euriaith, / gem aur, un gymar o'i iaith' (*there is to this stag, the mark of golden language, / a golden gem, a companion of his language*).[165]

Sweet speech

Imagery involving honey is equally common. In many ways, this is understandable since God's words are often described as mellifluous.[166] Sir William Gruffudd's speech is 'honey' according to Tudur Aled: 'Mêl yw parabl, mal purwynt' (*Honey is [his] speech, like a pure wind*).[167] Tudur himself had 'melys iaith, fal mêl i sôn' (*sweet language, as if speaking honey*) according to Morys Gethin, and 'sang honey' according to Huw ap Dafydd: 'Canai fêl acw 'n i fin' (*He sang honey there in his speech*).[168]

A related auditory image is to describe language as 'pêr' (*sweet-sounding*). The pairing 'parablau pêr' (*sweet-sounding phrases*) is a particularly common poetic phrase, e.g., in Hywel

[164] Guto'r Glyn, '91. Moliant i Hywel ab Ieuan Fychan o Foeliwrch', *GG.net*, ll. 23–24; Huw ap Dafydd ap Llywelyn ap Madog, '15. Marwnad Tudur Aled', *GHD*, l. 37; Siôn ap Hywel, '11. Marwnad Tudur Aled', *GSH*, l. 4. Edern Dafod Aur (*Edern Golden Tongue*) is the most famous Welsh literary figure to carry this motif. As a shadowy figure believed to have flourished in the early thirteenth century, though more famously known as the purported author of a nineteenth-century publication of the bardic grammars – *Dosparth Edeyrn Dafod Aur, or, The Ancient Welsh Grammar* (Llandovery: W. Rees, 1856) – this poet lies outside of this thesis's period of study. See: Griffith John Williams, 'EDERN DAFOD AUR', *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* <https://biography.wales/article/s-EDER-AUR-1280>.
[165] Guto'r Glyn, '91. Moliant i Hywel ab Ieuan Fychan o Foeliwrch', *GG.net*, ll. 23–24; Mathau Brwmffild, '14. Moliant Rhisiart ap Rhys, Gogerddan', *GMBrwm*, ll. 41–42.
[166] Lears, *WE*, p. 22.
[167] Tudur Aled, '33. Cywydd i Syr Wiliam Gruffudd y Siambrlen', *GTA* I, ll. 77–78.
[168] Morys Gethin, '6. Gan Morys Gethin', *GTA* II, l. 68; Huw ap Dafydd ap Llywelyn ap Madog, '2. Gan Huw ap Dafydd ap Llywelyn ap Madog', *GTA* II, l. 58.

Dafi's praise of Rhys ap Hywel ap Dafydd: 'cwnstabl ar bob parabl pêr' (*a constable on each sweet-sounding word*).[169] This is every phrase in Pirs Gruffudd's speech – 'pêr yw blaen parabl ynod' (*sweet-sounding is the tip of each of your words*) – and Siôn ap Hywel's unnamed beloved is both sweet and golden in her speech: 'pêr yw blas pob parabl aur' (*sweet is the taste of each golden word*).[170]

Descriptions such as these, however, reveal very little about the exact details of what was considered to be good Welsh. 'Golden', 'honeyed', and 'sweet-sounding' are highly subjective descriptions that contain precious little detail.

Of course, all auditory perception is subjective to greater and lesser degrees. However, some descriptions do provide more detail, especially those that are corroborated by similar descriptions in the bardic grammars. One of these are descriptions that involve adjectives pertaining to clarity ('eglur', 'gloyw') or purity ('pur').

Clear speech

Curiously, these adjectives are often applied to birdsong, but usually birds that are stand-ins for Welsh-speaking humans, for example, the birds that surround Dafydd ap Gwilym as he imagines them as clerics ministering a woodland Mass – 'mi a glywn mewn gloywiaith / ddatganu, nid methu, maith' (*I heard in clean language / a lengthy recitation without fault*) – or Siân Griffith's nightingale messenger, depicted as a friar with a pure voice: 'bur ei lais bore laswyr, / bêr ei hun, bore a hŵyr' (*pure its own sweet-sounding voice, / psaltery of the morning, day and night*).[171]

On these occasions of 'clarity', we hear a direct contrast with Gruffudd Gryg's stammer or Ieuan stumbling over his words. We hear carefully considered phrases spoken in a clear

[169] Hywel Dafi, '6. Marwnad Rhys ap Hywel ap Dafydd', *GHDaf* I, l. 13; cf. Barry Lewis, *GGM* I, p. 118.
[170] Siôn ap Hywel, '23. Cywydd merch', *GSH*, l. 28.
[171] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '39. Offeren y Llwyn', *DG.net*, ll. 21–22; Siân Griffith (née Owain), '36. Ateb: Anfon yr hedydd at Marged Harri', *Beirdd Ceridwen*, ll. 3–4.

voice. This reading of 'clear' or 'pure speech' is in line with what we read in the grammars: 'Tri pheth a hoffa kerd: datkanyat eglur, a chywreint wneuthuryat, ac awdurdawt y prydyd' (*Three things adorn a poem: clear declamation, skilled composition, and the poet's authority*), as one copy puts it.[172] Among other features that *strengthen* ('cadarnhau'), *arrange* ('cyweirio') and *dignify* (urddo) a phrase in the grammars are 'eglvr barabl' (*clear speech*), 't[h]auawt eglur wrth y datkanu' (*a clear tongue when declaiming*), and 'annyan[a]wl dyall y datk[einyat]' (*the natural comprehension of a declamation*).[173] Thus, it is fairly plain what is meant when we hear these adjectives in action, such as when Sir Rhys ap Gruffudd is praised as 'maer wysg Fflur llafnddur, iaith eglur iawn' (*steel-hilted governor along the river Fflur, very clear speech*).[174]

An alternative reading of 'eglur' and 'pur' is to do with concepts of 'pure Welsh' in the sense of a language uncorrupted by a foreign language, unlike the 'llediaith' Gruffydd Robert heard on the outskirts of Shrewsbury. This will be explored in greater detail in the section on Welsh-English bilingualism in the chapter that follows.

Free-flowing speech: 'rhugl', 'ffraeth', and 'berw'

The next revealing description of good Welsh pertains to speed, wit, and, of course, control. These concepts are bound up in the diffuse connotations of 'fluency' found in the words 'rhugl' (*fluent*), 'ffraeth' (*witty*), and 'berw' (*bubble*).

These sometimes refer to social situations. Several individuals are praised for their loquaciousness and sociability. Gruffudd Fychan is described by Guto'r Glyn as 'cyweithasaf â thafawd' (*most well-mannered in [his] speech*); a man who is also the subject of the rhetorical question 'oes ymadrodd nas medrai?' (*is there any expression that he did not know?*).[175] Then

[172] *GP*, p. 17 (*RBH*).
[173] *GP*, p. 17 (*RBH*); *GP*, pp. 134–35 (*PLlK*); *GP*, p. 58 (*P20*); *GP*, p. 36 (*Llst3*).
[174] Einion Offeiriad, '1. Moliant Syr Rhys ap Gruffudd', *GEODDdH*, l. 90.
[175] Guto'r Glyn, '52. Marwnad Gruffudd Fychan ap Gruffudd o Gorsygedol', *GG.net*, ll. 53–54, 51–52

we have the poet Trahaearn Brydydd Mawr who had a fluent tongue but chose his words carefully: 'ffraeth dafawd, detholwawd doeth' (*witty tongue, wise, choice poem*).[176] Similarly, it would seem that Wiliam Siôn was equally quick-witted: 'parod dy dafod â dawn, / pur ffraethloyw pêr a ffrwythlawn' (*ready your tongue with talent, / pure, witty, clear, sweet-sounding and fruitful*).[177]

One of the virtues of these people, then, was that they were sociable and had a particular way with words; they were easy to talk to and always seemed to have the right word for the occasion. The grammars agree that this is one of the key features of good speech and of good poetry: we read of 'ehudrwyd parabyl' (*lively speech*), 'medwl digrif' (*witty mind*), 'hyder eofn' (*bold confidence*), and 'hvawdlrwydd parabl' (*eloquent speech*).[178] So, 'good Welsh' was 'fluent Welsh' or 'witty Welsh'.

However, many of these keywords have dual meanings as we heard in the use of 'rhugl' in poems berating the rhugl groen. Control is the key once again, since being free flowing with your words was potentially a dangerous game. On the one hand, with assured control over one's language, one may speak freely, allowing the words to flow without hindrance. On the other hand, without control, speaking freely could mean an unrestrained babble and useless chatter; being too lazy to consider what one is saying and how it will be said led to the same issues of nonsense talk already explored.[179]

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[176] Gwilym Ddu o Arfon, '8. Marwnad Trahaearn Brydydd Mawr', *GGDT*, ll. 1–4.
[177] Lewys Morgannwg, '38. Moliant Wiliam Siôn', *GLM* I, ll. 59–60.
[178] *GP*, p. 36 (*Llst3*); *GP*, p. 58 (*P20*); *GP*, p. 135 (*PLlK*).
[179] Important exceptions to this binary are the 'awennithion' (*diviners*) described by Gerald of Wales. These wise individuals could answer all problems, but the answer was expressed in an incomprehensible torrent of speech: 'per ambages multas, inter varios quibus effluunt sermones, nugatorios magis et vanos quam sibi cohaerentes, sed omnes tamen ornatos' (*through many riddles, in which several words stream forth, more frivolous and meaningless than coherent, but embellished all the same*). Though they seem to be possessed ('quasi mente ductos […] quasi extra se rapiuntur' (*as if commanded by the mind […] as if seized outside themselves*)) and seem to produce a demonic sound similar to the Hell dwellers of Chapter One, they were perceived as enlightened, and their wisdom was admired by all. Gerald of Wales, 'Descriptio Kambriae', *GCO* VI, 1:16. (The *GCO* text and my own translations are used as we await the new editions produced by *The Writings of Gerald of Wales* project: *The Writings of Gerald of Wales* <https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/the-writings-of-gerald-of-wales#tab-1982691>.)

This duality exists in all three key words: 'ffraeth', 'rhugl', and 'berw'. As Dafydd Johnston has shown in his recent study of Dafydd ap Gwilym's vocabulary, these can relate to free-flowing speech and a brilliant muse, such as in the poet's description of his own fine poetry: 'rhugl foliant o'r meddiant mau'.[180] However, it seems significant, that when used in their positive sense, these words must often be qualified, as in the above description of Trahaearn's fluency – 'ffraeth dafawd, *detholwawd doeth*' – or in Morys Gethin's qualified description of Tudur Aled: 'berwi bu iaith *bur* o'i ben' (*pure language bubbled forth from his mouth*).[181] 'Detholwawd' and 'bur' seem necessary here.

As for the negative meanings, these words often appear in satirical poems that hear connotations of unregulated and unchecked language in the free-flowing speech in question; the same shortcoming as was heard in the speech of Gruffudd Gryg and Ieuan. An extensive example of uncontrolled free-flowing speech is in Hywel Ystorm's satire on Addaf Eurych (both *fl.* first half of the fourteenth century). Hywel mocks Addaf on the grounds that he does not know when to be quiet. Addaf has no restraint and does not stop spouting substandard poetry, which is described in spectacular fashion.

The sound of this uncontrolled speech is set against a background of silence. Addaf's home is mocked by means of reversing the typical motifs of eulogy: his house is unwelcoming, cold, and, crucially, completely silent. The starving cuckoo does not sing ('lle rhewydd cethlydd cathlddig, – herythlom, / hiraethlawn, difwydig' (*where the naked cuckoo, sad song, is starving / forlorn and without food*)); the lethargic cattle are silent ('lle difloedd, diflawd enderig' (*where the bullock is without cry, without meal*)); and there are no poets or people around ('lle heb gwrf na thwrf na thorf ddiysig' (*where there is no beer or clamour or an animated crowd*)).[182]

[180] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '99. Talu Dyled', *DG.net*, l. 10; Johnston, *'Iaith Oleulawn'*, pp. 2, 45–47, 234.
[181] Morys Gethin, '6: Gan Morys Gethin', *GTA* II, l. 35. [My emphasis.]
[182] Hywel Ystorm, '6. Dychan i Addaf Eurych', *GPB*, ll. 53–54, 89, 45.

The few noises that punctuate the silence are significant and are compounded by the momentum of an anaphoric <ll> carried through for an astonishing eighty lines: the famished whispering bluebirds and the guffawing crows ('lle llafar glas adar gloesig, / llefain brain branes foddiedig' (*where pained bluebirds cry, / a united cry of satisfied crows*)); the gluttonous minstrel poets, who have usurped their respectable professional counterparts ('llonclêr sêr, sarffod bwytëig' (*full of Clêr poets devouring [food], like greedy serpents*)); and, of course, the unregulated speech of Addaf Eurych himself.[183] Whereas the animals themselves are mostly silent, Addaf's animalistic speech – 'ermain anodrig' (*unbearable howling*) – is not.[184] In a multisensory passage that mocks Addaf's stench as well as his noise, Hywel clearly hears him as a loud, blabbering, overly prolific poet:

> Addaf gau ni thau, iaith ennig – frithgyrdd,
> â'i freithgerdd ddrewiedig;
> can ni thau garrau goriedig,
> can ni phaid tarw diraid terrig,
> can ni myn emennydd ysig
> ymadaw â'i ffrost, ffeniglbost ffig.[185]
>
> (*Addaf the liar does not shut up, little language of confused song / and his stinking disordered poem / because of his puss-filled legs, / because an evil, stiff bull does not stop, / because a wounded brain will not / desist from its boasting, useless, fennel-branch idiot.*)

As a description of poetry, we are here dealing with an overly prolific poet who has no standards of good poetry and so is happy to compose and perform every rhyme he puts together, regardless of whether or not it will be considered worthy of composition or performance. This recalls the mendicant friars who cared very little about what they preached or how much.

It should be noted that in Hywel's satire, we seem again to be dealing with a poet with a speech defect. Addaf purportedly suffers from a physical disability on one of the speech organs – 'oddof dafod' (*sore-filled tongue*) – as well as a mental disability, one that specifically affects his judgement for controlling language: 'can ni myn emennydd ysig'.[186]

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[183] Hywel Ystorm, '6. Dychan i Addaf Eurych', *GPB*, ll. 49–50, 40.
[184] Hywel Ystorm, '6. Dychan i Addaf Eurych', *GPB*, l. 32.
[185] Hywel Ystorm, '6. Dychan i Addaf Eurych', *GPB*, ll. 119–24.
[186] Hywel Ystorm, '6. Dychan i Addaf Eurych', *GPB*, ll. 106, 123.

As for why Addaf was described in such ruthless terms, it may be relevant that while Addaf was a poet – and it is likely that his own satire upon Hywel is what evoked this biting and malicious response in the first place – he was also some sort of a blacksmith or metal worker. This is suggested by his name and various descriptions elsewhere in the poem along the lines of 'tincr' (*tinker*). Indeed, Hywel evokes the noise of Addaf's profession to mock the 'noise' of his poetry. Addaf is 'eurych brych' (*defiled smith*) and 'drygof dryg-gynnyrch' (*clumsy blacksmith, [maker of] bad produce*).[187] We remember here the ill-repute of blacksmiths, directly linked to the noisiness of their work, and the mostly unwelcome sounds of urbanising Wales.

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A figure from Welsh prose that falls into this same category of careless babblers is Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet from the First Branch of the Mabinogi. Pwyll's name – *Patience*, *Good Sense*, *Care*, or *Deliberation* – is highly ironic in this sense as he consistently speaks without thinking. He promises to grant a wish to a stranger, Gwawl ap Clud, before even hearing what it is, leading him to have to give away his wife. Then, once he realises what he has done, he is dumbstruck and cannot muster a single word to fix his problem: 'Kynhewi a oruc Pwyll, cany bu attep a rodassei' (*Pwyll was silent, for there was no answer he could give*).[188] These deficiencies are brought into stark contrast with Pwyll's far more fluent and thoughtful wife, Rhiannon: 'Ac o'r a welsei eiryoet wrth ymdidan a hi, dissymlaf gwreic a bonedigeidaf i hannwyt a'y hymdidan oed' (*As he conversed with her, he found her to be the most noble woman and the most gracious of disposition and discourse he had ever seen*).[189]

Indeed, this portrayal is entirely in line with the grammars' expectation of women and their speech. 'Fluency', 'eloquence', and 'discretion' all feature in each copy's version of the

[187] Hywel Ystorm, '6. Dychan i Addaf Eurych', *GPB*, ll. 13, 105, 100.
[188] *PKM*, p. 14; *Mab*, p. 12.
[189] *PKM*, p. 2; *Mab*, p. 4.

small tract on the praiseworthy virtues of a noblewoman. The Llanstephan 3 copy refers to her 'huodylder parableu' (*eloquence of words*);[190] the Red Book of Hergest uses the phrase 'eglurder mod a deuodeu' (*clarity of manners and customs*);[191] while the clearest and fullest phrasing appears in the sixteenth-century *Pum Llyfr Kerddwriaeth*:

> Gwreigdda o arglwyddes neu uwchelwraic a volir o bryd a gwedd, a thegwch, ac addvwynder, a digrifwch a haelioni, a lledneissrwydd, a doethineb, a chymhendawd, a diweirdeb, a thegwch pryd a gwedd, a dissymlder ymadroddion, a phethav eraill ardderchawc addvwyn kanmoladwy.[192]
>
> (*A good sort of lady or noblewoman is praised for her appearance and image, and fairness, and meekness, and jollity and generosity, and humility, and wisdom, and eloquence, and purity, and fairness of appearance and image, and prudence of speech, and other praiseworthy, fine, and gentle things.*)

Women are praised for this exact characteristic in the poetic corpus too. We already heard how the phrase 'pêr yw blas pob parabl aur' was an appropriate way to describe Siôn ap Hywel's beloved. Gwenhwyfawr, wife of Hywel ap Tudur, was similarly a 'rhiain barabl groyw loyw lwys' (*woman of a pure, polished, cultivated speech*), whereas an unnamed woman admired by Madog Benfras is praised for being 'barablus addwyn fwyn ferch' (*eloquent, mild, tender girl*).[193] Female subjects also possess 'wise speech'. In the same way Hywel ab Ieuan was the 'eighth wise one of Rome', Elen Gethin was 'wythfed dysg ei thafod hi' (*the eighth [pillar of] learning of her tongue*).[194]

In this sense, apart from the fact that women's speech receives very little attention compared to their physical appearance or compared to the speech of men, women's speech is no different from men's. However, the dearth of surviving poetry of female authorship from this period should be reiterated at this point; this paucity has left us with no female opinions or comments on voice or language.[195]

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[190] *GP*, p. 35 (*Llst3*).
[191] *GP*, p. 16 (*RBH*).
[192] *GP*, p. 133 (*PLlK*).
[193] Gronw Gyriog, '2. Marwnad Gwenhwyfar wraig Hywel ap Tudur ap Gruffudd o Goedan', *GGGICE*, l. 2; Siôn ap Hywel, '23. Cywydd merch', *GSH*, l. 28; Madog Benfras, '3. I Ferch', *GMBen*, l. 11.
[194] Llawdden, '21. Marwnad Elen Gethin o Linwent', *GLlaw*, l. 47.
[195] Siân Griffith's aforementioned nightingale messenger – 'bur ei lais' (*pure its sweet-sounding voice*) – is the closest we get to a female author's description of speech. For more on this topic see: Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, 'Oral Composition and Written Transmission: Welsh Women's Poetry from the Middle Ages and Beyond', *Trivium* 26 (1991), 89–102; and Nia M. W. Powell, 'Women and strict-metre poetry in Wales', in *Women and*

Returning to speech in the First Branch, Pwyll is the direct opposite of these virtues. As the tale shows, being in a position of authority without control over one's speech was dangerous. Some of this belief must lie behind a phrase that was common in the poetry of Beirdd yr Uchelwyr and elsewhere: 'ni roddir gwlad i fud' (*land is not given to a mute [person]*).[196] That is to say, a mute person should not and cannot be granted land, reflecting the reduced rights of a stutterer examined above. A lack of control over one's faculty of speech – a lack of 'pwyll' – was, then, a social concern.

Slow and low speech: 'araf' and 'isel'

Contrasting Pwyll and Addaf's blabbering speech, then, are speakers who knew when to keep quiet. According to descriptions of good speech in the poetic corpus, we may add to this group speakers who spoke slowly. This brings us to a description of good Welsh that may seem obscure to our modern sensibilities at first but one that is entirely consistent with the medieval importance of order and control: having 'slow' and 'low' speech.

The first adjective that expresses this feature is 'araf'. From a modern perspective, this may seem unusual or unexpected, since today, this word means *slow*. In Middle Welsh, however, 'araf' also meant *quiet*, *leisurely*, or *calm*.[197] These virtues, then, stand in stark contrast to the features of the chattering figures examined above, and, knowing the importance

Gender in Early Modern Wales, ed. Simone Clarke and Michael Roberts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), pp. 129–58. For a comparison with modern-day expectations of women's speech, see: Deborah Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene* (London: Routledge, 2012), esp. pp. 166–211.

[196] *Diarhebion Llyfr Coch Hergest*, ed. Richard Glyn Roberts (Aberystwyth: CMCS Publications, 2013), §801. For more on the reduced legal rights of a mute person, see: Roberts, *The Legal Triads*, §X37, §Mk48, §Q74, and §Y160. For an example from the Beirdd yr Uchelwyr corpus, see: 'na roddir, ferch lawir lwyd, / gwlad i fud, gloywdwf ydwyd' (*a country, grey, generous girl, / is not given to a mute, you are a bright growth*), Gruffudd ap Maredudd, '4. Serch gwrthodedig', *GGM* III, ll. 37–38. This phrase also partly explains the anti-English imagery in another poem by Gruffudd ap Maredudd encouraging Owain Lawgoch to route English forces out of Wales: 'o hwyl iôr annwyl awr annedd – Gemais / y cyll Sais ei lais, loes edrywedd!' (*because of the attack of a beloved lord of the fine abode of Cemais / Englishmen will lose their voice; a route full of torture!*), Gruffudd ap Maredudd, '1. I Annog Owain Lawgoch i Feddiannu Cymru', *GGM* III, ll. 45–46.

[197] cf. Skt. *ilay-* 'be still', *rā́trī-* 'night', Av. *rāman-* 'tranquility', Gr. *érēmos* 'deserted'. See: *EDPCelt*, s.v. *aramo*.

of controlling one's speech, we come to realise that speaking slowly is entirely in line with that doctrine.

Hywel ap Dafydd ap Ithel Fychan is one individual who exhibited this virtue. Gutun Owain recognised him as a man who knew when to speak and when to be silent:

> Dewr iawn, o bai daro, wyd,
> a thawedoc doeth ydwyd:
> ofned wŷr avon a dav
> a'i bwriad drwy'r aberav;
> nid vn sôn gorweigion wŷr,
> wyd vn arial edyn eryr:
> tynnu 'dd wyd, y tv ni ddêl
> a thewi yn ddoeth, Howel:
> yn araf ac yn wrol
> yr â'r did a'r iav ar d'ôl.[198]
>
> (*You are very brave, if it comes to blows, / and you are silent and wise: / men fear a silent river / and how it flows through its confluences; / without the noise of vain men, / you are an arduous one, like an eagle: / you pull along with you those who would not come / and fall silent wisely, Hywel: / slowly and valiantly / the rope and the yoke follow you*.)

This sort of silent and wise conduct stands in direct contrast to 'sôn gorweigion wŷr', such as the speech of Addaf Eurych. Despite possessing a distinct ability to lead, including the ability to direct those who would not budge otherwise, Hywel does so with a quiet dignity and without uttering a single word.

An even clearer exposition of this virtue is in Lewys Glyn Cothi's hushed praise of Rhys ap Gruffudd. There are no triumphant bells and pipes, no clamorous dining halls, only Rhys's quiet, contemplative words:

> Er hyn, ni ddywaid drwy'r haf
> yno air ond yn araf.
> Blasus fydd parabl isel,
> a da a doeth wedy dêl.
> Isel a doeth a melys
> ytiw'r hwn a dd'weto Rhys.[199]
>
> (*Despite this, all summer long, / only slow words are spoken there. / Flavourful shall be the low speech / and fine and wise when he returns. / Low and wise and sweet / is that which Rhys speaks*).

Rhys's speech is 'doeth' and 'isel'. Indeed, this second adjective is our next keyword in the nexus of good sound. Siôn ap Hywel describes St Catrin in the same way: 'isel bêr barabl

[198] Gutun Owain, '60. Kowydd Moliant i Howel ap Davydd ap Ithel Vychan o Lan Eurgain', *GO* II, ll. 23–32.
[199] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '153. Moliant Rhys ap Gruffudd', *GLGC*, ll. 9–14.

iesin' (*fine, low, sweet-sounding speech*).[200] 'Isel' (*low*) is another adjective that might strike us as an unusual way to describe someone's speech or voice at first. It may refer to low in volume ('quiet') or low in pitch ('a low voice'). It is often unclear which of the two is meant.

What is clear, however, is that there is a distinct connection between 'isel' and female speakers and listeners. St Catrin, above, is one example. Another is Sioned, wife of Hywel ap Morgan ap Dafydd, who wishes to hear the 'low' or 'quiet' sounds of a harp, according to Hywel Dafi: 'sôn yn isel gan delyn, / Sioned a'i merched a'i myn' (*a low sound from a harp, / Sioned and her daughters request it*).[201] It is unlikely that 'isel' refers to low pitch on this occasion, since from what little we know about how the harp was played in medieval Wales – more on this topic in Chapter Four – its lower strings were not played on their own: far more likely was a two-handed performance on all twenty-five or so of its string, both high and low.[202] Instead, then, 'quiet' seems to be a more fitting meaning here.

Another instance of 'isel', referring specifically to speech this time, appears in a romantic adventure poem by Gruffudd Llwyd. His journey to a woman's house is frustrated by the presence of her husband, the stock-character 'Eiddig', and so Gruffudd cannot even exchange a single 'low' word with the woman in question:

> Ni chaid nac amnaid dan gêl
> goreuserch, na gair isel
> i'w chain bryd (och! i'n bradwr,
> medd rhai) hyd nas gwypai'r gŵr.[203]
>
> (*Neither a secret gesture, / greatest love, nor a quiet word was had, / to her beautiful face (blast! to our betrayer / say some) that her husband didn't hear.*)

This 'gair isel' almost certainly refers to a whisper due to the covert nature of the situation. Nonetheless, its associations are, once again, with a woman. Returning to Pwyll's wife Rhiannon we see that she is somewhat of an exception in this regard, since, all in all, the

[200] Siôn ap Hywel, '19. Awdl i Saint y Catrin', *GSH*, l. 43.
[201] Hywel Dafi, '16. Moliant Hywel ap Morgan ap Dafydd a Sioned ei wraig', *GHDaf* I, l. 33.
[202] Harper, *MWC*, p. 19.
[203] Gruffudd Llwyd, '4. I Eiddig a'i wraig', *GLlyg*, ll. 35–38.

ideal woman of this period was largely silent.[204] When she did speak, she spoke quietly and briefly: the voice of King Lear's favourite daughter, Cordelia, was 'ever soft / gentle and low – an excellent thing in a woman'.[205] This coincides with the overwhelming silence of women in the surviving poetic record, both as authors and as characters; cases in which female figures speak are exceptional and cases in which female figures speak with a bold quality are more exceptional still.[206]

'High' and 'low' speech aside, these descriptions suggest that 'wise' speech was a slow, deliberate speech. When audiences heard praise of Sir Wiliam Herbert's 'l[l]afar da doeth' (*good, wise speech*) or of Ifan ap Tudur of Llanefydd's wise tongue – 'pawb a ŵyr bod tafod doeth / ichwi, Ifan, a chyfoeth' (*everyone knows that there is a wise tongue / to you, Ifan, and wealth*) – they may well have heard them as people who spoke Welsh slowly and considerately.[207]

Abundant speech

The final feature of good Welsh has less to do with sound and more to do with content. This comes in the form of the adjective 'aml'. Again, this may seem an unusual adjective in Modern Welsh (*frequent*), but, borrowed from L amplus, in Middle Welsh it meant *copious*, *in abundance*, or, its English cognate, *ample*. What is meant, then, when the grammars say that 'abundant Welsh' is one of the three things that bring order to poetry: 'Tri pheth a gywreinant gerd: kywreint kyuanssodyat ymadroddyon, ac amylder Kyrmaec wrth y kyuanssodi, a

[204] See: *Fama: The Politics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe*, ed. Thelma Fenster and Daniel Lord Smail (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).
[205] William Shakespeare, *The History of King Lear*, ed. Stanley Wells (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 24:269.
[206] The closest one gets to a bold speaking woman in the poetic corpus is in such a character as Tomas ab Ieuan's wife in his 'Ysgowld o Wraig', examined in Chapter Three. Dafydd Evans, 'Tomas ab Ieuan a'i "Ysgowld o Wraig"', *Ysgrifau Beirniadol* 19 (1993), 86–106.
[207] Hywel Dafi, '66. Gofyn cymod Syr Wiliam Herbert', *GHDaf* II, l. 44; Maredudd ap Rhys, '6. I ofyn rhwyd bysgota gan Ifan ap Tudur o Lanefydd', *Detholiad o Gywyddau Gofyn a Diolch*, ed. Bleddyn Owen Huws (Llandybïe: Cyhoeddiadau Barddas, 1998), ll. 27–28.

dechymycuawr kerthwryaeth wrth gywreinaw y kerd' (*Three things set a poem in order: the ordered composition of phrases, and abundant Welsh during composition, and a great poetic imagination in fashioning the poem*)?[208] Or when poets describe individuals as having 'aml air da' (*abundant good words*) or 'geiriau aml fwriau ymleferydd' (*striking copious words*)?[209]

'[E]isseu Cymraeg' (*lacking Welsh*) appears frequently in the grammars' sections on bad poetry, whereas the sections on good poetry contain descriptions involving 'c[h]yuarwydyt ar gerddwryaeth' (*guidance on poetry*) and 'awdurdawt y prydyd' (*the poet's authority*).[210] Furthermore, in their totality, the grammars themselves concern knowledge of Welsh verse, as was the principal responsibility of Welsh poets. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that possessing language described as 'aml' meant possessing an encyclopaedic knowledge of Welsh poetry and/or an impressively enormous vocabulary.[211] This is particularly convincing when we consider the other virtues that feature alongside 'abundant Welsh' in the grammatical triads: 'kywreint kyuanssodyat ymadroddyon' and 'dechymycuawr kerthwryaeth wrth gywreinaw y kerd'.[212] As is the case here, 'abundant Welsh' always appears alongside virtues involving carefully considered content; in the RBH copy this is 'dyfynder ystyr' (*profound meaning*) and 'odidawc dechymic' (*outstanding imagination*).[213] Therefore, full knowledge of Welsh poetry and a large vocabulary both played their part in the sound of good Welsh, especially in the mouths and ears of poets.

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[208] *GP*, p. 37 (*Llst3*).
[209] Mathau Brwmffild, '7. Awdl foliant i Siôn Pilstwn Tir Môn', *GMBrwm*, l. 28; Sefnyn, '1. Moliant Angharad wraig Dafydd Fychan o Drehwfa o Threfeilir', *GSRE*, l. 20.
[210] *GP*, p. 17 (*RBH*); *GP*, p. 37 (*Llst3*).
[211] *GP*, p. 17 (*RBH*); *GP*, p. 37 (*Llst3*). This is very similar to the meaning of E. copious in the early modern era. See: *OED* s.v. *copious*[2b]: 'having a plentiful command of language for the expression of ideas'.
[212] *GP*, p. 37 (*Llst3*). This triad also appears in *GP*, p. 134 (*PLlK*).
[213] *GP*, p. 17 (*RBH*).

V. Conclusion

This chapter has shown just how closely poets listened to their linguistic surroundings. In some ways, this is no surprise, since being masters of language was part of a poet's remit; it was what they were paid to be. However, the extent to which they praised good language, derided bad language, and even the very fact that they were the ones who decided on and imposed these standards of good and bad language points to how these were anxious listeners. The terminology used to describe the features of good and bad language centred around concepts of control, as did the way in which certain groups and individuals were targeted. The main reason for establishing these features and targeting these speakers was to uphold and police high standards of language use among Beirdd yr Uchelwyr and to maintain a respect for those standards among their audiences. Another way to ensure high standards of controlled diction were met was to take inspiration from the even higher standards of other respected languages and to deride the non-existent standards of languages that should not be respected at all. It is to these languages that we listen next.

Chapter Three

The Sound of Language: Foreign Languages

I. Introduction

'Sounds magical like a Dutch person speaking Icelandic-ish'
— A YouTube user ('Klaod Nell') commenting on a video of Hywel Gwynfryn speaking Welsh[1]

Welsh was not the only language that could be heard in late medieval Wales. In this chapter, I seek to examine the perceived sounds of three further languages spoken in Wales during the Beirdd yr Uchelwyr period: Irish, Latin, and English. When considering Latin, I shall also briefly consider Greek and Hebrew. A further handful of languages were spoken in Wales during this time, but very few feature in the poetic corpus. French and Dutch are given only the briefest of descriptions, while Cornish simply appears in a list.[2]

Beyond loanwords, French only appears twice, describing educated individuals in English circles on both occasions. The first is in an anonymous awdl from the 1370s praising celebrated lawyer Sir Dafydd Hanmer (d. 1387).[3] Sir Dafydd of Maelor Saesneg made it to the very heart of English government in London, spending at least sixteen years studying to become an attorney, then a Sergeant at Law, before finally being promoted to the prestigious position of a Judge on the King's Bench, serving Kings Edward III and Richard II personally.

[1] Wikitongues, *WIKITONGUES: Hywel speaking Welsh*, YouTube, 14 February 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvtbdq3WiyU&t=28s>.

[2] The only reference for Cornish is in a poem by Y Nant (*fl.* 1470–1500) requesting a mantle: Y Nant, '9. I ofyn gŵn gan yr Abad Wiliam', *Gwaith y Nant*, ed. Huw Meirion Edwards (Aberystwyth: Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2013), ll. 25–32. Someone – it is unclear who or perhaps what – is described as not knowing any English, Irish or Cornish: 'Gŵn newydd urddedig / o frethyn ffrisedig, / ac o wlân Seisnig / ni wypo Saesneg; / ni ellir dim o'r Saesneg, / na iaffaith o'r Gwyddeleg / na dim o'r Cornueg / megis cyrn ewig.' (*A noble new mantle* / *of downy cloth,* / *and of English wool* / *who/which did not know [any] English;* / *it/he knew nothing of English,* / *nor a morsel of Irish* / *nor anything of Cornish* / *like the horns of a hind*). There are no mentions of languages outside of Europe in the Beirdd yr Uchelwyr corpus, but see: Natalia Petrovskaia, *Medieval Welsh Perceptions of the Orient* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015).

[3] For a full edition of the poem alongside textual and contextual notes see: Bleddyn Owen Huws, 'Rhan o awdl foliant ddienw i Syr Dafydd Hanmer', *Dwned* 9 (2003), 43–64.

French had become the language of law by the fourteenth century, especially in the oral medium. While all lawyers were therefore fluent in this language, Sir Dafydd seemed to speak and plead with exceptional ease: 'Dafydd hwyl ieithrydd' (*Dafydd, eloquent spirit*) says the unknown poet, though he was not the only one to notice his great oratory skill. Sir Dafydd's English colleagues also admired his great understanding and use of this particularly technical and professional kind of French:

> Y blaen, dadl ganthaw ni blyg,
> A da yng nghyngor y Dug,
> Ffyniant gerdded urddedig,
> Hoffai'r Eingl ei hoyw Ffrangeg.[4]
>
> (*The leader, a plea of his does not yield, / and good, according to the Duke [of Lancaster, John of Gaunt], / is the prosperity of his honourable path, / the English would admire his fine French.*)

In terms of listening out for descriptions of foreign languages, in the process of praising Sir Dafydd as a master speaker, the poet also praises the French language itself:

> Ffrangeg dda loywdeg ddilediaith – a fedr,
> Dysgodd fydr pob cyfraith;
> Ffynnon dirion bedeiriaith.
> Ffynadwy baun rhwy ben rhaith.[5]
>
> (*He could [speak] the good, fine, clear, pure French, / he learnt the nature of each law; / gentle well-spring of four languages. / A skilful peacock [is the] great chief lawyer.*)

The significance of 'dilediaith' and '[p]edeiriaith' will be discussed in greater detail below. For now, we only need note French's uncorrupted purity, as was the case with 'clear' and 'pure' Welsh, and that the four languages that this 'hylwydd Gymro' (*prosperous Welshman*) sprang forth were his native tongue and the three languages of civil authority: Latin, French, and English.[6]

French receives similar indirect praise in Ieuan ap Rhydderch's boasting poem, 'Cywydd y Fost', in which he speaks of his time at Oxford's faculty of arts where he learnt 'yr eang Ffrangeg' (*the great French [language]*).[7] As shall be seen below, Ieuan was an adroit

[4] Huws, 'Rhan o awdl foliant ddienw i Syr Dafydd Hanmer', ll. 29–32.
[5] Huws, 'Rhan o awdl foliant ddienw i Syr Dafydd Hanmer', ll. 33–36.
[6] Huws, 'Rhan o awdl foliant ddienw i Syr Dafydd Hanmer', l. 19.
[7] Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '3. Cywydd y Fost', *GIRh*, l. 25.

multilingual poet, and so we can see that, as with Sir Dafydd Hanmer, the very fact that knowing French was boastworthy reveals that it was a respectable language. Moreover, its description as 'eang' puts us in mind of good Welsh being described as 'aml': a language that contained immense vocabulary and learning.[8]

As for Dutch, the evidence for its description is weak. It features in a satirical poem by Tudur Penllyn in which he mocks a 'Hard Man of Maelor':

> Ac yn ôl i'n dadolwch
> erchis y gŵr Fflemis fflwch;
> rhyw ddir goel, rhoddi o'r gŵr
> delyn yn llaw ei deilwr;
> canu rhinc o'r cenau rhonca,
> yn ffest yn ôl bresych ffa;
> cywydd gan y delff celffaint
> gyda hi, cerdd a geidw haint,
> o waith Ierwerth ddinerthynt,
> heiniwr drwg ei gyflwr, gynt.[9]
>
> (*And the flush Flemish man requested / our reconciliation; / some true belief, the man put / a harp in his tailor's hands; / the rickety whelp made a creaking noise / hastily after cabbages and beans; / a cywydd by the withered idiot / a poem that keeps a plague, / from the work of impotent Iorwerth / diseased man of yore, awful appearance.*)

Firstly, it seems that this man is being ridiculed for his stupidity in giving his tailor – a man with no musical talent – a harp. Therefore, describing him as 'Flemish' may be some sort of xenophobic label, playing on the apparently poor reputation of people from Flanders, though one that is not encountered elsewhere. Indeed, given the dearth of evidence in this regard, and the fact that such a reputation would directly contradict the otherwise favourable reputation of Flanders as a wealthy mercantile country, this reading is uncertain and very little can be said to that end. Secondly, and more importantly, the passage reveals next to nothing about the

[8] Despite the absence of references to and usage of French in the poetry of Beirdd yr Uchelwyr, this is no reflection of the presence of French in medieval Wales, particularly during the central Middle Ages. See: Matthew Siôn Lampitt, 'The "French of Wales"? Possibilities, Approaches, Implications', *French Studies* 76.3, 333–49; Ad Putter, 'Multilingualism in England and Wales, *c*. 1200: The Testimony of Gerald of Wales', in *Medieval Multilingualism: The Francophone World and its Neighbours*, ed. Keith Busby and Christopher Kleinhenz (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), pp. 83–106. Little work has been done on the presence of French in medieval Irish texts, with the closest study being Keith Busby, *French in Medieval Ireland, Ireland in Medieval French: The Paradox of Two Worlds* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), though the title is somewhat misleading since this is almost exclusively a study of the representation of Ireland and Irish in French texts.

[9] Tudur Penllyn, '28. Dychanu'r Gŵr Caled o Faelor', *GTP*, ll. 59–68

Dutch language itself: whilst this is a vividly auditory passage, it is exclusively to do with the harp-playing tailor, rather than the Hard Man of Maelor's potentially Flemish speech.[10]

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Perceiving language as nonlinguistic sound becomes exceptionally important when considering foreign languages, since we are dealing with languages that the average Welsh audience member did not necessarily speak or understand. When we encounter a language that we do not understand, unless we speak a related language or recognise a loanword from a language that we do understand, it is nearly impossible to identify word division. As such, the language is perceived as a simple stream of phonemes that carry no linguistic meaning, or, at least, no more meaning than can be heard in a 'vox articulata-illiterata', deduced from tone, gesture, and body language. In this way, then, all languages can be perceived as nonlinguistic sound, meaning that all can ultimately sound the same: Welsh, Dutch, and Icelandic can all converge.

At the same time, listeners also tend to distinguish between these languages according to a quality they can ascribe to their nonlinguistic sound: Celtic languages may be described as 'sing-song', German as 'coarse', or Italian as 'dramatic'. (Curiously, a single language is also often described as having directly opposing characteristics: Welsh might be heard as both 'melodious' and 'harsh'.) Sound studies theorists have argued that perceptions of foreign languages in these situations are heavily dependent on the listener's preconceptions, the reputation of that language's speakers, and the relationship between the two interlocutors.[11] There is nothing inherently 'magical' about Welsh, for example, but for whatever reason the

[10] For the most recent survey of early medieval Flemish settlement in Wales, most notably in Pembrokeshire, see: Gerben Verbrugghe, Timothy Saey, and Wim De Clercq, 'Mapping "Flemish" settlements in South Wales: electromagnetic induction (EMI) survey at the villages of Wiston (Pembrokeshire) and Whitson (Monmouthshire)', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 170 (2021), 251–74.

[11] Lears, *WE*, p. 11. See also: Peter Garrett, *Attitudes to Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and Peter Garrett, Nikolas Coupland, and Angie Williams, *Investigating Language Attitudes: social meanings of dialect, ethnicity and performance* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 2–22.

YouTube user 'Klaod Nell' and many others believed this to be the case. They clearly enjoyed the video of Hywel Gwynfryn speaking Welsh – perhaps they had had positive encounters with Welsh people in the past, had some cherished childhood memories of Wales, found some avuncular features in Hywel's gentle demeanour, or even knew of his national fame as a beloved broadcaster – and so, subliminally, they transferred this feeling into their perception of the language's nonlinguistic sounds.

II. Irish

'Oir is le puisínibh briotacha agus le tengaidh oile laibheorus sé ris an bpobalso'
(*For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people*)
— A seventeenth-century Irish translation of Isaiah 28:11.[12]

In terms of the relationship of Irish-speaker/Welsh-listener, in the poetry of Beirdd yr Uchelwyr Irish is rarely perceived in any way positive. This section seeks to answer the question: 'why'?

Firstly, very few Welsh-speakers spoke Irish and although Welsh and Irish are both Celtic languages, they are not mutually intelligible. In this way, perceiving language as nonlinguistic sound becomes almost the only way Irish was heard by most people in Wales during the late medieval period. Furthermore, the linguistic relationship between the two languages was not demonstrated to general acceptance before the publication of Edward Lhuyd's *Archæologia Britannica* in 1707, and so, during the late Middle Ages, Irish was the foreign tongue of a foreign people.[13]

As was shown in the discussion on speech impediments, 'noise' was, and still is, used to describe the sounds of outsiders in order to emphasise their otherness. Nowhere was this clearer than when describing foreign languages. Foreign sounds are often heard more clearly

[12] *Leabhuir na Seintiomna ar na ttarrving go gaidlig tre cúram [agus] dútra[cht] an Doctúir Uilliam Bedel*, ed. William Bedell (London: 1685), p. 865.
[13] Edward Lhuyd, *Archæologia Britannica* (London: Routledge, 2000).

than native sounds, even if the latter is louder than the former by the simple fact that they are new and different to our ears.[14] The perception of that sound is, as explained, bound up in preconceptions, which can be unkind or even, in the case of human language, xenophobic. This is the case in fourteenth-century chronicler Ranulf Higden's passage on the language of Ethiopians: 'Some diggeþ caues and dennes, and woneth vnder erþe and makiþ hir noyse wiþ grisbaytynge and chirkynge of teeþ more than wiþ voys of þe þrote' (*Some dig caves and dens, and dwell under earth and make their noise with grunting and grating of teeth more than with voice of the throat*).[15] Higden's racist remarks characterize Ethiopians as animals, thus magnifying their distance from literate, English standards of behaviour and speech.

This is almost exclusively how Irish appears in Welsh poetry as Welsh ears perceived it to be noise, not language. (It is important to remember – as each of this chapter's epigraphs demonstrates – that such perceptions work both ways; as far as we can tell from the meaning of Ir 'briotach' (*British*, *Welsh*, but also *lisping*, *stammering*), Irish ears could perceive Welsh as noise too.)[16]

There was certainly a strong derogatory sense to words like 'Gwyddel' (*Irishman*) and 'Gwyddelig' (*Irish*), often appearing, for example, in lists of spiteful labels for odious antagonists, such as 'Eiddig', who sometimes appears as 'Eiddig Wyddelig' (*the Irish Jealous One*), or in the description of Llywelyn ab y Moel's tongue as a sinful, Irish priest: 'offeiriad meddw gweddw, Gwyddel' (*a widowed, drunken priest, [and] Irishman*).[17] The history of these xenophobic labels has been studied by some.[18] However, what has not yet received

[14] Schafer, *The Soundscape*, p. 211; Smith, 'Listening to the Wild Blue Yonder'.
[15] Ranulf Higden, *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden monachi Cestrensis together with the English Translation of John Trevisa and of an unknown writer of the fifteenth century*, ed. J. Rawson Lumby, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1865), I, p. 159.
[16] *eDil*, s.v. *brit(t)ach*; *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla*, ed. Niall Ó Dónaill (Dublin: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1977), s.v. *briotach*.
[17] For example: Anonymous, '14. Gŵr Esyllt', *Selections from the Dafydd ap Gwilym Apocrypha*, l. 14; Llywelyn ab y Moel, '70. I'r Tafod', *IGE*, l. 63; *GPC*, s.v. *Gwyddel*[1], *Gwyddelig*.
[18] For a summary of some primary sources that use 'Gwyddel' in this and other ways, and of previous scholarship on the term, see: Frederik Suppe, 'Medieval Welsh Ethnic Nicknames and Implications', *Authorship Worldview*

enough scholarly attention is how they are often to do with sound, bringing us back to the arguments of Chapter Two concerning the connection between noise and the language of outsiders.

The connection between the Irish language and nonlinguistic noise seemed to have been facilitated by the fact that the primary connotation of Irishness in medieval Wales was music.[19] Indeed, instrumental music and 'cerdd dant' (*the craft of the string*, i.e., bardic music for harp and crwth) itself may well have come to Wales from Ireland: a traditional history of 'cerdd dant' involved the assembly of Irish and Welsh musicians at 'Glyn Achlach' (Glendalough) overseen by 'Mwrthan Wyddyl' (Muirchertach Ua Briain, d. 1119, king of Munster, high-king of Ireland).[20] Furthermore, Irish musicians were also regarded as highly talented by chroniclers, including Gerald of Wales, whose *Topographica Hibernica* 'provides a valuable catalogue of the instruments of Ireland, Wales, and Scotland in relation to "the incomparable skills of the [Irish] people in musical instruments"'.[21]

Thus, Ireland's talented harpers had made it so that 'Irish' brought about positive connotations of 'music'.[22] But, of course, if the listener did not like the source of this music – listeners such as paranoid Welsh poets listening to the enemy Irish musicians – this 'music' could soon become 'noise'.[23] Given our discussion on the perception of foreign languages as

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and Identity in medieval Europe, ed. Christian Raffensperger (London: Routledge, 2022), pp. 328–45 (pp. 335–38).

[19] Harper, *MWC*, pp. 30–37, 45–46.

[20] The text is known as *Cadwedigaeth Cerdd Dannau* and is reproduced in Harper, *MWC*, pp. 110–12; For an exposition of theories on the origin of the Welsh harp in Ireland, see A. O. H. Jarman, 'Telyn a Chrwth', *Llên Cymru* 6 (1960–61), 154–75.

[21] Harper, *MWC*, p. 36, citing Gerald of Wales, 'Topographica Hibernica', *GCO* V (1867), 3:11.

[22] In musicology, 'harper' refers to a musician who plays a smaller folk harp and 'harpist' to one who plays the larger, more modern, classical harp. As such, scholars tend to use 'harper' when referring to medieval harp players. See: Harper, *MWC*, passim.

[23] For more on the history of Irish populations in medieval Wales, see: Karen Jankulak, 'How Irish was medieval Ceredigion? Pseudohistory, history, and historiography', in *Gablánach in scélaigecht: Celtic studies in honour of Ann Dooley*, ed. Sarah Sheehan, Joanne Findon and Westley Follett (Dublin: Four Court Press 2013), pp. 253–64; and Patrick Sims-Williams, *Irish influence on Medieval Welsh literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 24–28.

nonlinguistic sound, we must also add the Irish language itself to this binary of 'music' and 'noise', and it seems that this is exactly what Beirdd yr Uchelwyr did.

Iolo Goch chose to make particularly extensive use of the negative auditory connotations of Irish in two connected satirical poems.[24] Dafydd Johnston argues convincingly that his two poems involving Irish stock characters were composed as part of a humorous bardic competition, in which the participants were set tasks by the poet Ithel Ddu, probably at Christmas time.[25] Iolo was first given the task of composing an elegy to 'Hersdin Hogl' (*Arse-Bum of the Hovel*), an old woman who was a stock figure of fun; another poet present at the gathering presumably responded with a now-lost poem in the voice of Hersdin Hogl's son 'Y Gwyddelyn' (*The Irishman*, another stock figure), satirising Iolo for being disrespectful towards his dead mother. Iolo then responded with the second of his two poems, focusing entirely on mocking the 'Irish' son and his noisy, faulty language.

While Iolo does pay some attention to the noise of 'Hersdin' in the first poem – she is compared to various farmyard animals and is 'gythwraig, ymddanheddwraig haidd' (*a grumbling woman, one who squabbles over barley*) with typical synaesthetic mixing of stench and sound – it is her extreme old age and her fittingly leathery skin that bears the brunt of his mockery.[26] In both the first and second poems, however, when Iolo targets her son, he pays particular attention to the physical features that impede his speech. 'Gwae'r mab gwedy gwyro'r min' (*Woe to the lad with the twisted mouth*), Iolo cries, before calling him, and possibly his brother, a leper, begotten by the devil, whose 'clap' – a nonlinguistic and meaningless onomatopoeic sound – is the only sound heard at their mother's funeral:

[24] Iolo was composing at a particularly Hibernophobic time, given the Crown's five military expeditions to Ireland between 1361 and 1376, in which many Welsh soldiers took part. See: Adam Chapman, *Welsh Soldiers in the Later Middle Ages: 1282–1422* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2015), pp. 96–104.
[25] Iolo Goch, *IGP*, p. 186.
[26] Iolo Goch, '36. Dychan i Hersdin Hogl', *IGP*, ll. 10–11.

Ei gwlan a'i chwpan a'i chap
a'i deuglaf yn rhoi dwyglap.
I ddiawl oedd ohoni ddyn,
i ddiawl yntau Wyddelyn.[27]

(*Her wool and her cup and her cap* / *and her two lepers giving two claps.* / *She bore a son to the devil,* / *may the devil take him, Irishman*).

This attack on the son's unclean language crystallises in Iolo's second poem. 'Dychan i'r Gwyddelyn' (*Satire to the Irishman*) ends by making it clear that it is the so-called Irishman's language that is under attack here, closing with the biting couplet 'Yswain morchwain mawrchwaith, / ŷs faw diawl, aswy fu d'iaith' (*Lice-ridden knave of great sourness, / eat devil's dirt, clumsy was your language*).[28] The revealing description of the language as 'aswy' ends the ninety-line mockery of this man's appearance but mostly his speech: 'barf rydlyd, berw afradlawn' (*rusty beard, vain hubbub*).[29]

Crucially, this 'Irishman' is portrayed as a minstrel trying to undermine the bardic profession, and while this poem was all in jest and performed in the context of parody, this jibe is a revealing and honest expression of Iolo's anxieties regarding a Welsh profession perceived to be under threat by increasingly popular and foreign forms of entertainment. Because we must remember that Iolo's fabricated ire comes in the context of a poetic debate, and so Iolo is responding to the previous poem and mocking it in the only way a poet knows how: by calling it 'bad poetry'. Thus, 'iaith' here – 'aswy fu d'iaith' – is first and foremost the language that made up the poorly put-together poem that Iolo's poetic opponent had just performed: Welsh. It is the fact that Irish is a short-hand for 'bad poetry' or indeed 'bad language' that is telling. The primary concern, then, is that the 'Irishman' is trying to confront an established, trained, and professional poet like Iolo, even though his standard of poetry is no higher than a lowly minstrel's verse, as Iolo's command makes plain:

[27] Iolo Goch, '36. Dychan i Hersdin Hogl', *IGP*, ll. 59, 85–88.
[28] Iolo Goch, '37. Dychan i'r Gwyddelyn', *IGP*, ll. 91–92.
[29] Iolo Goch, '37. Dychan i'r Gwyddelyn', *IGP*, l. 32.

Gad atad, o'th gyd-wtir,
bob eilwers, fab yr hers hir,
twncl ar y tafod tancern,
tincer gwawd, wyneb tancr gwern.[30]

(*Get yourself, if you are driven out together, / every so often, son of the long arse, / a toncuer on your sharp pointed tongue, / peddler of poetry, face like an alderwood tankard.*)

That 'Y Gwyddelyn' is portrayed as a minstrel, 'tincer gwawd', allows us to place him in the same field as the troublesome Clêr poets, and that is exactly what Iolo himself does too, referring to him early on in the poem as 'cipiwr crainc, iangwr copr crin, / cyffeithdy clêr cyffeithdin' (*crab snatcher, wrinkled copper knave / minstrels' tannery with pickled arse*).[31] He is a '[p]uror iawn' (a *proper singer*), where 'puror' is an ordinary bard, not a 'prydydd' like Iolo, i.e., he is most definitely a common poet.[32] Indeed, this is Iolo's most outspoken attack against the Clêr poets:

nid synnwyr ffôl wrth ddolef,
nid clêr lliw'r tryser llawr tref,
nid beirdd y blawd, braw heb rym,
profedig feirdd prif ydym.[33]

(*no foolish sense at the top of our voices, / no minstrels of the marketplace coloured like the three stars / no flour-begging poets, powerless judgement, / we are proven master poets.*)

With this in mind, 'tincer gwawd' in the previous passage becomes a key phrase as it puts this Irishman in an urban context. As we shall soon hear, Welsh poets associated English speakers, whom they largely held in contempt, with the towns. Whenever the language is heard in a poem, the poet turns its associations with the hubbub of town life against its speakers. Despite occasionally marvelling in urban life, on these occasions, urbanity becomes a foreign blight upon Welsh land, as is possibly implied in Dafydd ap Gwilym's 'Y Rhugl Groen'.

Judging by the amount of urban and indeed seafaring terminology that litters Iolo's poem to the Irishman, it seems that the negative connotations of urbanism in Wales was not limited to English; it was also a negative connotation of Irish, and perhaps, indeed, all foreign

[30] Iolo Goch, '37. Dychan i'r Gwyddelyn', *IGP*, ll. 83–86.
[31] Iolo Goch, '37. Dychan i'r Gwyddelyn', *IGP*, ll. 11–12.
[32] Iolo Goch, '37. Dychan i'r Gwyddelyn', *IGP*, l. 31.
[33] Iolo Goch, '37. Dychan i'r Gwyddelyn', *IGP*, ll. 51–54.

vernaculars. The scene's auditory landscape is filled with dogs, heaps of metal, tanneries, beggars, and markets. Moreover, as this is a seaside scene, the Irishman is described as a 'cipiwr crainc' with 'croen ci coeg hallt' (*skin of a salty dogfish*).[34]

The general negative associations of the Irish language here, then, along with the references to 'Y Gwyddelyn' as the devil's son in the previous poem, may also corroborate Johnston's suggestion that the other unattested word in this passage, 'tancern' is connected to E. *tang* in the sense of a 'projecting pointed part or instrument, used of a snake's tongue amongst other things', where the snake's tongue may serve as diabolic allusion of the sort seen in Chapter One.[35]

All three aspects of anti-Irish sentiment come into play in another striking poem by Iolo Goch: Irish as music, Irish as urban, and Irish as foreign and connectable to English. 'Cywydd Moliant i'r Delyn Rawn a Dychan i'r Delyn Ledr' (*Praise of the Horsehair Harp and Satire on the Leather Harp*) satirizes a type of harp that was widely popular across medieval Europe, particularly in Ireland: a large, heavy harp, with a curved fore-pillar, a leather soundboard, and catgut or metal strings. Iolo's poem, on the other hand, shows that it evidently was not a favourite among at least some fourteenth-century poets in Wales who deemed it inferior to the preferred smaller harp, with a straight fore-pillar, and horsehair strings.[36]

Iolo's derision of this leather harp is remarkably detailed. The key take-aways are that this harp was noisy and, crucially, it was foreign. The socio-historic undercurrent in this poem

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[34] This seems to be one of the reasons behind Dafydd Johnston's parsing of the otherwise unattested word 'twncl', which he takes to be a borrowing from E. toncuer: 'a Norfolk dialect name for the fish commonly known as "sole"'. See: Johnston, *IGP*, p. 188; and *EDD Online (Innsbruck Digitised Version of Joseph Wright's English Dialect Dictionary, 1898–1905)*, ed. Joseph Wright and Markus Manfred (University of Innsbruck, 2019) <https://eddonline-proj.uibk.ac.at/edd/>, s.v. *toncuer*.

[35] Johnston, *IGP*, p. 188.

[36] The Welsh preference for the horsehair harp was recognised by visitors, as Andrew Boorde notes, ventriloquising a Welshman in verse: 'And yf I haue my harpe, I care for no more; / It is my treasure, I do kepe it in store; / For my harpe is made of a good mares skyn, / The stringes be of horse heare, it maketh a good din', Andrew Boorde, *The Fyrst Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge* (London: 1547), p. 126. See: Geraint Evans, 'Wales and the Welsh language in Andrew Borde's *Fyrst Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge*', *Studia Celtica* 42 (2008), 87–104.

is one of anxiety and the perception that musicians were flooding the market of patronage opportunities, thus threatening the poet's profession. This anxiety is, once again, expressed through sound:

> Tra fu amser i glera
> a dysg yr hen Gymry da;
> weithian, dioer, oer addysg,
> y mae cerdd seiniog i'n mysg,
> diflo anghyfan wangledr,
> telynau, llidiardau lledr.[37]
>
> (*Whilst there was time for poetry* / *and the learning of the good old Welsh people;* / *now, God knows, cold knowledge,* / *there is noisy song in our midst,* / *a weak-framed incomplete plank,* / *harps, gates of leather*.)

A key differentiator between the poet's craft and the musician's craft was that the musician was often heard to be uneducated. (In some ways, this chimes with Boethius's definition that a musician who did not hold an abstract knowledge of the mathematical proportions and ratios of music was not a musician at all.).[38] In reality, this was not the case – as is explored in Chapter Four – and even the poets themselves conceded that some types of musicians were highly educated and received great training. Nonetheless, it was an insult that poets levelled against musicians when it was convenient to do so, for example, when it was the wrong type of music – wrong instrument, wrong place, wrong time – or when that musician was foreign.

The inferior leather harp was both: it was the wrong type of instrument and played by the wrong type of musician. That it was linked to Ireland is implied in the description of its sound and of its appearance. Its animalistic noises echo those of Iolo's satire on the Irishman: 'gweryrad gwyllt, rhuad gau, / gwilff felen am geffylau' (*the wild neighing, false roaring,* / *of a yellow mare for stallions*).[39] Furthermore, it is also described as 'sonfawr Wyddeles ynfyd' (*noisy crazy Irishwoman*).[40] This last description may suggest Iolo's awareness of the Irish

[37] Iolo Goch, '32. Cywydd Moliant i'r Delyn Rawn a Dychan i'r Delyn Ledr', *IGP*, ll. 5–10.
[38] Boethius, 'De institutione musica', 1:34.
[39] Iolo Goch, '32. Cywydd Moliant i'r Delyn Rawn a Dychan i'r Delyn Ledr', *IGP*, ll. 45–46.
[40] Iolo Goch, '32. Cywydd Moliant i'r Delyn Rawn a Dychan i'r Delyn Ledr', *IGP*, l. 50.

origin of the type of harp in question, since early Irish harps, such as the so-called 'Brian Boru harp', did indeed have metal strings of bronze or brass, which had a bell-like resonance and long-lasting sound.[41] This resonance was clearly disliked by Iolo, but more importantly, this sound was linked to the nonlinguistic sound of Irish (female) speakers, possibly evoking the folkloric banshees.[42]

Beyond the obvious Irish connection, presented more directly are the leather harp's associations with England: 'ni luniwyd ei pharwyden / na'i chreglais ond i Sais hen' (*its column and its hoarse voice / were made only for an old Englishman*). For Iolo, then, this type of harp and harper – and possibly all musicians – had general associations with foreigners. It was a sign of changing fashions; a new sound that accompanied a changing world in which the English language was heard more and more in Wales, and the harp, other musical instruments, and minstrelsy were increasingly threatening Iolo's profession. For many poets, including Tudur Penllyn, as explored in his 'Satire on Flint' in a later section, poetry was Welsh and music was English.[43]

*

As always with xenophobic labels, Irish had confused and incoherent labels: it could be music as well as noise; Irish as well as English; good, historical harp, as well as bad, modern harp. However, 'confused' and 'incoherent' were exactly how medieval Welsh poets heard the Irish language. Wherever it was heard, it was the threatening sound of uncontrolled incomers. While this was similar to the perception of the English language, this was not at all the case for Latin.

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[41] Ann Buckley, 'Music in Ireland to *c*. 1500', in *A New History of Ireland* ed. F. X. Martin et al., 9 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976–2011), I (2005), pp. 744–814; Ann Buckley, 'Harps and lyres on early medieval monuments of Britain and Ireland', *Harpa* 7 (1992), 8–21.
[42] *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*, ed. James MacKillop (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), s.v. *banshee*.
[43] This is connected to how Welsh musicians sought employment in England as soon as the opportunity arose: musicians such as John Lloyd (aka Floyd or Flude, *c*. 1475–1523) from Caerleon who served within the household of the Duke of Buckingham near Bristol until at least 1508. See: Harper, *MWC*, p. 282.

III. Latin

'Vuallilinguae habent diversam ab Anglis, quam ipsi qui ad Troianae stirpem sui generis seriem referunt, partim Troianam, partim et Graecam sapere uetustatem aiunt: verum qualiscunque sit, non aeque suauiter molliterque Vualli, atque Angli linguam suam pronuntiant, eo quod illi, credo, magis prope guttur loquantur, contra isti Latinos recte imitantes, parum intra labia uocem exprimant, quae audientibus suauem reddit sonum.'[44]

(*Welsh people have a different speech from the English – they who trace their race and stem from the Trojan stock – and affirm that their speech is made up partly of Greek, partly of Trojan antiquity; but, however it may be, Welsh people do not speak as smoothly as the English. They, I believe, speak more in the throat, while they [English people] correctly imitating Latin speakers, express their voice only a little within the lips, which gives a sweet sound to the listeners.*)

— Polydore Vergil on the sound of the Welsh language compared to English and Latin

Unlike Irish, Latin had a fantastic auditory reputation and, as such, it regularly makes its way into Welsh poetry in both descriptions and wholesale linguistic units. It was the pan-European language par excellence: the living language of educated churchmen and scholars and, by association, of ecclesiastical, scientific, and sometimes courtly authority. Most importantly for much of the religious verse analysed in this section, it was the transcendent language of Christian devotion, the prestigious currency of which remained intact in Wales during this period even when it was beginning to be questioned in England by the Wycliffite movement.[45]

This prestige is the first reason that Latin, and its sound, is discussed and used at length by Beirdd yr Uchelwyr: several Welshmen who were proficient in Latin are praised for this virtue in their eulogies. For example, Ffwg Salbri, dean of St Asaph, who is praised by Tudur Aled as 'gŵr llên llwyd, gorllanw Lladin' (*grey, man of letters, Latin's high tide*), and William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, was 'y iarll hydr a ŵyr Lladin' (*the mighty earl who knows Latin*).[46] Conversely, no knowledge of Latin was a cause for concern and, at times, amusement: Dafydd Ddu of Hiraddug satirises an unnamed abbot for not knowing any Latin: 'clermwnt abad di-

[44] Polydore Vergil, *Historia Anglica* (Menston: Scolar Press, 1972), p. 9.
[45] Kantik Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and the Interpretation of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[46] Tudur Aled, '18. Cywydd i Ffwg Salbri, Deon Llanelwy', *GTA* I, l. 49; Hywel Dafi, '70. Moliant Wiliam Herbert, ail iarll Penfro', *GHDaf* II, l. 1.

Ladin, / cloria pla, plygiaith ganon' (*an abbot cleric without Latin, / a plague's arse, with his church service in a corrupt language*).[47]

The second reason behind the attention paid to the sound of Latin in Welsh poetry of the period is to do with the high rates of Welsh-Latin bilingualism in some form or another. Even though Latin was incomprehensible to most Welshmen and women throughout the Middle Ages, most Welsh speakers were at least passively bilingual (defined below). Latin pervaded all corners of Wales and all sections of its society, as it did all over Europe, to the extent that it can be argued that everyone in medieval Wales was bilingual: passively so, with fluency in the vernacular and a smattering of mostly liturgical Latin, or more extensively so, with proficiency in both.[48]

This section, then, aims to examine the prestige of Latin in late medieval Wales through its sound: in descriptions of its high-status sound and in the use of Latin in bilingual poems. In analysing the latter, I argue that a significant reason behind including Latin in Welsh poetry was to invoke a certain auditory environment through its sonic features, even among audiences who would not have been fluent in Latin. (With regard to the sound of a Cambro-Latin dialect, we are reliant on the accounts of outside listeners – like that of Polydore Vergil, quoted above – who bring their own agendas and preconceptions to their descriptions, showing once again how there can be great variety in the perceptions of foreign languages.)

On terminology, given that 'bilingualism' has a vast spectrum of meaning, I follow Suzanne Romaine's definitions. Romaine avoids excessive focusing on loanwords and the occasional insertion of single words, as these provide unreliable evidence of bilingualism since

[47] Anonymous, 'Atodiad Dd: 39. Dychan abad bydol', *GEODDdH*, ll. 1–2.
[48] Elizabeth M. Tyler, 'Introduction. England and Multilingualism: Medieval and Modern', in *Conceptualizing Multilingualism in Medieval England, c. 800–c. 1250*, ed. Elizabeth M. Tyler (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 1–14 (p. 10); Ad Putter and Keith Busby, 'Introduction: Medieval Francophonia', in *Medieval Multilingualism: The Francophone World and its Neighbours*, ed. Keith Busby and Christopher Kleinhenz (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), pp. 1–14.

‘borrowing can occur in the speech of those with only monolingual competence’.[49] Instead, I focus on the written equivalent of what she terms ‘intersentential’ and ‘intrasentential code-switching’. The former is a switch at clause or sentence boundaries and therefore keeps the two languages separate, whereas the latter is a switch within sentence-constituents, therefore requiring a higher level of fluency in both languages.

The sound of Latin

Firstly, it is clear that Latin was heard as the purest of all languages. One need not look further than the common phrase ‘Ladin dilediaith’ to hear this. *Pure Latin* is the simplest translation, though the morphology of ‘dilediaith’ should be briefly commented upon. ‘Llediaith’ is a compound word meaning, literally, *half-language*, thereby giving meanings such as *patois*, *barbarism*, and *alien*, or even a meaning to do with speaking with a foreign accent.[50] We shall return to this word in greater detail in our discussion on English-Welsh bilingualism. For now, it suffices to say that if Latin was none of these things – ‘di-’ (*not-*) – then it would be a *civilised*, *unmixed*, and *unpolluted* language.

Of course, much of Latin’s purity is to do with its ecclesiastical and heavenly connotations. In Catrin ferch Gruffudd ap Hywel’s penitential poem, she praises the seniority and purity of Latin. In light of the threat of the Protestant Reformation, Catrin stresses that Latin is the only true language of both the heaven that is to come and the Church that has always been: ‘Fo ddaw’r Lading ddilediaith / fal y bu erioed ben yr iaith’ (*Pure Latin will come, / just as it always has been the chief among languages*).[51] Elsewhere, Latin is simply an indirect shorthand for the language of the Church, such as in the praise of Sir Siôn Aled, vicar of Llansannan:

[49] Suzanne Romaine, *Bilingualism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 112–15.
[50] On ‘Llŷr Llediaith’, see: Chapter Three, n. 106.
[51] Catrin ferch Gruffudd ap Hywel, ‘30. Iesu, Duw Iesu…’, *Beirdd Ceridwen*, ll. 75–76. See also: Cathryn Charnell-White, ‘Barddoniaeth ddefosiynol Catrin ferch Gruffudd ap Hywel’, *Dwned* 7 (2001), 93–120.

Sierôm wyd, oes ŵr am iaith
ar Ladin mor ddilediaith?
Awstin o'r Lladin i'r llall,
i'm bro Syr Ambros arall.[52]

(*You are Jerome, is there another man [who knows] such language / as such unpolluted Latin? / Augustine on Latin and the other, / to my area, another Sir Ambrose.*)

Another word used to describe Latin is 'cyson' (*harmonious*), itself a Latin borrowing < L consonus. Gruffudd ap Maredudd's verses to God ('Awdlau i Dduw') offer several descriptions – and uses, see below – of Latin:

lle digaredd gyflafaredd
yn nhrugaredd ein Rhi gwirion,
lle didostrydd, llys lluosydd,
lle Dangosydd Lladin gyson.[53]

(*a sinless place of conciliation / in the mercy of our faultless God, / a joyful and free place, a court to a multitude, / a place of One who shows harmonious Latin.*)

The secondary meaning of 'cyson' (*constant*) may perplex modern Welsh speakers – a strange adjective to use to describe a language – but this in itself gestures towards the primary meaning, *harmonious*, through the close relationship between mathematical proportions and music in medieval thought based on Pythagorean music theory.[54] Constancy is synonymous, then, with regularity; a regulated language is a controlled language and, therefore, a good-sounding language.

Use of Latin: single words and phrases

Latin's most common appearance in Welsh poetry is in short liturgical phrases. Why this is can be explained by Gruffudd ap Maredudd who heard Latin as part and parcel of the

[52] Huw ap Dafydd ap Llywelyn ap Madog, '14. Moliant Syr Siôn Aled, ficer Llansannan', *GHD*, ll. 33–38.
[53] Gruffudd ap Maredudd, '3. Awdlau i Dduw', *GGM* II, ll. 137–140.
[54] Hippasus of Metapontum (sixth century BCE) is the earliest Pythagorean with surviving work that considers harmonics in mathematical terms, noting how a sound made by a strummed string harmonises with one made when the string's length is halved. See: Andrew Barker, 'Pythagorean harmonics', in *A History of Pythagoraenism*, ed. Carl A. Huffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 185–203 (p. 186): 'if we first strike a note from its whole length and then another from its half (separating the two halves by a bridge), the second note will be exactly an octave above the first, giving the ratio 2:1; if the ratio is 3:2 the interval is a perfect fifth; the ratio 4:3 gives a perfect fourth; and so on'. See also: Boethius, 'De institutione musica', passim, esp. Book 1.

miracle of transubstantiation: 'trwy'r gred, trwy'r giried, trwy'r geiriau – Lladin / a wna'r gwaed o'r gwin, rhin ein Rhiau' (*through the belief, through the alms, through the words – Latin / makes blood from the wine, our Lord's mystery*).[55] These verses are key to our understanding of why Latin was so prestigious in medieval Wales. Christian thought regarding the Holy Communion was that the miracle of the Eucharist was partly enacted by the words themselves. The language of those words, then, were as holy as all other aspects of Mass.

It is no surprise, then, that the use of prefabricated biblical or liturgical Latin phrases is the most common use of Latin in medieval vernacular poetry; phrases for which a monoglot audience member might not even need a translation.[56] It is therefore somewhat inevitable that Gruffudd should employ code-switching with the liturgy in the final lines of the poem: 'erglyw fi, fy Nêr uwch sêr ysydd, / Eurglo in caelo medd seilm Dafydd' (*hear me, my Lord who is above the stars, / golden lock in heaven, says David's psalms*).[57] Likewise, in another religious poem – a collection of englynion meditating on the sabbath – Gruffudd employs a short Latin phrase as he praises the miracle of feeding the five thousand: 'rhyborthes meus deus Duwsul / rhadau heb amau, bumil' (*my God fed on Sunday, / unhesitant grace, five thousand*).[58]

Gruffudd is not alone. A century later, Lewys Glyn Cothi mourned the death of Dafydd ap Gwilym, referring to heaven as 'adail â sail qui es in caelis' (*a building with the foundation of he who is in heaven*).[59] Elsewhere he describes the caring nature of both Whitland Abbey and its Abbot, Morys, as a 'santa parens' in a section that rhymes on the Latin adjectival and gerundive ending '-ens':

[55] Gruffudd ap Maredudd, '3. Awdlau i Dduw', *GGM* II, ll. 243–44.
[56] Herbert Schendl, 'Linguistic Aspects of Code-Switching in Medieval English Texts', in *Multilingualism in Later Medieval Britain*, ed. D. A. Trotter (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 77–92 (p. 89); 'Type 1' in Elizabeth Archibald, 'Tradition and Innovation in the Macaronic Poetry of Dunbar and Skelton', *Modern Language Quarterly* 53 (1992), 126–49.
[57] Gruffudd ap Maredudd, '3. Awdlau i Dduw', *GGM* II, ll. 259–60.
[58] Gruffudd ap Maredudd, '4. Englynion y Sul', *GGM* II, ll. 33–36.
[59] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '228. Marwnad Dafydd ap Gwilym', *GLGC*, l. 52.

Salve'r tŷ 'nglan Taf
gwyn ag a enwaf,
sy'n y tŷ puraf, santa parens.

Morys rym araf,
a'i lun yn lanaf,
ef â i'r nesaf i'r innosens.[60]

(*Hail the house on the banks of the Taf / white as I name it, / who is in the holiest house, saintly parent. / Morys, tender force, / and his holiest face, / he shall go to the next mild one*.)

Ieuan ap Gruffudd opts for this same kind of macaronic verse in his question-and-answer apologia 'Yr Offeren' (*The Mass*), which features a singular snippet of the Fraction of the Host prayer (the Agnus Dei):

Aro, pam yr â eraill
o'r llu i 'fengylu'r lleill
yn ôl Agnus, ni rusia,
Dei qui tollis, Deus da?
Arwydd tangnefedd eirian,
a maddau mwygl eiriau mân.[61]

(*Wait, why do others go / from the crowd to kiss each other / after the Agnus, it does not hinder us, / Dei qui tollis, good God? / It is a beautiful sign of peace, / and a way to forgive futile words of trifling importance.*)

Here, Ieuan employs the 'Agnus Dei' and does so in an inspired and creative manner since, much like the bread with which the prayer is associated, it is broken in two by the interrupting 'sangiad' (*interpolation*) that comforts the curious interrogator: 'ni rusia'.

More common outside Wales was to employ familiar Latin phrases and simply gloss them with vernacular translations or paraphrases, especially in refrains. With each language independently preserving its morphology and syntax, the text could be more easily divided and understood by a monoglot audience.[62] This happens on occasion in Ieuan ap Rhydderch's 'I Fair', which will receive closer attention below, e.g., 'sine pena, sôn heb boenau' (*without punishment, a tale without pain*), but this is not a widespread trend in Welsh poetry.[63]

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[60] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '65. Moliant Abad y Tŷ Gwyn', *GLGC*, ll. 17–22.
[61] Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '9. I Fair', *GIRh*, ll. 86–92.
[62] Siegfried Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons: Bilingualism and Preaching in Late-Medieval England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 2–6.
[63] Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '9. I Fair', *GIRh*, l. 70.

Within the liturgical Latin used, the most common word bank came from the Ave Maria. If the highlight of the medieval Christian audible experience was during the Eucharist, it appears that the highlight of the Christian audible experience within the Bible itself was the Latin Word(s) of God that made Christianity possible and that saved mankind: the words of the Annunciation.[64] Including this language in a vernacular poet allows the Marian poet to play a similar intermediary role between the divine and the human as that of Mary herself.[65]

Several poets meditate over the beauty and importance of Gabriel's words to Mary, and many often involve the Latin words themselves when doing so. At its simplest, this is the employment of the initial salutation only: 'ave'. Once again, Gruffudd ap Maredudd provides an illustrative example in his praise of the word itself: 'gorug Afe, doeth arwyre, daith oreurawl, / gwaith gwynfydig' (*Ave, wise raising, gilded journey, / did blessed work*), in which the 'work' was raising Adam from Hell by impregnating Mary and bringing God to earth in the form of Jesus Christ.[66]

However, a significant number of poets recreate the salutation in its entirety, bending it in creative ways to fit their points of praise and the poetics of the cynghanedd in each line. Both Gruffudd Fychan ap Gruffudd ab Ednyfed and Hywel Dafi opt for an acrostic poem. Gruffudd offers the most extensive example, though recreating the first four lines will suffice:

> Ave rhag mawrddrwg afal,
> Maria, Efa oful:
> geiriau gobrwyau Gabriel,
> Gratia, lles a wna yn ôl.[67]
>
> (*Ave, against an apple's great evil, / Maria, foolish Eve: / the gifts of Gabriel's words, / Gratia, goodness that shall reverse [Eve's sin].*)

[64] As mentioned on p. 11, contemporary belief maintained that Christ's incarnation in the Virgin's womb was caused directly by these words: 'And how Gabrell apperyd and sayd 'Aue'; / And with þat worde she shuld conceyuyd be', *Non-Cycle Plays and Fragments*, ed. Norman Davis (Oxford: Early English Texts Society, 1970), 6:412–13.
[65] Robert J. Meyer-Lee, 'The Emergence of the Literary in John Lydgate's *Life of Our Lady*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 109.3 (2010), 322–48.
[66] Gruffudd ap Maredudd, '10. Awdl I Fair', *GGM* II, ll. 17–18.
[67] Gruffudd Fychan ap Gruffudd ab Ednyfed, '12. Awdl i Grist a Mair', *GSRE*, ll. 25–52.

Gruffudd here offers the Welsh linguistic form of the typological commonplace that Mary is the new Eve, just like Christ is the new (and final) Adam: reversing 'Efa' to 'Afe' demonstrates how Mary reversed Eve's Original Sin.[68]

The poem attributed to Hywel Dafi is a more compressed offering, but one that is closer to Gruffudd ap Maredudd's use in the sense that he revels in the very words of the Annunciation and praises Gabriel for his fine speech:

> Myfyr y gwn, mau fawr gawdd,
> y chwegair a'i beichiogawdd:
> Afi, deddf a fedyddiwyd,
> Maria'n wir, morwyn wyd;
> Grasia uddun', groes addef,
> Plena a wnaeth plannu nef;
> Dom'nus, air damunus oedd,
> teca' mydr, tecum ydoedd.
> Gabriel i'th glust yn husting
> a'u dywad wynt, nid wyd ing,
> a'r rhai call a'u deallawdd,
> a'r hyn o eiriau, yn hawdd.[69]
>
> (*A mediation, I know, my great vexation, / the six words that impregnated her: / Ave, a baptised deed, / Maria, truly, you are a virgin; / Gratia to them, the Cross's confession, / Plena did plant heaven; / Dominus, this was a pleasing word, / finest metre was tecum. / Gabriel whispered in your ear / and told you these words, you are not in distress, / and the wise ones understood them, / these words, with ease.*)

The bilingualism is a little more intrasentential here in the sense that the Latin words form an integral part of the overall Welsh sentence, especially in the line 'Teca' mydr, tecum ydoedd'. This requires listeners to understand the meaning of 'tecum'. We note too how Gabriel's words are whispered and are 'damunus', meaning *pleasant* or indeed *choice*, similar to how the poet Llawdden uses the *six sinless words* in his comparable Marian lyric.[70] These are quiet, contemplative, deliberate words, setting the standards for good Welsh and good poetry, explored in the previous chapter.

[68] 1 Corinthians 15:45: 'And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.'
[69] ?Hywel Dafi, 'Atodiad IV: Cywydd i Fair Forwyn', *GHDaf* II, ll. 15–26.
[70] Llawdden, '2. I Fair', *GLlaw*, ll. 15–24.

Use of Latin: bilingual poetry

Occasionally, poets experiment in composing more extensively bilingual poems. These are all impressive in their ambition and often in their execution too. The best example comes from Ieuan ap Rhydderch in his praise to the Virgin Mary.[71] As in previous examples, this twenty-line bilingual passage in 'rhupunt hir' form employs liturgical phrases such as 'gratia plena', 'te laudamus', and 'miserere', evoking, even to monoglots, a familiarly solemn religious atmosphere. The thematic context is also the same in that it involves the Virgin Mary, but this time a more specific address to Mary herself. Indeed, it is entirely appropriate that the fullest example of a Welsh-Latin poem in the Beirdd yr Uchelwyr corpus is a Marian lyric, since this 'world of elegant, carefully wrought verbal artefacts, flamboyant decoration and an enthusiasm for a variety of metrical forms' is by far the largest category of macaronic English poems, of which Ieuan's is a Welsh reflex.[72]

Overall, there is a greater deal of sophistication in the synthesis of the two languages here: Ieuan regularly alternates a full Latin line followed by a half-Latin, half-Welsh line. Whereas intersentential bilingualism has characterised previous examples, the bilingualism is intrasentential here, calling for a fluently bilingual composer and an equally bilingual audience that can understand and access all possible meanings.

This is the same devotional exercise as before but on a more ambitious scale. Beyond simply inserting a Latin phrase here and there to create a Latinate aura, Ieuan fuses the two languages, and the alert bilingual audience member who can unlock bilingual syntactic units can see why: Ieuan exposes a metalinguistic concern for how he praises the Virgin. He seeks to craft the most refined eulogy possible and so praises Mary for her eloquence, her Latin, and

[71] Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '9. I Fair', *GIRh*; For a more detailed discussion, see: Llewelyn Hopwood, 'Creative Bilingualism in Late Medieval Welsh Poetry', *Studia Celtica* 55 (2022), 97–120, (pp. 107–10).
[72] Douglas Gray, '"Hale, Sterne Superne" and its Literary Background', in *William Dunbar: 'The Nobill Poyet': Essays in Honour of Priscilla Bawcutt*, ed. Sally Mapstone (East Linton: Tuckwell, 2001), pp. 198–210 (p. 202); Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons*, p. 2.

asks for the same. In Welsh, he asks for a 'dysg deg awdl, pefr dasg di-gabl, / dwysglaergerdd Duw disgleirgwbl' (*the beautiful discipline of an awdl, a fine, unsullied undertaking, / the wholly bright God's passionate, pleasant poem*).[73] In Welsh-Latin, he asks: 'stella maris, talm o eirau' (*star of the sea, [it is proper that we have] a portion of [your] words*) and 'Imperatrix, consolatrix, / Miseratrix, moes arotriau' (*[Oh] Empress, Comforter, / Compassionate One, give [us] eloquence*).[74]

This eloquence comes, in part, from the bilingual poem itself: the fusion in question and lines such as 'euraf wawd tafawd tewfydr / i'r lân wyry ar lun arodr' (*I will gild a eulogy with a tongue, mighty in verse, / to the Holy Virgin in the form of a prayer*) suggest that this poem chimes well with the English and Scots tradition of 'aureate' literature. This is where vernaculars were intentionally 'gilded' by Latinate loanwords and neologisms thereby allowing the low-status vernacular to co-opt the prestige of the high-status Latin.[75] Surrounding Welsh with Latin allowed the former to scale the lofty heights of the latter, the most controlled and refined language of all.

*

As mentioned, Ieuan's 'I Fair' is the most impressive example of a more extensively bilingual poem in terms of both ambition and execution. However, in many ways, the more revealing examples in terms of listening out for the superior importance of the *sound* rather than *content* of Latin verse in Welsh poetry are those that are slightly less impressive in their bilingual execution; poems in which the Latin is a little garbled. (Even in the hands of Ieuan ap Rhydderch, the Latin grammar is not always watertight.) On these occasions, it seems that the presence of the very sound of Latin is more important than its accurate usage.

[73] Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '9. I Fair', *GIRh*, ll. 17–8.
[74] Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '9. I Fair', *GIRh*, ll. 72–4.
[75] Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '9. I Fair', *GIRh*, ll. 31–2; Bengt Ellenberger, *The Latin Element in the Vocabulary of the Earlier Makars Henryson and Dunbar* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1977). For more on 'aureation' in Welsh poetry see: Hopwood, 'Creative Bilingualism', pp. 107–10.

Of course, there is no doubt that Ieuan ap Rhydderch and some of his contemporaries had a high degree of Latinate learning: Ieuan studied at Oxford and Iolo Goch received a formal ecclesiastical education.[76] However, it is reasonable to ask whether or not some poets and their audiences knew much Latin beyond that which was repeated during the Mass. This question becomes particularly pertinent when the liturgical Latin disintegrates within a poem.

Such a poem is Trahaearn Brydydd Mawr's awdl to God. His use of Latin phrases suggests a limited understanding of what those phrases really meant and how they should interact with each other grammatically:

> Mor hawdd ym o'm nawdd yn nom'ni – Agnus
> a Patris Cristus croes dadeni.
> Eurddraig un ffelaig enw â Filii,
> Spir'tus Iesu Sanctus a sancti,
> Amen; Ef yw ein Rhên a'n Rhi – didramgwydd,
> Arglwydd da, Culwydd yw Duw Celi,
> coron athrawon ein câr â Thri,
> caffom Ei arfoll oll rhag ein colli.[77]
>
> (*So easy is it to me of my sponsor in the name – of [the] Lamb / and of the Father Christ, cross of rebirth. / Golden dragon, a shining one with the name 'Filii', / Spirit, Jesus, sacred, and of sacred, / Amen; He is our Lord and our King – unfaltering, / good Lord, Culwydd is the God of Heaven, / the crown teacher of our companions and Three, / we received his whole covenant to save us from perdition*.)

A telling sign of Trahaearn's lack of proficiency is that he has spliced several prayers together but has kept the nouns in the cases in which they most commonly appear, irrespective of their role in the bilingual lines of this poem. In good Latin (and Welsh), for example, the first line ought to read 'yn nom'ne – Agni', with the two Latin words in the ablative and genitive cases respectively, and the second would read 'a Patris Cristi', with both in the genitive, this being a variation on the Trinitarian formula: 'in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti'. 'Patris' is in the expected genitive case, but 'Agnus' and 'Cristus' are inexplicably in the nominative case, while 'Filii' in the third line is also in the genitive case for no clear grammatical reason. The metrical reason for these nongrammatical forms seems to be a need to manipulate the words so as to fit the monorhyme '-i'.

[76] *GIRh*, pp. 4–7; *IGP*, p. x; *Gwaith Iolo Goch*, pp. xv–xxii.
[77] Trahaearn Brydydd Mawr, '10. Awdl i Dduw', *GGDT*, ll. 43–50.

It is, of course, a tall order to ask for the two languages to remain grammatically correct once they integrate. By and large, Ieuan ap Rhydderch did manage to do so. His bilingual petition opens thus:

> Mam Grist Celi, seren heli,
> luna celi, lain y suliau.
> oportere nos habere,
> miserere, moes ar eirau.[78]
>
> (*[Oh] mother of Christ [of] the Lord, star of the sea,* / *moon of Heaven, gem of Sundays,* / *it is proper for us to have* – / *show mercy* – *courtesy in our words.*)

'Luna celi, lain y suliau', for example, is grammatically sound. However, the rest is less accurate. In the third line quoted here, for example, grammatical Latin would have the 3sg form ('oportet') rather than the infinitive ('oportere').[79]

As mentioned, intertwining two syntactic systems is difficult enough let alone within the confines of strict metre. Nonetheless, this lax approach to grammatical correctness corroborates the idea that it was not the content or the grammatical correctness of the Latin language that was important, but the very fact that the Latin language was there at all. Trahaearn and Ieuan's examples, and indeed all above examples, seem to suggest that audiences would have simply appreciated the appropriateness of the sound of Latin in these otherwise Welsh poems, all of which are on religious topics.

Greek and Hebrew

That there is very little use or mention of Greek and Hebrew in Beirdd yr Uchelwyr poetry before the fifteenth century is concurrent with the early modern humanist revival of Greek and Hebrew throughout Europe during that century. Even so, their use and mention are rare, but from that point onwards they do begin to be added into the mix when praising

[78] Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '9. I Fair', *GIRh,* ll. 65–8.
[79] Another example might be in line 78: 'sine tristi, sôn nid tristau' (*without a sad thing, a story without sadness*). If the Latin means *without sadness,* it should include the noun (tristitia) in the abl. (tristitiā) and thus read 'sine tristitiā'. However, it is likely to mean *without a sad thing*, taking trīstī (< nom. trīstis) as an adjectival noun, in which case 'sine tristi' is correct. Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '9. I Fair', *GIRh,* l. 78; *GPC,* s.v. *trist*[1].

intellectuals and clergymen. As with Latin, they are invoked as a controlled, authoritative language, and their referencing in later medieval Welsh poetry preludes humanist desires to associate Welsh with the Classical languages, partially by way of the invented linguistic ancestry referenced above by Polydore Vergil.[80]

There is only one instance of Greek mentioned on its own, and this is in Tudur Aled's praise of Bishop Dafydd ab Owain. Dafydd knew some Greek, it seems, unlike Tudur who appears to be wishing that he could praise the Bishop in that same refined language: 'un o'th grefft yn iaith y Grig / a wnâi'r ddadl yn urddedig' (*someone of your craft in the Greeks' language* / *would present the case in a dignified manner*).[81]

More commonly, Greek and Hebrew appear together. For example, in a faux elegy for Sieffre Cyffin, Abbot of Maenan, Tudur Aled praises him for being a master of Hebrew and Greek:

> Ebryw, cwyn Aber Conwy,
> ni thrig mêl yn iaith Roeg, mwy!
> Galar gŵr heb goel er gwerth,
> gwalch ebyd, oedd gloch aberth.[82]
>
> (*Hebrew, Aber Conwy's feast,* / *honey no longer dwells in Greek's language!* / *Mourning a man without faith despite value,* / *hero of abbots, was the sanctus bell.*)

Tudur also praises Pirs Conwy, archdeacon at St Asaph, for the same reason:

> Tecáu holl eiriau llariaidd,
> llythr Groeg, a phob llith o'r gwraidd;
> lladin, o'th fin, eithaf yw,
> llwybraidd y llëi Ebryw,
> dyn at wraidd y dwned draw,
> di-eiddil y doi iddaw;
> pob cordiad yn y Lladin,
> pob iaith, fal y Pab, o'th fin;
> awen a dysg ynod oedd,
> i bregethu brig ieithoedd.[83]

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[80] For Maurice Kyffin, Welsh was 'onid hanner lladin drwyddi' (*more or less half Latin throughout*), 'Deffynniad Fydd Eglwys Loegr [1595]', *Rhag*, pp. 89–96 (p. 90); and such was the perceived similarity between Welsh and Hebrew for John Davies, 'pene Hebraeam esse dixeris' (*you could almost say that it is [in fact] Hebrew*), *Antiquae linguae Britannicae, nunc communiter dictae Cambro-Britannicae, a suis Cymraecae, vel Cambricae, ab aliis Wallicae rudimenta* (London: Johannes Billius, 1621), p. 5.
[81] Tudur Aled, '16. Cywydd i'r Esgob Dafydd ab Owain', *GTA* I, l. 85.
[82] Tudur Aled, '27. Cywydd i Sieffre Cyffin, Abad Maenan', *GTA* I, ll. 5–8.
[83] Tudur Aled, '30. Cywydd i Birs Conwy, Archdiagon Llanelwy', *GTA* I, ll. 43–52.

(*Adorning all gentle words, / Greek letters, and each reading from the root; / Latin, from your lips, veritable it is, / orderly do you read Hebrew, / a man to the root of the grammar yonder, / un-feeble do you approach it; / each harmony in Latin, / each [passage of] speech, like the Pope, from your lips; / there was inspiration and learning within you, / to praise to the highest languages/peoples*)

The use of the adjective 'llwybraidd' (*orderly*) alongside 'ebryw' (*Hebrew*) is common, especially in Tudur Aled's poetry: he praises the aforementioned Bishop Dafydd for possessing 'Ebryw mor llwybraidd' (*such orderly Hebrew*).[84] The adjective 'llwybraidd' is telling as it is the only description that comes close to specifying the sound of either Greek or Hebrew; it contains the adjectival form of the noun 'llwybr' (*path*), underlining that fluency, in this instance, means straightforward, methodical, and orderly speech. 'Llwybraidd', then, coincides with contemporary perceptions of controlled sound being an admirable and praiseworthy sound, as outlined above.

*

The praise of Pirs Conwy puts us in no doubt that Greek, Hebrew, and Latin were perceived as the languages of learning and religion. The three are frequently presented together, especially in eulogies of intellectuals, and they often appear in shorthand in the compound noun 'teiriaith' (*three languages*). Ieuan ap Rhydderch's aforementioned cywydd to the Mass groups them as such:

Teiriaith hybarch ddiwarchae
mewn yr Offeren y mae:
y Ladin berffaith loywdeg
a'r groyw Ebryw a Groeg.[85]

(*There are three honourable, famed languages / in the Mass; / the perfect, resplendent Latin, / and the clear Hebrew and Greek.*)

The term 'teiriaith', then, could refer to the 'tres linguae sacrae' of Christianity, as written upon the Cross:

And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.[86]

[84] Tudur Aled, '16. Cywydd i'r Esgob Dafydd ab Owain'', *GTA* I, l. 54.
[85] Ieuan ap Rhydderch, '7. Yr Offeren', *GIRh*, ll. 55–58.
[86] John 19:19–20.

However, in terms of looking for information about the sound of these languages, the references to these 'teiriaith' are not always revealing.

Firstly, just like today, knowledge of a language – or three – could simply be a literary knowledge of those languages. As seen above, when 'teiriaith' appears it is often in the context of ecclesiastical education and learned men, or it explicitly mentions the very 'literate' nature of their knowledge of these languages. Dafydd Llwyd o Fathafarn (*c.* 1420–*c.* 1500), for example, praises Gruffudd ap Llywelyn Fychan as follows: 'Darllëwr, uwch mawrddwr maith, / Dierwin wyd ar deiriaith' (*You are a fluent reader, above great, vast water, / in three languages*).[87] Tudur Aled also regarded Sir Sion, a prior on Anglesey, a fine reader, though not necessarily speaker, of three languages:

> Dyallwr heb i dwyllaw,
> darllëadwr wyd i'r llu draw,
> dwy iaith neu deiriaith yn dau,
> doeth yw byd o'th wybodau.[88]
>
> (*A man of understanding, never deceived, / you are a reader to that host there, / two or three languages are yours, / wise is the world of your knowledge*.)

On rarer occasions, however, reference is made to the actual speaking of the 'teiriaith'. Tomas ap Wiliam's three languages flowed freely and sweetly, according to Lewys Morgannwg: 'ir o'th ben fydd teiriaith bêr' (*fresh from your mouth shall be the three sweet languages*).[89]

Secondly, 'teiriaith' does not always refer to these three Classical languages. On several occasions, it is clear that 'teiriaith' uses 'iaith' (*language*) in a much broader sense of *culture* or *nation* so that it refers to the three law-codes governing Wales during the late medieval period: the native Welsh laws ('Cyfraith Hywel'), the English law codes, and canon law.[90]

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[87] Dafydd Llwyd o Fathafarn, '78. Ateb yma', *GDLlF*, ll. 5–6.
[88] Tudur Aled, '102. I Syr Sion Ingram Prior Mon i Ofyn March dros Fadog o'r Wyddgrug', *GTA* II, ll. 23–22.
[89] Lewys Morgannwg, '37. Moliant Tomas ap Wiliam, Pen-rhos', *GLM* I, l. 65.
[90] *GPC*, s.v. *iaith*; John Davies, *A History of Wales*, revised edn (London: Penguin, 2007), pp. 164, 198; This polysemy echoes Bede's definitions of the 'nations' of Britain as the speakers of the same language. See: Bede, *Bede's ecclesiastical history of the English people*, 1:1.

Dafydd ap Meurig Fychan, for example, is praised for being 'Gŵr diorwag, gŵyr deiriaith' (*an earnest man, he knew three law-languages*).[91] Nonetheless, 'teiriaith' may still refer to three separate languages, as reasonable conjecture would suggest that the initial reason behind this polysemy is that each law code was in a different language: Welsh, English, and Latin. This certainly seems to be what Ieuan Deulwyn (*fl.* 1460) is suggesting when praising Oxford-educated 'doctor' Sion ap Morgan who knew each law-code *in its language*. He knew them as well as he knew his pater noster: 'pob kyfraith yn u ieythoedd / pedair ieith mal u pader oedd' (*every law in its language / four languages were like his pater*).[92]

We note that 'three' has moved to 'four' here. Dafydd y Coed (*fl.* 1380) uses the same phrase appears, which appears in the same construction, i.e., in cynghanedd with 'pader', in his poem to God, assuring Him that he will praise Him 'o'm pedeiriaith ddysg a'm paderau' (*through my quadrilingual education and my prayers*).[93] This could be connected to the significance of the number four in the legal triads or a reference to a combination of Welsh, English, Latin, Greek or French.[94] However, it is more likely to be simply one of the many other numerals used to praise multilingualism and learnedness in hyperbole; four, eight, and 140 ('saith ugeiniaith').

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[91] Guto'r Glyn, '51. Diolch i Ddafydd ap Meurig Fychan ac Elen ferch Hywel o Nannau am farch', *GG.net*, l. 30. [My translation.]
[92] Ieuan Deulwyn, '27. Ir doktor Ssion ap Morgan a vy Esgob Dewi', *Casgliad o Waith Ieuan Deulwyn*, ed. Ifor Williams (Bangor: Jarvis & Foster, 1909), ll. 5–6. Were it not for the presence of English, which is hardly ever described as orderly, there may be a further connection between 'law' and 'language' here. One wonders whether the connection betrays just how authoritative Welsh, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew were perceived to be. Was it understood that language should be used as correctly as one would abide by and invoke the law? If we take 'good language' to mean 'regulated language', then perhaps it is no surprise that 'teiriaith' comes to refer to both the three Classical language and the three languages of law. Thus, for example, when we hear Lewys Morgannwg twice using the phrase 'llaw â theiriaith, llythyrawl' (*authority in three languages, well-read*) to praise Edward, Lord Herbert, and Siôn Wyn, these men are understood to be both polyglots and lawyers ('50. Moliant Edward, Arglwydd Herbert', *GLM* I, l. 32; '82. Moliant Siôn Wyn', *GLM* II, l. 52).
[93] Dafydd y Coed, '5. Awdl i Dduw', *GDC*, l. 10.
[94] Roberts, *The Legal Triads*.

All classical languages are always controlled languages. Their overwhelmingly positive auditory reputation meant that simply hearing individual words in those languages was enough to evoke a sense of awe in its listeners, overriding any grammatical inappropriateness. Its pure and controlled sounds meant that it could be used freely in bilingual poetry. The Irish language itself does not make a single appearance in bilingual Welsh poetry, presumably since few Welsh poets spoke Irish. This was not true for English, which did appear in bilingual poetry, but for very different reasons.

IV. English

> 'Nothing so much as mincing poetry. / 'Tis like the forced gait of a shuffling nag.'
> — Hotspur criticising Welsh poetry in *Henry IV, Part One*[95]

Despite the gradual integration of the English and Welsh nobilities after 1282, ethnic identities maintained a sharp distinction, and it seems that this distinction found its clearest expression in poetry: 'na ad, f'arglwydd, swydd i Sais, / na'i bardwn i un bwrdais' (*Do not, my lord, allow any office to an Englishman* / *nor give any burgess his pardon*).[96] What is largely absent in the scholarship on the poets' expression of such sentiment is a discussion of the fact that the antagonism against English people focusses largely on the English language and its barbarous sound. This section addresses this absence.

Opinions on Welsh-English bilingualism

Despite much Anglophobic sentiment in Welsh poetry, the sociolinguistic landscape was not unambiguous. People began to live hybrid, diglossic lives. By the late Middle Ages,

[95] William Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part One*, ed. David Bevington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3:11:129–30.
[96] Guto'r Glyn, '21. Moliant i Wiliam Herbert o Raglan, iarll cyntaf Penfro, ar ôl cipio castell Harlech, 1468', *GG.net*, ll. 61–62.

the Welsh-speaking nobility increasingly acquired English to obtain cultural and political power, and so English was becoming the high-status vernacular of Wales in commerce, bureaucracy, and law. Crucially, however, English was not becoming the high-status vernacular of literary expression: Welsh men and women could be English in terms of politics and class at the same time as they patronized strong expressions of anti-English resentment in poetry, thus allowing Welsh to maintain its position as the high-status vernacular in that world at least. This one-foot-in-one-foot-out situation – this 'doubling' in post-colonial terms – goes some way to explaining why eulogies referencing bilingualism are always subdued and more focused on the Welsh partner than the English partner.[97]

We have seen that knowing Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and French, alongside Welsh was a praiseworthy trait. There are no such descriptions for Irish and the closest explicit instance for English is in the following portrait of Sir Rhisiart Bwclai Hen, of the originally English 'Buckley' family: 'ni thyfai iaith ddoeth o fin / well garbron Lloegr a'i brenin' (*no better language sprang from any mouth / before the English and their king*).[98] This scarcity is telling because, in general, the English language occupied a negative and noisy place in the Welsh auditory imagination, as we shall soon see.

We have also seen how multilingualism in general was a praiseworthy trait. People are often praised for being a 'ieithydd' (*linguist*), especially poets and clerics. Dafydd ap Gwilym's elegy to his uncle – mentioned in Chapter Two – includes the appeal 'prydydd, ieithydd, na fydd fud' (*poet, linguist, be not mute*).[99] The same term is used to mourn Rhydderch ab Ieuan Llwyd – 'gyweithas ieithydd' (*amiable linguist*) – and to praise Abbot Rhys ap Dafydd of

[97] Helen Fulton, 'The Status of the Welsh Language in Medieval Wales', in *The Land Beneath the Sea: Essays in Honour of Anders Ahlqvist's Contribution to Celtic Studies in Australia*, ed. Pamela O'Neill (Sydney: Celtic Studies Foundation, University of Sydney, 2013), pp. 59–74; Homi Bhabha, *Locations of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 57–93, 121–31.
[98] Lewys Morgannwg, '92. Moliant Syr Rhisiart Bwclai Hen', *GLM* II, ll. 35–36.
[99] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '6. Marwnad Llywelyn ap Gwilym', *DG.net*, l. 12.

Strata Florida: 'eurben ieithydd' (*the golden head linguist*).[100] Furthermore, beyond the poetic record, one remembers the character of Gwrhyr Gwalstawd Ieithoedd in the tale of *Culhwch ac Olwen*: a man who knew all the world's languages including those of animals.[101]

If grouped with other languages in this way, English could be praised indirectly, but it is never mentioned by name in this positive context. A handful of poets who travelled throughout England clearly enjoyed the multilingualism of its towns – including bilingual towns on the Welsh border such as Oswestry – but none mention English in particular. Siôn Ceri marvels in Oswestry's busy streets where three languages are heard, as does Tudur Aled whose eulogy to the town contains a barrage of English consumer items 'barely assimilated into rudimentary Welsh phonetics and orthography', as Helen Fulton puts it: 'siwgr, sarsned, ffelfed a phân' (*sugar, sarsenet, velvet and fur*), 'cwmffets, pomgarents, a gwin' (*comfits, pomegranates and wine*).[102] But none of these signpost the English language.

In terms of English-Welsh bilingualism in particular, while having eloquent Welsh was a virtue that all noblemen and women should aspire towards, it seemed to have been unquestionably inferior to being eloquent in more than one language, even if that language was English. This can be gleaned from Guto'r Glyn's unusual praise of monoglot nobleman Dafydd Llwyd ap Gruffudd. The panegyric is predicated on the fact that it would have been unacceptable for a nobleman to only know Welsh at this time, at least if he wished to have any sort of favourable reputation outside the Welsh-speaking heartland. But Dafydd was indeed respected by Englishmen and Welshmen alike *despite* only knowing the latter's language, thus making him the exception that proved the rule:

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[100] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '10. Marwnad Rhydderch ab Ieuan Llwyd', *DG.net*, l. 39; Guto'r Glyn, '6. Cwyn am absenoldeb yr Abad Rhys ap Dafydd o Ystrad-fflur', *GG.net*, l. 24.
[101] *Culhwch ac Olwen*, pp. 13, 31. MW gwalstawd < OE walhstōd, *interpreter*. See: *GPC*, s.v. *gwalstod*.
[102] Siôn Ceri, '52. Moliant i Groesoswallt', *GSC*, ll. 1–6.; Tudur Aled, '65. Cywydd i Dref Croesoswallt', *GTA* I, ll. 64, 90; Helen Fulton, 'Class and Nation: Defining the English in Late-Medieval Welsh Poetry', in *Authority and Subjugation in Writing of Medieval Wales*, ed. Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 191–212 (p. 208).

Mil a ddywod wamaliaith,
maen' ar ôl, am na ŵyr iaith.
Ni bydd Dafydd heb dyfiad,
ni ŵyr iaith ond iaith ei dad.
Er eu sôn mwy yw'r synnwyr
no dau o'r gorau a'i gŵyr.
[…]
Arglwyddi Lloegr ogleddiaith
a'i peirch er na wypo'u iaith.[103]

(*A thousand spoke a mocking speech / because he doesn't know language, they're behind. / Dafydd won't be without progress, / he knows no language except the language of his father. / In spite of their talk the wisdom's greater / than two of the best men who can speak it. /* […] / *England's northern-speaking lords / respect him even though he doesn't speak their language*.)

Seeing it necessary to negate this standard of bi- or multilingualism seems to suggest that this was the default for a nobleman at this time. Nonetheless, there is still a sense of admiration in the fact that Dafydd only spoke Welsh, especially in the context of everyone else's 'sôn' (*talk, noise*), suggesting that it is better to speak one language purely and elegantly than to speak several languages poorly.

Indeed, it seems that this sort of hybrid language – this 'Wenglish' – was considered a problem. This is how the speech of Elen, wife of Robert le Northern, an Aberystwyth burgess, sounded to Dafydd ap Gwilym: a 'lediaith lud' (*halting patois*).[104] If this is the case, Guto'r Glyn and Dafydd would be predicting Gruffydd Robert's complaints regarding the mongrelisation of both Welsh and English in the mouths of unintelligent Welshmen: 'i cymraeg a fydd saesnigaidd, ai saesneg (duw a wyr) yn rhy gymreigaidd'.[105] This, then, contradicts the attitudes of many modern-day minority language activists – in Wales and elsewhere – who stress that using what little grasp one has on the language in question is better than not using it at all: 'gwell Cymraeg slac na Saesneg slic' (*loose Welsh is better than slick English*) is the catchphrase, modelled on Irish 'is fearr Gaeilge bhriste ná Béarla cliste' (*broken Irish is better than clever English*).[106] Thinking back to Barbara who opened the previous chapter, it should

[103] Guto'r Glyn, '86. Moliant i Ddafydd Llwyd ap Gruffudd o Abertanad', *GG.net*, ll. 21–26, 31–32.
[104] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '120. Dewis Un o Bedair', *DG.net*, l. 18. See also: Robert Lewis, *Wenglish: the dialect of the South Wales Valleys*, revised edn (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2016), esp. pp. 9–24.
[105] Robert, *Dosparth byrr*; Robert, '*Dosbarth Byrr*', p. 47.
[106] Dylan Foster Evans, 'Dala'r slac yn dynn', *O'r Pedwar Gwynt* (Gwanwyn 2020), p. 38. A possible exception to this meaning of *llediaith* is in the name of the legendary leader Llŷr Llediaith. See: *A Welsh Classical*

be reiterated that she was an Englishwoman from Somerset, and so it may be with a sense of surprise that Lewys Morgannwg remarked 'Dilediaith di-ŵyl ydyw, / Ym mrig iaith Gymräeg yw'.[107]

*

In examples that praise English-Welsh bilingualism explicitly, very little attention is paid to the English side. These examples primarily concern marcher families such as the Herberts of Raglan and the Vaughans of Abergavenny.[108] Dwelling in the Welsh March in the fifteenth century, both were heavily involved in English matters, both were certainly bilingual, but, somewhat unusually, both were praised for their bilingualism. The bilingualism at Hergest – the home of Thomas ap Roger Vaughan and of the famed Red Book, which was in his possession a short while after it was completed – was a cause for praise in the eyes and ears of Bedo Brwynllys: 'dinas yw dy dŷ annedd, / dwy iaith dan ei do a wedd' (*the house in which you dwell is a refuge, / it is fitting that two languages are under its roof*).[109] The house had recently undergone renovations and so Bedo dwells mostly on architectural features, but the fact that he also praises the presence of both English and Welsh is unusual. Nonetheless, we note that English is not actually named.

After Thomas was killed in the Battle of Banbury in 1469, his son Watcyn ap Tomas (Watkin Vaughan) took over his post as the constable of Huntington (modern-day Shropshire). According to Lewys Glyn Cothi, Watcyn also took over the praiseworthy ability to maintain

Dictionary: People in History and Legend up to about A. D. 1000, ed. P. C. Bartrum (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1993), s.v. *Llŷr Lediaith*. The word could refer to Llŷr: having several cultural allegiances; being bilingual; having a strange way with words; speaking 'broken Welsh'; or suffering from a stammer or muteness. Without a fuller narrative, such as the story of 'Móen Ollam / Labraid Loingsech' in the Irish tale *Organ Denna Ríg*, so little is known about Llŷr that it is difficult to state anything about his history let alone his speech.

[107] Lewys Morgannwg, '5. Moliant Siors Mathau, Radur, a Barbra ei wraig', *GLM* I, ll. 39–40.

[108] These were, in fact, branches of the same family.

[109] Quoted in Francis Payne, *Crwydro Sir Faesyfed*, 2 vols (Llandybïe: Llyfrau'r Dryw, 1966–68), I (1966), p. 33.

two languages: 'ystad yw costio dwy iaith, / a rheoli rhai eilwaith' (*it is of great dignity to maintain two languages, / and to manage more again*).[110] Again, English goes unnamed.

Around the same time as Watcyn's ascendancy, the otherwise Anglophobe poet Hywel Swrdwal wrote a moving elegy to another relative of the Vaughan family, and a cousin of William Herbert, Siôn ap Rhosier. Wishing that Siôn finds peace in heaven, he remarks: 'Gobaith y ddwyiaith ddiell / Fod i Siôn fyd y sy well' (*the hope of the excellent two languages/nations / that a better world comes to Siôn*).[111] Again, the two languages go unspecified.[112]

In all the above instance of praising bilingualism, no mention is made of English itself. In some, the focus is not on a polyglot genius but on an individual who has managed to keep Welsh alive despite living in area that had a distinctly English auditory environment. In others, bilingual fluency is praised, but with a heavy emphasis on the Welsh side of things.

This subdued praise of English suggests the poets' uneasiness with the realpolitik of Wales's diglossia wherein English was a necessity. After all, in the absence of statehood, what defined the Welsh nation as distinct from the English was the Welsh language: MW iaith could mean both *language* and *nation*. So, for it to have to share the stage with English was an uncomfortable reality. These poems seem to contain the now familiar sense of dread bubbling away under the surface; a sense that the Welsh language was less and less the language of the noble court, especially of Welsh homes close to or in England.

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[110] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '127. Moliant Watcyn ap Tomas', *GLGC*, ll. 7–8. An alternative reading would give 'maintain two peoples' referring to Thomas's cross-border lordship over Welsh and English tenants.
[111] Hywel Swrdwal, '9. Marwnad Siôn ap Rhosier o'r Fenni', *GHS*, ll. 59–60.
[112] This praise of the two languages, peoples, and cultures of the March is highly unusual for Hywel Swrdwal, suggesting personal relations between himself and Siôn, who was – and this is surely no irrelevant detail – English on his mother's side, as she was a daughter of Sir Walter Devereux. To complicate matters further, as can be judged from his surname, Hywel was of Anglo-Norman stock only a few generations prior. See: Dylan Foster Evans, *GHS*, pp. 1–5.

As an aside, one exceptional poem suggests that it did not matter which language was seen to be challenging Welsh; it was not just English that could be seen as a threat. Siôn Phylip of Ardudwy (*c.* 1543–1620) expresses an anxiety regarding the exodus of Welsh talent in the sixteenth century by berating Classical languages, not the English language. Here, Siôn praises Rhisiart Fychan (Richard Vaughan, *c.* 1550–1607) for the fact that although he is greatly knowledgeable in the humanist languages, he has not forgotten their shared mother tongue.

> Er gwybod, mwy yw'r gobaith,
> Ebryw a Groeg, bur groyw iaith,
> cadw'r wyd, lle caid rhediad,
> ddoeth huawdl wedd, iaith dy wlad.
> Gwŷr dy wlad, gŵr dilediaith,
> a geri i gyd, gorau gwaith.
> Gwarant gywirdant gwrda,
> gwarant wyd i'th geraint da.[113]
>
> (*Despite knowing, greater is the hope, / Hebrew and Greek, a pure, clear language, / you are keeping, where a stream is to be had, / a wise eloquent manner, your country's language. / Your countrymen, oh pure-speaking man, / you love them all, best work. / The guarantee of a proper-string, good man, / you are a guarantee to your good companions.*)

This, then, is a poem tinged with encouragement if not warning, for this is a highly intelligent Welshman form the heartland of Welsh-speaking Wales who has left his homeland to be educated in Cambridge and to seek a career within the Church in England.[114] This becomes particularly apparent when we place this praise in the context of later lines in which Siôn expresses his sadness that Rhisiart has left his native Ardudwy for England, a sadness expressed through sound:

> A'th dafod perffaith, dwyfawl,
> arwydd pur fel yr oedd Pawl,
> troi a wnaethost, ran ieithydd,
> o lygrau ffeils Loegr i'r ffydd.
> Lle y'th anwyd, pell y'th enwais,
> och wlad Lŷn na chlyw dy lais![115]
>
> (*And your perfect, pious, tongue, / a pure sign as it was Paul's, / you turned England, partial linguist, / from false corruptions to the faith. / Where you were born, from afar have I called you, / woe is the land of Llŷn, for it does not hear your voice!*)

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[113] Siôn Phylip, '26. I ofyn Risiart Fychan, Archddiacon Middlesex, am lyfrau gwasanaeth i eglwys Llandudwen ar ran Robert Madryn, Maredudd ap Tomas a Gruffudd ap Rhisiart', *Detholiad o Gywyddau Gofyn a Diolch*, ll. 63–70.
[114] Rhisiart was Archdeacon of Middlesex at the time of writing (1580s–90s).
[115] Siôn Phylip, '26. I ofyn Risiart Fychan, Archddiacon Middlesex, am lyfrau gwasanaeth i eglwys Llandudwen', *Detholiad o Gywyddau Gofyn a Diolch*, ll. 63–70.

In this context, then, 'dilediaith' in Rhisiart's epithet 'gŵr dilediaith', is certain to contain the meaning *pure language*, in the sense of Welsh with no trace of English: 'Welsh not of a foreign accent'.

Portrayal of English

The above analysis demonstrates how, in poems that gesture toward English-Welsh bilingualism, English is the elephant in the room. Even so, these are much more tolerant of the English language and of Anglo-Welsh relations than most poems from late medieval Wales, particularly from the fifteenth century. References to English as a standalone language, rather than in a bi- or multilingual context are consistently unflattering if not hostile. English is regularly portrayed as a nonhuman, barbarous noise. (Again, as Hotspur's description of Welsh poetry makes clear, we remind ourselves that such perceptions are entirely dependent on listener subjectivities and speaker-listener relations.)

*

Indirect references to English speech feature in much the same way as Irish speech with a strong suggestion of noise. The most famous example in the earlier medieval corpus might be the Deiran enemy of the Brythonic tribe led by Urien Rheged in Taliesin's 'Gweith Argoet Llwyfein': Urien speaks in a calm and collected manner while the words of his English opponent, nicknamed 'Fflamddwyn', are spat out in uncontrolled rage: 'atorelwis flamdwyn vawr trebystawt' (*Fflamddwyn cried, great his uproar*).[116] The best known example from this thesis's period of study is likely to be the description of the three Englishmen – 'Hicin a Siencin a Siac' (*Hickin and Jenkin and Jack*) – whom Dafydd ap Gwilym disturbs during his fabliau-like misadventures in 'Trafferth Mewn Tafarn' ('Trouble at an Inn').[117] The 'drisais mewn

[116] Taliesin, '6. Gweith Argoet Llwyfein', *Canu Taliesin*, ed. Ifor Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), l. 7.
[117] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '73. Trafferth Mewn Tafarn', *DG.net*, l. 52.

gwely drewsawr' (*three Englishmen in one stinking bed*) are presented in animalistic, auditory terms as they are awoken in a fright: 'Syganai'r delff soeg enau, / Aruthr o ddig, wrth y ddau' (*The churlish slobber-chops* / *(cruel hate) hissed to the [other] two*).[118]

Similarly, a poet known only as 'Griffri' is mocked by Y Mab Cryg for his 'false' words:

> Can oedd celwyddawg, rochgawg rechgawr,
> a ffalst ac anghlaer, murdaer mawrdwyll,
> a ffugiol trethol, truthain amhrydferth,
> a serth ac anferth, swrth ac ynfyd.[119]
>
> (*Because he was lying, farting giant, snoring by his bowl* / *and false and unclear, great deceiving murderer,* / *and faking taxing, ugly sycophant,* / *and steep and enormous, lazy and idiotic.*)

We are now familiar with such accusations and scatological imagery in poetic debates, which is the likely context for this poem; networks of 'bad poetry', lies, and flatulence are a staple of satire. However, Y Mab Cryg may be attacking more than simply low-grade poetry, he might be attacking the very language of his opponent, since the opening diatribe reveals that 'Griffri' was either an Englishman, or – more likely due to his Welsh name and presumably Welsh-language poetic attack on Y Mab Cryg – a Welshman who preferred to speak English:

> Crist Crair, un Mab Mair, mawr ryfeddod
> am gri bileinsais, trais wtreswr,
> nad â hëyrn chwyrn, chwyrndwrch gwaddodblas,
> y doeth ei leas cyn glas gloeslif![120]
>
> (*Dear Christ, Mary's only son, it is a great wonder,* / for a churlish Englishman's cry, crime lover, / *that it was not with coarse iron weapons, that scum-filled rugged boar,* / *did his death come before the streaming death of his pain.*)

Griffri may not have had any relationship with the English language; 'Y Mab Cryg' may simply be using English speech as a metaphor, predicated on the fact that English had a grating reputation in the Welsh auditory imagination. This would be similar, then, to Iolo Goch's use of the character of 'the Irishman' to insult his (Welsh) poetic opponent.[121]

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[118] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '73. Trafferth Mewn Tafarn', *DG.net*, ll. 55–56.
[119] Y Mab Cryg, '16. Dychan i Riffri', *GDC*, ll. 5–8.
[120] Y Mab Cryg, '16. Dychan i Riffri', *GDC*, ll. 1–4.
[121] Frustratingly little else is known about Y Mab Cryg and the significance of his name: *The Croaking Lad*.

Direct and specific descriptions of the sound of English clarify this grating reputation. See, for example, the animalistic imagery in Guto'r Glyn's praise of Wales's most powerful nobleman at the time, William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke: 'gwell arglwydd Cymro i'm bro o'm bryd / no Sais yn cyfarth Saesneg hefyd' (*better a Welsh lord to my land, in my opinion, / than an Englishman barking in English*).[122] It can also sound harsh, like in Lewys Glyn Cothi's prophetic poem to Jasper Tudor, in which he foresees Jasper routing the English and among the many 'English' things that will be banished is the English language itself: 'a'r Saesneg wangreg i wâl – yr eigion' (*and the weak, harsh language, driven to the hidden depths*).[123] 'Garw' is another word used to describe this perceived harsh quality. Dafydd Llwyd o Fathafarn again imagines Englishmen being routed, men who are once again described in auditory terms: 'dilyn y Saeson dilwydd, / garw eu sain, a gyr o'u swydd' (*follow the failing Englishmen, / harsh their sound, [and] drive [them] from their office[s]*).[124]

The socio-historic reasons for why the English language and English-Welsh bilingualism were often frowned upon have been outlined in the Introduction and elsewhere in this Chapter. These reasons are voiced in an early poem by Iorwerth Beli, 'Complaint Against the Bishop of Bangor', composed only a few years after the collapse of native royal rule in the 1280s.[125] It describes the sounds of the incoming English language in a particularly striking manner.

The early stages of post-Conquest Wales were a precarious time for Welsh poets who had, overnight, lost their traditional patrons and, with that, their traditional social status. In Iorwerth's poem, his only surviving work, the poet laments the passing of the great age of bardic patronage following the demise of the Welsh princes and the arrival of English

[122] Hywel Swrdwal, '4. Awdl Foliant Wiliam Herbert', *GHS*, ll. 49–50. For a particularly Anglophobic poem, see: Hywel Swrdwal, '7. Marwnad Wiliam Herbert', *GHS*.
[123] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '12. Awdl Frud i Siasbar Tudur', *GLGC*, l. 71.
[124] Dafydd Llwyd o Fathafarn, '8. Cywydd Proffwydoliaeth', *GDLlF*, ll. 79–80.
[125] Iorwerth Beli, '15. Cwyn yn erbyn Esgob Bangor', *GGDT*.

Edwardian rule. This awdl addresses the bishop of Bangor, probably Bishop Anian Sais (bishop of Bangor 1309–1327), and in it Iorwerth declares how poets were anxiously looking towards the Bishop in the hope that he would undertake the obligations of bardic patronage that had formerly been discharged by the independent Welsh prince.[126] However, the bishop of Bangor does not respond to Iorwerth's request and goes on to neglect the Welsh poets. Worst of all, the bishop instead gives his patronage to the usurping English musicians whom Iorwerth contemptuously describes as the 'gwehilion cerddau tabyrddau' (*dregs of drum music*).[127] Most significantly, Iorwerth's contempt towards these foreign entertainers is almost entirely directed at and expressed through the means of sound:

> Tra fu'r prifeirdd heirdd, hardd weision – cerddiawn,
> cyflawn o dryddawn ymadroddion,
> nid ef a berchid berchyllson – debig
> grwth helig terrig, tor goluddion.
> Wrth glywed teced tôn englynion – maith
> o waith prif deddfiaith y prydyddion,
> agarw oedd glybod eigion – telynau
> o gau wisg fleiddiau, tannau tynion.[128]
>
> (*While the beautiful chief poets, fair servants of correct music, / full of greatly gifted phrases, / the harsh willow crwth, with broken guts, / was not respected – noise like squealing piglets. / By hearing the fairness of englynion's great tones / from the works of chief rules of the bards, / very harsh was it to hear the hiccupping of harps / From lying wolf-wearing men, tight harp-strings.*)

What is striking about this poem in terms of language – what it reveals about the perceptions of music shall be discussed in the next chapter – is that the ear-splitting cacophony is directly linked to English as Iorwerth goes on to express his derision towards one 'Tudur Wion'; a man who was rewarded with a long green gown for his excellent command of the English language and perhaps, by implication, of English verse:

[126] Ceri W. Lewis, 'The Content of Poetry', p. 82.
[127] Iorwerth Beli, '15. Cwyn yn erbyn Esgob Bangor', *GGDT*, l. 53.
[128] Iorwerth Beli, '15. Cwyn yn erbyn Esgob Bangor', *GGDT*, ll. 21–28.

Tudur Wion lon, lun eidion – myngus,
rheidus, ys digus ei ostegion:
am wybod Saesneg Seisnig dôn – drygwas,
gwisg a gafas las laes odreon;
cafas, costog cas (nid cyson – damwain),
ysgymun filain gog brai breision,
yn dwyllor, cornor ceirnion – drwg araith
yn dullio breithiaith, dillad brithion.
Gwehelyth nis câr gwehilion – cerddau
tabyrddau, swysau iangwyr Saeson:
truan oedd gweled, gwaelddynion – gwrthfun,
rhoi dillad uddun ni bai'n dyllion![129]

(*Joyful Tudur Wion, mumbling like an ox, / [that] beggar, his poems are an abomination: / for knowing English-sounding English that scoundrel / received a long, trimmed green gown, / the wicked churl (not harmonious – a mistake), / detestable (excommunicated) churl, rotten fat cuckoo, / a cheater, big lump of a bugler – evil utterance, / fashioning a motley language, ragged clothes. / A noble stock does not want the dregs of drum / music, the experience of English youths: / it was sad to see, evil, repugnant men / giving clothes to them that weren't full of holes!*)

The English here is the polar opposite of the high standards of controlled Welsh poetry declaimed in a pure, clear voice: it is mumbled ('myngus'), impure ('breithiaith'), and neither harmonious nor regular ('nid cyson').

Much as in the Irish examples, the English language and its associated music is also linked to animalistic noises. These harsh sounds can be heard all over England too, according to Tudur Aled. It is typical of the flexible identities of Welsh poets at the time that the same poet who praised Oswestry in such detail could also despise London so much. In pleading an unnamed woman not to abandon him to go and live with some Englishman in London, Tudur warns her of the dangers of that city, doing so by evoking its jarring auditory landscape:

Od ei i Lundain, ddyn deg – i drigo
at dragwn pen galed,
cei eiriau twn, cei ŵr teg,
a'r gair a dorro'r garreg.[130]

(*If you go to London, fine woman – to live / with some hard-headed chieftain, / you will get splintered words and a fine man / and the word that may break a stone.*)

[129] Iorwerth Beli, '15. Cwyn yn erbyn Esgob Bangor', *GGDT*, ll. 45–56.
[130] Tudur Aled, '161. Rhybudd', *GTA* II, ll. 1–4.

There is no sweet-sounding Welsh in London, says Tudur, and certainly no pleasant words from poets like himself; only the harsh words of the English language and its unkind speakers, including her English suitor.[131]

Bilingual poetry

This negative auditory perception of English goes some way to explain a peculiar feature of bilingual poetry from medieval Wales which is the fact that the handful of poems that blend English and Welsh are all comedy poems.[132] Macaronic poetry has been associated with comedy since at least the sixteenth century, when Italian poet, Teofilo Folengo, outlined its features as being farcical, burlesque and light-hearted subject matter.[133] However, as we have seen, macaronic Welsh-Latin examples are anything but. They are instead products of piety, of a concern for literary craft, and of a desire to infuse Welsh with the prestige of Latin. This section seeks to address why English-Welsh poems are different.

As with the Welsh-Latin poems, concerns of prestige are at the heart of why Welsh-English poems are almost exclusively comedy poems. As mentioned, Welsh maintained a monopoly on the language of poetry in Wales; English was steadily becoming the language of

[131] A similar sentiment is in a poem by Dafydd ab Edmwnd (*fl.* 1450–90) to Rhys Wyn ap Llywelyn ap Tudur of Môn lest he marry an Englishwoman, though it does not mention language or sound. Dafydd ab Edmwnd, '47. Cywydd i Rys Wyn ap Llywelyn ap Tudur o Fon rhag priodi Saesnes', *Gwaith Dafydd ab Edmwnd*, ed. Thomas Roberts (Bangor: Bangor Welsh Manuscripts Society, 1909).

[132] Two possible exceptions are: Dafydd Llwyd o Fathafarn, '50. Cywydd Moliant i Syr Rhys ap Thomas', *GDLlF*; and two lyric verses in the sixteenth-century Glamorgan manuscript Llanover MS B.5 (now NLW MS 16031), although the latter is not in strict-metre. The Llanover verses are briefly discussed in: Simon Meecham-Jones, 'Code-switching and contact influence in Middle English manuscripts from the Welsh Penumbra – Should we re-interpret the evidence from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*?', in *Multilingual Practices in Language History: New Perspectives*, ed. Päivi Pahta, Janne Skaffari, and Laura Wright (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 97–119 (pp. 109–110). It should be noted that if Meecham-Jones is not including the fifteenth century in his statement that this is the 'earliest well-attested example of a writer experimenting with an integrated model of code-switching', then this thesis's discussion of bilingual poetry may prove that to be incorrect. Meecham-Jones's claims that 'evidence [for code-switching] earlier than the early modern period remains elusive' is also proved to be debatable. A third poem that should be mentioned is Ieuan ap Hywel Swrdwal's 'Hymn to the Virgin': an earnest Marian lyric written in English though entirely in strict-metre. However, given that it is exclusively English, it is not discussed in this chapter. For a full discussion of the poem see: Hopwood, 'Creative Bilingualism', esp. pp. 110–13; and Manon Thuillier, 'The Welsh Hymn to the Virgin: Transmission and Cultural Identity from the Late Middle Ages to the Present Day', *eSharp* 26 (2018), 29–42.

[133] Teofilo Folengo, *Baldo*, ed. and trans. Ann E. Mullaney, 2 vols (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007–08).

social authority, but it was still inferior within the poetic realm. Therefore, the moment it trespasses into this poetic territory in which it is a second-grade language, it loses its authority, and the rug can be pulled from beneath its feet. Here, as in other poems, English is heard as irregular, uncontrolled and so, nonsensical. The humorously imbalanced situation benefits the Welsh-speaking audience and their inflated sense of linguistic pride, especially the bilingual members. Therefore, quite simply, English sounds out of place in a Welsh poem. Even if that poem is entirely in English but in a Welsh metrical form, it is likely to be humorous, as in a triad of whimsical englynion recently established as the work of Tudur Aled. It begins:

> Is tell yw my mynd anes tayliur dame
> I deme we lak plesur
> loke here dame vn loke yor dur
> a lacke we haue no lykur.[134]
>
> (I tell you my mind, Annes, tell your dame: / 'I deem we lack pleasure. / Look here, dame, unlock your door, / alack! We have no liquor.)

*

Our first example of English's comic appearance is an early-sixteenth-century poem by Tomas ab Ieuan ap Rhys of the Tir Iarll bardic family (Upper Vale of Glamorgan): 'Cân Cymhorthfa' (*A Song for Succour*). Despite the resurgence of Welsh-language culture in this former Anglo-Norman lordship, it maintained a distinctly English ambience.[135] The poem is a self-deprecating, humorous account of an old man who regrets marrying his spirited, emasculating young wife.[136] He presents several reasons as to why he cannot fulfil his wife's wishes for him to fetch corn from nearby wealthy neighbours. These neighbours were English-speaking, and so his final excuse is that they would not understand his monoglot Welsh speech: 'maen hwy'n Saesnig ynghylch y Wig: / ny wis beth vo j'n y gaiso' (*they are English around*

[134] Hopwood, 'Creative Bilingualism', p. 104.
[135] Brian Ll. James, 'The Welsh Language in the Vale of Glamorgan', *Morgannwg: Transactions of the Glamorgan Local History Society* 16 (1972), 16–36.
[136] 'J445.2: Foolish marriage of old man and young girl', in Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, 6 vols (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1955–58), IV (1955), p. 39.

Wick: / it is not known what it is that I seek).[137] This is quickly dismissed by Tomas's wife who provides a crash-course in English that contains a formulaic script for Tomas to parrot back to the potential donors:

> 'Mi'th ddysga di, ffol, i erchi,
> ond kadw y'th go, vel y'th ddysgo:
> "j prav jow, syr, ffor lov, maestyr,
> God wil giv mi, and Owr Ladi"
> pan ddweto e, "kom hom, syre":
> "j'l kwm to yow, God redward yow".'[138]
>
> (*'I'll teach you, fool, how to beg, / But remember this, so that it teaches you: / "I pray you, sir, for love, master, / God's will, give me, and Our Lady"; / When he says, "Come home, sirrah": / "I'll come to you, God reward you".'*)

Tomas becomes self-conscious and immediately abandons his lesson, claiming that his tongue cannot manage the foreign sounds of this foreign language: 'er peck o od ny ddaw'r tavod / 'n y modd i bü'r wraig y'm dysgi' (*for the sake of a peck of pride, my tongue will not work / in the way the wife had taught me*).[139] Ironically, in seeking to avoid the humiliation of mispronouncing English by not saying anything at all, Tomas only invites further humiliation as his exasperated wife sends him packing in a state of undress.

These four lines of intersentential bilingualism are in dialogue and in a female voice. Thus, a primary aspect of the humour involves the medieval comedic trope of imbalanced gender roles; *she*, a dictatorial, young woman, is the one teaching *him*. However, more importantly, the comedy plays on the struggle between English and Welsh as prestigious vernaculars in separate social and literary hierarchies. It demonstrates the need to acquire English in economic life, while displaying the breakdown of that language once it trespasses the poetic territory in which it is a second-grade language. Here, it becomes nonsensical and part of the humorously imbalanced situation that inflates the Welsh-speaking audience's sense of linguistic pride, especially its bilingual members.

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[137] Evans, 'Tomas ab Ieuan a'i "Ysgowld o Wraig"', ll. 47–48.
[138] Evans, 'Tomas ab Ieuan a'i "Ysgowld o Wraig"', ll. 49–54.
[139] Evans, 'Tomas ab Ieuan a'i "Ysgowld o Wraig"', ll. 55–56. For notes on translation see Hopwood, 'Creative Bilingualism', p. 102.

This would have been the exact same sentiment among the bilingual listeners of 'Ymddiddan Rhwng Cymro a Saesnes' (*A Dialogue Between a Welshman and an Englishwoman*), one of the most well-known Welsh-English macaronic poems, and one of two composed by Tudur Penllyn.[140] This cywydd consists entirely of intersentential bilingualism as the poet's persona, who speaks exclusively in Welsh, and an Englishwoman, who speaks exclusively in English, each take it in turn to speak in their own language:

> 'Dydd daed, Saesnes gyffes, gain.
> yr wyf i'th garu, riain.'
> 'What saist, mon?' ebe honno,
> 'for truthe, harde Welsman I tro.'[141]
>
> (*'Good day, fine, skilful, Englishwoman. / I am in love with you, maiden.' / 'What are you saying, man?' said she, / 'for truth, I believe you are a Welshman.'*)

The poet capitalizes on the full farcical potential of the macaronic style and on the richly humorous possibilities of a generally but not universally bilingual society. Bilingual audience members would notice, for example, the bawdy wordplay between the Englishwoman swearing 'by the rwde' and the Welshman's response, 'hyd y groes onid oes dôr?' (*is there no opening to the cross?*), or the unwittingly sexual imagery in the Englishwoman's threat to 'make the blodei', implying the various medieval connections between blood and sexual intercourse.[142] Indeed, much of the poem's humour lies in how any social distinction that was initially signposted by the woman's English speech disintegrates as that language is comically misused. These double-entendres cause the Englishwoman's high-status vernacular to spiral out of control into vulgar burlesque.

The 'Ymddiddan' subverts the real relationship between English and Welsh outside the world of poetry. Here, Welsh has the upper hand in that the omniscient bilingual Welsh

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[140] Tudur Penllyn, '31. Cywydd o Hawl ac Ateb Rhwng Cymro a Saesnes', *GTP*. See also: Tudur Penllyn, 'Ymddiddan Rhwng Cymro a Saesnes', *Canu Maswedd yr Oesoedd Canol*, pp. 70–73; and Hopwood, 'Creative Bilingualism', pp. 100–01.
[141] Evans, 'Tomas ab Ieuan a'i "Ysgowld o Wraig"', ll. 1–4.
[142] Evans, 'Tomas ab Ieuan a'i "Ysgowld o Wraig"', ll. 27–30; Bettina Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), pp. 22–28, 119–25.

eavesdroppers are fully aware of the Welshman's intentions and the obscenities he expresses, as they share a secret language at the Englishwoman's expense, giving them a great deal of satisfaction.[143]

A depiction of the more standard relationship between English and Welsh features in Tudur Penllyn's satire of Flint, a town close to the modern-day border with England, and indeed under the Earldom of Chester at the time of composition.[144] Like all burgess towns in late medieval Wales, which were either planted by the English Crown or had attracted a great deal of English speakers, its auditory environment had a distinctly English flavour.[145] This is what Tudur plays with in his satire, which sees him visiting a wedding feast, hoping to entertain the crowd with a beautiful strict-metre poem of his own making. His proposals, however, are scornfully and dynamically rejected in favour of an English musician playing the bagpipes: '"ywt," ebr Sais, drais drysor, / "y nelo mynsdrel na mor"' (*'out', said the violent, English doorman,* / *'I want no more of a minstrel'*).[146]

In response, Tudur lashes out breathlessly at everyone present and focuses in particular on their English language. Not only does he describe the sound of the English bouncer who kicks him out as *unclear* ('Sais aneglur'), but he also goes to great lengths to deride the excruciating racket of the piper who upstaged him, 'rhygnu, syndremu, sŵn drwg, / rhwth gaul, a rhythu golwg' (*a grating sound, an aghast stare, an awful noise,* / *a big, slack belly, and a swelling sight*).[147] The swelling belly refers both to the piper and the pipe, since 'pib' usually

[143] This can be added to Patricia Malone's reading of the poem as pertaining to the subversive genres of *fabliau* and *pastourelle*: Patricia A. Malone, '"What saist mon?" Dialogism and Disdain in Tudur Penllyn's "Conversation between a Welshman and an Englishwoman"', *Studia Celtica* 46 (2012), 123–36.
[144] Tudur Penllyn, '30. Dychan i Dre'r Fflint ac i'r Pibydd', *GTP*.
[145] For the earlier period, see: Matthew Frank Stevens, *Urban Assimilation in Post-Conquest Wales: Ethnicity, Gender and Economy in Ruthin, 1282–1348* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010). For the later period, see: Harper, *MWC*, esp. 'Part III: Welsh Music in an English Milieu *c*. 1550–1650', pp. 297–370.
[146] Tudur Penllyn, '30. Dychan i Dre'r Fflint ac i'r Pibydd', *GTP*, ll. 15–16.
[147] Tudur Penllyn, '30. Dychan i Dre'r Fflint ac i'r Pibydd', *GTP*, ll. 26–26.

refers to an instrument closer to a bagpipe than a tin or penny whistle, for which the term 'chwibanogl' was used.[148]

Elsewhere, poets had no problem with the pipe itself as a musical instrument. Quite the opposite, since it often accompanied scenes of great celebration and praise, as in Lewys Glyn Cothi's call for music to sing the praises of Siôn Hafart: 'pibydd ac organ, sinffan i Siôn' (*a piper and an organ, a symphan for Siôn*).[149] Tudur Aled also singles out the pipe as an instrument capable of praising Dafydd ab Owain, Bishop of St Asaph: 'dy glod, rhoed gwladwyr i'w hau, / a phobl ar gyrn a phibau' (*your praise, may it be given to countrymen to sow, / and people on horns and pipes*).[150] Even beyond scenes of triumphant heralding, in scenes of joyful entertainment and dancing, the pipe is front and centre: 'cytgerdd ddiddan lân lonydd, / pibau, dawns, a gawn bob dydd' (*pleasant clear sweet harmony / I would have pipes and dance every day*).[151]

The difference with Tudur Penllyn's pipe is, of course, its player: the piper is English and that seems to make all the difference. That this piper spoke English suddenly allows the pipe to be heard as producing a harsh rather than tuneful or triumphant sound; a grating, huffing sound that is affected by its piper's grating, huffing language, and vice versa.

The sound of English affects Tudur's perception of the entire situation. Because of Flint's bilingualism, Tudur sees it as a captive town, perceiving its hybrid Anglo-Welsh identity and language as a mongrel vice. The town itself is a hellish furnace and a '[t]ref ddwbl, gaergwbl, gyrgam' (*a fully-fortified, crooked, double town*), and its inhabitants are diabolic: 'a'i ffwrn faith fal uffern fydd' (*and its great furnace will be hell*).[152] This reminds us, then,

[148] The high-pitched whistling of a 'chwibanogl' can be heard, for example, in Llawdden's description of a bull's bray: 'Chwibanogl yw uwchben glan / a'r chweubuw yn rhoi chwiban, / ac ar wich egori iad, / ac â'i enau bugunad.' (*It is a whistle upon a glen, / and the six bulls whistling, / and with a screech it opens its head, / and a roar [is given] with its mouth*). Llawdden, '28. I ofyn tarw coch gan Risiart ap Siancyn Twrbefil o Landudwg', *GLlaw*, ll. 51–60.
[149] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '138. Moliant Siôn Hafart', *GLGC*, l. 24.
[150] Tudur Aled, '17. Cywydd Mawl i Ddafydd ab Owain Esgob Llanelwy', *GTA* I, ll. 35–36.
[151] Iolo Goch, '16. Llys Ieuan, Esgob Llanelwy', *IGP*, ll. 55–56
[152] Tudur Penllyn, '30. Dychan i Dre'r Fflint ac i'r Pibydd', *GTP*, ll. 3, 51.

both of the raucous sounds of Hell in the medieval auditory imagination and of the cautious attitudes Welsh poets took towards bilingualism, including the use of 'llediaith' and 'breithiaith'.

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The key to all these Welsh poems that employ English to various degrees seems to be that English sounded out of place in a Welsh poem; the unexpected being a crucial element of comedy.[153] In Thomas ab Ieuan's poem, it coincides with the carnivalesque situation. Indeed, the poem's editor, Dafydd Evans, notes plainly that '[g]wyddai awduron y cyfnod, wrth gwrs, (megis heddiw) fod cynnwys Saesneg mewn cerdd yn fodd effeithiol o greu doniolwch' (*poets of the period knew full well (as is the case today) that including English in a poem was an effective way of creating humour*).[154]

This is certainly the case when we realise that the story and comedy of each poem – save, perhaps, for Tudur Penllyn's 'Ymddiddan' – could be understood without understanding the English; understanding both languages simply unlocked a secondary meaning. Indeed, as with Welsh-Latin poems, the second language, English, is often lacking in grammatical correctness. In 'Cân Cymhorthfa', an expertly bilingual audience member might notice that Tomas's wife may not be totally proficient in English: though it could be a scribal error, 'redward' is unattested and erroneous, and even with provisions for hyperbaton, the English syntax is somewhat disrupted, e.g., 'giv mi' lacks any sort of object.[155] Of course, this heightens the comedy, as it might suggest a misremembered petitioning phrase in clumsy and broken English, perpetuating the wife's portrayal as more self-assured, though not necessarily more learned, than her cowardly, subservient husband. Likewise, Tudur Penllyn's Englishwoman seems to be failing to speak in correct (English) cynghanedd at times. The cynghanedd draws

[153] Matthew Bevis, *Comedy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 49–51.
[154] Evans, 'Tomas ab Ieuan a'i "Ysgowld o Wraig"', p. 105.
[155] No results in: *OED*; *MED*; *LEME*.

in ‘kyste dyfyl, what kansto doe’ (*kiss the devil, what are you doing*), for example, is frustrated by the presence of the /n/ and by the fact that the first half of the line is unstressed and the second stressed, which are patterns prohibited by the metre’s rules.[156] Again, those listening closely may notice this fault and find it amusing, falling in line with the humorously distorted outcome for English employed on Welsh terms.

However, more broadly, these examples show that even if the second language was not correct, it could still have the desired effect: the inclusion of Latin (the language of control) could still create a pious auditory environment, and the inclusion of English (an uncontrolled language) could still be heard as ridiculous.

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Despite the humour in these bilingual poems, each in turn betrays the same old fear of what will become of the bardic profession. Tudur Penllyn’s satire to Flint is a particularly expressive example. Overall, Welsh comes out on top: the narrative of a Welsh poet scoffing at English-speaking drinkers who fail to recognise good poetry clearly demonstrates the notion that English was the prestigious vernacular of all social spheres bar the literary. This is shown even in minor details, such as comparing the Welsh poet’s high-brow verse with the English language’s association with low-brow topics, such as peas and dung: ‘sôn am bys, Wiliam Beisir, / sôn o’r ail am dail i’w dir’ (*William Beiser speaks of peas, / the other speaks of dung for his land*).[157] Within the poem, there is no doubt that the high literary status of Welsh is maintained whereas the socio-economic status of English is undermined as it becomes an uncontrolled, lower-grade language once it sets foot in the unfavourable realm of Welsh poetry.

Nonetheless, although we laugh at the English musician, like we did at the Irishman and the stuttering Welshmen, this is the exact sort of situation that Welsh poets dreaded: a form

[156] Tudur Penllyn, ‘31. Cywydd o Hawl ac Ateb Rhwng Cymro a Saesnes’, *GTP*, l. 7.
[157] Tudur Penllyn, ‘31. Cywydd o Hawl ac Ateb Rhwng Cymro a Saesnes’, *GTP*, ll. 17–18.

of entertainment that is not strict-metre poetry – and that is not even Welsh – becoming popular with Welsh audiences. The poet's hostile reaction to this popular sound stems from the same motive behind the hostile reaction to the speakers of bad Welsh we heard earlier: bad Welsh poetry and the bad sounds of new, foreign entertainment both threatened the Welsh poet's line of work, a line of work that was all about high standards of good sound.

V. Conclusion

With French as a possible exception, the non-Welsh vernaculars that feature in Welsh poetry were heard as uncontrolled and uncontrollable. Classical languages, on the other hand, were the epitome of order. This admiration of order is a prelude to the use of classical, largely Latinate and Ciceronian, models for writing Welsh prose and grammatical texts during the early modern period.[158]

All above examples regard languages as monolithic entities. Overall, all forms of Irish and all forms of English were bad, whereas Latin was consistently good, regardless of who spoke these languages. As seen in Chapter Two, the perception of Welsh itself is more nuanced and more dependent on each individual speaker. Even with broader criteria of 'good' or 'bad' Welsh, these are often associated with individuals.

This changes slightly when we consider one final point: dialects. Here, the nuance disappears somewhat as each dialect is taken as one homogenous tongue. However, poets rarely describe or even mention dialects. Even though dialectal differences had certainly existed in Welsh for centuries by the late medieval period, these are seldom signposted in the poetic corpus.[159]

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[158] See: *Rhag*, passim.

[159] This is, in some ways, expected, given that the surviving written record suggests that there was very little room for dialectal variation in literary Welsh: 'Yr oedd y Gymraeg [1250–1400] […] eisoes i raddau helaeth yn iaith sgrifenedig [sic] lenyddol safonol heb ei britho gan nodweddion tafodieithol' (*Welsh [1250–1400] […] was already to a large extent a standard literary written language uncorrupted by dialect features*). Daniel Huws, 'Llyfrau Cymraeg 1250–1400', *Cylchgrawn Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru* 28.1 (1993), 1–21 (p. 14). However,

Beyond the tentative parsing of 'dilediaith' to mean *without dialect*, the closest clear mention of dialect is when poets namecheck 'Gwyndodeg'. This north-west dialect is one of only three that is explicitly labelled in the poetic corpus, alongside 'Gwenhwyseg' (south-east) and 'Powyseg' (mid), each mentioned only a handful of times.[160] However, in general, the references to the Gwyndodeg dialect are usually no more than a byword for 'Welsh' or 'language', and we are given no judgements or insights into its qualities nor, crucially for the purpose of this study, its sound.[161]

The only possibly revealing poem when considering the sound of Welsh dialects is in a praise poem by Casnodyn – originally from Gilfái near Swansea – in which he seems to be boasting about his ability to compose poetry in both the 'Gwyndodeg' and 'Gwenhwyseg' dialects:

> Mau geiriau golau gŵyl Wyndodeg,
> mi a ŵyr moli hil rhi, hawl rheg,
> meithir y cludir clod, anrheg – tafawd,
> mor ddidlawd fy ngwawd yng Ngwenwhyseg.[162]
>
> (*I possess bright gentle Gwyndodeg words / I know well how to praise a king's race, worthy of a gift, / greatly is praise carried, the tongue's gift, / so wealthy is my praise in Gwenhwyseg.*)

J. E. Caerwyn Williams found it puzzling that Casnodyn would emphasise his mastery of both dialects since it is highly unlikely that there was room for dialectal Welsh in such stilted

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certain dialectal features can be spotted, confirming the assumption that Middle Welsh dialects did exist. See: Evans, *GMW*, §2; Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Variation in Middle Welsh Conjugated Prepositions: Chronology, Register and Dialect', *Transactions of the Philological Society* 111.1 (2013), 1–50; Willis, 'Old and Middle Welsh', pp. 1–2, 15; David Willis, 'Lexical diffusion in Middle Welsh: The distribution of /j/ in the law texts', *Journal of Celtic Linguistics* 9 (2005), 105–33. For a summary of the field of Welsh dialectology, see David Willis, 'Newid ac Amrywiaeth Mewn Cymraeg Cyfoes', in *Ysgrifau ar Ieithyddiaeth a Geiriaduraeth Gymraeg*, ed. Delyth Prys (Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, 2014) <https://www.porth.ac.uk/en/collection/ysgrifau-ar-ieithyddiaeth-a-geiriaduraeth-gymraeg-delyth-prys-gol>.

[160] Coincidentally or not, Gwyndodeg is also the least elusive of the named medieval variants when it comes to identifiable linguistic variables. See: Peter Wynn Thomas, 'Middle Welsh dialects: Problems and perspectives', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 40 (1993), 17–50.

[161] It is worth noting in passing that this lack of lavish praise of the north-western dialect calls into question the repeated assertion that it was 'better'. One of the first to note this belief was Gerald of Wales ('Descriptio Kambriae', *GCO* VI, 1:6), later to be repeated by Andrew Boorde (Boorde, *The Fyrst Boke*, p. 127) and Humphrey Llwyd (Llwyd, *The Breviary of Britain*, p. 122).

[162] Casnodyn, '5. Moliant Gwenllïant wraig Gruffudd Llwyd o Dregarnedd', *GC*, ll. 21–24.

praise poetry.[163] More importantly for our purposes, however, is that this suggests that Casnodyn, and presumably his audience, could at least hear a difference between the two dialects, even if they chose not to describe either in any further detail in their poetry.

[163] J. E. Caerwyn Williams, 'Cerddi'r Gogynferidd i Wragedd a Merched, a'u Cefndir yng Nghymru a'r Cyfandir', *Llên Cymru* 13 (1974–81), 3–112 (p. 83); R. Iestyn Daniel suggests that Casnodyn is primarily referring to geographical differences; he can sing just as well in Gwynedd as he can in Glamorgan and Gwent, *GC*, p. 119.

Chapter Four

Controlled Music: Harp and Crwth

I. Introduction

Some copies of the bardic grammars contain the following 'trioedd cerdd' (*musical triads*):

> Tri ryw brifgerd ysyd, nyt amgen: kerd dant, kerd vegin, a cherd dauawt.
> Teir prifgerd tant ysyd, nyt amgen: kerd grwth, kerd delyn, a cherd timpan.
> Teir prifgerd megin ysyd, nyt amgen: organ, a phibeu, a cherd y got.
> Teir prifgerd tauawt ysyd: prydu, a dachanu, a chanu gan delyn.[1]
>
> (*There are three main crafts, namely: the craft of the string, the craft of wind, and the craft of the tongue. / There are three main crafts of the string, namely: the craft of the crwth, the craft of the harp, and the craft of the* timpan. / *There are three main crafts of wind, namely: organ, and pipes, and the craft of the bagpipe. / There are three main crafts of the tongue: making poetry, and reciting [it], and singing [it] with the harp.*)

The very fact that these musical triads feature thus in several copies of the bardic grammars is significant. It shows the interconnectedness of poetry and music in the Welsh auditory imagination, and it shows the disciplined reputation of music, with the very word 'kerd' (ModW cerdd, cerddoriaeth, *music*) referring to any sort of *craft*, *skill*, or *art*.[2] This second fact is crucial to how poets perceived instrumental music in particular. By the late Middle Ages, as far as the poets' descriptions are concerned, music seems to have found itself in a very similar situation to poetry. In the hands of trained professionals, it was a laudable craft that produced a wonderful sound. In the hands of untrained and unskilled minstrels, it was a dangerous noise.

As was the case with poetry, language, and all sounds, music had to be controlled. Indeed, Welsh music had its own institutions for training, regulating the craft, and upholding

[1] *GP*, p. 57 (*P20*).
[2] John Morris-Jones, *Cerdd Dafod* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. v; J. E. Caerwyn Williams, 'Cerdd a Phencerdd', *Llên Cymru* 16 (1990–91), 205–11; Fulton, 'Words for Music', pp. 28–29.

standards. In fact, the hierarchical structures of both 'kerd dant' ('cerdd dant', *craft of the string*) and 'kerd dauawt' ('cerdd dafod', *craft of the tongue*, i.e., poetry) seem to have been virtually identical. Training of apprentices was similar for both crafts save for far less emphasis on theory in 'cerdd dant'. This is where music seems to have lagged behind other areas of Welsh lore, such as poetry and law. It had near-exclusive reliance on memorization and imitation under the master's guidance. As such, we have been left with a dearth of primary sources. Musical notation had already begun in England and Continental Europe in the late thirteenth century and while it is believed that the writing down of material dealing with the theory and practice of 'cerdd dant' may have begun in the 1480s, though only in a very modest way, there is no evidence of any form of musical textbook or grammar before 1560s, when a 'llyfr dosbarth' may have been used in the second Caerwys Eisteddfod (1567). No surviving musical notation predates the precious tablature of the Robert ap Huw manuscript (early seventeenth century).[3] This lack of written codification, however, made the craft no less formalised, at least in the eyes and ears of the Welsh poets. Music was considered to be a controlled discipline but as with all disciplines, it required a disciplined participant, and as with all sounds, it could lose its controlled nature and thus, its treasured meaningfulness.

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On a practical note, the 'musical triads' give us an insight into the musical instruments that could be heard in Wales's medieval auditory landscape. Not all of these are discussed in this chapter, partly for reasons of space – as outlined in the Introduction – and partly due to the paucity of evidence, as is the case with Welsh 'timpan'.[4]

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[3] *Robert ap Huw Manuscript*: British Library MS Additional 14905, copied in *c*. 1613. On musical notation in Wales, see Harper, *MWC*, 23, 135–59, and Harper, 'Poet and Musician', p. 8. On notation more generally, see: Christopher Page, 'Instruments and Instrumental Music Before 1300', in *The New Oxford History of Music, 2: The Early Middle Ages to 1300* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), ed. Richard Crocker and David Hiley, pp. 454–84 (p. 454); and Susan Rankin, *Writing Sounds in Carolingian Europe: The Invention of Musical Notation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[4] Ann Buckley, 'What was the Tiompán? A problem in ethnohistorical organology: evidence in Irish literature', *Jahrbuch für musikalische Volks- und Volkerkunde* 9 (1978), 53–88.

Instead, this chapter focuses on the first two instruments mentioned: the harp and the crwth. More specifically, it aims to enhance our understanding of the use of harps and crwths in the auditory imagery of Beirdd yr Uchelwyr and why the former fares better than the latter in terms of its reputation. It focuses on these two instruments in particular since it is clear from their descriptions in the bardic grammars, the Welsh Laws, records of the early eisteddfodau in the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, and, most importantly, their prominence in the poetry itself that they were the two principal instruments associated with poetry. Both were elevated instrumental music with a courtly function. However, as we shall see, this status was not set in stone, especially in the case of the crwth.

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A discussion of medieval music, especially in the context of poetry, inevitably involves a consideration of performance practices. Some caution is required here. Both the harp and the crwth exist today in their modern forms and in some recreations of medieval forms. As with bells, instinctively one might think that having access to these sounds allows us to have a better sense of what they – or their ancestors – sounded like in the Middle Ages. This is not necessarily the case. On a practical note, as we shall see, the instruments in their modern forms are different in several significant ways to their medieval forms.

More broadly, and more importantly, any such connection between the medieval past and the present can be a hindrance: we may well recognise the sound of a harp, for example, but our perceptions and understandings of its sound today cloud our ability to appreciate a medieval perception of its sound, with all its cultural baggage and auditory context, which has since evolved or disappeared. This has been the key argument throughout this thesis, but nowhere is it more important to stress than with music. When it comes to sound, music is the most popular way to conjure the medieval past. It seems to be the easiest and most evocative way of transporting ourselves into a previous world: medievalist TV shows, films, and video

games spend millions on the soundtracks and sound effects of the worlds they seek to recreate or, perhaps more accurately, create.[5]

It is also true in the world of academic research. The twenty-first century has seen a boom in projects that seek to recreate the sounds of the past, including the highly applicable research carried out by Bangor University in 2008–10: the aforementioned *Voicing the Verse* project.[6] The danger with such undertakings is that the casual reader or listener may surmise that by listening to the 'medieval music' that is being played on modern recreations of medieval instruments, one can hear the medieval soundscape. I use the term 'soundscape' advisedly on this occasion, rather than this thesis's preferred term 'auditory landscape', since, as has been argued throughout, reproducing the historical sounds themselves is only half the story; to 'recreate' it accurately, we must reproduce the historical listener, which, in its most accurate form, is of course impossible.

Few historical sound studies projects of this nature claim to recreate the sounds of the past accurately, including *Voicing the Verse*, which recognised the creative and experimental angle of its endeavour in its very title: *Voicing the Verse: Experiments in Performing Vernacular Bardic Poetry in Medieval Wales, Ireland, and Scotland*.[7] Indeed, Bethan Miles, another Welsh musicologist, made the following important point about the sound of the crwth that also applies to all instruments from medieval Wales: 'Mae'n amhosibl i ni heddiw wybod yn union pa fath o sain a gynyrchid ar y crwth yn nyddiau ei anterth yn yr Oesoedd Canol' (*It is impossible for us today to know exactly what type of sound was produced on the crwth in its heyday in the Middle Ages*).[8]

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[5] See articles in 'Part 6: Medievalism of the Screen' in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Medievalism*, ed. Stephen C. Meyer and Kirsten Yri (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[6] See also the following projects: *The Soundscapes of the York Mystery Plays*; Icons of Sound <https://live.stanford.edu/content/icons-sound>, and the accompanying publication, *Icons of Sound: Voice, Architecture, and Imagination in Medieval Art*, ed. Bissera Pentcheva (London: Routledge, 2022); and *CAHRISMA (Conservation of Acoustical Heritage by the Revival and Identification of Sinan's Mosque Acoustics*) <http://www.miralab.ch/index.php/rushmore_event/365/>.

[7] [My emphasis.]

[8] Bethan Miles, '"Pwt ar Frys" neu "Ffarwél y Crythor"', *Canu Gwerin* 13 (1990), 35–37 (p. 35).

This is why this thesis is not concerned with recreating sounds, including musical sounds: recreations do not represent what the music in question sounded like to its original listeners, which is its principal concern. While gaining access to those original sounds and their meanings is not altogether possible, studying how poets used sound in their imagery can reveal some of those meanings. One of the sounds that poets used in a real and metaphorical way was the sound of the harp and the crwth.

II. Harp

Who played the harp and how?

As the *Cydymaith i Gerddoriaeth Cymru* notes: 'Cyfeirir yn fwy rheolaidd at y delyn yn hanes llenyddiaeth Gymraeg nag unrhyw offeryn arall' (*The harp is referenced more frequently in the history of Welsh literature more than any other instrument*).[9] It is indeed ubiquitous, especially in the poetry of Beirdd yr Uchelwyr. Beyond the frequent references to the harp – and the crwth – in the poetic corpus, as mentioned, there is a relative dearth of documentary evidence when it comes to music in medieval Wales. This is partly to do with the fact that the craft of 'cerdd dant' was mostly transmitted by oral means. There were also issues of ownership and of a 'secret art': it was a craft restricted to those selected, trusted, and trained, and unrestricted circulation of written texts would have seriously undermined the status of qualified practitioners who were dependant on retaining control over their work to make a living.[10] This anxiety that encouraged excluding material from unworthy rustic entertainers is, by now, a familiar context, and one that will prove vital to our understanding of the representation of harp and crwth music in the poetic corpus.

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[9] Gwawr Williams, 'Telyn', in *Cydymaith i Gerddoriaeth Cymru*, ed. Pwyll ap Siôn and Wynn Thomas (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2018), pp. 397–98 (p. 397).
[10] Harper, *MWC*, p. 23.

Many aspects of medieval Welsh poetry are metaliterary in the sense that the imagery often draws upon the circumstance of the performance of the poetry itself. The poet often seems to be 'lifting a mirror to reflect the occasion'; the occasion in question being a gathering of mostly noble men and women at a patron's household, wherein poetry would be performed.[11] But who performed this poetry and how?

For Patrick K. Ford, the fourth musical triad listed above – 'Teir prifgerd tauawt ysyd: prydu, a dachanu, a chanu gan delyn' (*There are three main crafts of the tongue: making poetry, and reciting [it], and singing [it] with the harp*) – contains some answers.[12] Ford sees an unambiguous separation of three aspects of the poetic process here. 'Prydu' refers to the composition, 'dachanu' ('datganu'), an unaccompanied declamation, and 'canu gan delyn', a sung performance accompanied by the harp.[13]

Composing a poem and performing a poem do indeed seem to have been two separate crafts. There were also two aspects to the performance side of poetry. First was the unaccompanied performance, recited by the poet himself or by a professional reciter – a 'datgeiniad' (pl. 'datgeiniaid') – who belonged to a separate guild and of whom there were high expectations. Some of the expectations and rules for reciters were examined in Chapter Two's discussion of *Gramadeg Gwysanau*. Another example would be how regulations state that if a poem was performed badly, it was the fault of the 'datgeiniad', not the original poet.[14] The second type of performance was a declamation or sung performance accompanied by a musical instrument, usually the harp or the crwth, or a less sophisticated performance involving

[11] '[F]el petai'n dal drych i adlewyrchu'r achlysur'. Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr*, p. 6.
[12] *GP*, p. 57 (*P20*).
[13] Patrick K. Ford, 'Agweddau ar Berfformio ym Marddoniaeth yr Oesoedd Canol', in *Cyfoeth y Testun: Ysgrifau ar Lenyddiaeth Gymraeg yr Oesoedd Canol*, ed. Iestyn Daniel et al. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 77–108 (p. 80).
[14] Though some of the onus was on the poet to give clear instructions or written records, as seen in Chapter Two.

a simple recitation in time to the beating of a staff; a role known as 'datgeiniad pen pastwn' or 'pastynwr'.[15]

Poetic declamations to the accompaniment of a harper seems to have been a very early Celtic tradition. On his travels through Europe between 60 a 36 BCE, the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus noted that there were, among Gaulish populations, poets who would 'sing to the accompaniment of instruments which are like lyres, and their songs may be either of praise or of obloquy'.[16] Presumably this continued in some form or another in Britain during the early Middle Ages, despite there being only a handful of references to harp accompaniment before the twelfth century.

For the later period, the strongest evidence for the use of string instruments in poetic accompaniment comes from the poetry itself. Firstly, there are explicit mentions of string music and poetic composition or performance existing in the same world, most notably Dafydd ap Gwilym's description of the composition process as he mourns the death of Gruffudd Gryg:

> O charai ddyn wych eirian
> gan dant glywed moliant glân,
> gweddw y barnaf gerdd dafawd,
> ac weithian gwan ydiw'n gwawd.[17]
>
> (*If ever a fair splendid maid / loved to hear fine praise with a harp, / I judge that verse–craft is widowed, / and now our song is frail.*)

Similarly, though more focused on performance, Sypyn Cyfeiliog notes that customary songs were sung aloud to the sound of strings at the house of Dafydd ap Cadwaladr, Bachelldref: 'a llef gan dannau a llif gwirodau, / a llafar gerddau gorddyfnedig' (*and crying harp-strings and wassailing* / *and loud customary songs*).[18] Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen heard the same accompanied poetry at the very same house: 'lle gwir y telir talm dros gerddau / lle teilwng llef telyn a phibau' (*a true place where sums are paid for songs,* / *a place worthy*

[15] D. J. Bowen, 'Dafydd ap Gwilym a datblygiad y Cywydd', *Llên Cymru* 8 (1964), 1–32; Harper, *MWC*, p. 15.
[16] Ford, 'Agweddau ar Berfformio', p. 77; Diodorus Siculus, *Library of history*, trans. C. H. Oldfather, 12 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939), III, 5:31.
[17] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '22. Marwnad Gruffudd Gryg', *DG.net*, ll. 53–56.
[18] Dafydd Bach 'Sypyn Cyfeiliog', '1. Moliant Dafydd ap Cadwaladr o Fachelltref', in *GDBMW*, ll. 25–26.

of the sound of harp and pipes).[19] Secondly, evidence appears in lines of verse in which musical accompaniment – stringed instruments in particular – is assumed, e.g., 'bardd Aled, beirdd a wylant, / beth a gân dyn byth gan dant?' (*Aled the poet, poets weep, / what shall man forever sing with the harp string?*).[20] Evidence of more general musical accompaniment, with no specific mention of the instrument, is heard in the notably musical ambience of Llawdden's praise of Owain ap Gruffudd of Rhiwsaeson's three sons, which opens with the couplet: 'eurwn gerdd gyda'r un gainc / i drywyr fel derw ieuainc' (*I would compose a poem to the same tune / to three men like young oak trees*).[21]

The presence of harp accompaniment during a poetic performance is also corroborated by instances in which unaccompanied performances seem to be explicitly described and derided. An essential example is in Gruffudd Fychan ap Gruffudd ap Ednyfed's request poem to Rhisiart ap Sir Rhosier Pilstwn (mid fourteenth century). Gruffudd lists several craftspeople who would be useless without their correct tools, e.g., 'saer heb ddur fwyall ni saif' (*a carpenter without a steel axe does not stand*), including the poet and his harp:

> Beth, ddifyr felenbleth ddyn,
> a dalai wawd heb delyn?
> Ba ddelw gellir, wir warant,
> ganu'n deg onid gan dant?
> Cenais, pan ryglyddais glod,
> cywydd sengl, cuddiais anglod.[22]
>
> (*What, lively confusion, / would be the point of a poem without a harp? / How, true affirmation, / can one sing pleasantly other than with a harp-string? / I sang, when I was worthy of praise, / an unaccompanied cywydd, I hid my shame.*)

Given this passage's rhetorical question, Dafydd Johnston appears correct in suggesting that 'sengl' here refers to an unaccompanied poem: *single* in the sense of *alone*.[23] Thus,

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[19] Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen, '1. Moliant Dafydd ap Cadwaladr o Fachelltref', *GLlG*, l. 49, trans. Patrick K Ford: 'Performance and Literacy in Medieval Welsh Poetry', *The Modern Language Review* 100.4 (2005), xxx–xlviii (p. xxxvi).
[20] Huw ap Dafydd ap Llywelyn ap Madog, '15. Marwnad Tudur Aled', *GHD*, ll. 1–4.
[21] Llawdden, '6. Moliant tri mab Owain ap Gruffudd o Riwsaeson', *GLlaw*, ll. 1–2.
[22] Gruffudd Fychan ap Gruffudd ab Ednyfed, '11. Gofyn telyn i Risiart ap Syr Rhosier Pilstwn o Emral', *GSRE*, ll. 15–18.
[23] *Blodeugerdd Barddas o'r Bedwaredd Ganrif*, ed. Dafydd Johnston (Llandybïe: Cyhoeddiadau Barddas, 1989), p. 189.

Gruffudd clearly holds a performance accompanied by a harp in much higher esteem than an unaccompanied performance. Sally Harper puts it in starker terms: 'the *cywydd* was clearly nothing without some form of accompaniment'.[24]

Not only does this suggest that the norm for poetry was to be accompanied by the harp, but it also suggests the opposite: the norm for harp music was to be heard alongside poetry. There is some evidence to support the notion that the harp could be heard on its own in a solo performance or as dance music, for example in this scene depicted by Iolo Goch:

> Ynni dalm a wnâi delyn
> o flaen dawns, ni flina dyn;
> felly gwna ci da diorn,
> llafar y cais gan llef y corn.[25]
>
> (*A harp would create a lot of energy / leading a dance, one does not tire; / so does a good faultless dog, / loudly it seeks to the sound of the horn.*)

This is likely what Gerald of Wales is describing when he travelled through Wales two centuries earlier. Gerald describes complicated, fast melodies, which stand at odds with the simpler style of music thought to have been the central aspect of harp accompaniment in this thesis's period of study, as explored below.[26] Indeed, Sally Harper judges that of the pieces listed in inventories from around 1500 onwards and of the fuller pieces that were written down into the surviving record, most were 'almost certainly intended to be heard in a context where the music was the sole focus of the listener's attention'.[27] However, on the whole, solo performances seem to have been rarer than an accompanying sound, or at least they were less deserving of the poets' attention than performances as an accompanying instrument.

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[24] Harper, *MWC*, p. 14.
[25] Iolo Goch, '12. I Ofyn March gan Ithel ap Robert o Goedmynydd', *IGP*, ll. 11–14.
[26] Gerald of Wales, 'Descriptio Kambriae', *GCO* VI, 1:12: 'praecipiti digitorum rapacitate consonantiam praestant' (*with rapid, rapacious fingering they [Welsh musicians] perform [the] harmony*).
[27] Harper, 'Poet and Musician', p. 4; These repertory lists can be found in: Bethan Miles, 'Swyddogaeth a Chelfyddyd y Crythor', 2 vols (unpublished MA dissertation, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1983), II, 570–79; and Klausner, *Records of Early Drama*.

The question of who played the harp on these occasions provides many answers. As already mentioned, by looking at primary sources beyond the poetic corpus, one gets the impression that the disciplines of poetry and music were similar but separate.[28] The eisteddfodau awarded separate prizes for music, poetry, and declamation: the 1450 Carmarthen Eisteddfod gave a silver chair for best poet, a silver harp for the best harper, and a silver tongue for the best declaimer. Furthermore, the so-called Statute of Gruffudd ap Cynan prohibits following a career in music and another in poetry; one could not be a musician and a poet. Certain court accounts also suggest that the poet and the musician were separate: the two would travel together, in order to perform together: 'Walter Harper' and Guto'r Glyn appear together in the Shrewsbury Bailiff's Account in the 1470s as two 'minstrels of the prince', suggesting that they worked in tandem.[29]

All of this would suggest that a poet could not accompany himself when he performed a poem. However, it is demonstrable that this was not always the case. Dafydd ap Gwilym and Lewys Glyn Cothi give clear evidence that they were both poets and musicians and could indeed accompany their own poetic performances. Dafydd's poem 'Y Gainc' shows that his creative process involved the harp:

> Dysgais ryw baradwysgainc
> Â'r dwylo mau ar dâl mainc,
> A'r dysgiad, diwygiad dyn,
> Eurai dalm ar y delyn.
> Llyma'r gainc ar y fainc fau,
> O blith oed yn blethiadau
> O deilyngfawl edlingferch
> A brydais i â brwyd serch.[30]
>
> (*I learnt a heavenly melody / with my own two hands on the end of a bench, / and what I learnt (such is man's custom) / brought honour to the harp for a while. / This is the melody, there upon my bench, / that I composed from a love–tryst, / weaving a noble girl's worthy praise / on love's embroidering frame.*)

Lewys Glyn Cothi meanwhile is seemingly asked to both recite a poem and sing it with the harp:

[28] Ford, 'Agweddau ar Berfformio', p. 82.
[29] Harper, *MWC*, p. 13.
[30] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '91. Y Gainc', *DG.net*, ll. 1–8.

Y Bedo, efô a fyn
ganu dolef gan delyn,
datgan cerdd i Ddianis,
yfed medd fo o oed mis.[31]

(*Y Bedo requested / [that I] sing a refraing with the harp / to recite a poem to Dianis / to drink his month-old mead.*)

Tudur Aled is also described as 'bardd dwbl' (*a double poet*), possibly referencing his status as both a poet and a musician.[32] Nonetheless, the very fact that the harp was regularly played by a separate musician and not by the poet or the declaimer himself will later be shown to be very different from how the crwth was used, and, indeed, how the Clêr poets used their bells, as explored in Chapter Two.

Eulogy, elegy, education, and religion

There was, then, an intimate connection between 'cerdd dant' and 'cerdd dafod', not least in the social sense; the music of the harp and the poem's clear and fluent declamation came together during a social gathering in which eulogy and elegy would be publicised. Therefore, it is to be expected that the harp and its music should often be evoked at moments of praise and mourning. We shall take a brief look at these instances in order to get a better sense of the overwhelmingly positive reputation of the harp in the auditory imagination of Beirdd yr Uchelwyr; an instrument of esteem.

Often, simply mentioning the harp is synonymous with praise. For example, Lewys Glyn Cothi wishes 'pob crwth a thelyn Sulgwyn i Siôn' ([*let*] *Whitsun's crwth and harp [play] for Siôn*), meaning that he wishes for all sorts of poets and musicians to sing Sion Hafart's praises.[33] The exact same sentiment is found further north in the same century when Tudur

[31] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '193. Moliant Bedo ap Rhys', *GLGC*, ll. 41–44. See also: Rowlands, *Poems of the Cywyddwyr*, p. xv. Harper suggests 'Dianis' was a daughter of the house: Harper, 'Poet and Musician', p. 30.
[32] 'Bardd dwbl, i bwy 'roedd debig?' (*a double poet, who was his equal?*). Lewys Môn, '91. Marwnad Tudur Aled', *Gwaith Lewys Môn*, l. 24.
[33] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '138. Moliant Siôn Hafart', *GLGC*, l. 22.

Penllyn notes how ‘pob gwawd â thafawd a thant / i dai Rys yr ymdrwsiant’ (*every praise from tongue and (harp) string / head off to Rhys’s home*).[34]

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The same is true of elegy. Mentioning harp music could also signal mourning. For example, in an elegy by Raff ap Robert (*fl.* 1550) on behalf of Edward Llwyd, the harp is the signal of Siôn Erch’s passing and the cue for mourning: ‘Och lu trist! O chleiwyd draw / Cleiwch delyn, cloch dwylaw’ (*Oh mournful host! How it was heard yonder / the harp’s loudness, the bell of hands*).[35] The funerial sound of the harp is enhanced by its likening to a bell’s sombre tolling.

In almost all descriptions of the mournful sound of the harp, it can be read as metonymic of the elegy it accompanied. This is particularly true of those descriptions that include words such as ‘cŵyn’, ‘llef’, and ‘dolef’, with various meanings including: *complaint*, *lament*, *cry*, and *shout*, but also *refrain* (‘dolef’). While the semantic range of these words is broad, it is significant that they often specifically refer to human sounds, particularly loud, mournful sounds. Thus, when these are applied to the harp, it can be read, at least in part, as personification, perhaps as an extension of the poet’s own voice. Weeping harps can be heard, for example, in Lewys Glyn Cothi’s elegy to Meredudd ap Morgan:

> Cŵyn prydydd am F’redydd fry
> oedd awdl a chywydd wedy.
> Cŵyn tant am ei fabsant fo
> oedd i F’redydd gerdd Frido.[36]
>
> (*A poet’s lament for Meredudd upon high / was the awdl and cywydd that followed [his death]. / A harp-string’s lament for his patron saint / was Y Brido’s song to Meredudd.*)

That ‘cŵyn’ (*lament*) is applied both to Lewys himself, standing in for all poets, and to the harp’s ‘tant’ (*string*) shows how the two are heard to be one and the same on such occasions.

[34] Tudur Penllyn, ‘8. I Rys ap Maredudd o’r Ysbyty a’i Wraig Lowri’, *GTP*, ll. 9–10.
[35] Raff ap Robert, ‘7. Marwnad Siôn Erch ar ran Edward Llwyd’, *GRR*, ll. 13–14.
[36] Lewys Glyn Cothi, ‘136. Marwnad Meredudd ap Morgan’, *GLGC*, ll. 35–38. Y Brido was a popular harper, see: p. 242.

An example from Hywel Dafi's elegy to Gwallter Hafart ap Siancyn Hafart Hen introduces us to a second function of the harp in elegiac auditory imagery: its silencing. It reads:

> Aeth wylo crwth a thelyn,
> aeth y farwolaeth fawr ynn.
> Aeth cerdd tafod yn dlodach.
> Aeth ef i wlad nef. Yn iach![37]
>
> (*The crwth and the harp's began weeping, / the death became great for us. / Poetic craft became poorer. / He went to heaven's land. Farewell!*)

The most probable reading continues the trend of weeping instruments. By taking 'aeth' to be an auxiliary verb, we hear how the crwth and the harp began weeping as soon as Gwallter died: *the crwth and the herp went a-weeping*, so to speak. A less conventional reading takes 'aeth' as our primary verb, as is the case in the fourth line. This reading would suggest that all harp and crwth sounds – even mournful ones – stopped in light of Gwallter's death. In the context of the departure signalled by the anaphoric *aeth*, just as Gwallter has gone to heaven, the joyful sound of harp and crwth have also 'gone'.

While this is an unlikely reading of this line, it introduces the motif of the silent harp. The silencing of the harp and all musical instruments is a ubiquitous auditory image in the elegies of Beirdd yr Uchelwyr. As already explored in the study of mute individuals, silence could signal lifelessness. Ordinarily, harp music also signalled life and merriment, and so its silencing likewise signalled lifelessness. A typical example is in Huw ap Dafydd's elegy for Rhisiart ap Hywel, Alrhe, in which he mourns the silence of Rhisiart's court: 'ni chwardd dyn â cherdd dannau' (*no one rejoices to the music of harp-strings*).[38] Another might be Tudur Aled's elegy to Morys ab Ieuan ap Hywel of Llangedwyn: 'tawer, am hwn, i'n trymhau, / tawent, gân tant a genau' (*may there be silence, for the sake of this man, to sadden us, / let the song of harp-string and mouth be silenced*), 'myned oedd well, mewn dydd Iau, / ben a thant,

[37] Hywel Dafi, '30. Marwnad Gwallter Hafart ap Siancyn Hafart Hen', *GHDaf* I, ll. 53–56.
[38] Huw ap Dafydd ap Llywelyn ap Madog, '6. Marwnad Rhisiart ap Hywel, Alrhe', *GHD*, l. 56.

ban aeth yntau!' (*The mouth and the harp-string bid farewell, on a Thursday, / when he departed*).[39] This same image of the silencing of the 'mouth and harp-string' is used again by Tudur in his elegy to Hywel ap Siencyn ab Ierwerth:

> Ni chaed, doe, yn Uwch Tywyn,
> air ond och ar enau dyn;
> awn o'r sir hon ar soriant,
> awn, pa na thawn, pen a thant? [40]
>
> (*Yesterday, in Uwch Tywyn, there wasn't / a word on man's lips, save for a sighing; / let us leave this county in sorrow, / let us go, which shall we not silence, mouth or harp-string?*)

Hywel Dafi paints a more apocalyptic picture of the end of joyful merriment to the tune of the harp as he mourns the passing of Gwilym ap Tomas ap Gwilym. In a series of anaphoric negation, the poet turns from the loss of craftsmen, acrobats, and singers to the loss of music: 'ni chair ysgol cerdd foliant, / ni cherdda dyn â cherdd dant' (*one will not have a school of praise poetry, / man shall not move to stringed music*).[41] In composing this last line of cynghanedd groes, the poet teases out the implication of animated life in the word 'cerdd' (here *music*), hearing an etymological similarity – an incorrect one – to the verb of motion, 'cerdded' (*to walk, journey, run, turn*), thus drawing a severe distinction between the once vivid joy of the court under Gwilym's music, and his now lifeless, tuneless body. But the loss turns utterly destructive as we listen on: 'Diliw cerdd grwth neu delyn, / Dyddbrawd ar gerdd tafawd dyn' (*The Flood of crwth or harp, / Judgement Day for the poetic art of man*).[42] The point is thus clear: the world of music ended when Gwilym's life ended. The crwth and the harp are helpless on this occasion: they cannot do anything to lift spirits.

*

Raff ap Robert, on the other hand, chose not to focus on present silence, but past joyful sound. His elegy to an esteemed harper, Siôn Erch, reminds us that music was a respected craft

[39] Tudur Aled, '80. Marwnad Morys ab Ieuan ap Hywel o Langedwyn', *GTA* I, ll. 49–50, 55–56.
[40] Tudur Aled, '82. Marwnad Hywel ap Siencyn ab Ierwerth', *GTA* I, ll. 55–58.
[41] Hywel Dafi, '78. Marwnad Gwilym ap Tomas ap Gwilym', *GHDaf* II, ll. 41–42.
[42] Hywel Dafi, '78. Marwnad Gwilym ap Tomas ap Gwilym', *GHDaf* II, ll. 47–48.

that required an education to practice. Here Raff focuses on the brilliance of Siôn's harp playing when he was alive, and cherishes the memories of his education – or that of Edward Llwyd on whose behalf the poem was composed – at the feet of this talented harper:

> Ar oddef dringo'r oeddwn,
> organ cerdd, ar geinciau hwn.
> F'ysgol oedd fiwsig o'i law,
> f'aeth breuddwyd fyth o'i briddaw.[43]
>
> (*With mind intent, I would climb, / music's organ, this man's song-branches. / My ladder was the music from his hand, / my dream went away forever from the moment he was laid in earth.*)

The notion of multiplicity of Siôn's harp-playing suggested in the typical play on the meaning of 'cainc' (*branch*; *song, lay*, here in the pl. '[c]einciau') is repeated towards the poem's close, where Raff – or Edward – proclaims: 'llais ei gainc – lluosog oedd' (*the voice of his song – it was manifold*).[44] The audience marvels at the great repertoire, and thus knowledge, possessed by Siôn; like the multifarious and polyphonic song of the cuckoo – 'ar y gainc ni ŵyr y gog / ond un llais, edn lluosog' (*on the branch the cuckoo knows / only one tune; a prolific bird*), or the 'aml air da' (*abundant good words*) of Siôn Pilstwn.[45]

This emphasis on repertoire and knowledge shows that the highly specialised and technical training needed to be able to play the harp was greatly admired by the poets. This is always at play whenever the harp is evoked, especially when an individual is praised to the tune of the harp; both literally in the performance of a eulogy or elegy, and metaliterally, with auditory imagery involving harps flooding the poem.

*

A fourth reason why the harp had such potent positive connotations when it was heard was its biblical associations. The harp, or at least its ancestor, the lyre, is the heavenly instrument of King David, it is mentioned in Genesis in the context of Jubal, 'the father of all

[43] Raff ap Robert, '7. Marwnad Siôn Erch ar ran Edward Llwyd', *GRR*, ll. 25–28.
[44] Raff ap Robert, '7. Marwnad Siôn Erch ar ran Edward Llwyd', *GRR*, l. 64.
[45] Hywel Dafi, '68. Ateb Hywel Dafi', *GHDaf* II, ll. 17–18; Mathau Brwmffild, '7. Awdl foliant i Siôn Pilstwn Tir Môn', *GMBrwm*, l. 28.

such as handle the harp and organ', and it is the common sound of heavenly visions.[46] With the first association in particular, given the presence of stringed instruments in the hands of King David in the visual culture of late medieval Britain, one can assume that poets and their audiences were aware of the religious significance of their primary instrument.[47]

However, this awareness does not translate as clearly into Welsh poetic imagery as one might expect. Only occasionally is the harp heard to produce an explicitly heavenly sound in the auditory imagination of Welsh poets and their audiences. Iolo Goch is the only poet to mention King David explicitly alongside his harp. In his aforementioned satire of the leather harp, to which we shall return, Iolo alludes to King David in order to praise his preferred type of harp, one made with horsehair rather than catgut or metal strings:

> Ni wnaeth, clau ddewiniaeth cler,
> Dafydd Broffwyd diofer
> un delyn, ddiddan angerdd,
> onid o rawn, gyfiawn gerdd.
> […]
> Y delyn rawn, dawn difas,
> o rad y Drindod a'i ras,
> a ddyfod oll i Ddafydd
> a fu rhagllaw ac a fydd
> o ddechrau byd, bryd breisgfawr,
> hyd dydd brawd, myfyrdawd mawr.[48]
>
> (*The horsehair harp, profound gift, / by the blessing of the Trinity and its grace, / told David all / that was beforehand and will be / from the world's beginning, mighty purpose, / to the day of judgement, great meditation. […] The virtuous Prophet David / never made, swift magic of minstrels, / any harp, entertaining skill, / except of horsehair, proper song.*)

Otherwise, references to the angelic sound of the harp tend to be oblique. On another occasion, Iolo Goch offers an implicit allusion to King David's harp in the context of Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen's beautiful poetry: 'Hoff fydd gan Ddafydd Broffwyd / Ddatganu cerdd Lleucu Llwyd' (*It is a favourite of David the Prophet / to declaim the poem of Lleucu Llwyd*).[49] Elsewhere, prefaced by praise of 'cywyddau didolc' (*holy poems*, or literally *dentless poems*)

[46] Genesis 4:21.
[47] See images in: Harper, 'Poet and Musician'; and Christopher Page, 'Biblical instruments in medieval manuscript illustration', *Early Music* 5 (1977), 299–309.
[48] Iolo Goch, '32. Cywydd Moliant i'r Delyn Rawn a Dychan i'r Delyn Ledr', *IGP*, ll. 13–16, 19–24.
[49] Iolo Goch, '22. Marwnad Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen', *IGP*, ll. 83–84.

‘heb un gongl’ (*without a single bend*), Lewys Glyn Cothi states that ‘crythau, telynau a gyflenwyn’ – nef / a gân eu dolef hwy gan delyn’ (*they provide crythau and harps – heaven / plays their cry with a harp*).[50] This is reminiscent of the sonic image of Heaven in the Book of Revelation and of King David’s harp.

The only other occasion in which harps and heaven or heavenly creatures are mentioned in the same breath is in a prophetic poem by Dafydd Gorlech regarding three noblemen – Sir John Lovell, Richard Nevill (Earl of Warwick), and Sir Rhys – in which he mentions ‘angel wrth grwth a thelyn’ (*an angel on the crwth and the harp*).[51] As we can see, this harper’s skill must have been held in high esteem by the poet for him to be described as an angel. However, there is no clear connection between the angel and the harp: the phrasing seems to suggest that one could just as easily be an ‘angel wrth bib’ (*an angel on the pipe*).

The heavenly and angelic associations might also be undermined by two considerations. The first is that this poem is in the ‘canu brud’ genre, the genre of prophecy poetry, notorious for being full of elusive imagery that assigns pseudonyms and heraldic imagery to people, places, and events.[52] This applies to the angel in question who, according to Erwain Haf Rheinallt, may be an allusion to the angel of *Brut Dingestow* that prophesied to Cadwaladr Fendigaid, last king of the Britons, that his people would take back the Island.[53] The second is that the mention of ‘eight voices’ and of ploughing hints towards the elusive myth of the Ychen Bannog, discussed in the Introduction:

> Angel wrth grwth a thelyn
> a dry wyth llais i draeth llyn.
> Aros yr ych wers yr wyf
> ac aredig yr ydwyf.[54]

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[50] Lewys Glyn Cothi, ‘40. Moliant Caeo’, *GLGC*, ll. 25–8.
[51] Dafydd Gorlech, ‘3. Cywydd brud’, *GDGor*, l. 59.
[52] See: Jones, *Darogan*.
[53] *Brut Dingestow*, ed. Henry Lewis (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1942), pp. 206–07; *GDGor*, p. 75.
[54] One should also bear in mind that the ‘ox’ was a common sobriquet for Jasper Tudor and that the ‘eight voices’, so writes Erwain Haf Rheinallt, may be the eight names for the ‘mab darogan’ mentioned in ‘Proffwydoliaeth y Wennol’ (*The Swallow’s Prophecy*). Dafydd Gorlech, ‘3. Cywydd brud’, *GDGor*, ll. 59–62, and p. 75. See also: R. Wallis Evans, ‘Daroganau’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 9 (1937–39), 314–17.

(*An angel on the crwth and the harp / that turns eight voices towards a lake's shore. / I wait a while for the ox / and I plough.*)

While these lines do also suggest angelic music, the poet seems much more concerned with evoking the dulcet sounds of these mysterious legendary oxen as they plough through the night.

References to the biblical associations of the harp are few and far between. Nonetheless, the presence of the few mentioned strongly suggest that this instrument was not only held in high regard due to the skill required to master its performance and maintenance, but also due to the fact that it was the instrument of the heavens. Both aspects are crucial in understanding why the harp – unlike the crwth – was almost exclusively heard as a pleasant and impressive sound.

Regulated rhythms and the significance of 'cyweirdant' and 'cyweirgorn'

The high status of the harp helps to explain two curious but common metaphors in the poetry of Beirdd yr Uchelwyr. These are the descriptions of poets and patrons as a 'cyweirdant' (*tuning string*) and a 'cyweirgorn' (*tuning horn*); two specialist terms that require specialist knowledge to be explained. The ever-present concept of the poets' preference for control in auditory perception will also provide key. To my knowledge, the significance and even meaning of these two metaphors have yet to receive full analysis and explanation in scholarly discussions of medieval Welsh music and poetry. This section offers analysis and explanation.

Here, we return to the question of how exactly the harp was played and expand upon the above summary of its role in accompaniment. Again, we must preface our discussion with Sally Harper's disclaimer: 'exactly how this stringed accompaniment worked in practice remains a matter for speculation'.[55] Nonetheless, by reading the metaliterary comments of the poets alongside other valuable sources, conclusions can be reached on how poets heard the

[55] Harper, *MWC*, p. 14; Fuller discussion in Harper, 'Poet and Musician'.

sound of harps. These, in turn, expand our understanding of their role within the auditory imagery presented in the works of Beirdd yr Uchelwyr. This section, then, adds detail to Harper's observation that 'in Wales, where clarity of recitation was regarded as paramount, accompaniment was probably kept relatively simple'.[56] This 'clarity of recitation' has already been analysed in detail in Chapter Two. Now, we turn our ears to the 'simple' and regular nature of harp music in relation to poetic declamation.

*

The most important source when it comes to the details of how the harp was played is the aforementioned Robert ap Huw Manuscript. This is a technical harp tablature copied in the seventeenth century, though containing material from at least two centuries prior.

The manuscript gives us information on the types of harps available in late medieval Wales and how they could be played. In terms of type of harp, we are dealing with a single-strung diatonic harp with no more than twenty-five strings covering three and a half octaves. The materials and shape of this harp are not specified, though Harper comments that the repertory 'certainly sounds well on a bray harp'.[57] A bray harp was one fitted with 'brays' (W gwrachïod): small wooden L-shaped pegs set into the soundboard that caused the string to buzz. They made the string sound for longer and increased the volume, making it the perfect instrument to enact a drone effect.[58] These brays are exclusively mentioned in later poems, for example, in a cywydd by Huw Machno (*c.* 1560–1637) seeking a harp on behalf of Robert ap Huw, which invokes its twenty-two 'ceimion wrachïod cymwyd / yn siarad bob teimlad dwys' (*purposeful carved brays / giving voice to every intense emotion*), though they are possibly also

[56] But see also: 'More complex pieces (including the majority of those that survive in Robert ap Huw's manuscript) were perhaps reserved for solo performance before and after poems, or between the sections of a poem'. Harper, *MWC*, p. 18.
[57] Harper, *MWC*, p. 19
[58] Gwawr Jones, 'Telyn Wrachïod', in *Cydymaith i Gerddoriaeth Cymru*, ed. Pwyll ap Siôn and Wynn Thomas (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2018), p. 400. To hear its sound, see the following demonstration by Natalie Surina and Maura Ó Cróinín: GalwayEarlyMusic1996, *Two medieval harps: the bray harp & the Early Irish Harp*, YouTube, 18 September 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ForAX7eB-E>.

evoked in Iolo Goch's fourteenth-century satire on the leather harp, which features a 'c[h]afn botymog' (*studded soundboard*), perhaps a reference to brays.[59]

Iolo's poem satirizes a type of harp that was widely popular across medieval Europe, particularly in Ireland, but was clearly not a favourite among at least some fourteenth-century poets: a harp with catgut or metal strings. This was a large, heavy harp, with a curved fore-pillar, and with a leather soundboard. (Why its sound was so repugnant to Iolo was explored in Chapter Three.)

Instead, it seems that the 'telyn rawn' was the instrument of choice for Beirdd yr Uchelwyr; a smaller, more portable harp with strings made from horsehair, rather than catgut or metal, and a straight fore-pillar that was altogether rare elsewhere in Europe.[60] The horsehair harp was probably fairly small, given that surviving early Welsh iconographical representations of harps show a small triangular-framed instrument, similar to the 'Gothic' harps used throughout much of Renaissance Europe.[61] Despite its bardic preference, this was not the most prestigious type of harp according to Welsh Law. The Cyfnerth recension suggests that it was only officially suitable for younger musicians: a young 'cerddor' wishing to become an 'eirchat' – defined as one supplicant to practise on his own – would give up his 'telyn rawn' for some other, unnamed type of harp.[62] However, Iolo Goch's great praise of 'y delyn o rawn duloyw' (*the harp of shining black horsehair*), which also gave it biblical Davidian status, and

[59] Iolo Goch, '32. Cywydd Moliant i'r Delyn Rawn a Dychan i'r Delyn Ledr', *IGP*, l. 38.
[60] Harper: 'Poet and Musician', p. 23–4; Gwawr Jones, 'Telyn Rawn', *Cydymaith i Gerddoriaeth Cymru*, ed. Pwyll ap Siôn and Wynn Thomas (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2018), pp. 399–400. One of the few references to horsehair strings outside Wales is in a gloss to a fifteenth-century English psalm-commentary, which notes that fiddles were generally strung with 'pilis equorum' (*the hairs of horses*). Christopher Page, *Voices and Instruments of the Middle Ages* (London: Dent, 1987), pp. 215–17, 240–02.
[61] Harper, *MWC*, p. 18. These harps were later replaced by the Italian arpa doppia: a harp built with two rows of strings that enabled chromaticism, which led to the famous 'telyn deires' that became a symbol of Welsh music during the nineteenth century, especially in mid- and south-east Wales. See: Gwawr Jones, 'Telyn Deires', in *Cydymaith i Gerddoriaeth Cymru*, ed. Pwyll ap Siôn and Wynn Thomas (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2018), pp. 398–99.
[62] Note, however, that the evidence is nor particularly strong here, since this progression is found only in some redactions: the *Book of Colan* (NLW MS Peniarth 30) and the *Black Book of Chirk* (NLW MS Peniarth 29). See: Harper, 'Poet and Musician', p. 5.

later descriptions such as the following two couplets copied by Siôn Phylip of Ardudwy (1543–1620), singles the horsehair harp out as the poet's favourite:

> Tôn a swn o'r tannau sydd
> bid i'r dôn bedwar deunydd
> pren, croen a rhawn, cwbl-ddawn cû,
> ac esgyrn, raid i gwasgu.[63]
>
> (*A tone and sound the strings produce / to effect this tone, four things concur / wood, skin and horsehair, lovely and complete the gift / which with bone must be tightened.*)

All harps could be played with both fingernails and finger pads. Once again, this is corroborated by the poets. Usually, they simply refer to 'bysedd' (*fingers*) – 'berw yn y bysedd bron basant' (*a bubbling in the fingers almost [as if they were those of] Pasant*) – or 'dwylo' (*hands*): 'a pheri i'r dwylo gyffroi'r delyn' (*and causing the hands to excite the harp*).[64] On occasion, however, they feel the need to specify the use of fingernails: twice, Dafydd ap Gwilym refers to playing *with his ten fingernails* ('a'i ddeg ewin', 'gyda'i ddeg ewin'), and likewise Tudur Aled mentions using his 'ewin' (*nail*).[65]

*

What about the music itself? Musicologists and musicians have collaborated on several projects in recent years to provide answers to this elusive and complicated question. Foremost among these have been *Voicing the Verse*, the arrangements and recordings of William Taylor and Paul Dooley, and, with regard to the crwth, explored in the next section, the work of Cass Meurig and Robert Evans, including the albums and performances of his experimental folk group 'Bragod'.[66]

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[63] Iolo Goch, '32. Cywydd Moliant i'r Delyn Rawn a Dychan i'r Delyn Ledr', *IGP*, l. 38; Anonymous, 'Cywydd i ofyn telyn rawn', cited in Harper, *MWC*, p. 18.
[64] Tudur Aled, '63. I Wiliam ap Sion Edwart, Cwnstabl y Waun', *GTA* I, l. 47; Lewys Glyn Cothi, '94. Moliant Dafydd ap Tomas', *GLGC*, l. 41. 'Pasant' seems to have been a paragon musician, especially of crwth music. See: *GPC*, s.v. *pasant*[2].
[65] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '24. Cywydd Ymryson Cyntaf Dafydd ap Gwilym', *DG.net*, l. 40; Dafydd ap Gwilym, '9. Y Gainc', *DG.net*, l. 32; Tudur Aled, '63. I Wiliam ap Sion Edward, Cwnstabl y Waun', *GTA* I, l. 51.
[66] *Voicing the Verse*; William Taylor, *Two Worlds of the Welsh Harp* (Dorian Recordings, 1999); Paul Dooley, *Music from the Robert ap Huw Manuscript Volume 1* (Paul Dooley, 2004); Cass Meurig, *Crwth* (Fflach, 2004); Bragod, *Kaingk*.

The technicalities that provide answers to this question are indeed very technical. Sally Harper gives the clearest summary in the following explanation of the patterns recorded in the Robert ap Huw Manuscript:

> Each musical *mesur* […] consists of no more than a pattern of two alternating elements, termed *cyweirdant* (notated as *k* or 1) and *tyniad* (*t* or 0) in the sources […]. Both *tyniad* and *cyweirdant* may be defined as simple harmonic forms built from a set of interlocking (and complementary) triads located a major second apart, where the *cyweirdant* might comprise the notes a-c-e-g, and the *tyniad* g-b flat-d-f […]. This alternating harmonic pattern was then used throughout the piece, sometimes in a straightforward, regular manner, as a later composer might use a repeated 'ground'; in other cases in a much more sophisticated way to generate different harmonies. In several pieces the recurring notes of each element of the measure can be heard very clearly on the lower strings of the harp, as the upper hand develops a series of variations above, drawing on the different types of figuration. Sometimes there will be only minimal development from one 'variation' to the next, creating a cumulative, rather hypnotic effect; the music that results is nevertheless rather timeless and beautiful. Indeed, the underlying measure may be remarkably short: one of the most common patterns in the Robert ap Huw manuscript is *tytyr bach*, notated in two identical halves as 0011.0011.[67]

The outstanding feature of this description is the prominence of regularity. In both the primary source in question and the modern interpretations, there is a clear sense of a regular and simple pattern, particularly in the lower hand, while the upper hand plays simple variations.[68] Gerald of Wales's earlier observations seem to corroborate this aspect of harp playing in Wales too. He heard rapid fingering over a bass ground which reminded him of Irish harpers: 'tam subtiliter modulos intrant et exeunt; sicque, sub obtuso grossioris chordae sonitu, gracilium tinnitus licentius ludunt, latentius delectant, lasciviusque demulcent' (*they start and end rhythmical measures with great precision and thus, with the sound of a dull, thick bourdon underneath, they freely play a light tinkling, they delight by hiding [their skill], and they caress playfully*).[69] Regardless of what the precise details of tuning, key, and rhythm might have been during the Beirdd yr Uchelwyr period, one can confidently surmise that an 'underlying metrical regularity' was the standout feature of harp accompaniment.[70]

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[67] Harper, 'Poet and Musician', p. 15.
[68] On these occasions, modern recreations are useful to give a sense of the technicalities of the instrument's music, even if they do not tell us exactly what the music sounded like to its original listeners. See, for example: Dooley, *Music from the Robert ap Huw Manuscript*. See also Peter Greenhill's transcription of the music copied by Robert ap Huw into modern musical notation: Harper, 'Poet and Musician', pp. 11, 41, 49–50, 59–60.
[69] Gerald of Wales, 'Descriptio Kambriae', *GCO* VI, 1:12.
[70] Harper, 'Poet and Musician', p. 16.

The most compelling reason to surmise as such is that the poets themselves discuss these features; something that seems to have escaped the attention of musicologists. A revealing passage in this regard is in a request poem for two black oxen by Llawdden. Here, Llawdden describes how he would take great care of his oxen and sleep next to them, which would, in turn, help his composing:

> Lle'r nos ar y llawr nesaf
> at y gell i'm tŷ a gaf.
> Gwely'r amaeth a'r geilwad
> wrth y côr, fal eirth, y'i cad.
> Da y gallwn, a digellwair,
> canu gwawd, hwyntau'n cnoi gwair:
> cnoi cil megis canu cainc
> wych a wna ychen ieuainc;
> a'u dau anal a dynnant
> yma wrth waith môr a thant
> o chair y ddau garcharawr
> a'u cyrn fel mêr esgyrn mawr.[71]
>
> (*I shall have, during the night, a place next / to the storehouse in my house. / The farmer's bed and the driver / next to the stall, like bears, are had. / Well could I, in earnest, / compose a poem, as they ate grass. / Chew the cud as if singing a fine poem / do young oxen; / and their two breaths would they take / here like the sound of the sea and a harp-string / if the two slaves are had / and their horns like great bone marrows.*)

The crucial lines here are those describing the regular chewing of an ox, placed in apposition with the poet composing or performing a poem.[72] Bleddyn Owen Huws offers an excellent explanation as to the meaning here:

> Y mae'r sawl sy'n gyfarwydd â chlywed sŵn buwch yn pori ar gae (neu'n bwyta gwair o rastl mewn beudy) ac yn cnoi ei chil, yn gwybod yn iawn mai sŵn rhythmig rheolaidd a chyson ydyw. Gallwn gasglu, felly, mai ergyd y gymhariaeth hon yw fod y sŵn hwnnw y peth tebycaf a geid i'r math o gyfeiliant cerdd dant a fyddai gan y beirdd, sŵn ysgafn cefndirol na fyddai'n amharu ar allu cynulleidfa i glywed y geiriau.[73]
>
> (*Those familiar with hearing the sound of a cow grazing in a field (or eating hay from a rack in a cowshed) and chewing the cud know full well that this is a sort of rhythmic, regular, and constant sound. We may conclude, therefore, that the meaning of this similar is that that sound is the nearest thing to the type of cerdd dant accompaniment that the poets would have, a light, background sound that would not impinge on the audience's ability to hear the words.*)

The logical next step here is to connect Huws's enlightened analysis to what we know about the musical accompaniment through the work of Welsh musicologists, namely, the

[71] Llawdden, '23. I ofyn dau ych du gan Watgyn ap Tomas o Hergest', *GLlaw*, ll. 39–52.
[72] On the polysemy of 'canu', see Caerwyn Williams, 'Cerdd a Phencerdd'.
[73] Bleddyn Owen Huws, 'Nodiadau', *Dwned* 2 (1996), 118–21 (p. 120).

aforementioned repetitive pattern of the measure sustained by the lower hand, while the upper hand provided complex figuration above it. The poet's composition and performance, then, is to a rhythm that is as regular as the repetitive chewing of an ox.[74]

Bearing the regularity of a harp's accompaniment in mind may also explain Dafydd ap Gwilym's decision to pair the harp and the mechanical clock together in order to depict his incessant praise of Morfudd in 'Talu Dyled' (*Paying a Debt*), discussed in greater detail in Chapter One:

> Rhoais iddi, rhyw swyddau,
> rhugl foliant o'r meddiant mau,
> gwrle telyn ac orloes,
> gormodd rhodd; gŵr meddw a'i rhoes.[75]
>
> (*I gave her (some duties) / fluent praise from my possession, / the voice of a harp and a clock, / too much of a gift; a drunkard gave it.*)

Another important word from Llawdden's poem is 'geilwad'. This refers to an ox driver who walked backwards in front of the animals, calling at them and singing songs or poems.[76] These oxen songs were still sung in Glamorgan in the nineteenth century, going by the name 'tribannau'.[77] A possible earlier instance of this position and its connection with poetic composition and performance is in Gerald of Wales's observations on the annual celebrations at the church of St Eluned near Brecon. There, people sang songs with 'cantilena' (*refrains*)

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[74] Some modern Welsh poets maintained a similar practice. Dic Jones (1934–2009) claimed to compose his poems to the beat of the automatic milking systems on his farm. '[…] a thician rheolaidd pendil y peiriant yn gyfeiliant i'm myfyr. Yn wir, bron nad oedd y tician hwnnw yn fy nghymell at rythmau cerdd dafod – yn enwedig at fesurau'r cywydd a'r hir-a-thoddaid. Bron nas clywswn yn curo "Draw dros y don mae bro dirion nad ery", a llinellau felly. A chyn fy mod yn llawn sylweddoli hynny rywsut, byddai gennyf innau linell gyffelyb ac fe'm cawn fy hun yn prysur adeiladu pennill o'i chwmpas.' (*[…] and the regular ticking of the machine's pendulum accompanying my meditation. Indeed, it was almost as if that ticking drove me towards the rhythms of cerdd dafod – especially of the cywydd and the hir-a-thoddaid. I could almost hear it beating* 'Draw dros y don mae bro dirion nad ery' [from T. Gwynn Jones's 1902 poem 'Ymadawiad Arthur'], *and such verses. And before I knew it, I would have a similar verse and I would find myself quickly building a stanza around it.*) Dic Jones, *Os hoffech wybod…* (Caernarfon: Gwasg Gwynedd, 1989), p. 241. Ann Griffiths (1776–1805) also found that hymns came to her when engaged in rhythmical tasks. Lloyd-Morgan, 'Oral Composition and Written Transmission', p. 94. (Lloyd-Morgan adds that, for a long time, women composed poetry almost exclusively during hours and in places of work.)

[75] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '99. Talu Dyled', *DG.net*, ll. 9–12.

[76] *GPC*, s.v. *geilwad*[1b].

[77] See, for example, the 1953 recording of Glamorgan farmer Robert Thomas (b. 1865) who had sung such 'tribannau' whilst helping to drive ploughing oxen at Doghill Farm, St Nicholas, around 1878: 'Folk Songs: The Ox-Driver's Song', *Amgueddfa Cymru* <https://museum.wales/collections/folksongs/?id=1>.

and dancers were led in and out of graves before moving into a trance-like state.[78] Later, after collapsing and leaping into the air, worshipers would mime with hands and feet various labours undertaken without licence on the Sabbath, with some miming ploughing activities. This 'ploughing' included goading oxen and continuously singing 'solitas barbarae modulationis' (*barbarous customary songs*) to lessen the tedium of their work.[79] While there is no mention of any regular rhythms to the song itself, the activities undertaken have a constant, repetitive quality, to which a constant, repetitive rhythm would surely have suited. Therefore, in Llawdden's poem, perhaps the all-important feature of regularity is also evoked in the allusion to the 'geilwad' as well as in the comparisons between singing poet and chewing oxen.

*

A sense of control, then, was a key aspect of what poets appreciated in the sound of harp accompaniment. This same feature is central to understanding the two common, though otherwise strange, metaphors examined in this section: 'cyweirdant' or 'cyweirgorn'. Describing patrons as a 'cyweirdant' is a common auditory image, particularly in musical contexts, such as when praising a nobleman who was himself a musician or a patron of music. But what was a 'cyweirdant'?

A 'cyweirdant' was a string on the harp, or indeed the crwth, the pitch of which would establish the key to which all other strings would be tuned. As already seen in Harper's summary of Robert ap Huw's harp tablature, the 'cyweirdant' was also the principal harmony note, whereas what was known as the 'tyniad' was a second group of ascending thirds.[80] These interlocking chords were the fundamental structure for any piece, and often, as Harper tells us, 'the *cyweirdant* group will suggest repose, while the *tyniad* tends to give a feeling of transition

[78] Gerald of Wales, 'Itinerarium Kambriae', *GCO* VI, 1:2.
[79] Gerald of Wales, 'Itinerarium Kambriae', *GCO* VI, 1:2.
[80] If the 'cyweirdant' would be A, C, E, and G, the 'tyniad' would be G, B flat, D, and F. See: Harper, *MWC*, pp. 150–01.

and unrest (*tyniad* literally means 'a drawing out')'.[81] Measures were thus built as simple binary patterns based on the alternation of these two contrasting harmonic elements: the 'cyweirdant' and the tyniad.

Thus, as a tuning note and a stable part of the harmony, the 'cyweirdant' would have been known for its pure and constant qualities, both in pitch and in its role in the melody. These are the qualities in the men who are likened to a 'cyweirdant' in the poetic corpus. Sometimes there is a more literal connection, such as when Lewys Glyn Cothi praises Owain Fychan ap Gruffudd, who was himself a harper:

> Mi a wn swrn, myn y saint,
> i'r un gŵr hwn o geraint:
> brawd yw'n medru tynnu'r tant
> I gywirdeb â'i g'weirdant.[82]
>
> (*I know many things, by the saints,* / regarding this man of friends: / *he is a brother able to pluck the harp string* / *correctly with his tuning-string.*)

However, the term is usually applied at a further distance from the harp itself, such as when Iolo Goch uses it to praise the speech of Ithel ap Robert: 'parabl rhesonabl rhyw sant, / cywirdeb mal cyweirdant' (*wise saintly speech,* / *correctness like a tuning-string*).[83] That 'cywirdeb' chimes in cynghanedd with 'cyweirdant' did not go unnoticed by Dafydd ap Gwilym either. To his ears, a nightingale was 'cyweirdant y cywirdeb' (*tuning-string of all skilfulness*) and his uncle, Llywelyn, was 'cyweirdant pob cywirdeb' (*the tuning-string of all fidelity*).[84] Indeed, any good praise poet ought to possess the qualities of a 'cyweirdant', according to Guto'r Glyn: among other virtues, this idealised figure is 'cerddor gyda'r cywirddant' (*a musician with the tuning string*).[85]

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[81] Harper, *MWC*, p. 151.
[82] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '199. Moliant Owain Fychan ap Gruffudd', *GLGC*, ll. 27–30.
[83] Iolo Goch, '13. I Ddiolch am Farch', *IGP*, ll. 83–84.
[84] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '155 Yr Eos', *DG.net*, l. 6; Dafydd ap Gwilym, '6. Marwnad Llywelyn ap Gwilym', *DG.net*, l. 103.
[85] Guto'r Glyn, '18. Ateb cyhuddiad Hywel Dafi ei fod yn wenieithiwr', *GG.net*, l. 47.

The same term and sentiment appear in Ieuan Gethin's heartfelt elegy to his son, Siôn ab Ieuan Gethin. It also contains a slight orthographic and surely phonetic difference that bears analysing. The couplet in question reads: 'mawr wae fi, marw fy iôr / a'm cywirddant a'm cerddor' (*great woe is me that my lord* / *and my tuning string and my musician has died*).[86] It is worth exploring the significance – if there is any – of the slight change from 'cywirdant' to 'cywirddant'. Firstly, it cannot be a scribal error, since the /ð/ in *cywirddant* is essential to the *cynghanedd groes* of the line. Thus, we might be dealing with the radical form 'dant' (*tooth*) as opposed to 'tant' (string). This is also the case with Ieuan's use of the term in its plural form in a later couplet: 'gŵr oedd Siôn a garodd saint, / ac urddol ar gywirddaint' (*Siôn was a man who loved saints,* / *and he was honourable on tuning strings*).[87] The plural form 'daint' is only attested for 'teeth'; the plural for 'tant' is 'tannau' (*strings*). Granted, these could both be alternative, dialectal, or idiolectal forms, but one wonders whether there could be wordplay similar to that of 'tafod' here. Might the audience be encouraged to hear a connection between the poet, musician, or patron's teeth – or, more broadly, his mouth – and the sound-making harp string? These alternatives of 'cyweirdant' – 'cywirddant' – also lack the usual <e>, opening its meaning from 'cyweirio' (*tuning* or *setting in order/arranging*) to 'cywiro' (*correcting*), pointing to the possible flexibility of these two similar-sounding terms in all usages of variations on 'cyweirdant': an instrument that corrected and control the tuning.

*

We next move to an item that does not itself emit any sound at all but served a similar metaphorical purpose to the 'cyweirdant'. The 'cyweirgorn' (*tuning key* or literally a *tuning horn*) was a small implement that tuned the harp, similar to a modern-day tuning key. Early harp iconography often depicts the player tuning his instrument from the neck with some form

[86] Ieuan Gethin, '8. Marwnad Siôn ab Ieuan Gethin', *GIG*, ll. 13–14.
[87] Ieuan Gethin, '8. Marwnad Siôn ab Ieuan Gethin', *GIG*, ll. 29–32.

of tuning key, which seems to be what is meant by a 'cyweirgorn'. (The alternative meaning of some sort of blown device sounding a particular pitch – such as a modern-day tuning fork – would seemingly serve the same purpose of keeping the harp, or whatever instrument in question, in tune.)[88]

That a tool associated with the harp was a common metaphor for an individual's greatness is a by-product of the fact that musicianship was generally highly prized among the aristocracy in medieval Wales just as it was further afield. It could be argued that the importance placed upon the knowledge of music in Western culture stretched back at least as far as the Church Fathers, with St Jerome and St Augustine stressing its importance in order to fully understand the Bible.[89] Medieval Welsh reflexes of this trend can be found in the twenty-four 'feats' expected of a nobleman, which included knowledge of harp-playing, poetry with harp accompaniment, and how to tune a harp.[90] Furthermore, according to the Welsh Laws, all three types of a 'telyn kyureythyaul' (*legal harp*) came with their own tuning horn, and when Gerald of Wales visited Wales towards the end of the twelfth century, the musical expertise remained a virtue: 'omnes quoque de curia seu familia viri, citra doctrinam omnem, citharizandi per se peritiam tenent' (*and all noble and family men hold for themselves a knowledge of harp playing*).[91] For the later Middle Ages specifically, as mentioned, we know that musicians, like poets, underwent lengthy apprenticeships and were regarded as skilled professional craftsmen, belonging to a hierarchical order.[92]

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[88] Harper, 'Poet and Musician', p. 21.
[89] Page, 'Biblical instruments', pp. 302–03.
[90] These appear in the hand of Gruffudd Hiraethog (d. 1564) in NLW MS Peniarth 155 compiled in 1561.
[91] 'Teyr telyn kyureythyaul [sic.] esyd: telyn e brenhyn a thelyn penkerd a thelyn gurda. Guerth e due [sic.] gyntaf chue ugeynt, a pedeyr ar ugeynt ar eu keweyrgorn; telyn gurda try ugeynt, a deudec keynnyauc ar e kyweyrgorn' (*There are three legal harps: the king's harp, the penkerd's harp, and the harp of a good man. The first two's worth: six twenties, and twenty-four for their cyweirgorn; a good man's harp, three twenties, and twelve coins for the cyweirgorn*), *Llyfr Iorwerth: a Critical Text of the Venedotian Code of Medieval Welsh Law; Mainly from BM. Cotton Ms Titus Dii*, ed. Aled Rhys Wiliam (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1960), p. 23; Gerald of Wales, 'Descriptio Kambriae', *GCO* VI, 1:10.
[92] Harper, *MWC*, p. 7.

Welsh poetry from this same period confirms this long-standing value as seen in previous examples. To these we could also add Sir Rhisiart Herbert, described by Guto'r Glyn as always having an instrument of some kind in his hand – 'ni bydd ef, myn bedd Iefan, / heb rôt a luwt, Herbart lân' (*he is never, by the grave of St John, / without rote and lute, fair Herbert*) – or Dafydd ab Owain ap Gruffudd's mastery of noble feats including playing the harp: 'impyn â thelyn ni thau, / ac impyn y prif gampau' (*the little sprout who never silences his harp-playing, / and little sprout of the chief exploits*).[93]

Therefore, if someone was described as a 'cyweirgorn' that person was linked to the skilled professionals who had mastered the harp. But the broader features and functions of the 'cyweirgorn' itself brings a further dimension to this metaphor.

As an instrument made up of all natural elements – wooden frame and catgut or horsehair strings – the harp was subject to the elements, which affected its tuning. Temperature and wear and tear meant that it could go out of tune easily. Therefore, the tuning key was an essential part of controlling the harp's upkeep. Without it, the harp was rendered sub-par at best and useless at worst.

When the 'cyweirgorn' is used metaphorically, then, to describe patrons, this person is understood to be an essential part of aristocratic society. Furthermore, in the same way the 'cyweirgorn' had the ability to establish order on a fallible and unstable instrument, the person compared to a 'cyweirgorn', had the ability to establish order on a fallible and unstable society.

In some examples, the noun 'cyweirgorn' and its associated verb 'cyweirio', seems to be used in a literal sense. When Lewys Glyn Cothi praises Hopcyn ap Siôn with the couplet 'canu telyn, Hopcyn hael, / a'i chyweirio'n gloch urael' (*playing the harp, generous Hopcyn, / and tuning it into a fine bell*), we seem to be dealing with an actual harper tuning his harp.[94]

[93] Guto'r Glyn, '22. Moliant i Golbrwg, cartref Syr Rhisiart Herbert', *GG.net*, ll. 57–58; Llawdden, '6. Moliant tri mab Owain ap Gruffudd o Riwsaeson', *GLlaw*, ll. 15–16.
[94] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '102. Moliant Hopcyn ap Siôn', *GLGC*, ll. 13–4.

Though Hopcyn is an impeccable tuner – able to make the harp ring like bell – this need not be heard as metaphorical.

On other occasions, the vocabulary is certainly metaphorical rather than literal, employed to describe an individual in tune with his people, possessing the ability to keep his social surroundings in order. Upon Harri Gruffudd of Y Cwrtnewydd's passing, for example, Guto'r Glyn mourns how Harri's homeland of Ergin and Euas is now without a leader: 'Euas, gynt wrth lais ei gorn, / ac Ergin heb gyweirgorn' (*Euas, once following the sound of his horn, / and Ergin without a tuning key*).[95] Dafydd ap Gwilym also mourns in musical terms in his elegy to Gruffydd Gryg, the refined chief of the wellspring of song:

> a ffynnon cerdd a'i phen coeth,
> a'i chyweirgorn, ddiorn dda,
> a'i chyweirdant, och wyrda!
> Pwy a gân ar ei lân lyfr,
> prydydd Goleuddydd liwddyfr?[96]
>
> (*and the well–spring of song and its refined chief, / and its tuning horn (a good flawless song), / its key-string too; noblemen, alas! / Who now shall sing from his fine book, / poet of Goleuddydd, she of the colour of flowing waters?*)

In this context of control, regulation, and especially education, the wording of Iolo Goch's praise of the horsehair harp becomes highly significant:

> Ceisied pob prentis cyson
> o fars tir Lloegr i Fôn
> telyn eirian i'w chanu
> i rannu dysg o rawn du
> fal yr oedd, mau gyhoeddi,
> yn oes ein henafiaid ni.
> Na cheisied, ddiged ddeugwyn,
> y dydd brentisiaid i'w dwyn.[97]
>
> (*Let every true apprentice / from the march of the land of England to Môn / seek a bright harp of black horsehair / to play and spread learning / as it was, my declaration, / in the time of our ancestors. / Let not, favourless double complaint, / the day-apprentices seek to bear it.*)

[95] Guto'r Glyn, '36. Marwnad Harri Gruffudd o'r Cwrtnewydd', *GG.net*, ll. 9–10
[96] Dafydd ap Gwilym, '22. Marwnad Gruffudd Gryg', *DG.net*, ll. 16–20.
[97] Iolo Goch, '32. Cywydd Moliant i'r Delyn Rawn a Dychan i'r Delyn Ledr', *IGP*, ll. 1–70.

How this harp is explicitly linked to a formalised learning via apprenticeship ('prentis', 'dysg', '[p]rentisiaid') and a regular, harmonious song ('cyson') is now clear. The harp was, then, a regular instrument, representing all that was good about Welsh instrumental music.

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Indeed, it is significant that the only two instances – to my knowledge – in which the harp is heard as anything but pleasant is not a universal problem of the harp. In the first – Iolo Goch's satire on the leather harp – it is the wrong type of harp and one possibly linked to Irish people and their foreign language. In the second – Tudur Penllyn's disastrous feast in Maelor where a Flemish tailor gave a harp to his servant to play – it is because it is not played by a trained professional. The servant, who had no training in the difficult craft of harp-playing, had no chance, and so the noise he produced was cacophonous:

> Ac yn ôl i'n dadolwch
> erchis y gŵr Fflemis fflwch;
> rhyw ddir goel, rhoddi o'r gŵr
> delyn yn llaw ei deilwr;
> canu rhinc o'r cenau rhonca,
> yn ffest yn ôl bresych ffa;
> cywydd gan y delff celffaint
> gyda hi, cerdd a geidw haint,
> o waith Ierwerth ddinerthynt,
> heiniwr drwg ei gyflwr, gynt.[98]

The 'rhinc' of this harp was not its usual sound at all, but this was because its player – an untrained servant – had no business meddling in this aristocratic art.

The problem of the individual player seems to have been one of the key reasons that the harp's relative – the crwth – was often heard producing an unpleasant noise, despite it sharing many characteristics with the harp. It is the crwth's disreputable players who are often to blame. Thus, as we turn to this thesis's final consideration, the crwth, we once again hear the poets' problem with groups and individuals deemed to be unable to control their sounds, thus diminishing the high standards of regulation in the bardic order and its associated music.

[98] Tudur Penllyn, '28. Dychanu'r Gŵr Caled o Faelor', *GTP*, ll. 59–68.

III. Crwth

Who played the crwth and how?

'On balance […] the crwth never achieved the same status as the harp', claims Sally Harper.[99] This section explores why this was the case – even though the sound and material make-up of the crwth was very similar to the harp – and how this can inform our reading of some of the imagery contained in Beirdd yr Uchelwyr poetry.

The crwth was certainly an instrument of status and one recognised and enjoyed by the bardic order: 'Teir prifgerd tant ysyd, nyt amgen: kerd grwth, kerd delyn, a cherd timpan'. The harp and the crwth – and possibly the 'timpan' – shared their origins in the ancient lyra, though it seems that 'crwth' is the descendant of the original Brythonic name for this instrument: 'Romanusque lyra, plaudit tibi barbarus harpa, / Graecus Achilliaca, crotta Britanna canat' (*let the Roman applaud you with the lute, the barbarian [Frank] with the harp, / the Greek with the epic lyre, the Briton with the crwth*).[100] However, by the eleventh century, the crwth had become a separate instrument, a bowed rather than plucked instrument, though it seems it was occasionally played by plucking, as suggested in Hywel Dafi's praise of Gwilym Dew ap Hywel ap Llywelyn:

> Crwth eilwaith croyw a thelyn,
> cywydd i Forfudd a fyn;
> cerddwriaeth llyfr cerddorion,
> canuau'r brudiau o'u bron.[101]
>
> (*A pure nail-song from crwth and harp, / he desires a poem to Morfudd; / music from a musician's book, / prophecy poems from the breast.*)

[99] Harper, *MWC*, p. 19. For general introductions to the instrument, see: Bethan Miles and Robert Evans, 'Crwth', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edition, 29 vols (London: Macmillan, 2001), VI, pp. 747–53; and Bethan Miles, 'Crwth', in *Cydymaith i Gerddoriaeth Cymru*, ed. Pwyll ap Siôn and Wynn Thomas (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2018), pp. 107–9. See also: Bethan Miles, 'Crythorion', in *Cydymaith i Gerddoriaeth Cymru*, ed. Pwyll ap Siôn and Wynn Thomas (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2018), pp. 109–12.
[100] Venantius Fortunatus, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, ed. Karl Halm et al., 12 vols (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1877–82), IV (1881), 7:8. Translation guided by: Venantius Fortunatus, *Venantius Fortunatus: personal and political poems*, ed. and trans. Judith George (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), p. 64.
[101] Hywel Dafi, '2. Moliant Gwilym Dew ap Hywel ap Llywelyn', *GHDaf* I, ll. 13–16.

Here, Gwilym Dew seems to be asking Hywel to sing a poem by Dafydd ap Gwilym and to do so to the accompaniment of a crwth or a telyn, or perhaps both, with 'eilwaith' suggesting that the former could be played by plucking as well as with a bow.

The appearance of crwth and harp together here shows how the two were often treated to be on a par in terms of the appropriateness and sweetness of their sound. The crwth was the second most important instrument when it came to bardic activity, including accompanying Welsh poetry. Not only did it serve a similar function to the harp, but the details of its sound production are very similar too.

Medieval iconography and later written sources, especially the Robert ap Huw Manuscript, are agreed that the typical crwth had two unfettered lower strings and four upper strings placed along a finger board. The two lower strings – tuned as an octave pair, GG – were of unchanging pitch and, given that they were set at an oblique away from the finger board, acted as pedal notes. These were bowed or plucked very near to the bridge. The more dynamic melody would be played upon the four upper strings – tuned in octave pairs as CC and DD – which were set across the finger board.[102]

This set-up of lively melodies over a lower drone-like sound is almost exactly how the harp was played. The only difference is that while the ground tones of the bottom hand on the harp could move between notes, the crwth had a true drone: an unmoving pedal note, such as that produced by modern-day bagpipes.[103] Therefore, the drone on the crwth was more

[102] Harper, *MWC*, p. 19. Some of this evidence comes from a supposedly contemporary cywydd by Gruffydd ap Dafydd ab Hywel (*fl.* 1480–1520), copied into NLW MS 37B, p. 20, by antiquary William Jones of Llangadfan (1726–1795), together with a diagram of the crwth labelling its various strings: 'Chwech spigod, o codwn, / a dynna holl dannau hwn; / chwe thant a gaed o fantais / ag yn y llaw yn gan llais / tant i bob bys ysbys oedd, / a daudant i'r fawd ydoedd' (*Six pins, if raised* / *tighten all its strings;* / *six strings disposed to advantage* / *and in the hand a hundred voices;* / *a string is evident for every finger,* / *and there are two strings for the thumb*). Harper's translation but with corrected transcription of original (cf. 'tant i bob ysbys oedd').

[103] To hear this drone, listen to Cass Meurig's demonstration: Cyfeillion Cymro, *Cass Meurig ar y crwth*, YouTube, 22 December 2018 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCcsTrFPwHM>.

pronounced than on the harp.[104] Nonetheless, the feature of a steady, regular sound is much the same.

Instead of having a regular, controlled sound, however, the crwth is frequently described as the exact opposite: a sound source that epitomises unsteadiness and irregularity. How can this be the case?

There are some occasions on which the crwth is praised. This is most common in imagery that groups the crwth and the harp together, often metonymic for the poet's praise. Lewys Glyn Cothi, for example, describes his praise for Sion Hafart thus: 'pob cerdd a genir yn deg dirion, / pob crwth a thelyn Sulgwyn i Siôn' (*each song is sung splendid and gently, / each crwth and harp [on] Whitsun for Siôn*).[105] In Gruffudd Llwyd's poem to God, he remarks that 'dilys fod crwth neu delyn / yn ceisio dyhuddo dyn' (*it is fitting that a crwth or a harp / seeks to appease man*).[106] In these examples, it is suggested that the crwth could accompany poetry – declaimed by a third individual, the poet or the 'datgeiniad' – as is likely to have been the case.

Elsewhere, the crwth is very much heard as a solo instrument. More importantly, as shown below, it is heard as the solo instrument of a minstrel. Thus, if it did accompany poetry, to the ears of Beirdd yr Uchelwyr, it accompanied the poetry of a lower-grade poet.

On rarer occasions, the crwth is singled out for its attractive sound. Among the things that Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen's nephew enjoys hearing is 'cytgerdd crwth chwimwth a chod' (*a lively crwth and a bagpipe in concord*).[107] Much later, in the sixteenth-century, the

[104] See: Harper, *MWC*, pp. 147–50.
[105] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '138. Moliant Siôn Hafart', *GLGC*, ll. 21–22.
[106] Gruffudd Llwyd, '18. I Dduw', *GLlyg*, ll. 37–8.
[107] Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen, '8. Moliant Hywel a Meurig Llwyd o Nannau', *GLlG*, l. 61; This use of 'cytgerdd' may suggest an understanding of the concept of 'sympathetic resonance', discussed in Chapter 1. The problem, here, of course, is that we are dealing with a string and a wind instrument, not two string instruments. The same is true of Lewys Glyn Cothi's couplet: 'Pibau organ a ganant / Yn gytûn fal y gwna tant' (*Organ pipes sing / in concord as does a harp string*). Lewys Glyn Cothi, '230. Moliant Gruffudd ap Rhys ac Annes', *GLGC*, ll. 43–44.

talented ‘crythor’ (*crwth player*), Robert Rheinallt, who served at the English court between 1537 and 1553, notes how poetry must be heard alongside his own crwth music:

> Mên a threbl a wnaeth Robert,
> tiwniau pur o’r tannau pert.
> Naws rhwydd, er dim nis roddai
> ar sydd, os cywydd nis câi.[108]
>
> (*Mean and treble Robert played, / pure tunes from the pretty strings. / An easy sensation, although he would give none of it / unless he had a cywydd.*)

The crwth here is a ‘pure’ sound and is demonstrably appropriate enough to accompany poetry, or at least to be heard in the same setting as a poetic performance. Furthermore, Kings Edward I, II, and III employed Welsh crwth players, but very few Welsh harpers.[109]

In the auditory imagination of Welsh poets and audiences, the crwth had a chequered reputation. But why? If the sound produced by the harp and the crwth was broadly similar, both consisting of a regular pattern in lower pitches and simple flourishes in the upper pitches, and if the two could be interchangeable when it came to poetic accompaniment, and if the crwth itself could be subject to praise, why do most descriptions in the poetry of Beirdd yr Uchelwyr portray the crwth as an uncontrolled, grating sound?

As was the case with Iolo Goch’s leather harp and the Clêr poets’ bells, the difference in auditory perception has more to do with the social circumstances of the sound source – the crythor himself – than with the sound. Rhiannon Ifans states: ‘y mae cyfran helaeth o’r cerddi Cymraeg i grythorion yn dwyn anfri ar y proffesiwn’ (*the vast majority of Welsh poems to crythorion* [pl. of ‘crythor’] *bring discredit the profession*).[110] The focus on the profession instead of the instrument is key. Particularly towards the later end of our period of study, the crwth became associated with minstrels and vagabonds. As shall be seen, even in the earlier period, these increasingly popular roaming crwth-playing musicians were seen by the poets as an existential threat to their profession. By keeping in mind that the listeners whose work we

[108] Cited B. Miles, ‘Swyddogaeth a Chelfyddyd y Crythor’, I, p. 472.
[109] Harper, *MWC*, pp. 70–71.
[110] *GLlyg*, p. 223.

are studying were an anxious group of listeners, obsessed with gatekeeping and controlling the sounds of their world, it becomes clearer why the crwth was an unsteady instrument.

A nuisance noise

One of the earliest examples of a crwth being heard as a nuisance is one of the gravest. The sonorous imagery of Iorwerth Beli's 'Complaint to the Bishop of Bangor', composed at some point during the first quarter of the fourteenth century, has already been discussed in Chapter Three, as have its Anglophobic elements. The poem performs two functions: it laments the passing of the great age of bardic patronage following the demise of the Welsh princes, and it attacks the new forms of musical entertainment replacing traditional strict-metre poetry. This seems to apply to instrumental music in general: both solo harp and crwth. The relevant passage is reproduced once more:

> Tra fu'r prifeirdd heirdd, hardd weision – cerddiawn,
> cyflawn o dryddawn ymadroddion,
> nid ef a berchid berchyllson – debig
> grwth helig terrig, tor goluddion.
> Wrth glywed teced tôn englynion – maith
> o waith prif deddfiaith y prydyddion,
> agarw oedd glybod eigion – telynau
> o gau wisg fleiddiau, tannau tynion.[111]

We are presented with a noisy and animalistic group of foreign musicians. Though their music may have been pleasant to some, it is undoubtedly a disordered sound here.

The fact that Iorwerth attacks the harp as well as the crwth seems to be out of kilter with the general pattern of the always praiseworthy harp. There are two possible explanations. Firstly, we note that this is not a usual harp: it appears to have some leather features – if '[c]au wisg fleiddiau' could be taken to refer to animal skin – and its strings may be made of catgut – '[c]oluddion' – rather than the preferred material: horsehair. This reminds us of Iolo Goch's leather harp, and so, perhaps it is not the sound of the 'Welsh' harp that Iorwerth is attacking

[111] Iorwerth Beli, '15. Cwyn yn erbyn Esgob Bangor', *GGDT*, ll. 21–28.

here, but the different sound of this 'foreign' harp; English for Iorwerth, Irish for Iolo. A second reason might be that Iorwerth simply disliked solo instrumental music that did not accompany poetry. Even though poets preferred poetry to be accompanied, they did not take much interest in the sound of the harp as a solo instrument.

Indeed, Iorwerth presents a clear binary between poetry and music that is based on control. The unstable noise of both the harp and the crwth is amplified as it is juxtaposed with 'correct' poetry. There is nothing complete, pure, or controlled about the music that is mentioned, described as 'gwehilion cerddau tabyrddau' earlier in the poem. Poetry, on the other hand, is undoubtedly complete, pure, and controlled. It is the 'prifeirdd heirdd', not the foreign, amateur musicians, who are the masters of correct music ('cerddiawn'). Their craft is 'cyflawn', 'dryddawn', and composed in accordance with rules: 'deddfiaith'.

Iorwerth sees himself living in a time of crisis in which poets and musicians are at war, fighting for patronage. This is confirmed by the allusion to an old folk tale concerning Maelgwn Gwynedd.[112] In this tale, poets and musicians were forced to swim across the Menai strait; once over, only the poets could perform, whereas the harpers were useless.[113] Seeing himself and his fellow-poets locked in a similar battle, Iorwerth is at pains to deride the rival art's deficiencies, eager to ensure its music is heard as noise. In some ways Iorwerth admits his ears are biased. He describes the sound of the crwth and the leather harp as 'dwrdd clustiau cerdd ymryson' (*a din to ears that are accustomed to ymryson poems*). This music is noise *to ears that are used to poetry*. For the poet in particular, this new import is an unpleasant, threatening sound.

[112] Iorwerth Beli, '15. Cwyn yn erbyn Esgob Bangor', *GGDT*, ll. 29–40.
[113] For more on this tale see: Brynley F. Roberts, 'Rhai o Gerddi Ymddiddan Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin', in *Astudiaethau ar yr Hengerdd*, ed. Rachel Bromwich and R. Brinley Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1978), pp. 281–325 (pp. 318–22).

A little later in the same century, in a satire to Trahaearn Brydydd Mawr attributed to both Hywel Ystorm and Casnodyn, we again hear the crwth as an unpleasant sound.[114] Trahaearn's unacceptable poetry is the poet's target but, revealingly, his unruly speech is derided by being compared to the crwth, without its harp cousin on this occasion. Why the crwth should be heard as unruly here is, once again, due to its players; lowly Clêr poets. Trahaearn is 'côr cewri, bleiddgi bloeddgwm, – câr clergrwth' (*as large as a stonehenge, loud-arsed wolf hound, companion of the Clêr's crwth*).[115] The poet formulates a network, connecting three uncontrolled sounds: Trahaearn's unacceptable poetry, his purported flatulence, and the noise of the crwth, portrayed as the inferior instrument of inferior minstrels. The association between the Clêr and the crwth is repeated in another satire poem found in the Red Book of Hergest, wherein Hywel Ystorm derides an unnamed crythor as 'athro clêr' (*master of the Clêr*) solidifying the inferior connotations of the crwth.[116]

This association with the uncontrolled Clêr may explain why the crwth is specifically described as an uncontrolled and unreliable instrument from time to time. In a poem attributed to both Iolo Goch and Sypyn Cyfeiliog, an unnamed woman – or a generic 'ideal' woman – is portrayed as extremely shy or modest. In depicting this fact, the poet notes that her eyes look away or lose focus when someone pays attention to her, either because she is too shy to sustain direct eye contact or because the strong gaze causes her to faint:

> o chemir bys yn chwimwth
> o'i blaen, lygad crynfaen crwth,
> brwynen ewinwen wanwyrth
> braidd fel tywys haidd na syrth.[117]
>
> (*if a finger is crooked suddenly / before her, gem-like eyes trembling [like a] crwth, / white-nailed delicate reed, / she almost falls like an ear of barley.*)

[114] *GC*, p. 14; Edwards, *DGIA*, p. 44.
[115] Casnodyn, '11. Dychan i Drahaearn Brydydd Mawr', *GC*, ll. 137–38.
[116] It is unclear whether these descriptions indicate that Clêr poets played the crwth. However, what is significant is that whenever the two appear together in poetry, it is exclusively in noisy imagery employed to insult someone or something.
[117] Iolo Goch, '24. I Ferch', *IGP*, ll. 47–50. [My translation is guided by those of Dafydd Johnston and Patrick K. Ford.]

While ‘crynfaen crwth’ could mean a *full* or *round pebble*, as in Dafydd Johnston’s interpretation, Patrick K. Ford’s more literal reading highlights the feeble and faulty reputation of a crwth:

> Mae ei llygaid yn debyg i emau, ac mae hi’n llygatgam, hynny yw yn wylaidd, yn gwyro ei threm, ac o’r herwydd, pan fo rhywun yn camu bys arni, mae hi bron â llewygu â’i llygaid yn mynd yn fawr oherwydd sioc, mor fawr ac mor ddifesur â chrwth.[118]
>
> (*Her eyes are like gems, and she is lowering her gaze, that is modest, looking away, and because of that, when someone beckons her, she almost faints and her eyes balloon in shock, as large and unmeasured as a crwth.*)

Knowingly or not, Ford’s use of ‘difesur’ is particularly apt here: we have already seen that a poet’s common complaint against the Clêr poets was that their verse forms lacked metre, or at least could not be compared to the intricate nature of their own strict-metre poetry. It seems, then, that this same complaint could be applied to an instrument associated with lower-grade minstrelsy: the crwth.

In his opening contribution to the ymryson with Gruffudd Gryg, Dafydd ap Gwilym associates the crwth more broadly with the Clêr’s urban connotations. As mentioned, Clêr poets found audiences in noble households in rural areas but also in marketplaces and town squares. The latter was not always to the tastes of Beirdd yr Uchelwyr. This is the environment evoked as Dafydd compares Gruffudd’s faulty speech to the faulty music of a crwth:

> Telyn ni roddid dwylaw
> ar ei llorf, glaeargorf glaw,
> ni warafun bun o bydd
> ei cheuedd gyda chywydd.
> Traethawl yw, o cheir trithant,
> traethawr cerdd, truthiwr a’i cant
> yn nhafarn cwrw anhyful,
> tincr a’i cân wrth foly tancr cul.[119]
>
> (*A harp on whose column hands have not been placed, / a sweet pillar of rain, / a girl will not be dissatisfied if / the harp’s cavity is an accompaniment to a cywydd. / It is clear, if there are three strings, / proclaimer of poems, a sycophant sang it / in a common beer tavern, / a tinker sings it beside his narrow beer tankard.*)

[118] Ford, ‘Agweddau ar Berfformio’, p. 92; *Gwaith Iolo Goch*, p. 326.
[119] Dafydd ap Gwilym, ‘24. Cywydd Ymryson Cyntaf Dafydd ap Gwilym’, *DG.net*, ll. 11–18.

Though the crwth is not explicitly mentioned here, it was practically the only three-stringed instrument of the time: the crwth usually had six strings, but a variation – possibly a lower-grade variation – was one with only three.[120] 'Trithant' would thus be synecdochic. (Equally, this could be a faulty crwth that has only three strings left, or indeed a faulty harp in an even worse state of disrepair.) Dafydd places the instrument in an urban auditory context by evoking a drunken metal worker struggling to stitch a tune together on his crwth whilst hunched over his pint. The crwth here is undoubtedly a lowly instrument, especially since its appearance follows that of the refined sounds of the harp – 'glaeargorf glaw' – here representing Dafydd's refined, controlled verse.

*

Sally Harper remarks that 'there is certainly an underlying suggestion that the crwth had still to come into its own as a professional bardic instrument during Dafydd [ap Gwilym]'s lifetime.'[121] However, it is difficult to tell when this happened, because derisive description of the crwth and its associations with the Clêr and lower-class culture continued, if not intensified, into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

This period sees swathes of named crythorion enter the surviving record. They often appear in unfavourable situations that confirm the fourteenth century's portrayal of the crwth as a threatening, uncontrolled instrument. The most common situation in which named crythorion appear – outside of the poetic record – is on trial. In 1381, for example, Lleucu Grythores, Alice Grythores, and two other crwth players faced charges in the Star Chamber in Clwyd, where they were described as 'common wasters'.[122] In 1553, sixteen 'vakabondes cawllyng them selyffes mynstrelles', comprising of crythorion, fiddlers, poets and a dancer,

[120] The 'crwth trithant' was a small, rustic fiddle played with a bow but lacking frets and a fingerboard. Incidentally, it should be noted that this has nothing to do with the aforementioned 'telyn deires', which was not invented until the sixteenth century and was not used by Welsh harpers until a century later.
[121] Harper, 'Poet and Musician', p. 25.
[122] Miles, 'Crythorion', p. 109.

were seen by the Denbighshire assizes.[123] By this point, if a crythor did not belong to a guild or receive official patronage, their lives could become dangerously close to that of a vagabond or a roaming minstrel; indeed, many were regarded as 'vacabundi', and summonses to appear before the Welsh assize courts were increasingly common.[124] These roaming musicians were the exact types that the poets feared and protected themselves against by formulating rigorous structures such as the eisteddfodau, the grammars, and the Statute of Gruffudd ap Cynan, to bolster the quality and continuity of the traditional crafts of both poetry and music.[125]

*

This 'vagabond' nature of crythorion features prominently in Lewys Glyn Cothi's praise of Einion ab Ieuan ap Llywelyn ap Meredydd Gam. Here, Lewys takes aim at the minstrels who swarm over Einion's household, seemingly selling wares as well as playing amateurish music:

> Pob ddau y glêr a ddeuyn',
> pob dri fry i dŷ pob dyn;
> wrth y drws un â'i grwth drwg,
> a baw arall â'i berrwg,
> o'r lle bai arall â'i bib
> a rhyw abwy a rhibib.[126]
>
> (*In twos Clêr would come, / in threes upwards to every man's house; / by the door is one with his evil crwth, / and another sod with his perwg, / whence another might be with his pipe / and some carcass with his rebec.*)

[123] Harper, *MWC*, p. 48.
[124] Harper, *MWC*, p. 303.
[125] Harper, *MWC*, pp. 20, 58.
[126] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '63. Moliant Einion ab Ieuan a Dychan ar y Glêr', *GLGC*, ll. 25–30. The exact nature of a 'perwg' is unknown, but it seems to have been perceived as a ghastly instrument by upper-class listeners. According to *GPC*, this quotation is the only medieval example of 'perwg'. Much later, probably taking the first element to mean 'pêr', William Owen-Pughe believed it to be an instrument 'of a soft tone or sweet tone' before suggesting that it is 'probably a hurdy-gurdy' – a string instrument sounded by a turning wheel rather than a moving bow or finger-plucking – but without giving any further evidence. This is unlikely since there is very little to suggest that the hurdy gurdy was ever used in Wales. *A dictionary of the Welsh language, explained in English: with numerous illustrations, from the literary remains and from the living speech of the Cymmry. To which is prefixed, a Welsh grammar*, ed. William Owen-Pughe, 2nd edn (Denbigh: Thomas Gee, 1832), pp. 416–17.

If satirizing the Clêr by ridiculing their crwth was not enough, Lewys mentions the crwth's even more rustic sister instrument: the rebec, an early violin.[127]

Lewys seems to be echoing Iorwerth Beli's concerns here and is equally concerned with his position being threatened by the growing presence and popularity of minstrels. He seems very much aware that these travelling musicians were competing with poets like himself for patronage in noble households. Furthermore, like Iorwerth Beli, Lewys also contrasts the unsophisticated, uncontrolled sound of minstrels' music with the orderly, learned art of 'cerdd dafod': 'ei fwnai efô Einiawn / a urddai wŷr â cherdd iawn' (*Einiawn with his money / would bless men who had a proper poem*).[128] Lewys's poetry is the only true 'cerdd iawn'. (It is important to bear in mind here that the crythor had multiple roles that varied far wider and into less dignified crafts than the multiple roles of the professional poet. While the poet would be a genealogist, storyteller, and historian as well as an entertainer, the crythor was the 'stand-up comedian' of his day: a minstrel, a singer, a musician, a dancer.)[129]

This contrast continues elsewhere in Lewys's poetry. In his praise of Wiliam ap Morgan, only the 'bardd' (*poet*), 'storïawr' (*storyteller*), and 'teuluwr' (*poet*), are listed as the 'tri ffrwythlon gerddor' (*three fruitful poets/musicians*). It seems knowing that Lewys would choose the word 'cerddor' here: a word that could certainly refer to both poets and musicians, even though he excludes musicians from his list. Then follows a passage that maintains this exclusion on the grounds that poets of the traditional kind are more refined than these new roaming minstrels:

[127] The meaning of the related word 'rebeck' – 'a disparaging or abusive term for: an old woman, a crone; (hence) a procuress, bawd, or brothel-keeper' – is surely indicative of its poor reputation and its associations with lowly, urban people. See: *OED*, s.v. *rebeck, n.1*. See also: OED, s.v. *rebec, n.*, and *ribibe, n*.
[128] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '63. Moliant Einion ab Ieuan a Dychan ar y Glêr', *GLGC*, ll. 17–18.
[129] Miles, 'Pwt ar Frys', p. 35.

Penceirddiaid a'i câr lle ymgymharant,
haid o dinceriaid fyth nis carant;
teuluwyr a'i câr, darpar cerdd dant,
erestyn nis câr ef a'i grastant;
clêr y dom erom heb warant – amlwg,
ei guwch a'i olwg a ochelant.[130]

(*Chief poets love him where they compare with each other, / a flock of tinkers will never love him; / teuluwyr [pl. of 'teuluwr'] love him, providers of string music, / a common minstrel with his coarse string loves him not; / the Clêr of the dung-heap, who are upon us without a warrant for all to see, / avoid his frown and his regard.*)

A 'crastant' was a particular string that could be found on both the harp and the crwth, though context suggests that it is the latter that is in mind here. More importantly, it is crucial that these minstrels are 'heb warant', emphasising, in comparison, the licensed and regulated nature of the poet's verse. Lewys's patrons dislike the sound of these crwth-wielding amateurs too. Unlike the Clêr, Lewys's poets play the refined harp, since this is what Wiliam preferred: 'ei glod a draethir gan gildant – Brido / tra draetho genau, tra dweto dant' (*his praise is declared by the upper string – Y Brido / while the mouth utters, while the string speaks*).[131] This poem's harper is given special mention and a name: Y Brido was a master-harper, and likely the composer of three of the pieces in the Robert ap Huw Manuscript.[132]

As we have already seen, when roaming crythorion are named, it is rarely for a good reason. This is as true in the poetic record as it is in court records. The most famous, or perhaps infamous, crythor among Beirdd yr Uchelwyr was one called Rhys Grythor (Rhys ap Maredudd). This volatile man features in several sixteenth-century poems. He made a name for himself as an exceptionally gifted musician but also one who would overstay his welcome and become a boisterous nuisance. Twm Tegid, for example, kicks Rhys out of his house one night when he became a loud and drunken nuisance. His raucous behaviour is castigated thus:

Rhisglin goeg erwin gegrwth oer yfwr
iwr afanc safnrwth
Rhys filain gegfain goegfwth
rhuw gna cryg yn rhygnu crwth.[133]

[130] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '116. Moliant Wiliam ap Morgan', *GLGC*, ll. 33–38.
[131] Lewys Glyn Cothi, '116. Moliant Wiliam ap Morgan', *GLGC*, ll. 43–44.
[132] Harper, *MWC*, pp. 12, 138–39.
[133] Jesus College MS 88, p. 36. The foreword reads: 'Twm Tegid to Rys Grythor who had promised him lodgings, but when in the twilight Rys caused himself to be denied Tom said…'.

(*A good-for-nothing, rough piece of bark, gaping* cold drinker / *is the foul-mouthed monster* / *narrow-necked, churlish Rhys, mouth like an outhouse* / *some croaking knave grating a crwth.*)

The prevalence of the liquids /r^{h}/ and /r/ is notable here, hinting that this was an effective way to convey harsh sounds.[134] This seems to be the case elsewhere too, not least with the word 'rhinc' (< E ring) as heard in Tudur Penllyn's description of a grating harp played by a Flemish man's servant. The English preface to Twm Tegid's poem in the one surviving copy does not mention why Rhys was staying with Twm, but presumably it had something to do with Rhys's entertainment skills; a musical performance on the crwth would have occurred. The fact that Twm turns this sound against Rhys – with the 'rhygnu crwth' serving to echo Rhys's drunken nonsense – speaks volumes about the volatile reputation of the crwth, and its players in particular.

Raff ap Robert also disliked Rhys Grythor. His poem attacking Rhys has a lengthy back story. In the first instance, the poet Siôn Tudur requested a goose on behalf of Rhys and satirised the lands, possessions, home, and hospitality of Robert ap Rhys Gutun (d. 1571) in the process. In answer to this, Raff sought to defend Robert's good name, praising his patron but also taking the opportunity to insult Rhys Grythor towards the end of the poem:

Os gwisg yn wysg ei ysgwydd
arf Rys ei hun ar fawr swydd,
caned â'i drec ei hunan,
clolied fry, clul dwy frân.[135]

(*If Rhys's own instrument is worn on his shoulder* / *for some great undertaking,* / *let him sing out with his own tools,* / *let there be gabbling upon high, knell of two crows.*)

Rhys's crwth is implicit in the reference to the shoulder bag in which the instrument would often be carried.[136] A network is then presented between the sound of the crwth, of Rhys's inarticulate, possibly drunken speech (his 'clolio'), and of the harsh crow, possibly a death-signalling 'cnul'. Again, a network of noises that are all taken to be unregulated sounds.

[134] As well as, in Latin, animalistic sounds, cf. /r/ as the 'litera canina' (*canine letter*). See: Siôn Dafydd Rhys, *Cambrobrytannicae Cymraecaeve linguae institutiones et rudimenta* (London: Thomas Orwin 1592), p. 29.
[135] Raff ap Robert, '10. Ateb i Siôn Tudur', *GRR*, ll. 71–74.
[136] Harper, 'Poet and Musician', p. 22.

More memorable still – and more explicitly linked to Rhys's uncontrolled sound – is the englyn attributed to both Siôn Tudur and Rosier y Gwydd, which contains the line: 'hwff haff, bwff baff, rwff raff Rys' (*huff haff, puff paff, ruff raff Rhys*).[137] Previous chapters have explored the significance of onomatopoeia in Welsh poetry, signifying unwritable sounds that sit lower than human language on a scale of intelligibility and, thus, intelligence. That Rhys's Welsh language never features in this englyn, only his animalistic, uncontrolled exclamations and grunting, highlights his poor auditory reputation: a reputation that both transfers onto and takes from the sounds of his crwth.

The most biting satire of any crythor, however, comes in a sixteenth-century satire on a musician called Edward Sirc, possibly authored by one 'Morys Powel'. It opens:

> Sirc feddwisiad grwydrad garwdran – gna!
> Geg rhonco gwag rhincian,
> Sirc rog, Sirc, greithiog grythan,
> Sirc flerwr, glerwr gwlân.[138]
>
> (*Sirc the rough wandering drunkard – knave! / Rickety mouth, empty mumbling, / Sirc of the gallows, Sirc, with his battered little crwth, / Sirc the slovenly man, a woollen Clêr poet.*)

The series of englynion maintains the cymeriad geiriol on the crythor's surname for over half of this forty-eight-line poem. It is unwavering in its imagery: Edward Sirc is seen – and heard – by this poet to be a poor, worthless vagabond. There are frequent references to his drunken state and to a whole host of noisy items: babies, cats, crows, the devil, and Irishmen.

Unlike some of the attacks on Rhys Grythor which mock his own personal character without making connections to his crwth, this poet draws clear parallels between Edward's harsh speech and the harsh music of his crwth:

> Sirc sen, grasaren, surion – 'i chwed(lau),
> gis dannau gas dynion;
> os cras yw'r crwth, dragwth dôn,
> crasach yw'r geirie creision.[139]

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[137] ?Siôn Tudur, '253. Englynion i Rys Grythor', *Gwaith Siôn Tudur*, ed. Enid Roberts, 2 vols (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1980), I, l. 8
[138] Miles, 'Pwt ar Frys', pp. 36–37.
[139] Miles, 'Pwt ar Frys', pp. 36–37.

(*Insulting Sirc, pungent, sour – his tales, / slapping strings, hated by men; / if the crwth is harsh, violent tune, / harsher still is the harsh words.*)

Bethan Miles believes that the reason this poem is so direct and elaborate in its insult is because Edward Sirc was 'not a very proficient player'.[140] While this could be the case, as we have seen, plenty of crythorion have been derided simply for playing the crwth. Presumably at least some of those were fairly proficient in the crwth, but it was the crwth itself and its association with lower-class musicians who stole poets' jobs that made it a harsh, disordered, and disliked sound.

*

The poor reputation of individual crythorion goes some way to explaining the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century surge in poems that abstract the crwth from its players and use it to describe noisy qualities elsewhere. Early in the fifteenth century, for example, Gruffudd Llwyd describes Eiddig as 'crwth hurtrwth hen' (*an old, gaping, crooked idiot*).[141] Some of this imagery is physical: the crwth was slightly crooked, and so it was used to deride an ugly old man. (This is the image that Iolo Goch uses to describe a person's crooked back when breaking in a new horse: 'rhaid esgynfaen, chwaen chwimwth, / trwm fydd dyn crwm fel dwyn crwth' (*a mounting-stone is needed, nimble feet, / heavy is a man bent as if carrying a crwth*).)[142] Gruffudd's usage also serves to describe Eiddig's voice. As Rhiannon Ifans notes: '[y] rhincian sy'n nodwedd ar ei lais a natur ei sgwrs gan fod sŵn amhersain i'r offeryn i glust yr uchelwyr' (*the whining that is a feature of his voice and the nature of his conversation since the instrument made an unpleasant sound in the ears of the uchelwyr*).[143] Ifans's word choice – 'i glust yr uchelwyr' – echoes Iorwerth Beli's awareness of the subjective nature of listening. The crwth

[140] Miles, 'Pwt ar Frys', p. 37.
[141] Gruffudd Llwyd, '5. I Eiddig', *GLlyg*, l. 52.
[142] Iolo Goch, '13. I Ddiolch am Farch', *IGP*, ll. 49–50. [My translation: 'crwth' is much more likely to mean 'hump' here, however, 'crwth' is used in my translation in order to highlight the connection between the instrument and crookedness.]
[143] *GLlyg*, p. 223.

here is applied to Eiddig's voice since, to the ears of the nobility, it was a harsh-sounding instrument.

Later in the same century, Hywel Dafi turns to the crwth to evoke a screeching noise. Seeking to visit Eiddig's wife, he satirizes the loud noise made by the lock that bars him from entering, threatening to wake the household:

> Clwm ar dderw, clyw mor ddyrys,
> clo a bach nis decly bys;
> crwth cau, annel croth cynnor,
> ci du a ŵyr cäu dôr;
> cist allwydd, cau ystyllen,
> cath yw a'i brath o wain bren
> porthor ar gynnor y gell
> pyn ymystyn am astell;
> llais gwrcath a'i frath 'n ei fron,
> llun hwrdd yn llawn waharddon;
> marchlyffan ar darian dôr
> A'i gonyn yn ei gynnor.
> Beichiog â'r gwst yw'r drws draw,
> bors wern, a bar sy arnaw.
> Budr ydyw eu byw, o'm barn,
> bos hwyad â bys haearn.
> Mae'n ei dor, gymain, o dêl,
> mal cestryn ym moly costrel;
> magl drws yw, mwygl dyrys hen,
> mal chwidongl corn molchweden.[144]
>
> (*A fetter upon oak, hear how wild [it is], / a lock and a hook that a finger/latch cannot open / a hollow crwth, a belly trap on a doorpost, / a black dog that knows how to close a door / a key's chest, a closing plank, / its bite is a cat's from a wooden sheath / a doorman on the cell's doorpost / when one reaches for the ledge; / a bobcat's voice with a bite in its heart, / looking like a forbidden ram / a massive toad on a door's shield / with its sting on the doorpost. / Swollen with gout sickness is that door yonder, / elder-wood hernia, with a bar across it. / Its life is filthy, in my opinion, / duck's belly with an iron latch. / There is a great size in its door, if it comes, / like a penis in the belly of a flagon; / it is a door trap, a sultry old trickster, / like a little snail's whistle.*)

The lock is described in animalistic terms: a growling dog, a screeching cat, a noisy ram, a cackling duck, and even a snail's whistle. The significance of the wild and uncontrolled connotations of animal noise is clear. What concerns us most here is the allusion to the 'crwth cau'. Turning to the crwth to describe the noisy difficulty with which this lock is pried open is, in the contemporary auditory imagination, apt, given the droning and somewhat screeching quality associated with its music in the ears of the poets. As for 'cau' (*hollow*), the crythor's

[144] Hywel Dafi, '108. Y Clo', *GHDaf* II, ll. 5–24.

reputation lends weight to this adjective. While it is first and foremost a reference to the instrument's hollowed-out soundboard, one cannot avoid hearing a snide remark upon the equally vacuous nature of its foolish player.

IV. Conclusion

The confused picture painted of the crwth reveals that its reputation depended far more on who produced the sound – who played the instrument – than on the sound itself. Though it was played in a similar way to the harp, its appearance in poetic imagery is reserved for contemptible people and situations. While certain types of harp were shunned, the general concept of the harp was much more acceptable and the harper was an educated musician within the bardic institution. The same cannot be said about the crythor, who was often a disreputable vagabond. The contrast in their reputations, which depends more on the reputations of their players than on any practical features of the instruments themselves, is what lies behind the association of one with the controlled and the other with the uncontrolled.

Most of these poems are in jest as they deride and insult the crwth and its players. However, just as we saw with the multilingual poetry of Chapter Three, hiding beneath the veil of comedy, the poems reveal a constant anxiety about losing control of the poetic profession.

Conclusion

With the vast auditory landscape of late medieval Wales playing in the back of our minds, and with a deeper understanding of the auditory imagination of medieval Welsh listeners, we can now appreciate the significance of the imagery found in the prologue to Gruffydd Robert's grammar which opened Chapter One:

> Canys chwi a gewch rai yn gyttrym ag y gwelant afon Hafren, ne glochdai ymwithig, a chlowed sais yn doedyd unwaith good morrow, a ddechreuant ollwng i cymraeg tros gof, ai doedyd yn fawr i llediaith: i cymraeg a fydd saesnigaidd, ai saesneg (duw a wyr) yn rhy gymreigaidd.[1]
>
> *For you get those who, as soon as they see the River Severn, or the belfries of Shrewsbury, and hear an Englishman bid them 'good morrow', begin to forget their Welsh and speak it full of patois: their Welsh will be English, and their English (God knows) too Welsh.*

Taking the belfry as its reference point, this thesis's first chapter outlined how, in an altogether quieter world in which each sound was clearer and held more meaning, bells could be an aural signature for geographic places and situational spaces, namely churches. It was also the sound of timekeeping. Beyond the practical meanings of bellringing, the use of bells as metaphors in poetic imagery was also explored in detail, demonstrating their rich semantic field. An in-depth study of the socio-historic and religious connotations of bells improved our understanding of once curious phrases such as 'haeddu'r gloch' and certain aspects of poetic imagery such as those involving 'cnul'.

The next two chapters examined Gruffydd Robert's key concern: language. These chapters showed that this concern was not altogether new, as Robert's ventriloquised 'Welsh language' notices: 'yr ydoedd y beirdd rhyd cymru yn ceissio fynghadw rhag colli ne gymyscu a'r saesneg' (*poets across Wales tried to keep me from vanishing or mixing with English*).[2] In Chapter Two, the perceived 'sullied' use of Welsh was the primary focus – especially among

[1] Robert, *Dosparth*; Robert, '*Dosbarth Byrr*', p. 47.
[2] Robert, '*Dosbarth Byrr*', p. 46.

individuals and groups disliked by the professional poets – compared to the pristine language use of the poets themselves. As it explored the exact features of good and bad Welsh, these were revealed to be mostly features of spoken language, and features that were all to do with control.

In Chapter Three, we listened to the languages that poets – and humanists – both admired and feared. English was an audible threat, as heard in Gruffydd Robert's descriptions of the mongrelisation of Welsh, but also in the poets' consistent portrayal of it as a barbarous-sounding language, one which sounded out of place in Welsh poetry, and one which was only reluctantly accepted in the bilingual speaker as a practicality. Latin and Classical languages, on the other hand, were the epitome of order. They each sounded controlled and so could freely make their way into Welsh verse, even if they were not conveyed entirely accurately; their auditory presence was enough to delight the Welsh ear. As more texts were discovered and taught as the Renaissance blossomed, Hebrew and Greek received increased attention among the humanists compared to the poets, as they deemed all three to be models for how the Welsh language should be studied, used, and, in some cases, modified.[3] It seems significant, then, that the only adjective poets used to describe Hebrew in particular – 'llwybraidd' (*orderly*) – should also find itself echoed in Gruffydd Robert's 'anhylwybr' (*awkward*) to describe the disorderly state of the Welsh language.[4]

While Irish does not feature in early modern humanist prose, it relates in part to the same problem as English; it was the language of foreigners. The chief reason for the presence of Irish derision among poetry and its total absence in later prose is also the chief reason behind

[3] See, for example, John Prys's use of 'yr hwnn', taken from Latin 'qui, quae, quod' (*who, which*) etc. to make up for the lack of a fully inflectional connecting relative pronoun in Welsh, or his use of Greek-inspired 'deng air deddyf' ('δεκάλογος', *decalogue*) and the Hebrew-inspired 'poet gwir' ('אָמֵן', *Amen*): John Prys, 'Yny llyvyr hwnn…[1547]', *Rhag*, pp. 3–4. Though 'yr hwnn' and its variations are not Prys's invention, nor that of the sixteenth century, its usage increases during this period compared to the Middle Welsh period. See: Elena Parina, 'Relative clauses with overt marking in Early Modern Welsh', *Journal of Historical Syntax* 6.10 (2022), 1–23.
[4] Robert, '*Dosbarth Byrr*', p. 46.

poets' and humanist authors' concern for language change. For both, it was existential. However, for the poets, this was also, if not mostly, a personal concern: changing language use was a sign of a changing society with a diminishing place for poets. Other forms of entertainment, including Irish harpers, English pipers, and Welsh rhymesters threatened the need for strict-metre verse. For humanist authors, on the other hand, there is less of a sense of reacting to a personal threat. Instead, there is a broader national, even patriotic, concern – finding changing language use to be a threat to concepts of linguistic and cultural self-competence – as well as the entire endeavour being an intellectual exercise.

Music does not feature in Gruffydd Robert's prologue nor in most early modern prose texts. This absence reiterates the difference between the poets and the humanist authors in the reasoning behind their concern for controlling language and controlling sound, since musicians could threaten the poets' lifestyles but not so the humanists. Chapter Four examined the detailed attention poets paid to the musical instruments that were most audible in their line of work: the harp and the crwth. These instruments were played in similar ways, yet it was shown that their use in poetic imagery was different. A suggested reason for this difference was that their players came from different sides of society, thus returning us to the matter of the perceived uncontrolled sound of anyone outside the bardic institutions.

*

On paper, Welsh poets' tightening noose of conservative attempts to control sound and the increased regulation of strict-metre verse may look like a set of circumstances and rules that choke the art out of poetry. The vast array of new meanings that have been revealed in this thesis proves that this is not the case.

This revelation also proves the usefulness or indeed the necessity of aural-sensitive readings of literature produced in a pre-printing, pre-Enlightenment, pre-industrial, and pre-electric society. Gruffydd Robert's prologue recognises the change that needed to happen to

the Welsh language in order to re-cultivate its inherent erudite and exquisite nature, but it was up to its speakers to do so. However, Gruffydd does not call them 'speakers'; he calls them 'readers': 'rhaid i ti (ddarllenydd howddgar)…' (*you (kindly reader) must…*).[5] This choice of words is crucial since it signals that one of the many historic crossroads of the sixteenth century was a sensory one: a shift from listener to reader, from speaker to writer. From the days of Gruffydd Robert onwards, the importance of listening slowly diminished.

This thesis has, therefore, demonstrated the value of applying the theories and methods of sound studies to literature written before the early modern period in which Gruffydd was writing, but especially medieval Welsh poetry, given the deeply aural nature of cynghanedd. Cynghanedd is occasionally compared to 'dán díreach' (*direct verse*) – the style of Irish bardic poetry composed during more or less the same time frame as this thesis's period of study – because it is also a syllabic verse form with stringent rules of rhyme, consonance, and alliteration.[6] It is curious that a similar poetic form of controlled language should arise in Wales and Ireland around the same time period and due to similar circumstances; the English settlements in Wales was felt far more strongly in Ireland, especially during the Elizabethan period, resulting in the increased need to praise native Irish rulers, to use panegyric as an old Irish tradition, and to praise poetry itself as a way to ensure the continuation of the poet's social function in a weakening Gaelic world. These are the similarities between Wales and Ireland. However, the differences remain to be seen: while cynghanedd and dán díreach are comparable, and so too are the historical circumstance, a similar comprehensive study of sound in medieval Ireland is yet to be written, and so a balanced comparison is as yet not possible.

The arguments on sound and control outlined in this thesis are only directly relevant to Wales. This sort of research needs to be applied to each literary corpus individually. This thesis

[5] Robert, '*Dosbarth Byrr*', p. 46.
[6] See, for example: Conran, *Welsh Verse*, pp. 307–08. Eleanor Knott, *An Introduction to Irish Syllabic Poetry of the period 1200–1600*, 2nd edn (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1974).

hopes to have set a precedent for doing so with Celtic languages and will prelude further research that brings Celtic language and literature into the field of sound studies.

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