

Praise Poetry as a genre: some conclusions and terms

- Genre was important for all medieval literatures, and especially in Wales because of the strength of the bardic tradition and the social role of the poets.
- Useful to the poets as they compose their works, and for the audience in appreciating the poems.
- Sub-genres:
 - praise in the context of elegies for patrons
 - praise of male patrons - *cywydd gŵr*
 - praise of female patrons - *cywydd merch*
 - praise of God
 - praise of a saint
 - praise of a patron's home
 - praise of a town

Topos (pl. *topoi*) and motif

- A word often used to describe a major (traditional) theme or topic within a poem is *topos* (i.e. ‘theme’ or ‘topic’), e.g. :
 - appealing to God for inspiration
 - praising a patron’s military prowess or hospitality
 - praising a patron’s home.
- Another term often used is ‘motif’, which refers to a more specific element within a poem, e.g.:
 - referring to broken or bloodstained weapons (as a means of praising military prowess)
 - referring to predatory birds feasting on the dead (to convey fierceness of battle)
 - referring to a poet sharing a drink or couch with a patron (to praise hospitality and convey closeness of relationship)
- Still more specific (and used particularly often in referring to prose) is the term ‘formula’, used for a (fairly) specific form of words, e.g.:
 - phrases with *hëyrn* ‘iron javelins’ (literally ‘irons’) and the verb *hau* ‘to sow’
 - *Gwalchmai y’m gelwir* ‘Gwalchmai am I called’ (or whoever)
 - *Gwelais* ‘I saw...’ (conveying the idea of poet as eye-witness)

Some stylistic points (I)

- The Gogynfeirdd (= the Poets of the Princes, and 14th century poets composing in the same style) are generally characterised by a use of language distinct from everyday speech (and distinct from literary prose, too).
- Not only rhyme, consonance, cymeriad, rhythmic patterns, etc, but also a different style of expression and use of words.
- Fondness for **concise expression** - omission of words such as the definite article (y 'the'), verbs (especially conjugated forms), and prepositions.
 - At the same time, similar ideas are expressed repeatedly!
 - Reliance on verbal nouns renders the phrases timeless - useful for elegies.
e.g. *Rhwydd ei glod o gludaw anrhaith* 'his fame was [or 'is' or 'will always be'] widespread because of bringing plunder' (poem 3, l. 18)

Some stylistic points (II)

- The poets' desire to use a concise form of language led to a reliance on juxtaposition of nouns, adjectives and verbal nouns, e.g.:
 - *Hwrdd fleiniad feiddiad, flaid cyfwyrain* 'a challenger who is a leader in an onslaught, an exalted hero' (poem 2, line 2)
 - *Rhydd wisgoedd Wesgwyn ganhymdaith* '[a giver] of abundant garments, the companion of Gascon stallions' (poem 3, line 16)
 - *Rhwyf myrdd cyrdd, cerddorion wobaith* 'Leader of a myriad troops, the hope of poets' (poem 3, line 11)

These break down grammatically as:

- *flaid cyfwyrain* = noun + verbal noun (modifying)
- *rhwyf myrdd cyrdd* = noun + noun (modifying) + noun (modifying)
- *rhydd wisgoedd* = adjective (modifying) + noun (note mutation where modifying word precedes the noun)
- *Wesgwyn ganhymdaith* = noun (modifying) + noun (note mutation)
- *hwrdd fleiniad feiddiad* = noun (modifying) + noun (modifying) + noun (note mutations)
- Look out for mutations. Usually in Modern Welsh the adjective follows the noun (and mutates if noun is feminine). But in poetry the adjective often precedes the noun, in which case the noun mutates (*rhydd wisgoedd*). And nouns can be used in a similar way to precede (and modify) another noun (*Wesgwyn ganhymdaith*).

Some stylistic points (III)

- Fondness for compound words (sometimes of their own invention), e.g.
 - *rhuddlanw* 'blood-stained tide' (poem 2, l. 57)
 - *beirddgar* 'fond of bards' (poem 3, line 31)
 - as well as helping with conciseness this was useful for rhyme/consonance - later poets did this too!

Myfi yw, **ffraethlyw** ffrwythlawn,

Maer dy dda, mawr yw dy ddawn. (poem 6, ll. 7-8)

'I am the steward of your goods, / eloquent fruitful leader, you are greatly gifted.

- Where the poets do use more regular sentence structure, use of *sangiadau* (interjections) is common
 - e.g. *Â gwayw, gwaie Ddafydd enwir!* / *Gwân gwalch rhyfel, Hywel hir* (poem 4, lines 23-4).
 - Especially common in the later *cywyddau*, as in the example above (*ffraethlyw ffrwythlawn*).
 - Very helpful for *cynghanedd*, but also allows the poet to say two or more things at the same time - Dafydd ap Gwilym was a master at this, see the example above, and also:

Myned o'm gwlad, **dyfiad iôr**, / *Â'th glod, a dyfod, Ifor*

'taking your praise from my land, / and returning, **Ifor of lordly stature.**' (poem 6, lines 5-6)

- Unusual word order - placing things first in the sentence for emphasis or to help with metre/ornamentation, e.g. *Â gwayw, gwaie Ddafydd enwir!* / *Gwân gwalch rhyfel, Hywel hir* (poem 4, lines 23-4).

Some stylistic points (IV)

- The Gogynfeirdd / Poets of the Princes did not ALWAYS use these conventions.
- Some poems are more or less formal than others. Or a poet might use a change in style in order to draw attention to a particular section of a poem.
- Much depended on metre, too. The *englyn* metre was used for less formal works than the *awdl* (e.g. Peryf ap Cedifor's elegy for Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd)...
- ... and the later *cywydd* was particularly suited for the less formal style (i.e. closer to everyday speech.)
 - but unusual word order / sentence structure is still common
 - and *sangiadau* often used, so interpretation can still be challenging
- Late-medieval poets continued to use the *awdl* and *englyn* metres as well. A poet like Guto'r Glyn might choose an *awdl* for a particularly formal occasion, and/or when he wanted to show off his technical skill.

Ornamentation (I)

- Within a line: internal rhymes and consonance.
- Between lines: end-rhymes and *cymeriad*.
- *Cymeriad* is used to link together the beginnings of subsequent lines, or to link the end of one line to the beginning of the next (e.g. to link a series of *englynion*) or to link a poem's beginning with its end.
- Types of *cymeriad*:

– *Cymeriad llythrennol* ('with letters') - the initial consonant or (any) vowel is repeated:

Rhwyf myrdd cyrdd, cerddorion wobaith,

Rhudd, diludd, dileddf gedymdaith.

Rhygelwid Madawg cyn no'i laith

Rhwyd galon, difogion diffaith! (poem 3, lines 11-14)

– *Cymeriad cynganeddol* - a series of consonants is repeated

Canwyf—py ganwyf?—catglwyf cludfan:

Canaf can caraf, can wyf gwaethlfan,

Canu cerdd am borth am byrth clodfan;

Cyfodwch, cenwch, cenyf o'm ban,

A mi, feirdd, i mewn a chwi allan! (last section of poem 1)

– *Cymeriad geiriol* - a whole word is repeated:

Oedd beirddgar barddglwm dilediaith,

Oedd cadarn angor dyfnfor diffaith, (poem 3, lines 31-2 (and 6 more lines))

Ornamentation (II): recap of *cynghanedd*

Use of internal rhyme and consonance by Poets of the Princes was formalised and codified by the later poets (14th century) and became stricter in the 15th century.

How to find the four types?

1. Is there an internal rhyme?

If **yes**, where is it?

Cynghanedd lusg: a two part line, the end of the first part rhyming with the penultimate (accented) syllable of the second.

A'r pedair l**loff**t | o h**off**ter

Cynghanedd sain: a three-part line, with rhyme linking the first two parts and consonance linking the second and the third:

Fwrrdd | a **ch**wpwrdd | a **ch**apel

Recap of *cynghanedd* (II)

2. If there's no internal rhyme, how much consonance is there? (NB . consonants at the end of the words in each half of the line don't count.)

(a) Everything matches > *cynghanedd groes*

Mae gwahawdd | ym a gohir

Draw gan hael | i drigo'n hir

(both these lines, in opening couplet of poem 8, have *cynghanedd groes*; NB. *h* doesn't always need to contribute to *cynghanedd* as it does here - it can be ignored)

(b) There is a gap in the middle, in terms of consonance > *cynghanedd draws*.
As in the second line here:

Rhoist ym swllt, rhyw ystum serch,

Rhoddaf | yt brifenw **Rhy**dderch. (poem 6, lines 11-14)

(And the first line has *cynghanedd groes*)

Recap of cynghanedd (III)

NB. There are many complications, e.g. hardening (*caledu*) of consonants.

Telaist | ym frago**d d**uloyw (*cynghanedd draws*)

d + *d* can 'answer' *t*, because the doubling of the *d* where the one word follows the other causes it to harden to *t*. This also happens with *b* (> *p*) and *g* (> *c*))

Also, some *goddefiadau* ('allowances') to make things easier, e.g. an *f*, *r*, *n* or *m* doesn't need to be 'answered' in the middle of a line for it to count as *cynghanedd groes* - this instance below would be called *cynghanedd groes gyda 'r' ganolgoll*)

Breuglod hir | i'**r** briglwyd teg (poem 8)

(note hardening of *d* + *h* and *d* + *t*; both of these would be pronounced as *t*)

Recap of *cynghanedd* (IV)

- *Cynghanedd groes* is the most difficult and prestigious, so might be used for the opening or closing lines or a particularly significant line.
- *Cynghanedd lusg* is the easiest and least prestigious.
- BUT a poet might still use *cynghanedd lusg* for an 'important' line, because the change in the type of *cynghanedd* is a way of drawing attention to it.
- It's usual for a poem to contain all four types but the best poets would have a high proportion of *cynghanedd groes*.

Why is *cynghanedd* important for reading / studying / researching the poetry?

- Fundamental to appreciating the poetry - not necessary to name all the types, but they can be heard and enjoyed when reading the poetry aloud.
- Juxtapositions between important words can be highlighted by *cynghanedd* or other types of ornament, and made more powerful.
- When we edit poetry, especially that of the *cywyddwyr*, *cynghanedd* helps us decide which is the best reading when we are faced with a variety of different manuscript copies.
- BUT... we have to be wary of misunderstanding and 'correcting' things wrongly...
- ... and need to look out for 'corrections' by the scribes who transmitted the poems.
- Finding a line without *cynghanedd* in a poem by Dafydd ap Gwilym would not be surprising -- but we wouldn't expect this in a poem by Guto'r Glyn!