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MIDDLE WELSH

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When the Welsh language emerged from its British predecessor, firstly in the form of Old Welsh (identifiable from before 600 up to the mid-twelfth century) and then Middle Welsh (from the mid-twelfth century to the early fifteenth century), it was already a language that had a prestige status and literary register among its speakers.[1] The early Welsh poem, *Y Gododdin* ('The Gododdin'), composed by the sixth-century poet Aneirin as a memorial to a band of fallen warriors after a great battle at Catraeth in north-eastern England, is the product of an aristocratic court culture, as is the work attributed to Aneirin's near-contemporary, Taliesin. The two sides of the conflict described in *Y Gododdin* are not a clear binary – they are the men of Bernicia and Deira (later Northumbria) on the one hand and the men of Gododdin and their allies on the other, both of which were likely to have comprised various combinations of British, Angles, and Saxons. The heroic poems of Taliesin, a sixth-century court poet of Welsh princes, celebrate the historical leader Urien and his son Owain, princes of Rheged, a British kingdom in the region of what is now southern Galloway and Carlisle. Urien is named in the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum* as a warleader who fought against Theodric of Bernicia, but in some of Taliesin's poems Urien's enemies are not the Saxons but rival British leaders competing for territory.

It is not until the tenth century that we find unambiguous references to the Welsh as a nation waging an existential struggle against the English, in the prophetic poem *Armes Prydein* ('The Prophecy of Britain').[2] The anonymous author calls on allies of the Welsh, including the Irish and the Vikings, to help them throw off the Saxon yoke and restore political sovereignty to Wales as the rightful rulers of the whole of Britain. This call to arms was to reverberate throughout the literature of Wales until the end of the Middle Ages. In such an anti-English political text, it is interesting to find two loanwords from Old English occurring in the same phrase, 'trwy uwrch y dinas ffoxas ffohyn' ('through the ramparts of the fortress the foxes will flee'), referring to the English fleeing before the avenging Welsh.[3] Both of

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[1] On the development of the Welsh language, see Russell 1995; Griffiths 2015.

[2] For the text and translation, see Williams and Bromwich 1972. See also Fulton 2019.

[3] *Armes Prydein*, l. 62. The phrase is discussed by Russell 2019.

these forms, *bwrch* (lenited here to *vwrch*) and *ffoxas*, have been taken straight from Old English (OE *burg* and *fox* respectively), complete with the English plural inflection in *ffoxas*, and given a Welsh orthography.[4] The effect is entirely pejorative: the English are vermin, like foxes, and their own words are used against them to construct them as 'other'.

Cultural and Linguistic Exchanges on the March of Wales

From the Anglo-Saxon period, the permeation of English into Wales was most intense in the area of the border between the two nations. Before 1066, the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia bordered the Welsh kingdom of Powys, creating a disputed borderland commemorated in the Welsh 'Llywarch Hen' poems which describe the grief and loss that accompany war and social disruption in a border region.[5] After 1066, with the settlement of Normans, supported by an English peasantry, around the borders and southern coast of Wales, the English language penetrated further into Wales, alongside the Norman French spoken by the colonisers. Norman towns, such as Monmouth, Chepstow, and Cardiff, created a more vigorous market economy than had previously existed in Wales and this attracted many English people from neighbouring regions such as Herefordshire and Gloucestershire into the growing towns. The church was another conduit by which English speakers were absorbed into Wales. Gerald of Wales describes a monk in Cardiff addressing Henry II in English and the king then using an interpreter to reply in French.[6] The Welsh distanced themselves from these other language groups, especially English, as a matter of national pride – the Welsh word *iaith* means both 'language' and 'nation'.

As a language of low prestige, English made relatively little impact on Welsh writing, especially compared to French which is already visible in the form of borrowings in the prose tales of the *Mabinogion*.[7] Because of its association with the Norman power group and with

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[4] Parry-Williams 1923: 35, 38.

[5] For a discussion of these poems, see Fulton 2019: 38–45.

[6] Gerald of Wales, *Itinerarium Kambriae*, I.6. For an English translation, see Thorpe 1988: 123–4.

[7] The eleven tales which make up the collection known as the *Mabinogion* took literary shape at various points between the late eleventh and mid-thirteenth centuries. The standard translation is Davies 2007. French borrowings into Middle Welsh have been studied by Surridge 1966 and 1984. For further background see Luft 2019.

the culture of the court, Norman French was the second language of choice for the Welsh nobility, a choice supported by the significant level of intermarriage between Welsh and Norman families, especially in the area of the March. Intermarriage, and therefore some degree of language exchange, was also a political strategy at the highest levels of the aristrocracy: examples include Dafydd ap Owain Gwynedd (d. 1203), prince of Gwynedd, who married Emma of Anjou, the sister of Henry II, and Llywelyn ap Iorwerth (d. 1240), also prince of Gwynedd, who married Joan, daughter of King John. It is not surprising to find that the most significant group of French loanwords into Welsh at this time are connected with luxury commodities such as clothing, textiles, and accoutrements that signify high status. In the tale of *Owein, neu Chwedl Iarlles y Ffynnawn* ('Owain, or the Lady of the Fountain'), dated to the early thirteenth century and adapted from the romance of *Yvain* by Chrétien de Troyes, the hero watches the funeral procession of his predecessor, whom he has killed in a duel, and sees all the barons in the procession dressed in *pali a seric a syndal*, 'brocaded silk and damask and sendal' (Thomson 1968: ll. 352–3).[8] These are all luxury fabrics, and hard to come by in Wales, increasing the sense that Owain has found himself in an otherworld far from his home. *Pali* is borrowed from Old French *palie*, while *seric* comes from Latin *sericum*, or 'serge'. *Syndal* is borrowed from Old French *cendal*, or, quite possibly, from Middle English *sindal*. In the early thirteenth century, it is sometimes hard to know if a word has been borrowed into Welsh from French or Middle English, though the former is more likely, given the interactions between noble Welsh and Norman families and the generally low prestige of English at that time.

A stronger element of bilingualism in Welsh and English developed after 1284 in the context of English governance and immigration. Immediately following the Edwardian conquest of north Wales, new fortified towns were built around the north Welsh coast, including Flint, Denbigh, and Conwy, bringing with them English immigrants to inhabit the towns and operate their urban commercial economies.[9] As part of the political settlement of 1284, systems of English administration were imposed on the Crown lordships and in some areas of the March, especially in relation to the management of castles and other defences, though

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[8] See also Davies 2007: 125. For further discussion of textiles and clothing in the *Mabinogion*, see Williams 2012.

[9] On the new towns of Wales and the urban economy, see Beresford 1967; Fulton 2012, especially the Introduction; Griffiths 1978.

highly-placed members of the Welsh gentry (*uchelwyr*) were often appointed to senior roles such as constable. Consequently, a large number of English borrowings into Welsh during the fourteenth century were words connected with commerce, commodities, and administration.

One of the first poets of the post-1282 regime to establish himself among the new patrons of the Welsh gentry was Dafydd ap Gwilym (fl. c. 1340–50), still regarded as among the finest of medieval Welsh poets. His poetry, a corpus of around 160 lyric poems which includes praise poetry to patrons, religious verse, and poems of love and nature, provides numerous glimpses of the reconfigured Welsh landscape which now comprised not only the worked fields of the peasantry and the rich estates of the gentry but the lineaments of bustling commerce in busy towns. A number of the poems have urban settings, particularly in taverns where young men are inclined to behave badly, and there are also references to various trades and commercial activities. The small sprinkling of English loanwords in such poems stress the predominance of English people and their speech in Welsh urban settings. In one urban poem, the poet professes love for the wife of a cloth merchant who has the English name of Robin North (transliterated into the Welsh form, 'Nordd'). Dafydd describes her as 'fy anrhaith â'r lediaith lud, / Brenhines, arglwyddes gwlân, / Brethyndai bro eithindan' ('my treasure with the sticky foreign accent, the queen, the mistress of wool, of cloth factories in the land of gorse-fire'), reminding us of the Englishness of the towns, where the Welsh were not encouraged to trade, and sometimes legally prohibited from trading.[10] The Middle English (originally Old English) word *portman*, meaning a burgess or citizen, appears in the poet's reference to Robin Nordd as 'y porthmonyn moel' ('the bald burgess', l. 14), while the items produced in Elen's cloth-working shop include 'hosanau da' ('good stockings', l. 26) and 'medlai' ('medley', l. 28, a cloth made of mixed wools), both borrowed from English forms (OE *hosa* and ME *medle, medlai* respectively).[11]

The transition from the fourteenth to the fifteenth century was marked by the rebellion of Owain Glyndŵr, a wealthy landowner who lived in north-east Wales in the March and was thus in close proximity to many English gentry families and to a number of the English towns

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[10] Dafydd's poetry has been edited by Johnston et al., *Cerddi Dafydd ap Gwilym* (2010), and also edited and translated on the website, *DafyddapGwilym.net* [http://www.dafyddapgwilym.net/] (accessed 10 December 2020). This extract is from poem 120, lines 18–20, with my translation.

[11] Parry-Williams lists W. *medlai* as a borrowing from ME *medlay* (1923: 118).

in that region. The exact motives behind Owain's uprising, which broke out in 1400, are complex, especially in the wider political context of the deposition of Richard II in 1399 and the taking of the throne by Henry IV. Owain, like many Welshmen, had served Richard II as a member of the royal army, campaigning mainly in Scotland, and the deposition may have been a factor in his rebellion. However, the nature of Owain's targets for devastation – mainly the English towns of north and south Wales – and his treaty with Edmund Mortimer and Henry Percy, earl of Northumberland, by which Britain was to be divided into three polities with Owain taking Wales and the Marches, clearly point to an agenda in direct opposition to the English Crown and its dealings in Wales.[12] When the rebellion was finally extinguished, around 1410, with Owain himself disappearing from view after 1412, the Crown extracted ruinous fines to secure pardons, bludgeoning a Wales already on its knees following the punitive legislation of 1401–2 which excluded the Welsh from buying land in England or becoming burgesses of the English towns in Wales. R. R. Davies called these measures 'vindictive and discriminatory', and their result was 'to re-erect the ethnic barriers between English and Welsh' (1995: 286).

Unsurprisingly, we see in fifteenth-century Welsh literature an increase in the kind of anti-English rhetoric which was less noticeable in the previous century though not uncommon even then.[13] This rhetoric takes the form, not simply of insult or satire, but of a politically motivated hostility that sees poets advising their patrons not to marry English women but to find good Welsh women instead, and praising their patrons for resisting the 'Saxons' who had stolen Welsh sovereignty. These anti-English sentiments intensified during the Wars of the Roses from about 1450 to 1485, when poets seized on the possibility that a Welsh king would take the throne of England, thus returning the Welsh to their original sovereignty in Britain. In a praise poem to Sir William Herbert, one of the foremost Welsh lords of the March and a Yorkist supporter, Guto'r Glyn (fl. c. 1435–90) urges him to show no sympathy to the English: 'Na ad, f'arglwydd, swydd i Sais, / Na'i bardwn i un bwrdais' ('Do not allow any job to an Englishman, my lord, nor a pardon to a single burgess').[14]

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[12] The standard history of Owain's rebellion is Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (1995). For details about English responses to the rebellion, see Marchant 2014.

[13] For some examples from the poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym and others, see Fulton 2008.

[14] Williams and Williams 1961: no.48, lines 61–2, my translation. For an online text and translation, see *Guto'r Glyn.net* [http://gutorglyn.net/gutorglyn/index/] (accessed 10 December 2020), no. 21.

The Welsh words *pardwn*, 'pardon' (originally from Old French *pardun*) , and *bwrdais*, 'burgess', are again illustrative of borrowings from urban culture and governance, lexical fields in which English had become the dominant language. These kinds of borrowings indicate the complexity of Welsh-English relations in the fifteenth century, which were, at the very least, ambivalent. On the one hand the Welsh expressed resentment of English control but on the other they were not backward in taking advantage of a largely English-driven urban economy. Thus poets composed not only to Welsh families but also to prominent members of the English gentry across the March, such as the Hanmers and the Pulestons, who intermarried with high-status Welsh families and thus became largely bilingual and bicultural. As memories of the Glyndŵr rebellion faded, more Welsh people settled in towns and their hinterlands, some becoming burgesses themselves, engaging in trades and mercantile activities alongside the English. Bilingualism was well advanced in the towns, and loanwords from English into Welsh were common, as in this well-known collection of commodities listed by the poet Tudur Aled (fl. c. 1465–1525) in his praise-poem to the largely Welsh town of Oswestry on the March of Wales:

> Cistiau da, 'n costio dierth,
> Cwmin, bocs, caem win heb werth;
> Siwgr, sarsned, ffelfed a phân,
> Siêp-Seid yn siopau sidan…
> ….Cwrw a siwgr caer wresowgwin,
> Cwnffets, pomgarnets, a gwin.[15]

> (Chests of goods, expensive to an outsider, cummin, box, we get wine
> without tax; sugar, sarsnet, velvet and fur, silk shops like Cheapside…beer
> and sugar in a mulled-wine castle, confits, pomegranates, and wine.)

This string of loanwords, mainly from English, turns the Welsh of this section into a creole, a blended version of the two languages that is characteristic of border communities where languages and cultures meet. While the English had commandeered local and long-distance

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[15] Jones 1926: no. 65, lines 61–4, 89–90, my translation. On this poem see also Fulton 1997; Russell 2019: 13–14.

trade, the Welsh appropriated these goods, and their names, into their own language. The reference to *siêp-seid*, 'Cheapside', is not an isolated one, and it invariably refers to London's Cheapside rather than to any marketplace in general. While it may seem overly-ambitious for the poet to compare Oswestry's market to the great shops of London, this reference also indicates a provincial border perspective that looks beyond the local to the metropolitan, constructing London as the nearest capital city and thus, implicitly, the capital of Wales.

Evidence for the cultural diversity of the Marches is also provided by the names of the patrons to whom the poets addressed their praise poems. While the 'poets of the princes', composing before 1284, addressed their songs mainly to the aristocratic Welsh dynasties of rulers, by the late fourteenth century a poet such as Iolo Goch (fl. 1345–97), based in Denbighshire on the March, could plausibly sing the praises not only of the Welsh gentry but also of one of the great (English) Marcher lords, Roger Mortimer of Wigmore, 4th Earl of March and the lord of Denbigh. Transliterating Sir Roger's name into Welsh orthography creates a linguistically portentous opening to the poem, rich in word-play and sound-play, while appropriating this English lord into the Welshness of his border estates:

> Syr Rosier asur aesawr,
> Syr Rosier o'r Mortmer mawr,
> Rosier ieuanc, planc plymlwyd,
> Sarff aer o hil Syr Raff wyd,
> Rhos arglwydd, Rosier eurglaer,
> Rhyswr, cwncwerwr can caer.[16]

> (Sir Roger of the azure shield,
> Sir Roger of great Mortimer,
> young Roger, plank of battle,
> you are a warlike serpent of Sir Ralph's line,
> lord of Rhos, golden bright Roger,
> hero, conqueror of a hundred forts.)

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[16] Johnston 1993: no. 20, ll. 1–6.

The English loanwords, *asur*, 'azure', *planc*, 'plank', and *cwncwerwr*, 'conqueror', unusually prolific in these few lines, are a means of paying homage to Sir Roger's English identity, while the Welsh epithets, such as *sarff aer*, 'warlike serpent', draw him into the rhetoric of Welsh praise poetry and thus acknowledge his lordship of the Wigmore estates in Wales. Iolo's acknowledgement of English sovereignty extended even to the king, Edward III, to whom he addressed a praise poem, something unprecedented at the time and not seen again until the middle of the fifteenth century.[17]

During the fifteenth century the names of English patrons living on the March figure increasingly often in Welsh poetry, many of them the result of intermarriage between local Welsh and English families. The work of Guto'r Glyn and Tudur Aled (fl. c. 1465–1525) is studded with the names of English patrons such as Huw Bwlclai (Hugh Bulkeley) of Beaumaris (a Cheshire family in origin), Rhosier ap Siôn Pilstwn (Roger son of John Puleston), Syr Siôn Talbod (Sir John Talbot, 2nd Earl of Shrewsbury), Wmffre Cinast (Humphrey Kynaston) of Shropshire, and Syr Tomas Salbri (Sir Thomas Salesbury), who was killed at the Battle of Barnet in 1471.[18] These families, many of whom, like the Pulestons, had lived on the March for generations, can perhaps be regarded as the first of the 'Anglo-Welsh' gentry and were marked by a relatively high level of bilingualism.

Multilingual Texts and Manuscripts

I have already referred to borrowings and translations into Welsh of a number of French and Latin texts between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, but there is limited evidence for the circulation and consumption of Middle English texts in Wales until the fifteenth century when the influence of English in the border regions was increasingly strong. There are some suggestive references in a poem by Guto'r Glyn, composing in the north-eastern March, in praise of Syr Siôn Bwrch (Sir John Burgh), a member of the Shropshire gentry and sheriff of Shrewsbury:

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[17] See Johnston 1993: no. 1.

[18] For the list of Guto'r Glyn's patrons, see *Guto'r Glyn.net* [http://gutorglyn.net/gutorglyn/patron-list] (accessed 10 December 2020). For the list of Tudur Aled's patrons, see Jones 1926: vol. II, pp. 659–88.

Syr Siôn biau'r siars yno,

Sirif fyth ar y sir fo!

Syr Ffwg y sy aer a phen,

Syr Gei ieuanc, Syr Gawen,

Syr Liwnel, os erlynynt,

Syr Libus Disgwynus gynt,

Syr Befus, lwyddiannus lw,

Siohannes, oes i hwnnw![19]

(It's Sir John who leads the charge there, may he be sheriff of the county
forever! Sir Fulk, he is heir and chief, a young Sir Guy, Sir Gawain, Sir Lionel,
if they prosecute, Sir Libius Disconius of old, Sir Bevis, successful his oath,
Johannes, a long life to him!)

In comparing Sir John to a string of romance heroes, the poet adapts most of the names from
Middle English rather than from French. The Welsh form 'Gei', referring to the romance
hero Guy of Warwick, is based on the Middle English pronunciation of 'Guy', as a
diphthong, rather than on the French form, 'Gui', pronounced as a monophthong.[20] The
character of Gawain normally appears in Welsh tales as Gwalchmai, but here the name is
transliterated directly from the English form, becoming 'Gawen'. 'Libus Disgwynus' is a
Welsh orthographical rendering of the anglicised name Lybeaus Desconus, the eponymous
hero of a Middle English romance composed about 1325–50 and based on a lost twelfth-
century French romance.[21] The Welsh name 'Befus' is taken directly from the English
'Bevis', even though there was an existing Welsh translation of the thirteenth-century

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[19] Text from *Guto'r Glyn.net*, no. 80, ll. 33–40, my translation.

[20] The Norman French romance *Gui de Warewic* was composed around the middle of the thirteenth century and
translated into Middle English soon after 1300 with a number of variants. There is no known translation into
Welsh.

[21] The closest analogue to the English romance is an Old French poem, *Li Biaus Descouneus*. See Mills 1969:
42.

Norman French romance, *Boeve de Haumtone*, whose hero appears in Welsh as Bown.[22] There has been a clear shift in Welsh references, then, from names based on earlier French forms to names based on the corresponding English forms, suggesting an increased circulation of Middle English romances on the borders by the middle of the fifteenth century as well as a more regular and normalised use of English loanwords by Welsh writers.

The increasing bilingualism and co-operation between the Welsh and English of Wales are evident in a small number of poems that are composed mainly in Welsh but contain significant phrases in English. The poet Dafydd Llwyd, who was composing political and prophetic poetry throughout the Wars of the Roses, addressed one of his praise poems to Sir Rhys ap Thomas, the king's lieutenant in south Wales who joined forces with Henry Tudor and fought with him at Bosworth. Praising Rhys's valour as a soldier, most likely referring to Bosworth, the poet says that the 'children of Rhonwen' (i.e. the English) were dead unless they were on Rhys's side, and he imagines a little scene between Rhys and an English-speaking Welsh soldier on the battlefield:

> 'Fair leader for your lady.'
> 'Ar ôl maes cymer law mi.'
> 'As I am a Wels yeoman
> Spare me with thy spear, man.'
> 'Gwadu Hors a'i gwaed horswn,
> Cymro gwych, Cymraeg a wn.'
> 'For my soul offer my sallet,

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[22] The Welsh prose romance, *Ystorya Bown de Hamtwn*, was translated from the French verse romance in the middle of the thirteenth century, while the Middle English version, *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, was written early in the fourteenth century. For the Welsh text, see Watkin 1958. Poppe (2002) discusses allusions to the romance in Welsh poetry. The Welsh name 'Liwnel', on the other hand, referring to Lionel, the brother of Bors in the *Queste del Saint Graal*, comes directly from the French name since the French prose narrative was translated into Welsh in the late fourteenth century as the first part of *Y Seint Greal*. Similarly, the Welsh 'Ffwg' is a borrowing from the Norman French prose romance, *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, circulating in the first half of the fourteenth century. Compare a later borrowing from the Middle English 'Fouke', appearing in Welsh as 'Ffowc', in a poem by Dafydd Llwyd writing in the late fifteenth century (Richards 1964: no. 50, ll. 4–6). The Welsh 'Ffowc' suggests the vowel has become diphthongised.

Marw me will no more mate.'[23]

> ('Fair leader, for [the sake of] your lady [i.e. spare me].' 'After the battlefield,
> take my hand.' 'As I am a Welsh yeoman, spare me with your spear, man.'
> 'Renounce Horsa and his bastard line, excellent Welshman, I know how to
> speak Welsh.' 'For my soul, [I] offer my helmet, brain-marrow will no longer
> stop me.')

The yeoman on the battlefield, fighting on the king's side, is from Wales but speaks
no Welsh, unlike Sir Rhys, who is prepared to shake hands with the yeoman as a
fellow-Welshman, even though they are fighting on opposite sides. Sir Rhys
demands that the yeoman renounce all thoughts of allegiance to the Saxon race of
Horsa, while the yeoman, not understanding Rhys's offer of friendship, prepares to
die (or surrender) by taking off his helmet. The syntax of the English lines is slightly
tortuous in order to conform to the Welsh *cywydd* metre in which final stressed and
unstressed syllables rhyme in each couplet, but it is quite idiomatic and suggests a
high level of bilingualism.

This kind of sporadic insertion of English into Welsh poems is taken a step further by
Tudur Penllyn, a slightly younger contemporary of Dafydd Llwyd. Tudur Penllyn,
who flourished from about 1420 to about 1485, composed a *pastourelle* in the form
of a dialogue between a Welsh man and an English woman. Unlike earlier French
and English examples of the *pastourelle*, Tudur's poem has no contextual narrative
but is set out almost like a play text with alternating speeches by two people,
beginning with these lines:

> 'Dydd daed, Saesnes gyffes, gain,
> Yr wyf i'th garu, riain.'
> 'What saist, mon,' ebe honno,
> 'Ffor truthe, harde Welsman I tro.'[24]

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[23] Richards 1964: no. 50, ll. 47–54, my translation.

[24] Roberts 1958: no. 31, ll. 1–4, my translation. For another text and translation see Johnston 1998: no. 14. The
poem is discussed by Malone 2012.

('Good day to you, fine smart English girl, I'm in love with you, maiden.'

'What are you saying, man,' she said, 'for truly I think you are a Welshman.')

The poem continues in alternating couplets, Welsh and English, until the woman finally succeeds in rejecting the poet's amorous advances. The Middle English displays traces of Welsh phonology and orthography, such as 'ffor' which uses the Welsh double f to indicate the sound /f/, and 'harde' for Middle English 'ye art'. Since 'y' does not appear as a semi-vowel in Welsh phonetics (only as a vowel), the poet has used 'h' instead to convey the sound, while voicing the 't' of 'art' to 'd' and adding an 'e' on the end to make it look more English. So the form 'harde' is an attempt to render an English form as it would have been heard by a Welsh speaker who had probably never seen it written down in English.

The application of Welsh orthography to Middle English features throughout an entire poem attributed to Ieuan ap Hywel Swrdwal, who flourished between about 1430 and 1480. Ieuan's 'Hymn to the Virgin' is written in English but uses Welsh orthography and metre, rendering it very difficult for a non-Welsh speaker to disentangle the English. The poem was apparently composed as a rebuttal of anti-Welsh insults delivered to Ieuan when he was a student at Oxford, and his aim was to prove the superiority of Welsh strict-metre poetry over anything that the English could come up with.[25] Here are the first two stanzas, out of a total of thirteen, written in an *englyn* metre:

O michti ladi, owr leding—tw haf
　　At hefn owr abeiding:
　　Yntw ddy ffest efrlesting
　　I set a braents ws tw bring.

I wann ddys with blys, ddy blessing—off God
　　Ffor iwr gwd abering,
　　Hwier i bynn [ffor] iwr wyning

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[25] In his notes to his edition of the poem, Foster Evans (2000: 212–3) comments that the attribution to Ieuan ap Hywel Swrdwal is not entirely secure, as there is no evidence that Ieuan was ever a student at Oxford.

Syns kwin, and iwr swnn ys king.[26]

　　　　　(O mighty lady, you have guided us so that we may abide in heaven; you

　　　　　planted a branch [i.e. Christ] to bring us into the everlasting feast. You won

　　　　　this with bliss, the blessing of God, for your good delivery [in childbirth],

　　　　　wherefore you are, for your reward, as a queen, and your son is king.)

There are at least twelve manuscript copies of the poem from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, all with significantly different spellings, suggesting that the copyists themselves, all of whom were Welsh speakers, had their own ideas about how best to write English using Welsh orthography. The point of the poem is that an English audience would be able to understand the poem when it is read aloud to them (by a Welsh speaker), because it sounds like English; but they would struggle to read it for themselves, even though it is in their own language. The poet has also worked the English sounds into a complex Welsh metre that requires both rhyme and alliteration, drawing attention to the greater sophistication of Welsh metrical poetry compared to what was being produced in English. So the joke was against the English students who had tried to dismiss Welsh poets and their craft.

Further evidence of bilingualism and cross-linguistic influence between Welsh and English in the fifteenth century can be found in the number of manuscripts, produced mainly in the March of Wales, which contain texts in Welsh and English, and sometimes Latin and French as well. As William Marx has noted, 'It is salutary to be reminded that in Wales, in the later Middle Ages, Middle English was a minority language and shared the linguistic stage with Welsh, French, and Latin' (2008: 15). One key example of a multilingual manuscript copied in Wales is Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales Peniarth MS 50. This mid-fifteenth-century manuscript from Glamorgan, a large Marcher lordship, contains texts in Welsh,

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[26] Foster Evans 2000: no. 33, ll. 1–8, my translation. See also Foster Evans's translation of the poem into modern Welsh (pp. 127–9). The word 'ffor' in line 7 is omitted from Foster Evans's text but it is needed for the metre and it appears in the edition of the poem by Dobson (1954), on which Foster Evans's text is based. Dobson used the orthography to comment on aspects of Middle English phonology including evidence of vowel shift. For further studies of the poem, see German 2009; Thuillier 2018.

Latin, and English, many of them prophecies in prose and verse.[27] One of the English prophecies, 'The Cock in the North', is also translated into Welsh in the same manuscript, one of very few Middle English texts to be translated into Welsh, indicating the Welsh enthusiasm for prophecy of all kinds especially during the Wars of the Roses.[28] Another example is Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales Peniarth MS 53, produced at the very end of the fifteenth century and containing texts in Welsh, Latin, and English. Among them are two Middle English prophecies, one in prose, in a Galfridian style, attributed to Merlin, and the other in verse with Latin tags, composed in a style similar to some of the prophecies circulating during the Wars of the Roses.[29]

As well as manuscripts containing Middle English texts which were produced for Welsh gentry families in the region of the March, there are also numerous manuscripts containing mostly or only Middle English texts which were produced in the Marcher regions of Herefordshire, Shropshire, and Chester. Given that these were all bilingual areas (Welsh and English) in the Middle Ages, and that Welsh-English families such as the Pulestons, Hanmers, Vaughans and many others lived there, it is not unreasonable to suppose that at least some of the Middle English manuscripts from the border regions were commissioned and owned by gentry families with some connection to Wales and that some of the scribes were Welsh-speaking. A case in point is British Library MS Harley 2253, dated to c. 1310–1330 and attributed to a scribe working in or near Ludlow in Herefordshire. Though this manuscript contains no Welsh, it does contain texts in Latin, English, and French, all languages that were accessible to Marcher audiences. Other border manuscripts, often characterised by a West Midlands dialect of Middle English, contain Middle English texts

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[27] Lloyd-Morgan says that NLW Peniarth 50 is the 'first surviving trilingual manuscript [from Wales] to include English' and that 'henceforth Welsh translators would increasingly target English rather than French texts' (2008: 168). See also Fulton 2015: 327–32.

[28] The most detailed study of this prophecy and its significance is by Flood 2017: 155–98. For the transcript of 'Cock of the North' from Peniarth 50, and for details of other Middle English texts in Welsh manuscripts, see Marx 1999: 33. The English version of 'Cock in the North' also appears in NLW Peniarth 26, another multilingual manuscript from the border region of Oswestry dated to about 1456 (Marx 1999: 39), but the Welsh translation appears only in NLW Peniarth 50 (on p. 99 of the manuscript).

[29] The prose prophecy begins 'As Merlyn seid in hys prophesy' (NLW Peniarth 53, p. 71). This prophecy is also printed in Marx 1999: 34–5. The verse prophecy begins 'With flotyng and fey[t]yng the prince I schall please' (NLW Peniarth 53, p. 131). For diplomatic transcriptions of both texts, see Roberts and Lewis 1927: 34 and 67.

that are known, or likely, to have been of interest to Welsh audiences. London, College of Arms Arundel MS 22 and London, Lincoln's Inn Library MS 150 are both fourteenth-century manuscripts from the March which contain versions of the metrical romance *Seege or Batayle of Troye*, a legend which was of keen interest to Welsh audiences who traced their origins to the Trojan Aeneas and his descendant Brutus.[30] The Arundel manuscript also contains an English version of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, a work that was popular in Wales and had been translated into Welsh from the early thirteenth century, often appearing in manuscripts of the fourteenth century and later along with the Welsh version of the Troy legend based on the account by Darius Phrygius, *Ystorya Dared*.[31] The Lincoln's Inn manuscript contains three other Middle English romances including *Lybeaus Desconus*, whose eponymous hero, as we have already seen, appears in a Welsh praise poem of the fifteenth century. Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales Brogyntyn MS II.1, made in Shropshire in the mid-fifteenth century, contains a version of the 'The Cock in the North', a text which we know was translated into Welsh; a number of lyrics comparable to those of the earlier Harley collection; a Life of St Catherine of Alexandria, which was also translated into Welsh;[32] a version of the *Siege of Jerusalem*, a place known to the Welsh as a pilgrimage destination; and the romance of *Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle*, whose hero appears in Welsh poetry.[33] Welsh names written in the margins (such as 'John ap Dafydd ap Gruffydd ap Howel', fol. 26a), possibly from the sixteenth century, indicate that the

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[30] For a description of these two manuscripts, see Barnicle 1927: x–xiv and xvii–xviii. Barnicle associates the Lincoln's Inn manuscript with Wenlock Priory, near Shrewsbury (pp. xii–xiv), and describes its dialect as West Midlands, possibly Hereford or Stafford (p. xxviii). She describes the dialect of the Arundel manuscript as South-West Midlands and places its scribe 'within a district in which the influence of the Earls of Shrewsbury or the Abbey of Shrewsbury operated' (p. xxvi). The *Manuscripts of the West Midlands* database describes Lincoln's Inn MS 150 as having a Shropshire dialect [https://www.dhi.ac.uk/mwm/browse?type=ms&id=87] (accessed 10 December 2020).

[31] Welsh versions of *Ystorya Dared* regularly appear in manuscripts as a prologue to Geoffrey's *Historia* (translated into Welsh as *Brut y Brenhinedd*). See Lloyd-Morgan 2015; Fulton 2011.

[32] The Life of St Catherine was translated into Welsh before the middle of the fourteenth century, possibly from a Middle English version. See Cartwright 2008: 170–72.

[33] Some of the contents of Brogyntyn II.1 are listed and transcribed by Marx 1999: 19–27, omitting those which have been fully edited elsewhere. See also Kurvinen 1953.

manuscript circulated among Welsh families.[34] There are plenty of indications, then, that manuscripts from the March of Wales were the products of a distinctive cultural region where both Welsh and English were used (along with Latin and French), and where audiences shared similar literary and popular interests.

With regard to influences from Welsh on Middle English texts, some of the most suggestive evidence comes from the 'Harley Lyrics', the collection of carols and folksongs included in the manucript London, British Library Harley MS 2253. As has already been mentioned, this is a multilingual manuscript (containing French, English, and Latin) that was produced in the March of Wales, probably in the region of Ludlow, and the Harley Lyrics display many of the same motifs that are found in earlier French popular poetry and in fourteenth-century Welsh poetry, notably that of Dafydd ap Gwilym (Fulton 1989: 180–81). The handful of Welsh words that appear in the lyrics are evidence not so much of two separate linguistic groups exchanging loanwords but rather of a significant degree of bilingualism and shared cultural references in this border region. The word *wolc*, 'hawk', in the poem 'Annot and John' (line 24), is clearly related to the Welsh *gwalch*, 'hawk', but both are likely to be derived from the Old English form, *wealh-hafoc*, 'foreign hawk', so are cognates rather than an example of direct borrowing.[35] Only the relative scarcity of *wolc* anywhere else in Middle English texts hints that its use in this poem might have been influenced by the Welsh spoken locally in the Marcher region.

A more important reference, in the same poem, is to the Welsh folktale character Tegeu (line 43), who appears in Welsh poetry as an exemplar of faithfulness, though interestingly the earliest mention of her name that survives in Welsh is from the early fourteenth century, more or less contemporary with the written copy of the Harley Lyrics (Bromwich 2014: 503–6). A reference to Cradoc (Welsh Caradog) in line 47, as part of the same list of folktale characters, strengthens the likelihood that the composer of 'Annot and John' was tapping in

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[34] The manuscript has been digitised by the National Library of Wales, [https://www.library.wales/discover/digital-gallery/manuscripts/the-middle-ages/a-middle-english-miscellany#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-359%2C0%2C4797%2C4079] (accessed 10 December 2020).

[35] This is the etymology of *gwalch* given in the online dictionary, *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, [http://geiriadur.ac.uk/gpc/gpc.html] (accessed 10 December 2020). See also Fulton 1985: 248. For the text of 'Annot and John' and other Harley Lyrics, see Brook 1968: no. 3; see also Fein 2014.

to a common stock of border tales known to both Welsh and English poets and storytellers.[36] Finally, the word *miles*, 'animals', in the poem 'Lenten ys come wiþ loue to toune' (no. 11, line 20) seems to be a genuine borrowing from the Welsh *mil*, 'animal', with an English plural suffix, used (like *wolc*) to provide the necessary alliteration in 'miles murgeþ huere makes' ('animals please their mates'). The fact that the poet had such a word to hand, when looking for an alliterating group, suggests at least some knowledge of Welsh.

Conclusion

Interactions between Welsh and English speakers in the Middle Ages were complex and, in general, combative. The loss of Welsh independent princely rule in 1284 and the imposition of a new political and administrative order in which Wales was fully subsumed within English control coincided with the gradual replacement of French by English as the language of governance. Before about 1300, the Welsh despised the English language as a non-elite form of communication, used mainly by incomers and urban settlers, like the uncivilised English tradespeople in the *Mabinogion* tale of Manawydan. After 1300, as English became the language of administration in an incorporated Wales, it was no longer just the language of the lower-class urban workers, mocked by the poets, but had now become a language of power and increasing prestige, through which the Welsh had to negotiate their subordination and oppression by English rule. Welsh poets and their patrons, families who considered themselves heirs to the old princely culture, kept the flame of Welsh tradition and prestige alive. But the influence of English in Wales was insidious and inevitable. The road to bilingualism began in the Marcher regions where cultural traditions and multilingual manuscripts circulated among families and communities whose identities were woven from both Welsh and English strands. With the increase in the number of English speakers in Wales after 1284 and in the range of fields where English was routinely spoken – such as trade, commerce, law, and administration – the English language, newly empowered, found its place alongside Welsh as a language of nationhood.

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[36] Bromwich speculates that the figure of Tegeu was attached to Caradog (French Carados) as his mistress in some of these tales. There are some late-medieval references in Welsh poetry to Tegeu and Caradog as lovers (2014: 504). The Harley poet does not seem to connect Tegeu and Caradog in his list, however.