DAFYDD JOHNSTON

Language Contact and Linguistic Innovation in the Poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym

Edmund Crosby Quiggin (1875-1920) was the first teacher of Celtic in the University of Cambridge, as well as being a Germanist. His extraordinarily comprehensive vision of Celtic studies offered an integrated approach to the subject: his combination of philological, literary, and historical approaches paralleled those which his older contemporary, H. M. Chadwick, had already demonstrated in his studies of Anglo-Saxon England and which the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic continues to seek to emulate. The Department has wished to commemorate Dr Quiggin's contribution by establishing in his name, and with the support of his family, an annual lecture and a series of pamphlets. The focus initially was on the sources for Mediaeval Gaelic History. Since 2006 the Quiggin Memorial Lecture is on any aspect of Celtic and/or Germanic textual culture taught in the Department.

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Medieval poetry is hardly likely to be the first port of call for anyone seeking evidence of linguistic innovation in Welsh. Famously described by the seventeeth-century grammarian Dr John Davies as 'vetustae linguae custodes', guardians of the old language, the poets of medieval Wales are generally considered to have been ultra-conservative in their use of language.[1] However, this view can be seen to reflect a Renaissance ideal of purity of language, which later became a concern of modern Welsh scholars faced with language decline and keen to preserve traditional standards, and therefore instinctively in sympathy with linguistic conservatism.

Stability of language was undoubtedly essential to praise poetry as a sort of future-proofing. If the verbal artefact was to be a permanent memorial, then praise poets had a vested interest in an unchanging language. But although praise poetry was the backbone of the bardic tradition, it was not the only means of livelihood for Welsh poets. The love poetry of the early Cywyddwyr in the mid-fourteenth century, and of Dafydd ap Gwilym in particular, formed a contrast to praise poetry not only in its ironic humour but also in its exploitation of colloquial vocabulary and duplicity of meaning – what the Red Book of Hergest bardic grammar refers to as *gorderchgerd o gywydeu teulueid drwy eireu amwys*.[2] The types of innovations discussed in this lecture also feature in the work of a number of Dafydd ap Gwilym's contemporaries, such as Gruffudd Gryg, Madog Benfras, Llywelyn Goch ap

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[1] John Davies, *Antiquae Linguae Britannicae . . . Rudimenta* (London, 1621), quoted by Branwen Jarvis, 'Welsh Humanist Learning', in *A Guide to Welsh Literature c. 1530–1700*, ed. R. Geraint Gruffydd (Cardiff, 1997), 133.

[2] *Gramadegau'r Penceirddiaid*, ed. G. J. Williams and E. J. Jones (Caerdydd, 1934), 6: 'entertaining lovesongs in the *cywydd* metre with ambiguous words'. All translations given here are my own unless otherwise indicated.

Meurig Hen and Iolo Goch, but they are best exemplified in Dafydd's own work because such a large corpus of his poetry has survived.[3]

Dafydd ap Gwilym has long been recognised as an innovator in terms of the content of his poetry, his use of European literary conventions, as a primary exponent of the new *cywydd* metre, and also in his use of loanwords. I will argue that his linguistic innovation goes much further, and that his poetry demonstrates an acute awareness of and responsiveness to semantic change, foregrounding neologisms and dual meanings. He has many first instances of colloquialisms, and even seems to anticipate senses which only become fully apparent much later in the history of the language. This aspect of his poetry has not been given the attention it deserves, perhaps partly because of a tendency to read Dafydd's language anachronistically as if it were Modern Welsh, overlooking the innovations, and in the process missing some significant nuances of meaning.

I like to think of the motley magpie, with its black and white pied colouring, as an emblem for this linguistic hybridity, as seen in this passage from *Cyngor y Bioden* 'The Magpie's Advice' in which Dafydd addresses the magpie:

> Mwtlai wyd di, mae yt liw teg,
> Mae yt lys hagr, mae yt lais hygreg,
> A phob iaith bybyriaith bell
> A ddysgud, breithddu asgell.[4]

Appropriately enough, the word *mwtlai* itself happens to be an example of an English loanword. There seems to be an implied connection here between pied colouring and linguistic variation, drawing on the popular belief that magpies were able to learn human speech. Several of Dafydd's other poems show a pattern of identification with adversarial opposites, such as the Grey Friar, the girls of Llanbadarn, and his own shadow, a sort of grudging recognition of similarity, so I think this 'emblem' can be taken to relate to himself in some way.[5]

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[3] The most recent edition is 'Dafydd ap Gwilym.net', http://www.dafyddapgwilym.net (henceforth DG.net), which recognizes 147 poems as genuine. Poems have the same numbering in the Welsh-language print edition, Dafydd Johnston et al. (eds), *Cerddi Dafydd ap Gwilym* (Caerdydd, 2010).

[4] DG.net 36.57–60: 'You are motley, you've got a fair colour (you've got an awful dwelling, your voice is very hoarse), and you would learn every fine far-off language, mottled-black wing.'

[5] DG.net poems 148, 137 and 63 respectively.

A further dimension of complexity, or equivocality, is present in this passage in the asides which appear to be addressed to the audience for comic effect. Dafydd's tone is respectful enough when addressing the magpie directly, but he also makes disparaging comments about it, seen here in the second line. This is a particularly creative use of the *sangiad*, an interpolated phrase independent of the main sentence, which is a stylistic feature of the early *cywyddau*.

Although Dafydd's attitude towards the magpie is ambiguous at best, he does elsewhere show great respect for linguistic expertise, which he often associates with poetry. In an elegy to his uncle, Llywelyn ap Gwilym, who held the post of constable of Newcastle Emlyn, and whom Dafydd acknowledges as his teacher, Llywelyn is described as *prydydd, ieithydd* 'poet, linguist'.[6] And the lawman Rhydderch ab Ieuan Llwyd, whose legal activities would surely have required him to be multilingual in Welsh, Latin, French and English, is also called *ieithydd*.[7]

Staying in the field of law, Dafydd describes his fellow poet Gruffudd Gryg as *llyfr cyfraith yr iaith iawn* 'lawbook of right language', which demonstrates a sense of correct standards, and is just the sort of thing which justifies the conservative view of the poets' attitude to their language.[8] It must be acknowledged that Dafydd makes extensive use of archaic vocabulary, and not just in his praise poems. Numerous words are attested for the last time in his work – as well as substantially more for the first time. The overall impression created by his lexicon is one of a language in transition.[9]

Dafydd ap Gwilym lived in a period in the first half of the fourteenth century when the Welsh language was undergoing considerable change – essentially the shift from Middle Welsh to Early Modern Welsh – and that change was accelerated, and probably partly caused by contact with first Anglo-Norman French,and then English resulting from invasions and subsequent immigration. The establishment of towns and the associated development of a commercial economy led to rapid social change in fourteenth-century Wales, and there was a concomitant increase in bi- or tri-lingualism which would surely have destabilized Welsh to some extent.[10] English was mainly confined to the towns, but these urban environments

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[6] DG.net 6.12.

[7] DG.net 10.39.

[8] DG.net 22.14.

[9] See Dafydd Johnston, 'The Lexicon of Dafydd ap Gwilym's Poetry', in *'Yn llawen iawn, yn llawn iaith': Proceedings of the 6th International Colloquium of* Societas Celto-Slavica, ed. Dafydd Johnston, Elena Parina and Maxim Fomin (Aberystwyth, 2015), 53–68.

[10] See *Urban Culture in Medieval Wales*, ed. Helen Fulton (Cardiff, 2012).

would have provided the intensity of contact necessary for contact-induced language change. The courts of the nobility would also have been sites of language contact, such as the home of Ifor ap Llywelyn ('Ifor Hael'), Dafydd's patron in Glamorgan who seems to have been involved in trading across the Bristol Channel.

Towns feature prominently in Dafydd ap Gwilym's poetry, both positively and negatively. In this next passage we see him commenting on the imperfect command of Welsh of an English immigrant. Elen, wife of the English cloth merchant Robin Nordd of Aberystwyth, is said to have *lediaith lud* 'halting patois':

> Gwraig, rhyw benaig, Robin Nordd,
> Elen chwannog i olud,
> Fy anrhaith â'r lediaith lud.[11]

There is some evidence of English immigrants being absorbed into Welsh speech communities, and so they could have had some influence on the language. Exposure to such interaction would have influenced Dafydd's perception of language, and I think helps to explain his sensitivity to linguistic issues, and his eclecticism, combining old and new.

Dafydd's best-known poem with an urban setting is *Trafferth mewn Tafarn* 'Trouble at an Inn', a comic story of an attempted seduction which goes disastrously wrong when the would-be lover searches for the girl's bed in the dark, falls over the furniture and wakes three English merchants who think he is trying to steal their belongings. I wouldn't want to make anything of the fact that the poem depicts the three Englishmen speaking Welsh to one another; that's simply because they are characters in a Welsh-language poem. Much more interesting is the way that Dafydd exploits the instability of language to create ironic double-meanings at the expense of the narrator, as seen in this passage:

> Deuthum i ddinas **dethol**
> A'm hardd **wreang** i'm hôl.
> Cain hoywdraul, lle **cwyn** hydrum,
> Cymryd, **balch** o febyd fûm,
> Llety, urddedig ddigawn,

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[11] DG.net 120.16–18: 'The wife, some sort of lord, of Robin North, Elen covetous of wealth, my treasure with the halting patois'. This is the earliest instance of *llediaith* in this sense, but Cynddelw has *dilediaith*, cited in the final paragraph below. It is not clear what the force of the epithet is in the name of the legendary character Llŷr Llediaith.

> **Cyffredin**, a gwin a gawn.
> Canfod **rhiain** addfeindeg
> Yn y tŷ, f'un **enaid** teg.
> Bwrw yn llwyr, liw haul dwyrain,
> Fy mryd ar **wyn fy myd** main,
> Prynu rhost, nid er bostiaw,
> A gwin **drud**, mi a gwen draw. . . .
> Gwneuthur, ni bu **segur** serch,
> Amod dyfod at **hoyw**ferch
> Pan elai y minteioedd
> I gysgu; bun aelddu oedd.[12]

This is something I explored in an article in *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* a few years ago.[13] The words which I see as thematic ambiguities are highlighted in bold in the above quotation, and I'm just going to pick out a few which are most relevant to my purpose today. Nevertheless, it is important to see the density of ambiguity in this passage in order to appreciate the poetic strategy in operation here. Some of the words in question relate to social status, some to religion, and others to moral concepts, but the overall pattern is that they are used by the speaker in positive and boastful senses but are open to be understood in negative senses which cast his actions in a morally dubious light. A particularly clear case is *balch* in the fourth line, which the speaker uses in its general positive sense 'glad, fine', but which is open to be understood as 'proud' with negative moral connotations which are very relevant to the subsequent action of the poem where pride is seen to come literally before a fall.[14]

A word which illustrates the complexity of relationships between languages is *segur* in the phrase *ni bu segur serch*. A borrowing from Latin *securus*, it was commonly used in Middle Welsh in two contrasting senses of that word, on the one hand 'idle' (the only meaning to have survived in

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[12] DG.net 73.1–24: 'I came to an exclusive town followed by my handsome page-boy. Fine merry expense, place of ready dinner/complaint, I took, I was a fine/proud young man, common lodging, dignified enough, and I got some wine. I spotted a fair slender maid in the house, my one fair soul. I set my mind entirely upon my slender darling, colour of the rising sun, I bought roast (not to show off) and expensive wine, for me and that beauty. … I made (love was not idle/easy) an agreement to come to the gay girl when the crowds had gone to sleep; she was a dark-browed girl.'

[13] Dafydd Johnston, 'Semantic Ambiguity in Dafydd ap Gwilym's "Trafferth mewn Tafarn"', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 56 (Winter 2008), 59–74.

[14] For information on this and other words discussed see *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, http://geiriadur.ac.uk/gpc/gpc.html.

Modern Welsh), and on the other 'safe, sure' (as seen in the English *secure*). The speaker is clearly using it here in the former sense to boast of his energetic seduction, but the latter sense is also ironically appropriate here because the attempted seduction turns out to be a complete disaster. Awareness of how the Latin loan was being used in English might well have contributed to the audience's appreciation of the dramatic irony. And an interesting footnote to the story of this word is that the positive sense has been taken over in Modern Welsh by *sicr*, from Middle English *siker*, an earlier Germanic borrowing from the Latin.

One of the results of language contact can be semantic narrowing of a word to align with a single sense in the other language. That process can be seen in action in the history of *drud*, used here to describe the wine which the speaker purchases. *Drud* has a wide range of meanings in Middle Welsh centring around the idea of excessive boldness and foolhardiness. Dafydd ap Gwilym uses it elsewhere in those senses,[15] but the usage in *Trafferth mewn Tafarn* is significant as an early instance of what has become the only modern sense of the word, expensive primarily in monetary terms (a sense resulting from the development of a monetary economy in the market towns).[16] The speaker is boasting here how much he has spent on the wine, showing he had spared no expense to woo the girl, but the audience would be expected to pick up on the negative connotations of excess.

A similar kind of semantic realignment is perhaps to be seen in the case of *cyffredin*. Used in early Welsh legal texts to mean 'fair, just', it seems to have been influenced by the English *common*, and *llety cyffredin* in lines 5–6 of this passage looks like a calque on 'common lodging' (i.e. lodging open to the public). Amusingly, even before completing the phrase the speaker hastens to assure his audience that his lodging was dignified enough despite being open to all. *Cyffredin* seems to have mostly avoided the negative connotations of *common*, 'vulgar' (which have been taken on by the English loanword in Welsh *comon*), but Dafydd does use it in that sense in another poem located in an urban setting, in the town of Newborough in Anglesey, in which he sends his servant with a gift of wine to a pretty girl he sees in a crowd. The girl's indignant response – before she pours the wine over the boy's head – is a complaint that the town is open to any riff-raff:

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[15] Most strikingly of the wind in *Y Gwynt* 'The Wind' (DG.net 47.4).

[16] The alternative word to express this sense in Middle Welsh (and also in modern dialects of south Wales) was *prid*, which is also used by Dafydd in the context of buying wine in a town, specifically Newborough in Anglesey, in DG.net 74.25 (see below).

> 'Pond cyffredin y dinas?
> Paham na'th adwaenam, was?'[17]

This is one of many snippets of speech in Dafydd's poetry which perhaps give us a glimpse of the colloquial language of the period. And what we see is Welsh temporarily coming closer to English, a process which is most likely to have occured in precisely the sort of context depicted here.

One consequence of language contact occurs when a word becomes fashionable in one language to convey a culturally significant sense, and the other language redeploys one of its own words to fill the perceived gap. Such a process would explain the enormous increase in usage of the word *hoyw* in fourteenth-century Welsh poetry (as compared to that of the age of the Princes). *Hoyw* is cognate with Latin *saevus*, and originally meant 'fierce, spirited, lively', most often used of animals such as horses or dogs.[18] I suggest that Dafydd ap Gwilym and his contemporaries used it to convey the sense of the French and English *gaie / gay*, which had a range of positive meanings including 'noble, beautiful, amorous' and was part of the vocabulary of courtly love. The French word was also used to describe a spirited horse, which may be the common factor which explains why the Welsh word was enlisted to fill the gap. And so when the speaker describes the girl as *hoywferch*, we know exactly what sort of girl he thought she was.[19]

Another key word for expression of social status in Anglo-Norman culture was *gentil* in French and *gentle* in English, derived from the Latin *gens* 'people' i.e. of good stock. Now, the interesting thing about this word is that it seems to have been calqued into Welsh at a very early stage. That is the implication of the use of *mwyn* to mean 'noble' in the First Branch of the *Mabinogi*, where Teyrnon's wife says of the baby Pryderi on the basis of his high-status clothing (*llen o bali*), *Mab y dynnyon mwyn yw* 'He is the son of noble people'.[20] The essential meaning of *mwyn* was 'mild, tender', often used

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[17] DG.net 74.39–40: "'Isn't the town common? Why don't I know you, boy?'"

[18] See the citations in GPC and cf. the personal name *hoewgi* 'fierce dog' in *Canu Aneirin*, ed. Ifor Williams (Caerdydd, 1938), line 266, which corresponds to *bleidgi* 'wolf-dog' in the B text.

[19] Cf. the use of *hoywddyn* in the line *Hawdd yf a wŷl ei hoywddyn* 'Easily does he drink who sees his sweetheart' (DG.net.126.28). It should be noted that the usage of *gay* with reference to homosexuals is a modern development, and the Welsh *hoyw* has taken on the same sense – indeed that is by now its only sense, which is another example of semantic narrowing in both languages.

[20] *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet*, ed. R. L. Thomson (Dublin, 1957), line 541; there are two similar usages in the same episode, lines 584 and 625. Thomson's note to l. 541 (p. 39) explains *dynnyon mwyn* as 'a calque upon the English or French expression'.

of the weather, and of people's manner or speech. The only way that it could work as a calque would be if the derived sense of *gentil* i.e. 'kind, tender' (the sort of behaviour supposedly typical of noble people) was already well established. But the Four Branches is generally thought to have been composed in its present form early in the twelfth century (partly because of the lack of evident Norman influence), whilst the earliest example of that derived sense in Anglo-Norman dates from 1230,[21] and in English from the late fourteenth century. Of course we could get round this difficulty by falling back on the dates of the manuscript texts of the Four Branches, which for this section are fourteenth-century, and argue that this might be the result of scribal rewording. However, I don't think that will wash, not least because there are two examples of *mwyn* in the sense of 'noble' in the romances, *Peredur* and *Gereint*, which take us back to the early thirteenth century at least.[22] I think the most credible explanation is that *gentil* already had the connotations of 'kind, tender' in the spoken language long before the earliest written example. That language is most likely to have been French rather than English, and it is interesting to note that one of the very few French loanwords in the Four Branches is *pali* 'silk' which happens to be the specific item which marks Pryderi as *mwyn*.

Not surprisingly, Dafydd ap Gwilym was very fond of the word *mwyn*; there are some 40 instances in his poems, which implies that it was a culturally significant term. Although there is no conclusive example of the sense 'noble' comparable to the one quoted from the *Mabinogi*, the context tends to suggest that it was a marker of social status, as well as having obvious sexual connotations, both evident in this passage from a poem depicting the month of May as a generous nobleman:

> Dofais ferch a'm anerchai,
> Dyn gwiwryw mwyn dan gôr Mai.
> Tadmaeth beirdd heirdd a'm hurddai,
> Serchogion mwynion, yw Mai.[23]

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[21] See *The Anglo-Norman On-line Hub*, http://www.anglo-norman.net, s.v. *gentil*, 4 '(of language or action) kind, courteous'.

[22] G. W. Goetinck, ed., *Historia Peredur* (Caerdydd, 1976), 14.29–30: *eiryf gwr mwyn a uyd arnaw gan y marchawc* 'the knight will consider him a nobleman'. *Ystoria Gereint* (Dublin, 1997), 1370: *Nyt deuawt gan y gwr bieu y dref gadu neb y lettyaw yndi o dynyon mwyn namyn a del attaw y hun y'r llys* 'It is not the custom for the man who owns the town to allow anyone of gentle birth to take lodging here except those who stay with him in his own court.' (Translations by Sioned Davies, *The Mabinogion* (Oxford, 2007), 69 and 176.)

[23] DG.net 32.21–2: 'I tamed a girl who welcomed me, a gentle one of good stock under May's chancel. May is the foster-father of fair poets, gentle ones devoted to love, and he dignified me.'

I know of no evidence that this use of *mwyn* survived beyond the Middle Ages, and certainly the sense 'noble' has left no trace in the modern spoken language, which still typically uses *mwyn* of mild weather and of gentle behaviour and speech. We can conclude from this that the French influence on *mwyn* was a temporary development amongst a social elite, the sort who were involved in the production and reception of the romances and love poetry, and that it never had any effect on the language of the general population.

Of course when we think of *gentle* as a marker of social status in English, the classic quotation which comes to mind is Chaucer's description of the knight in the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, 'He was a verray parfit gentil knight', which shows how important the term was for the ideal of chivalry. And in that context it's worth considering the Welsh term for knight, *marchog*, which I think also shows the influence of French in this period. In terms of its morphology, *march + -og* 'one who has a horse', it corresponds closely to the French *chevalier* (and not to the English *knight*), and it did take on the same chivalric connotations, being used to denote social status rather than means of transport. Dafydd uses it specifically of Peredur fab Efrog in referring to the romance of which he is the eponymous hero, and he also uses it with reference to Rhydderch ab Ieuan Llwyd, the lawman and literary patron (who never received a knighthood).[24]

I have been talking so far about semantic developments which can be traced back before Dafydd ap Gwilym's time, and which enable us to appreciate some of the subtlety and complexity of his usage of those words. I'd like to turn now to developments which are attested for the first time in his work, both new senses of older words and neologisms.

This passage from *Merched Llanbadarn* 'The Girls of Llanbadarn' is a very valuable one because Dafydd actually appears to draw attention to two distinct and opposing senses of a word, providing evidence of awareness of semantic shift and its exploitation as a deliberate poetic device. In this poem Dafydd recounts how he would eye up the girls in church, and then we hear the words of one of those girls cursing him:

> 'Wtied i ddiawl, beth ynfyd!'
> Talmithr ym rheg y loywferch,
> Tâl bychan am syfrdan serch.[25]

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[24] DG.net 86.38, 10.42.
[25] DG.net 137.34–6: '"Devil take him, the mad thing!" I was stunned by the bright girl's curse/gift, meagre payment for my stupified love.'

We have another taste of colloquial language here, *wtied* being the earliest example of a borrowing from English *hoot*, perhaps also influenced by *out*. But the really interesting word in this passage is *rheg* because this is the first instance of the new sense 'curse'. Previously *rheg* had meant only 'gift', but that sense was taken over by the compound *anrheg*, and since then *rheg* has meant only 'curse', with its derived verb *rhegi*. Now that sense is absolutely clear here because the girl has just cursed him to the devil, but then in the following line Dafydd appears to make reference to the older meaning of the word when he complains that this is *tâl bychan*, meagre payment for his devotion, i.e the curse is the only gift she has for him.

Another example of a new negative sense for a word which had previously only had a positive meaning is Dafydd's use of *cyfrwys* in a satire or flyting poem to a fellow-poet by the name of Rhys Meigen: *cyfrwys ddifwyn cwys* 'cunning nasty sod'.[26] *Cyfrwys* shows exactly the same semantic shift as English *cunning*, from an original sense of 'skilled, clever' to 'crafty, sly', the latter being the only sense in both modern languages. I'm not sure whether to put this down to semantic influence of English on Welsh as a result of language contact, or to parallel development due to shared culture (i.e. suspicion of cleverness). But either way, Dafydd was evidently very sensitive to semantic change. The satirical genre may be significant here because it does seem to have drawn on a lower register of language than more respectable poetry, and in addition to formal *ad hominem* abuse satire is also a prominent mode in a number of Dafydd's humorous poems cursing things which have interfered with his love-making.

Parallel development to English can also be observed in the case of Welsh *gwirion*, which derives from *gwir* 'true' and so meant originally 'innocent'. Just like the Middle English *sely* (Modern *silly*) it took on a pejorative sense of 'foolish', and effectively corresponds to *silly* for many modern Welsh speakers.[27] I'd love to be able to show that Dafydd uses *gwirion* in that pejorative sense (just as Chaucer uses *silly*), but the most I can say is that the two examples in his work are ambiguous, and it may be significant that the context in both cases has to do with uncertainty. In the first a girl is denying any relationship with him:

> Gwydn wyd yn gwadu'n oedau,
> Gwirion yw'r atebion tau.[28]

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[26] DG.net 31.21.

[27] That development seems to have happened first in north Wales dialects; the old sense 'innocent' of children is still current in Ceredigion at least.

[28] DG.net 123.47–8: 'Stubbornly do you deny our trysts, your replies are foolish/innocent.'

In the second even the Seven Sages of Rome can't understand the girl's nature – is she innocent, or are they foolish?

> Ped fai Ddoethion, wirion wedd,
> Rhufain, llyna beth rhyfedd,
> Yn ceisiaw, alaw eilun,
> Nychu yr wyf, ni châi'r un
> Adnabod, nod anniben,
> Nawd gwir anwydau gwen. [29]

It's typical of Dafydd ap Gwilym's poetry that such questions remain unresolved (perhaps compounded here by the ambiguity of reference of the *sangiad* in the first line), and so I propose that he was taking advantage of an ambiguity that was already apparent in the word *gwirion* even though the earliest definite examples of the pejorative sense don't occur until about 1500.

Moving on to words which occur for the first time in Dafydd's poetry, these are remarkably numerous. Using the citation evidence in GPC I have counted nearly eight hundred first attestations. Even allowing for the fact that more of his work has survived than any other author of the period, that is a great deal. Many of these are secondary formations from words attested earlier, and there are also a lot of borrowings from English (he has a very early instance of the word *gwn*, meaning a cannon and used as a metaphor for his penis),[30] but about a quarter derive directly from Celtic roots. Dafydd also has the first instances of a number of words of uncertain origin, and some of these are very common and basic words in the modern language.

For instance, *siarad* 'to talk'. Dafydd has the two earliest examples, both used of birds:

> Clywed siarad gan adar,
> Clerwyr coed . . .[31]

> Rhois hwp i'r ddôr, cogor cawg,
> Dderw, hi aeth yn gynddeiriawg.
> Gwaeddodd fal siarad gwyddau . . .[32]

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[29] DG.net 80.45–50: 'If the Sages, innocent/foolish manner, of Rome, there's a strange thing, were to try, image of a water-lily, I am languishing, not one of them would recognize, a vain aim, in a true fashion, the girl's disposition.'

[30] DG.net 85.31.

[31] DG.net 37.17–18: 'To hear the chattering of birds, minstrels of the woods …'

[32] DG.net 68.35–7: 'I gave the oak door a shove, clang of a basin, and it went berserk. It screeched like the cackling of geese …'

By the fifteenth century *siarad* was being used of human speech, although mostly with disparaging connotations of idle chatter.[33] Was it already being used of people in the fourteenth century, and is this part of Dafydd's anthropomorphic depiction of birds? The origin of the word is obscure. GPC compares Occitan *charrado* 'conversation', but perhaps more significant is the parallel with English *chatter* which is an onomatopoeic word also used originally of birds. The phonetic correspondence is not quite right, requiring metathesis of /t/ and /r/, but it's hard to believe that there isn't some connection between the two words. This is a basic vocabulary item in Modern Welsh – 'siarad Cymraeg' is what we do – and it is telling that Dafydd ap Gwilym used it at the very beginning of its rapid trajectory towards that position within the language.

A good number of the first attestations in Dafydd's work belong to a low register, being highly expressive words mostly conveying contempt. A typical example is *sothach* 'trash' used by him of an archer's poor shots:

Saethydd a fwrw pob sothach,
Heb y nod â heibio'n iach . . .[34]

It is not obvious what the derivation of *sothach* is, since although the derogatory suffix *-ach* is common enough in words such as *poblach* 'rabble' there is no known word *soth*. I should clarify that I am not suggesting for one moment that Dafydd himself invented this and similar words which make their first appearance in his poems – they are far too widespread in later sources for that to be the case – but rather that he exploited a vein of colloquial language which had not previously featured in literature.

There are also cases where Dafydd seems to be playing on contrasting usages of a word within different registers of the language. Since I began with the motley magpie as an emblem of linguistic hybridity, I will give an example from Dafydd's dialogue with that bird, where we again get a strong taste of the spoken language. The situation is that Dafydd is in the woods on an early

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[33] The earliest instance with reference to human speech seems to be by the early fifteenth-century poet Llywelyn ab y Moel in his complaint to his own tongue, R. Iestyn Daniel, ed., *Gwaith Dafydd Bach ap Madog Wladaidd 'Sypyn Cyfeiliog' a Llywelyn ab y Moel* (Aberystwyth, 1998), 12.64. Cf. E. Bachellery, ed., *L'Oeuvre Poétique de Gutun Owain* (Paris, 1950), III.31, D. Johnston, ed., *Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi* (Caerdydd, 1995), 123.40, and A. Cynfael Lake, ed., *Gwaith Hywel Dafi* (Aberystwyth, 2015), 62.8; and also the adjective *siaradus* 'garrulous' used by Guto'r Glyn of himself in his old age, 'Guto'r Glyn.net', www.gutorglyn.net, 117.5.

[34] DG.net 87.19-20: 'An archer shoots all sorts of useless shots, missing the target completely.'

April morning (probably to be seen as an April fool), singing love-songs in harmony with the other spring birds, when he is interrupted by the harsh voice of the magpie, a bird of ill-omen, who tells him in no uncertain terms that he is too old for that sort of thing:

> 'Mawr yw dy ferw, goegchwerw gân,
> Henwr, wrthyd dy hunan.
> Gwell yt, myn Mair, air aren,
> Gerllaw tân, y gŵr llwyd hen,
> Nog yma ymhlith gwlith a glaw
> Yn yr irlwyn ar oerlaw.'[35]

The magpie here uses *berw* (literally 'boiling') in the contemptuous sense of babbling rubbish or infatuation, a sense which is not attested until the modern colloquial language.[36] Dafydd's indignant reply contests the meaning of the word by using it in the traditional sense of the bubbling of inspired poetic out-pouring:

> 'Dydi bi, du yw dy big,
> Uffernol edn tra ffyrnig,
> Taw â'th sôn, gad fi'n llonydd,
> Er mwyn Duw, yma'n y dydd.
> Mawrserch ar ddiweirferch dda
> A bair ym y berw yma.'[37]

There may be another linguistic innovation at the end of that passage, if I am right in understanding 'y berw yma' as 'this bubbling' rather than 'the bubbling here'. The use of *yma* as a demonstrative adjective instead of the traditional *hwn* etc was an innovation in late Middle Welsh, and *yma* does tend to have a locative sense in the earliest examples.[38]

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[35] DG.net 36.35–40: '"Great is your babbling, bitter-false song, old man, to yourself. By Mary (wise word), you'd be better off beside the fire, you grey old man, than here amidst dew and rain in the fresh grove in cold rain."'

[36] O. H. Fynes-Clinton, *The Welsh Vocabulary of the Bangor District* (Oxford, 1913), 37 svv. *beru, berwi*.

[37] DG.net 36.41–6: '"You, magpie, your beak is black, you fierce hellish bird, be quiet, leave me in peace, for God's sake, here at my tryst. It is great love for a pure good girl which causes me this bubbling."' For the traditional sense of *berw* in the context of poetry cf. DG.net 8.40, [*b*]*erw Cynddelwaidd* 'bubbling like that of Cynddelw'.

[38] See D. Simon Evans, *A Grammar of Middle Welsh* (Dublin, 1970), 84–5. The fact that corresponding forms are commonly used in the same sense in Cornish and Breton suggests

Finally, I'd like to consider a startling neologism which occurs repeatedly in Dafydd's poetry, the word *bach* 'small, little'. He has twenty-one instances which are the earliest known examples of the word. It's surprising that *bach* doesn't occur in the whole corpus of Middle Welsh prose, given that it is such a fundamental word in the modern language. The earlier word for small is *bychan*, feminine *bechan*, and *bach* must be related to that word, but it's not clear exactly how,[39] or why it suddenly appears in the fourteenth century. It had a strong affective force, which is still evident today as a term of endearment used especially of children (i.e. 'little' rather than 'small'), and it's likely to have belonged to a colloquial register like other neologisms we have just seen. It is also worth noting that *bach* is exempt from normal mutation rules in some dialects – *merch bach*.

Dafydd uses *bach* mainly of girls and of birds, and here it describes a star (an instance of the tendency to withstand mutation):

> Hyd nad oes dim oleuach
> No'r seren gron burwen bach.[40]

In combination with *bechan* it conveys strong affection in phrases such as 'ddynan fechan fach' of Morfudd (where it does mutate),[41] and with the diminutive 'Fy nyn bychanigyn bach'.[42] And there is one instance of the odd form *baches*, apparently the adjective with a feminine suffix, which appears to be a nonce word coined for this highly emotive passage:

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that this may have been in sub-literary use in south Wales long before the fourteenth century, as Professor Paul Russell pointed out to me.

[39] It may be worth noting that *vachan* occurs as a variant form of *vychan* in fourteenth-century manuscripts such as Peniarth 20 and Cotton Cleopatra B V, see http://www.rhyddiaithganoloesol.caerdydd.ac.uk s.v. *vachan* and also note 47 below. Could it be that *bachan*, listed in GPC as a variant form of *bachgen* 'boy', is in fact this adjective used in a nominal sense (cf. nominal use of *bach* referring to children)? The word *bachgen* itself is tentatively analyzed in GPC as *bach* + the element *cen* seen in *cenedl*, but that is also rare in Middle Welsh, occuring in the plural form *bechgyn* in a satire by the early fourteenth-century poet Trahaearn Brydydd Mawr (N. G. Costigan et al., eds, *Gwaith Gruffudd ap Dafydd ap Tudur, Gwilym Ddu o Arfon, Trahaearn Brydydd Mawr ac Iorwerth Beli* (Aberystwyth, 1995), 13.46), and in a proverb in the Red Book of Hergest collection (*c.* 1400), *Rod ac atrod rod bachgen* (Richard Glyn Roberts, ed., *Diarhebion Llyfr Coch Hergest* (Aberystwyth, 2013), 32). The standard term for 'boy' in Middle Welsh was *mab*.

[40] DG.net 50.21–2: 'So that there is nothing brighter than the little round pure-white star.'
[41] DG.net 95.9.
[42] DG.net 104.12.

> Ni chefais, eithr nych ofal,
> Nid amod ym, dim o dâl,
> Ond ei myned, gweithred gwall,
> Deune'r eiry, dan ŵr arall
> I'w gwneuthur, llafur nid lles,
> Yn feichiog, fy nyn faches.[43]

We can see there the power of Dafydd ap Gwilym's poetry. He's complaining that Morfudd has betrayed him by marrying another man, which he depicts in bitterly degrading terms as 'going under another man to be made pregnant'. But the final phrase, *fy nyn faches*, expresses his affection for her in spite of that betrayal. The emotional tension of the passage is intensified by the cynghanedd between *feichiog* and *faches*. And awareness of the linguistic innovation enables us to better appreciate what the original force of this line might have been.

There is one other very interesting point about Dafydd's use of *bach*, which is that he made it part of the nickname of Morfudd's husband, *Y Bwa Bach* 'The Little Bow' (probably referring to a physical deformity), who is named thus by Dafydd on two occasions. Firstly, in a poem sending the wind as a love-messenger to Morfudd, Dafydd tells it: *Nac ofna er Bwa Bach* 'Don't be afraid despite Bwa Bach'.[44] And in a poem exulting in the continuation of his love affair with Morfudd after her marriage he exclaims:

> Hi a orfuum haeach,
> Aha! wraig y Bwa Bach![45]

This nickname is recorded in three contemporary documents, noting that he acted for the reeve of the commote of Perfedd in 1339–40, that he stood surety in a court case in 1344, and that his son Maredudd was beadle of the commote of Genau'r Glyn in 1357–8.[46] The form of the name in all three is *Y Bwa*

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[43] DG.net 107.27–32: 'I did not get, apart from grievous sickness, any reward, I had no contract, except her going (faithless act, colour of snow) under another man to be made (work of no avail) pregnant, my dear little girl.'
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[44] DG.net 47.16.
[45] DG.net 110.39–40: 'I have already won her, aha! the wife of Bwa Bach!'
[46] See Thomas Parry, ed., *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym* (Caerdydd, 1952), xlix–li, and Ralph A. Griffiths, *The Principality of Wales in the Later Middle Ages* (Cardiff, 1972), 438, 453.

Bychan.[47] As far as I know no one has ever commented on the fact that Dafydd appears to have changed *bychan* to *bach*. Why would he do that? I don't think it is enough to say that *bach* is more manageable within the metrical constraints of the *cywydd*. Dafydd was adept enough to use whatever words he wanted. More to the point, I think, are the affective connotations of *bach*, which may be working here to feminize or even to infantilize the jealous husband, thus neatly expressing Dafydd's contempt for him (and in pointed contrast to his repeated use of *bach* to convey affection for Morfudd). *Bach* is certainly a little word which punched way above its weight, and I think that Dafydd's use of it is as good a demonstration as any of the importance of linguistic innovation in his poetry.

When Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr referred in his elegy to Madog ap Maredudd of Powys (d. 1160) to poetry in praise of Madog as *dilediaith* 'unadulterated in language',[48] he was projecting an ideal of the poets as custodians of an unchanging literary language. For Dafydd ap Gwilym, on the other hand, contact with the *llediaith* of immigrants seems to have been a positive stimulus to profit, like the eclectic magpie, from the very instability of language.

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[47] In fact, in two of the three cases the epithet is spelt *baghan*, perhaps representing *bachan*, which would be further evidence for the relevance of that form to *bach* as suggested in note 39 above.

[48] Nerys Ann Jones and Ann Parry Owen, eds, *Gwaith Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr* I (Caerdydd, 1991), 7.31.

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