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The Welsh Bardic Grammars and the Western Grammatical Tradition¹

A. T. E. Matonis

The following is a descriptive account of medieval Welsh grammars, which have been largely passed over by Welsh scholars and are inaccessible to those others who do not read Welsh. Like Ælfric's grammar, for instance, the Welsh grammars derive from Latin sources and are equally pedagogic in purpose; unlike Ælfric's, they attempt principally to tutor the student in the grammatical principles of his own language. Because they fall so firmly within the tradition of the late Latin grammars, it might be claimed that they are unimportant works individually. However, persuaded by the sentiments of such men as R. W. Hunt, who urges us to study the medieval grammars because of their elucidation of the intellectual activity of the period,² and of others, like Father Dineen, who would have us enlarge our appreciation of the variety and development of the Western grammatical tradition,³ I would call attention to this little-known vernacular effort.

Middle Welsh, beginning in the middle of the twelfth century and ending with the close of the fourteenth, is conveniently subdivided into Early Middle Welsh (ca. mid-twelfth century to the mid-thirteenth) and Late Middle Welsh (ca. mid-thirteenth century to the end of the fourteenth), a traditional division based on philological developments occurring over the period. Even in the literary language, Middle Welsh, like other medieval vernaculars, contains considerable orthographic, morphological, and syntactic variety. In addition to the variety within the standard language, many of the linguistic features of the poetry of the period were deliberately archaic. It was in this period of natural diachronic linguistic change and artificially preserved literary diversity that the earliest Welsh grammars were produced.

As we know, descriptions of medieval vernacular grammatical systems rested on Latin models which in turn derived largely from Greek sources (evident, e.g., in the inclusion of the optative mood in the Latin grammatical tracts—an inclusion carried uncritically into the Welsh grammars by way of their Latin sources). It is not surprising that the Welsh bardic grammars are primarily adaptations into Welsh of the late Latin grammars associated with Donatus and Priscian, given the vast and inescapable influence such tracts exerted throughout the Middle Ages.⁴ Nor is it surprising that in this area, as in most areas of Old and Middle Welsh scholarship, we owe a large debt to Sir Ifor Williams, who in 1916 first called

1/A semester's study leave from Temple University allowed me to work up this topic. I would like, in addition, to acknowledge the many helpful suggestions of Professor Eric P. Hamp, Mr. T. Arwyn Watkins, and Sir Thomas Parry.

2/Hunt does so in his initial article on Priscian, "Studies in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 1 (1941–43): 194–231.

3/Francis P. Dineen, S.J., *An Introduction to General Linguistics* (New York, 1967).

4/For a discussion of the prominence of Donatus and Priscian, as well as for instructive surveys of medieval grammars and scholasticism, see Louis J. Paetow, *The Arts Course at Medieval Universities with Special Reference to Grammar and Rhetoric*, University of Illinois Studies no. 7 (Urbana, 1910); R. H. Robins, *Ancient and Medieval Grammatical Theory in Europe* (1951; reprint ed., Port Washington, N.Y., 1971); R. H. Hunt, above, and the second article on Priscian, similarly titled, in *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 2 (1950): 1–56.

attention to the affinities that the Welsh texts share with the Latin grammars.⁵ The affinities are unquestionable, even though we cannot identify a specific manuscript source.

Less certain is how wide and how early was Welsh acquaintance with Latin grammatical doctrine. Theodore M. Chotzen believed that Cynddelw (fl. 1166–1200), one of the most important poets of the *Gogynfeirdd* (literally, “fairly early poets”),⁶ referred to the “book of Donatus” in the line:

Ym prysur llauur llyuyr doneit.⁷

Certainly an admiration for grammatical learning is reflected by the early eleventh-century author of the *Life of St. Cadog*, who notes with approval the presumably eighth-century saint’s study of Donatus and Priscian.⁸ In the fourteenth century, *dwned* (Donatus) occurs as a Welsh word for *grammar*, its form borrowed, interestingly enough, not from the Latin but from Middle English *donet* or *donat*.⁹

The Welsh grammars themselves date in manuscript form from about 1400, though the dates are now in dispute, with scholars currently inclined to push the earliest tracts back to the first quarter of the fourteenth century. It is also possible that the extant texts may be copies of earlier grammars thought by some to have been the products of monastic schools.¹⁰ The earliest extant grammars, however, are attributed to, or derived from texts attributed to, two men whose exact dates are also in dispute: Einion Offeiriad (Einion the Priest, ca. first half of the thirteenth century) and Dafydd Ddu (Dafydd the Swarthy, ca. 1330–80), who was very probably a cleric also. The tendency to associate the grammars with monastic origins has no doubt been partially strengthened by the clerical identities of these two men. Gutun Owain (ca. 1455) and Simwnt Fychan (ca. 1570) were influential later adapters of the grammars, which they much expanded, and which drew on additional or different sources.

G. J. Williams, the principal editor of the tracts, entitled them the *Gramadegau'r Penceirddiaid* [Grammars of the chief bards] because he believed them to “contain a compendium of information received by pupils in the bardic schools.”¹¹ Even this claim is disputable, as we shall see later. G. J. Williams and E. J. Jones, his associate editor, printed the three earliest texts in full (items I, II, and III in the list below) and provided excerpts from important later texts as well as the complete text of the most significant of the sixteenth-century grammars, Y

5/Sir Ifor Williams, “Awdl i Rys ap Gruffudd gan Einion Offeiriad; Dosbarth Einion ar Ramadeg a’i Ddyled i Ddonatus,” *Y Cymmrodor* 26 (1916): 115–46.

6/The term designates Welsh bards who flourished from the beginning of the twelfth century to the middle of the fourteenth and whose verse is distinguished by certain metrical forms and subject matter.

7/Theodore M. Chotzen, *Recherches sur la poesie de Dafydd ap Gwilym* (Amsterdam, 1927), p. 144, cites this line, which appears in “Un Arglwyd kyfrwyd,” no. 15, in *Hen Gerddi Crefyddol*, ed. Henry Lewis, (1931; reprint ed., Caerdydd, 1974). The English translation of the Welsh verse is: “In my busy toil at the book of Donatus.”

8/G. J. Williams and E. J. Jones, eds., *Gramadegau'r Penceirddiaid* (Caerdydd, 1934), p. xcvi, where Williams refers to W. J. Rees, *The Lives of Cambro British Saints* (Llandoverly, 1853), p. 28. The Williams and Jones edition of the *Gramadegau'r Penceirddiaid* is the standard edition of the Welsh bardic grammars. I will use it throughout and hereafter cite it as GP.

9/*Gramadeg* < Lat. *grammatica* also occurs in the fourteenth century.

10/The monastic affiliation is also problematic, though Williams argues in support of this theory (GP, pp. xcvi–xcvii).

11/GP, p. v.

Pum Llyfr Kerddwriaeth [The five books of poetic art], by Simwnt Fychan. In the following discussion I will base my remarks on the three earliest grammars, which follow each other closely though not exactly. I will use *Peniarth 20* for textual citations unless otherwise noted. In all, seventy-eight grammars have been preserved, most of them copies of earlier or nearly proximate exemplars, the largest number of them paper copies belonging to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Williams and Jones provide bibliographical descriptions of all the manuscripts, but I cite here the more important grammars, giving the roman numeration assigned to the manuscripts by G. J. Williams.

- I. *Llyfr Coch Hergest* (the end of the fourteenth century), attributed to Einion Offeiriad.
- II. *Llanstephan 3* (ca. 1400), attributed to Dafydd Ddu.
- III. *Peniarth 20* (accepted as ca. 1400 by Williams and Jones, but now regarded as possibly ca. 1320), differs from the above texts in some details of organization and in its somewhat older orthography.
- XX. *Llanstephan 55* (1579), copied by Sion Dafydd Rhys from a copy attributed to Dafydd Ddu. Williams and Jones excerpt this text.
- XXII. *Llanstephan 28* (ca. 1455), in the hand of Gutun Owain. This grammar follows the same general arrangement of the others but is fuller on most points. In addition, it is prefaced by the following heading: "Llyma Cyfrinach Beirdd Ynys Bryddain, yr hwnn a elwir y Dwned yng Ng hymraec."¹² *Llanstephan 28* is one of the first grammars to distinguish eight parts of speech. It also supplies Latin examples.
- LV. *Y Pum Llyfr Kerddwriaeth* (compiled ca. 1570) by Simwnt Fychan. This is the fullest and most systematic treatment of word classes found in the Welsh tracts, much expanded by the addition of newer and more detailed material. It also bears a heading: "Llyma ddysg i adnabod kerddwriaeth kerdd davod herwydd llyfr Dafydd Ddu Athraw."¹³

There are many questions surrounding the grammars, not the least of which is their bardic authority. Though G. J. Williams and others after him have regarded these grammars as manuals of bardic instruction, there are difficulties in accepting this as strictly true: first, because of our very uncertainty about the existence of bardic schools; and second, because, as Thomas Parry has well argued, it is unlikely that training in a grammatical system based on Latin features would have been relevant to Welsh or of any practical value in cultivating a mastery of the Welsh poetic idiom.¹⁴ Then, too, our limited knowledge of the circumstances of the first grammar's composition, of the original author, and of the historical circumstances of Wales during this period—which had seen the collapse of the highly stratified bardic orders after the fall of the last prince in 1282—allows only guarded speculation. Moreover, the treatment of metrics and various techniques of versification (such as *cynghanedd*, a strict system of internal rime or a matching series of alliterating consonants running throughout the line or both) does not represent an accurate reflection of fourteenth-century bardic practice.

On the other hand, the regrettable lack of evidence for bardic schools does

12/GP, p. 67. Translation: "Here is a Welsh bardic grammar [literally, The secret of the bards of the island of Britain], that which is called Grammar in Welsh."

13/GP, p. 89. Translation: "Here is the instruction for becoming skilled in the art of poetry following the book of Dafydd Ddu, teacher."

14/Parry, "The Welsh Metrical Treatise Attributed to Einion Offeiriad," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 47 (1961): 177–95.

not conclusively confirm their nonexistence. Certainly there must have been some system of bardic training of long ancestry in Wales such as has been claimed for Ireland.¹⁵ It is a safe assumption that Wales, like Ireland, had a highly regulated bardic order, each group with its assigned subject matter and metrical forms. The metrical forms themselves were sufficiently complex, the prosodic system layered with proscriptions and prescriptions so detailed and complicated, that a long period of training can be presumed. The question then becomes, Did these bardic schools produce or make use of the grammars which we now have? The grammatical tracts are unmistakably pedagogic and bardic in orientation, as will be shown in the course of this paper. The question of the original compiler remains unsettled, but it is far more likely that this compiler was a cleric than that he was a bardic teacher. Similarly difficult is the question of provenance. We cannot assume a monastic origin. And here there are some large and interesting questions regarding the production of both Latin and vernacular manuscripts in medieval Wales. At this moment, Welsh scholars are not at all certain that monastic centers were very actively engaged in this sort of activity or how many translations from Latin were taking place. Moreover, there were comparatively few monasteries in Wales, and their efforts were directed toward translating religious material, such as saints' legends, that would appeal to the secular clergy.

Though these and other problems have still to be resolved, and though the early and middle decades of this century saw some debate on the problems of date and attributions of the grammars, the grammars themselves have attracted relatively little discussion. In fact, there have been only three noteworthy discussions beyond the early remarks of Ifor Williams and G. J. Williams in his introduction: first, Thomas Parry's excellent 1961 Rhŷs lecture which addressed itself to the questionable accuracy and value of the prosodic section in the grammar; second, J. Beverly Smith's 1964 essay on Einion Offeiriad, which attempts to solve some problems of date and biography;¹⁶ third, Saunders Lewis's 1966 Cardiff lecture on the grammars, in which he argues somewhat pressingly that the grammars, and particularly *Peniarth 20* (for reasons which are not entirely clear to me), belong to the tradition of dialectic and logic which dominated grammatical doctrine after the twelfth century.¹⁷ Since Lewis's beliefs seem to have gained some uncritical acceptance and have not been answered, I would like to respond to them here—an unpleasant duty because Lewis is a fine and sensitive scholar from whose work I have gained considerably.

Let me say at once that I believe the grammars to be normative, descriptive, pedagogical treatises firmly rooted in the tradition of the late Latin grammars, and, in their focus, sharply differentiated from the efforts of the Modistae. Whereas the speculative grammarians couched their definitions and analyses of the parts of speech (and their accidents) in the technical vocabulary of metaphysics and logic, the Welsh grammars do not propound any theory at all, be it morphological,

15/Yet even the situation in Ireland is obscure, for, though the Irish evidence is much fuller, particularly in the many references to the *filid* found in the poetry, nonetheless, our earliest classification of the bardic system in Ireland dates from the sixteenth century and then by way of an English source.

16/J. B. Smith, "Einion Offeiriad," *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 20 (1962-64): 339-47.

17/Taking up the ideas expressed in his *Braslun o Hanes Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg hyd 1535* (Caerdydd, 1935), Saunders Lewis has most recently argued this point in his 1966 Cardiff lecture, *Gramadegau'r Penceirddiaid* (Caerdydd, 1967).

semantic, or philosophic. Moreover, in their treatment of the sentence, or units of discourse, the grammars fail to identify the sentence with its predication as either conceptual or propositional. Were the original compiler following a speculative text or working within the speculative tradition, he could not have avoided turning to the logical applications of the sentence. While there are recognizable logical criteria contained in the grammars, these would have been uncritically, and to a certain extent unavoidably, copied from the Latin source which in turn would have inherited such historical criteria.

Believing the grammars to be consciously dialectic, Lewis explains their deviations from the actual linguistic system of Welsh as the rejection of that system in favor of an Aristotelian framework. This simply will not do. For one thing, as I suggested above, there is none of the speculative or dialectic apparatus common to the *grammaticae speculativae* in the Welsh texts. The noun, for instance, is notionally and superficially defined and subdivided into various traditional types (e.g., strong and weak, proper and common, etc.), its treatment scarcely deviating from the treatment found in Donatus or Priscian—or Ælfric, for that matter. The compilers of the Welsh texts do not show any interest in *how* a noun, or any word, “signifies” something. They do not strictly concern themselves with meaning, with modes of understanding or knowing or being, or with any of the distinctions central to speculative grammatical theory. Furthermore, unlike the speculative grammarians, the Welsh compilers did not reclassify “substantival” and “adjectival” nouns as nouns and adjectives but subsumed the adjective under the noun, as did Donatus and his followers. We must pause also when Lewis, in averring that the grammar of *Peniarth 20* is “a branch of logic or dialectic,”¹⁸ offers the following as textual support: “Dwy rann ymadrawd ysydd herwyd Kymraec, nyt amgen, henw a beryf.”¹⁹ (“There are two parts of speech as regards Welsh, namely, noun and verb.”) When Lewis further bases his argument on the comparison of the Welsh text with the Latin (namely, the Welsh *herwydd Cymraeg*, “as regards Welsh,” where the Latin of Priscian has *secundum dialecticos*), one begins to see the source of some confusion. Lewis is presuming, perhaps, that *Peniarth 20* drew directly on Priscian’s *Institutiones Grammaticae*;²⁰ moreover, he may be attributing to Priscian’s categorization a philosophic intent beyond the necessary concern with logic that it—and others of its species—inherited as a natural consequence of their subject matter. I doubt that any of us would vigorously dispute the close connection between the early evolution of grammatical theory in Greece and the analysis of logical propositions and their linguistic bases. This legacy, as well as the interest in rhetoric and the practical uses of language in oratory, marks all grammatical descriptions from the Sophists on through the Middle Ages and beyond. Thus, when Donatus grants that there are eight parts of speech, he also accepts the logician’s position which gave primacy to the noun and verb.²¹

One might also query why the translation of *secundum dialecticos* into “as regards Welsh” (*herwydd Cymraeg*) bears any special significance. Not only does

18/*Ibid.*, p. 4.

19/*Peniarth 20*, lines 14–15; GP, p. 42.

20/Heinrich Keil, ed., *Grammatici Latini*, vol. 3 (1864; reprint ed., Hildesheim, 1961).

21/Donatus *Ars Grammatica* 1.4 (in Keil, 4:372).

it fail to translate the Latin literally but it also fails to carry over any of the sense of *dialecticos*. Finally, one has to dismiss Lewis's suggestions that the compiler of *Peniarth 20* deliberately rejected the linguistic realities of Welsh in order to bring his grammar closer to the Aristotelian system. While it is no doubt true that medieval vernacular grammarians often disregarded linguistic realities characteristic of their vernaculars, they most often did so because their thinking about language was dominated by Latin and its eminence, or because their immediate sources were Latin.

I have referred to the Welsh grammars as bardic, and, as I noted, this description was given to the collected grammars by their editor, G. J. Williams. Though the early grammars do not explicitly declare a pedagogical purpose nor specifically announce that it was the bardic student whom they addressed, there is sufficient evidence within the texts to indicate we can accept both as givens. And, indeed, from the mid-fifteenth century (when texts begin to carry captions which assert a bardic purpose), there can be no doubt that scribes and bards alike regarded the grammars as manuals of bardic instruction, despite the reservations modern scholars have had in accepting them as practicable texts. In any case, the compiler's instincts are those of the pedant, not the bard, though bards no doubt could be equally pedantic. Moreover, the compiler's efforts in explaining svarabhakti vowels,²² for instance, suggest one who was thinking in terms of the written word—a point I will turn to later. It is possible that the compiler may have been a cleric whose interests both in bardism and in the fostering of learning led him to his task. His bardic frame of reference, however, is indisputable, as is seen in his discussion of syllables and diphthongs—which departs radically from the Latin texts.

The compiler borrowed the framework and the grammatical categories of the Latin grammars. He may even have borrowed the idea of including an *ars metrica*. It will be remembered that a vast number of grammars from the fourth century on commonly include metrics as part of the grammatical *ars*; and, although neither Donatus nor Priscian incorporates chapters on poetics or metrics into his grammar, Priscian did turn to the topic elsewhere. Or, again, we might refer to the Irish tradition which also produced bardic grammars.²³ In a number of these, the grammatical material constitutes less than one-third of the text; the larger portion, drawn from the native tradition, is given over to technical features of the poetic system.²⁴ Even so, in their treatment of grammar the early Irish tracts rely equally heavily on the Latin tradition, often directly quoting Donatus and Priscian. Nonetheless, in the Irish grammatical tracts the phonetic observations behind the exacting prosodic dicta regarding varieties of rime, the formation of compound words, and the treatment of consonants in their mutated and nonmutated forms

22/Svarabhakties, or epenthetic vowels, developed before the Middle Welsh period in certain groups of consonants. They were not counted metrically in the poetry. For a comprehensive review of these vowels, see D. Simon Evans, *A Grammar of Middle Welsh* (Dublin, 1964), pp. 12–13.

23/See Osborn Bergin's publications on the "Irish Grammatical Tracts. I. Introductory"; "II. Declension"; "III. Irregular Verbs"; "IV. Abstract Nouns"; "V. Metrical Faults"—all published as supplements to *Eriu* 8 (1913–16), 9 (1921–23), 14 (1946), and 17 (1952–55). See also Father Lambert McKenna, ed., *Bardic Syntactical Tracts* (Dublin, 1944).

24/The features are nicely reviewed by Brian Ó Cuív, *The Linguistic Training of the Medieval Irish Poet* (Dublin, 1973).

show a sophisticated grasp of linguistic detail that was not drawn from Latin sources and is not apparent in the Welsh texts, though the Welsh compiler does distinguish himself in some areas. That he does not distinguish himself more notably may well be another reason to regard him as someone outside the bardic system. For almost certainly it was the bardic-teacher class, the *flid*, which was responsible for the grammatical tracts in Ireland, and it was their firsthand intimacy with the poetic system which enabled them to make the linguistic distinctions they did.

Some of the other problems connected with the grammars, such as dating, will have to wait for the expert analysis of a paleographer, though we learn something from the distinguished researches of Thomas Jones, who examined *Peniarth 20* in connection with his work on the *Brut y Tywysogion* [The chronicle of the princes].²⁵ Jones accepted the dating of Robin Flower, who placed the manuscript in the second half of the fourteenth century. Yet the orthography is older and, in addition, shows some curious features such as the scribal use of *q* to indicate the spirant sound /ð/, denoted in modern Welsh by *dd*, but in Early Middle Welsh by *t*—except initially, when it invariably indicated /t/. The practice of representing the spirant /ð/ graphically as *dd* developed during the fourteenth century, but only after the use of *t* had been abandoned in favor of the graph *d*. *Peniarth 20* also uses *d*, which supports a later fourteenth-century date, but this may have been a scribal adjustment for there are other orthographic features which suggest an older tradition.

As for the curious use of *q*, which suggests the Latin contraction of *que*, this seems to be peculiar to this manuscript, and Thomas Jones explained it as an apparent orthographic experiment by a copyist habituated to transcribing Latin or French texts.²⁶ And indeed, in his itemization of the letters of the alphabet, the scribe of *Peniarth 20* uniquely includes *q* as one of the letters of the Welsh alphabet.

The grammars provide us with the earliest examples of a linguistic terminology in Welsh, although almost nothing of this terminology survives today.²⁷ Predictably, a high percentage of the technical grammatical vocabulary derives from Latin, as either learned loans or calques. Among the surviving loans are *bogal* ("vowel"), *dipton* ("diphthong"), and *berf* ("verb"). *Dipton* is of some interest, borrowed from Latin, adapted to Welsh phonology, and possibly confused with "tone." Typical calques are *cytsain* ("consonant" < *cyd* + *sain*, "sounding together"), *enw* ("noun" ~ *nomen* = "name"), and *anterfynedig* ("infinitive" *an* + *terfyn* + *edig* = "interminable").

In addition to the Latin-derived terminology, there are a number of terms which belong to the native tradition or which are particularly creative adaptations. These are almost exclusively terms used to describe various syllables and diphthongs, both major determinants of what constitutes an acceptable metrical line.

25/*Brut y Tywysogion*, trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff, 1952), pp. xlv–xlix.

26/*Ibid.*, p. xlv.

27/This replacement took place only as recently as the early part of this century. Then, too, Welsh has had to compete with English as the language of instruction even in grammar. Thus, even in the early part of this century, Welsh schoolchildren would have learned English grammar, in English. It was not until a decade or so ago that a strong effort has been made to revive Welsh as the first language of Welshmen and as the language of instruction from primary schooling up through university.

On the other hand, the consonants were equally crucial in the composition of the poetic line, being of fundamental importance in both rime and alliterative correspondences. Yet the grammars do not go beyond their Latin sources in their discussion of the consonants. In this particular, the Irish grammars far eclipse the Welsh.

The texts proper fall into two major divisions, although they are not signaled by captions or manuscript headings in the three early grammars. The first section deals with grammar and constitutes roughly 37 percent of the tract; the second is a native *metrica*. The following organization characterizes the grammars and was outlined by G. J. Williams in his introduction, although he did not include number 4 below as part of his schema. I have done so in order to indicate the presence of the discussion on units of discourse and syntax that appears in all the grammars and was recognized by medieval grammarians as a category distinct from parts of speech. With this addition, the outline reflects the fairly fixed major linguistic categories perceived by medieval grammarians: *orthographia*, *etymologia*, and *oratio*: (1) discussion of the letters of the alphabet; (2) the syllables and diphthongs; (3) the parts of speech; (4) syntax and units of discourse; (5) the measures of *cerdd dafod* (i.e., the poetic art); (6) forbidden flaws in poetic composition; and (7) the manner in which to praise each thing: that which pertains to poetry; the *Trioedd Cerdd*.

The debt the Welsh grammars owe to the Latin tradition will be immediately obvious. They inherit certain primary criteria (such as meaning and function) for assigning words to their grammatical categories, yet whoever their audience, their illustrative matter and occasional interpolations betray their bardic orientation. As is to be expected, many of the descriptions and subcategories are often incompatible with Welsh. Such discrepancies are, no doubt, to be regarded as flaws—but flaws that would have been less troublesome to the early compiler and his contemporaries than they are to us, partially because they were more routinely in contact with Latin than we, and partially because they did not share the critical fussiness of the modern linguist.

When we turn to the grammars themselves, we shall see at once that a large number of orthographic difficulties arose from the early uncritical, though understandably natural and necessary, adoption of the Latin alphabet.

The Letters

“Pedeir llythryrenn ar hugeint Kymraec ysyd, nyt amgen, *a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, y, w, ll, q̄*.”²⁸ The Welsh texts begin with this statement²⁹ and do not depart substantially from the discussion of the letters in the Latin grammars, though they lack both the introductory statements on words (*a voce*) and the broader discussion of letters (*de litera*) found in most of the Latin texts. The Welsh grammars also fail to include the definitions supplied in the Latin (*Littera est pars minima vocis articulatae*),³⁰ and in so doing they reduce the treatment considerably, omitting an essential linguistic criterion. The compilers of

28/GP, p. 39; *Peniarth 20*, lines 1–2. Translation: “There are twenty-four letters in Welsh, namely, *a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, y, w, ll, q̄*.”

29/Later grammars, e.g., *Llanstephan 28*, seemingly following another tradition which omits the initial discussion of the letters, begin with the parts of speech. *Y Pum Elyfyr Kerddwriaeth*, however, begins with the letters, and the discussion parallels the three early grammars.

30/Donatus 1.2 (in Keil, 4:367).

the Welsh grammars have been criticized for ignoring Welsh orthography and pronunciation by including *q* and *x*, unnecessary symbols in Welsh, and by excluding other graphs that would have reflected the phonetic realities of Welsh—presumably the nasal velar /ŋ/ and the fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, as well as the velar fricative /x/, and the unvoicing of *r*/*ŕ*/. Yet Welsh orthography did accommodate its peculiar phonemes in a fairly sensible way. Thus, while Latin had a scarcity of voiced nasals, the Welsh need to represent its four voiced fricatives /ð, γ, β, μ/ was met by choosing the consonantal approximates /d, g, b, m/. This choice of symbols may also explain why /b, d, g/ are represented internally and finally by the graphs *p, t, c* in Old Welsh. By the Middle Welsh period, phonetic developments surrounding both /β/ and /μ/ produced additional orthographic confusion. Meanwhile, /γ/ and /β/ had disappeared from the phonetic system, and /μ/ lost its nasal element.³¹

The Welsh grammars all include the voiceless lateral spirant /λ/, representing it orthographically by ligatured *l* and within the text further describing it as having “the force of two letters.” Nonetheless, in Welsh manuscripts of the period, a ligatured *l* may refer both to the lateral spirant and the single *l*, while elsewhere in medieval vernaculars *ll* does frequently appear orthographically for *l*.

Further observations on the letters seem to be based entirely on Latin sources. Thus, all three early grammars explain that *z* is a Greek letter, as do Probus, Donatus, and Priscian. Similarly, *x* is described as a combination of *c* and *s*, though here the Welsh grammars do not follow the Latin in mentioning the Greek origin of the letter.³² Their recognition of the spirant value of *h* is also dependent on their Latin sources, but they do observe that, while “there is no letter *h* as regards metre . . . yet it is necessary in Welsh, and Welsh cannot be without it.”³³ It is further essential in indicating the spirant mutation and appears initially before vowels (sandhi *h*) after various pronominal forms.

The graph *w*, included in all the Welsh grammars, represents an important development in Welsh orthography, having been adopted some time in the Middle Welsh period to indicate both the vowel /u/ and the consonant /w/, which is in actuality a voiced semivowel. Its earliest use seems to have been as a symbol of the consonant *w* which was expressed by *u* in Old Welsh. In the *Book of Llan Daf* (ca. 1140), *u* appears regularly for both the vowel and the consonant, though in the *Black Book of Carmarthen* (ca. beginning of the thirteenth century) one finds *u/v* denoting the vowel without exception and *w* used to represent /v/. But even during this period, there is some overlapping between the use of the symbols *u* and *w*. Thus the vowel /u/ could be represented by *w* or *Ϸ* where in Old Welsh we would find *u*. The consonant *w*, also represented in Old Welsh by *u*, was commonly written *w* or *Ϸ* in Middle Welsh, though some manuscripts give *u* or *v*. Eventually, and after certain phonetic changes, the symbol *w* regularly indicates the vowel when it appears terminally in such words as *carw*, where the *w* tended to become syllabic and vocalic. As Arwyn Watkins has observed, there was an orthographic

31/I am greatly indebted to T. Arwyn Watkins, *Iethyddiaeth* (Caerdydd, 1961) for this discussion of Welsh orthography and phonology.

32/*Y Pum Llyfr Kerddwriaeth*, GP, p. 89, claims that *x* is a Latin letter which has no place in Welsh, which uses *c* and *s* instead (“*X* Lladin yw, ac nid anghenrraid wrthi yng [Ng]hymraec, kans *c* ac *s* a roir yn i lle”), lines 20–21.

33/“Nyt llythyrenn *h* herwyd mydyr . . . ac eissyoes, reit yw wrthi y mywn Kymraec, ac ny ellir bot hebdi.” GP, p. 39; *Peniarth* 20, lines 26–29.

reason for *w* to supplant *u* here, for it meant that the orthography would be less ambiguous and less likely to confuse such words as *llw* (Early Middle Welsh *llu*) and *llu* (Early Middle Welsh *llu*).

I have already mentioned *Peniarth 20*'s peculiar use of *q̄*, which appears throughout the early pages of the manuscript to indicate the dental fricative /ð/. The grammar provides us with this explanation: "Llythyrenn Gymraec yw *q̄*, kyt boet sillaf Ladin hi, a thodi mywn kerd a wna megys *d*."³⁴ (" *q̄* is a Welsh letter, although it is a syllable in Latin, and it dissolves in song and becomes *d*.") Granted the difficulty we may have in associating /ð/, written *dd* since the end of the fourteenth century, with such a symbol, the manuscript evidence clearly suggests that the scribe of *Peniarth 20* saw *q̄* as a useful symbol.³⁵ Nonetheless, G. J. Williams, following the explanations found in the Latin grammars for the value of *q* when followed by *u*, recommends that we take the scribe's *q̄* as *qu*.³⁶ Despite this, it seems perfectly clear that the scribe (or compiler) intended his symbol to denote /ð/, recognizing in addition that it was constantly needed in the *cynghanedd* of the poetry.

Although the alphabet presented by the Welsh grammars does not reflect either the orthographic perplexities or the phonetic characteristics of Middle Welsh, it adapted itself in a fairly satisfactory way to accommodate both systems, which were then in a state of flux. Then, too, most medieval vernaculars failed equally to adjust their orthographic systems, and Welsh eventually managed a more consistent correspondence than did English. Moreover, the Welsh tracts do show some independence in their presentation of the vowels, giving them as *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, *y*, *w*, thus expanding the Latin—which for Welsh purposes had a scarcity of vowels. There were, in fact, seven vowels in Middle Welsh (discounting the schwa): /*a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, *ɨ*, *ʉ*/. It was, accordingly, an easy enough matter for the Welsh compilers to adopt the Latin symbols for the first five vowels, but it was also an intelligent choice to reuse symbols which were physically proximate to represent the Welsh vowels which had no Latin counterpart. Since /*u*/ and /*ʉ*/ were physically similar, both closed and round, *u* was used for both. Likewise, /*i*/ and /*ɨ*/ being similar, they were both indicated by *i* in Old Welsh. But *y* begins to appear for /*ɨ*/ even in the late tenth century, and by the middle of the twelfth century regularly indicated both /*ɨ*/ and /*ə*/. Thus, while the orthographic use of *y* can be traced to the late Old Welsh period, its use was not regularized until Early Middle Welsh. *Peniarth 20*, in fact, refers to the two sounds which *y* could represent, explaining immediately following the list of Welsh vowels: "ac vn onadunt ysyd a deu ryw datkanyat arnei, nyt amgen, *y*, yn tywyll ac vn eglur, val *y* mae yn *y* geir hwnn, *ystyr*, neu yn *y* geir hwnn, *llythyr*. Ar yr *y* gyntaf o bob vn onadunt, *y* mae tywyll datkanyat, [ac ar yr] *y* diwaethaf [o bob] vn onadunt *y* mae eglur datkanyat."³⁷ ("... and there is one [vowel] among them with two kinds of pronunciation, namely, *y*, obscure and open, as it is in the word *ystyr*, or in the word *llythyr*. The first *y* of each of them is obscure in pronunciation, and the last [*y*] of each is open in pronunciation.") Since this distinction was important in

34/GP, p. 39; *Peniarth 20*, lines 30–32.

35/It might also be noted that *t* = /ð/ early in the Middle Welsh period, *d* later, and finally *dd*, which developed sometime during the fourteenth century.

36/GP, appendix D, p. 163.

37/*Ibid.*, p. 39; *Peniarth 20*, lines 4–6.

providing a kind of *lusc* rime (literally, “trailing,” a type of internal rime found in *cynganedd*), the above observation certainly suggests a bardic frame of reference, although somewhat rationalizing it in print.

The classification of the consonants further illustrates the dependence on Latin and signals a glaring failure to record observations on the Welsh consonantal system that must have been both obvious and available. The compiler was surely aware of the consonants which were subject to mutation—after all, mutations are indicated in the text—and must have appreciated the role they played in *cynganedd* (in both their mutated and unmutated forms) where consonantal categories and correspondences were crucial. Moreover, the grammars do comment on the spirant quality of *h*—used in the spirant mutation—though it is possible that they did not have its role in indicating the mutation in mind, and that this observation was another uncritical borrowing from the Latin.

Instead of looking closely at his own consonantal system, which contained several easily identifiable categories in addition to the one sensibly borrowed category (the mutes, or plosives), the compiler of the Welsh grammar slavishly reproduced the Latin categories, dividing his consonants into liquids (*d* [i.e., /ð/], *f*, *l*, *m*, *n*, *r*, *s*), which he calls *tawdd* (“melting”), and mutes (*b*, *c*, *g*, *k*, *p*, *q*, *t*), which, following the Latin text, he calls *mut*. The liquids listed in the Welsh grammars correspond, with the exception of the graph *d*, to the Latin semivowels, while the mutes also reflect the Latin order except for *d* and *h*, which are dropped from the list of Welsh mutes. At least here the Welsh grammars recognized that *d*, which they obviously took as the sign of the voiced fricative /ð/, and *h*, another Welsh fricative, should not be classified with the plosives. In addition, the Welsh grammars drop the Latin definition of a semivowel (or “liquid,” as they are classified in the Latin grammars), and choose to explain them as “melting” or “dissolving” (*tawdd*)—“because they dissolve in poetry.” If *tawdd* is an attempt to translate “liquid,” it is not a poor rendering, but it is a curious name for describing the epenthetic vowel that often precedes certain consonants (e.g., the liquids *ll*, *rh*, *l*, and *r* when final; the nasals *ngh*, *ng*, *nh*, *n*, *mh*, and *m*). Nor is it entirely clear that the compiler did not have these consonants so affected in mind, especially when one considers the bardic orientation. Moreover, such an epenthetic vowel was not counted in verse. I think we can be fairly certain that the compiler is here concerned with this epenthetic quality.

Though we might not expect the compilers of these texts to supply detailed analyses of some of the peculiarities of the Welsh orthographic system, we may nevertheless regret their failure to acknowledge them, particularly at a time when the system was being sorted out and presumably by the very class who transcribed *Peniarth 20*. Finally, as regards the discussion of the alphabet, it should be remembered that Welsh, unlike Irish,³⁸ has always been written in the roman alphabet. As for the numeration of letters in the Welsh grammars, one could question both the editors of the *Gramadegau'r Penceirddiaid* and John Morris-Jones,³⁹ who

38/Irish had an ogham alphabet which was used from ca. fourth or fifth century to the early seventh century. References to this alphabet appear in a late medieval Irish grammar. George Calder, ed., *Auraicept na nÉces: The Scholar's Primer* (Edinburgh, 1917).

39/Morris-Jones makes this claim in *A Welsh Grammar* (1931; reprint ed., Oxford, 1970), p. 10, while G. J. Williams, almost certainly following Morris-Jones, claims, in his introduction to the GP: “Y mae'r eglur fod rhyw swyn yn perthyn i'r rhif hwn yn yr Oesoedd Canol” (p. xxx). Translation: “It is clear that some magic was attached to this number in the Middle Ages.”

claimed that some magical value accorded the number 24 accounts for the compiler's choice of the twenty-four letters in their alphabet.⁴⁰ While it may well be that there are many groupings of twenty-four in Welsh lore, it is equally possible that the Welsh compilers described the alphabet as having twenty-four letters because their source gave twenty-four, a number ultimately derived from Greek grammatical tracts and found, for instance, in the grammar of Dionysius Thrax.

The Syllable

Donatus describes a syllable in terms of its *tenor* and *spiritus*, classifying syllables as *breves*, *longae*, or *communes*.⁴¹ The Irish *Auraicept* calls the syllable "the ultimate element of everything Gaelic, except gender; number, case, person, degree, tense, mood are indicated by syllables."⁴² Priscian regarded a syllable as a sound that could be written and uttered in one breath and bearing one accent.⁴³ In an addendum to the Welsh grammars, there appears a list of *trioedd* ("threes") which claims that a syllable has letter, tense, and accent,⁴⁴ that is, that it indicates these three conditions—though the claim for accent is peculiar and may be a borrowing.

Priscian further describes the syllable as capable of having as few as one or as many as six letters. Ælfric, typical of the grammarians and commentators of the period, follows Priscian, including his examples.⁴⁵ The Welsh grammars likewise allow syllables to range in size from one letter to six and provide accurate examples of each. In addition, they make the noteworthy and independent observation that some syllables consisting of six letters may also include a "sign of aspiration" (*arwyd vcheneit*), such as in the word *gwnaeth*, which they correctly regard as monosyllabic.

The Welsh grammars expand the description, classification, and discussion of the syllable considerably, though, as with their definition of the letter, they omit certain linguistic considerations mentioned in the Latin models. Thus, while Priscian defines the syllable, "Syllaba est comprehensio literarum consequens sub uno accentu et uno spiritu prolata; abusive tamen etiam singularum vocalium sonos syllabas nominamus. Possumus tamen et sic definire syllabam: syllaba est vox literalis, quae sub uno accentu et uno spiritu indistanter profertur,"⁴⁶ the Welsh texts are considerably less substantial: "Kanys o'r llythyr y byd y sillafeu, wrth hynny, reit yw gwybot beth yw y sillaf, a pha ffurf yw gwahaner y sillafeu. Sillaf yw kynnulleitua llyaws o lythyr y gyt. . . ."⁴⁷ ("Since syllables are made up of letters, therefore, it is necessary to know what a syllable is, and what form is given the syllable. A syllable is a collection of a number of letters together.")

Perhaps the question of accent was a confusing one for the early Welsh grammarians to sort out, particularly as regards those proclitics and enclitics

40/On the other hand, I understand that to this day, especially in rural districts, you can find Welshmen who will tell you that there are twenty-four letters in the alphabet.

41/Donatus 1.3 (in Keil, 4:368).

42/Calder, ed., line 1457.

43/Priscian *Institutiones Grammaticae* 2.1 (in Keil, 2:44).

44/GP, p. 57; *Peniarth* 20, line 32: "Teir rann sillaf ysyd, nyt amgen: llythyrenn, ac amser, ac aken."

45/Julius Zupitza, ed., *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar* (Berlin, 1880), p. 7.

46/Priscian 2.1 (in Keil, 2:44).

47/GP, p. 39, *Peniarth* 20, lines 33–35.

which are pronounced conjointly with accented words that follow or precede them. On the other hand, it may be that the compiler's bardic frame of reference confused his thinking about accent. For, although there were—and still are—regular principles of stress in Welsh poetry, accent did not play a part in the scansion of the poetic line. Further, there are no feet in Welsh verse. Syllable count, however, is indispensable as the poetic lines are reckoned by syllables. Thus, although accent is an important factor in *cynghanedd*, it is not a factor in the quantitative meters of Welsh. Nonetheless, a native speaker of Welsh who had an apparent acquaintance with and interest in linguistic systems should have been able to comment on the easily identifiable accentual system of Welsh.

The subsequent classification of the Welsh syllable includes some detailed analysis of the diphthong and represents a creative and radical departure from the Latin. Although the description was motivated by bardic rather than linguistic concerns, the linguistic detail we glean from the discussion is not negligible. Furthermore, the extensive and distinctive treatment of the Welsh syllable (ninety-three lines of printed text in the Welsh grammars as compared with seven lines in Ælfric, e.g.) constitutes a notable contribution to early vernacular grammatical descriptions. So, too, does the Welshman's attempt to devise a coherent classification and descriptive terminology, even though we might find the vocabulary sometimes quaint or inconveniently overlapping—as, for example, in the use of *tawdd* to describe both a type of syllable and a type of consonant. Yet we can discern the compiler's attempt to be consistent even here, for a *tawdd* syllable appeared in writing as one that included a *tawdd* letter preceded by the epenthetic vowel. In effect, and in speech, the vocalic quality is indistinct, having developed from the tendency of *l*, *m*, *n*, and *r* to become syllabic. And when the compiler feels obliged to explain the second vowel in *mydyr* (which is epenthetic) or the *w* in *berw*, we learn further that his focus is on the written language. It is highly unlikely that a bard, for whom poetry was conceived of as entirely oral even in its initial composition, would have been troubled by the epenthetic *y*. Indeed, it is doubtful that he would have considered it a factor at all. As for *berw*, in Middle Welsh poetry *w* is nonsyllabic after *d*, *dd*, *l*, *n*, and *r*, though it might be stressed that this was a matter of bardic tradition and did not represent the normal spoken usage of the period. In any case, the compiler clearly knows that *w* was neither a vowel nor a syllable in *berw*, for he uses the same word as a monosyllable illustrative of a type of syllable he calls *tawdd lleddf* (a syllable in which *y* or *w* follows a *tawdd* letter). If *w* were a vowel it would have to be a syllable. He knows this too, for earlier in his grammar he explains that vowels have a syllabic quality. This is but one of the numerous points in his discussion of the syllable and diphthong where the compiler chooses terms which reveal his concern with epenthetic vowels, a concern which in turn shows in his determination to explain the written appearance of the rather complicated facts of Welsh poetry.

However, the classification and treatment of the syllables and diphthongs are, on the whole, remarkably sharp and thorough. In picking out some of the complicated features of Welsh poetry for description, the compiler has provided us with a rare phonetic account of a medieval vernacular. From its beginnings Welsh poetry catered to the ear, often with a series of intricately matched and partially matched cadences which find no equivalent in English verse. Accordingly, it necessarily

had a phonetic basis from its inception. However, I do not mean to suggest that phonetic theory as such formed part of the training of the bard. I do suggest that the compiler of the Welsh grammar made a number of keen observations which we might construe as phonetic. Some indication of this is best conveyed by a review of certain of his observations which, as they are regularly supported by examples, manage to make a very complicated business fairly easy to follow.

The grammars initially formulate a system of classification which distinguishes among syllables that are: (1) *lleddf* ("inclining") or *talgron* ("rounded");⁴⁸ (2) *trwm* ("heavy") or *ysgafn* ("light"); and (3) *hir* ("long") or *byr* ("short"). Within the first category there are several subclasses which we can schematize as follows:

1a) *lleddf*:

- i) *cadarnlleddf* (a "strong, bending syllable")—a syllable which ends in two consonants, one of which is *tawdd* (dissolving); it is strong because there are two consonants in the syllable; it is *lleddf* because one of these is a *tawdd* letter (i.e., *d, f, l, m, n, r, s*); for example, *kerd, mygyr, mydr*.
- ii) *pengamlleddf* (a "bending of the head")—a syllable in which there are two adjacent vowels with one "dipping" toward the other, as in *glwys*. (Note: *w* is a vowel here, and it seems likely that this example was chosen to distinguish vocalic *w* from consonantal *w* as in *gwen*. Other examples might have included words which contained any of the *lledf* diphthongs, such as *moes*.)
- iii) *tawddlleddf*—a syllable which contains both a "bending" element and a "dissolving" feature. In such a syllable, a *tawdd* consonant is preceded by a vowel and followed by *y* or *w* which can be said to "incline" toward the consonant, hence becoming assimilated with it, as in *eiry* and *berw*.

Again, I might note that the examples chosen by the compiler reflect bardic usage and not the spoken language.

- 1b) *talgron* ("rounded")—a syllable which contains only one vowel regardless of the number of consonants preceding or following it, as in *glen, glas, glut*. (Here it would have helped had the compiler given an example with consonantal *w*, which is rounded and voiced, and which would have explained why the term *talgron* was chosen to differentiate this type of syllable from a *lleddf* syllable which could contain vocalic *w*.)
- 2a) *trwm* ("heavy")—a syllable in which the same consonant occurs twice, regardless of the number of vowels, as: *gwenn, llenn*. (In Welsh poetry *trwm* in fact refers to a riming of words with short vowels.)
- 2b) *ysgafn* ("light")—a syllable in which one such consonant appears, regardless of the number of vowels, as: *gwên, llên*. (In the poetry, *ysgafn* indicates the riming of words with long vowels.)

The compiler is obviously referring to consonants closing a syllable; thus, the description seems to conform to the Latin rule regarding open and closed syllables. In Welsh, however, the quantity of a vowel depends on the nature of the syllable in which it occurs and not on its historic value. From the examples chosen, it would also appear that the compiler neatly distinguished between minimal pairs—and with acuity.

⁴⁸I take *talgron* to be from *tal* + *crwn*, thus "rounded." But cf. Morris-Jones, p. 254.

- 3a) *hir* ("long")—every *lleddf* syllable is long. (It will be recalled that *lleddf* syllables contain long diphthongs, which makes this a sensible classification.)
 3b) *byr* ("short")—every *talgron* syllable is short. *Talgron* syllables do not contain diphthongs.

The ensuing classification of the diphthongs is made intelligible by the preceding treatment of the syllables. Indeed, the link between the two is disclosed by the introductory statement: A diphthongal syllable has two "strong" vowels in it, as in *glew*. Once more we can see the compiler struggling with the two values of *w*; thus when *w* has a vocalic value he would regard it as "strong," and, when it is consonantal but also appears next to a vowel, as "unstrong." Such an identification is both legitimate and conventional, as is the description of the diphthong, which is explained as the appearance of two adjacent vowels, each bearing their vocalic quality. The diphthongs are then classified as follows:

1. *talgron*—there are five *talgron* diphthongs, namely:
aw as in *llaw* /aʊ/;
ew as in *llew* /eʊ/;
iw as in *lliw* /iʊ/;
yw as in *llyw* /iʊ/; and
uw as in *duw* /üʊ/.

The grammars add that *eu* also is to be regarded as a *talgron* diphthong, but explain that since *proest* (a kind of half-rime) cannot be formed with *eue* /eʊ/, it is to be designated a *wib* ("straying") diphthong.

2. *lleddf*—there are four *lleddf* diphthongs, namely:
ae as in *kae* /aɛ/ or /ai/;
oe as in *doe* /ɔɛ/;
wy as in *rwy* /uɪ/; and
ei as in *trei* /eɪ/.
3. *wib* ("straying")—the grammars allow two diphthongs here:
oi as in *roi*, *troi* /öi/; and
oy as in *roy*, *troy* /oɪ/.

This is, in fact, an excellent classification. Moreover, it is essentially a distinctive feature classification from which we can extrapolate the following: *talgron* diphthong = ending with rounding; *lleddf* diphthong = ending non-back; *wib* diphthong = ending in +high and also in -back, that is, it must be opposite in rounding and opposite in height.

The classification may be schematized thus:

$$\begin{array}{ll}
 \text{d. } talgron & V + \left[\begin{array}{c} V \\ + \text{ round feature} \end{array} \right] \\
 \text{d. } lleddf & V + \left[\begin{array}{c} V \\ + \text{ front or} \\ \text{central vowels} \end{array} \right] = V + \left[\begin{array}{c} V \\ - \text{ back} \end{array} \right] \\
 \text{d. } wib & \left[\begin{array}{c} - \text{ high} \\ - \propto \text{ round} \end{array} \right] \left[\begin{array}{c} + \text{ high} \\ \propto \text{ round} \\ - \text{ back} \end{array} \right]
 \end{array}$$

Though the compiler failed to supply satisfactory definitions of a syllable or a diphthong, his classification and examples, and even his terminology, show rigor and consistency here. And while his discussion is limited to those aspects of the language that mattered in bardic composition, his efforts to explain what he regarded as inconsistencies between the written bardic product and what he as a Welsh speaker heard (or did not hear) suggest that he was continually aware that neither bardic practice nor the written form consistently represented the normal spoken practice of his time. Moreover, if it were not for the compiler's determination to describe these features of Welsh poetry, we might very well lack a description of the nonuniversal characteristics of Welsh at so early a date.

The grammars contain additional remarks on types of syllables, though the accounts are by no means precise, complete, or thorough—neglecting practically all the accidents of the noun, adjective, and verb, for example. And while the grammars recognize that *-eu*, one of the many common plural suffixes attached to nouns, constitutes a syllable, by a cumbersome and circular process the addition of the plural suffix is also used to determine whether a preceding syllable is heavy (*trwm*) or light (*ysgafn*).

Subsumed under the treatment of the syllable is the distinction between "noncompound" and "compound" words. These receive a circular and unsatisfactory definition which reduces to: a word is noncompound before compounding. Here, too, the Welsh compiler misses an opportunity to exercise some initiative, for, given its bardic orientation, the grammar might have attended more fully to compound words. Indeed, the use of compound words in the poetry would seem to have made the discussion of them essential because, as in Irish where the bardic tracts do devote considerable attention to compounds, the exigencies of the metrical line in Welsh required bards to depend heavily on compounds, such as the typically poetic compound *gwynlliw* ("white-hued"), the example offered by the compiler. When the Welsh grammars come to the discussion of "original" versus "derived" forms, the difficulties are at once understandable since Welsh did not have a declensional system for adjectives or nouns, and therefore the treatment of case in the Latin grammars had no ready application in Welsh.

Following the account of the syllables and diphthongs, the Welsh grammars turn to the traditional examination of the parts of speech. In this way they are unexceptionally derivative.

Parts of Speech

The Welsh grammars contain no account of what constitutes a "word" except to note that words are made up of syllables and that "some are to be called parts of speech."⁴⁹ Though we cannot be sure, it would appear that the compiler was implicitly distinguishing between derivational suffixes, which he would not regard as words, and the stems to which they were attached, namely, nouns and verbs, which, presumably because of their semantic component, were to be accepted as words.

49/"Kanyys o'r sillafeu y byd y geiryau kyfann, y rei a elwir yn ranneu ymadrawd. . . ." GP, p. 42; *Peniarth* 20, lines 11–12.

The subsequent two-part division of parts of speech into nouns and verbs made by the three early Welsh texts⁵⁰ represents the familiar historical division found in Dionysius Thrax and later in the Latin grammars which medieval grammarians uncritically adopted. When he comes to the parts of speech, the scribe (or compiler?) of *Peniarth 20* specifies that this two-part classification is apt “as regards Welsh” (“Dwy rann ymadrawd ywyd herwyd Kymraec, nyt amgen, henw a beryf.” [“There are two parts of speech as regards Welsh, namely, noun and verb.”]). This suggests that the compiler’s linguistic sense was so extensively influenced by his source(s) that in nonbardic matters he could believe that the linguistic system he borrowed from Latin was applicable to Welsh with only those few modifications he introduced into his text.

In their description and classification of the noun into its various categories and subcategories, the Welsh grammars fuse semantic and logical criteria (as do the Latin texts), though these criteria are never explicitly admitted. They also adopt the traditional medieval classification of the noun into noun-substantives (“strong nouns”) and noun-adjectives (“weak nouns”). This separation was simply arrived at in Latin and easily maintained in Welsh, which could subject both the noun-substantive and the noun-adjective to a number of the grammatical considerations found in the Latin. Thus, although the adjective, especially the monosyllabic adjective, in its original form was not always formally distinguishable from the noun, it could be compared, while the substantive could not; and the substantive could stand grammatically without an adjective, while the reverse was not true. But in Welsh, as in Latin, certain adjectives (mostly plural forms in Welsh) frequently serve as nouns, usually to indicate classes of people (e.g., *y bonheddigion* “the gentry,” from *bonheddig* “noble”). As we might expect, the Welsh grammars do not pursue the problem, but, then, such confusions between grammatical and referential criteria caused argument among numerous grammarians from Saint Anselm through Roger Bacon.

Nevertheless, the definition of the noun found in the Welsh grammars is recognizably notional. Since the Welsh noun was not inflected for case or gender (though the feminine noun was subject to lenition after the article), the omission of formal structural criteria has some slight justification. The grammars define the noun as follows:

“Henw yw [pob peth o’r arwydockao kedernit, neu ansawd damweinyawl y’r kedernyt. Kedernyt a arwydokaha pob peth] o’r a aller y welet, neu a glybot, neu gyhwrd ac ef . . . a phob peth korforawl odidawc heb gyuansodi. . . . Kedernyt heuyt a arwydokaha pob peth yspydawl digorforawl, kynn ny aller na’y welet na’y glybot na chyhwrdd ac ef, val y mae *eneit*, neu *angel*, neu *vedwl*.’’⁵¹ (“A noun is everything that denotes a substantive, or a quality dependent on the substantive. A substantive signifies everything that can be seen, or heard, or touched . . . and everything of a physical composition. . . . A substantive also denotes everything spiritual and noncorporeal, for one is not able to see it or hear it or touch it, as, for example: *soul*, or *angel*, or *thought*.”)

⁵⁰The later grammars expand this classification to eight.
⁵¹GP, p. 42; *Peniarth 20*, lines 15–24.

In accepting the substantive as divisible into physical and spiritual subgroups, the Welsh grammars maintain the traditional Latin categories (namely, *corporale* "material," and *incorporale* "abstract"), even retaining the terminology.⁵²

The definition of the noun-adjective, called a weak noun in the Welsh grammars, further conforms to the late Latin tradition, particularly that derived from Priscian, who, in turn, was indebted to the category of derivative nouns formulated by Dionysius Thrax. Accordingly, a noun-adjective signifies a quality of a substantive (*ansawdd damweiniawl*) and is unable to stand alone. It is formally identifiable as a derivative noun because its positive form can be inflected for the comparative and superlative. To this grammatical identification is added a notional one, namely, that such inflections "increase or lessen" the "first sense of the word." The treatment of adjectival comparison is drawn from Latin models, but the compiler of *Peniarth 20* distinguishes himself somewhat as he departs from the Latin terminology found in the other two early grammars by substituting the Welsh *grwndwalrad* (literally, "foundation grade") and the possible calque *vchelrad* ("high grade") where the others read *posseyt* ("positive") and *superleit* ("superlative").

The subsequent listing of nominal classes, while not as extensive as that found in Priscian, Donatus, Isidore, Bede, Alcuin, or Ælfric, shares a number of categories with them. For example, the strong noun, or substantive, is further subdivided into proper nouns and common nouns, with the definition of a proper noun resting on a logical base, as it does in Latin: "Henw priawt yw hwnn a gytwedo y vn peth drwy alwedigaeth. . . ." ⁵³ ("A proper noun is one which corresponds to one thing only by naming it. . . .") The common noun (*enw galwedig*) is equally undifferentiated—even in its examples—from the Latin sources, and so on through the other subcategories. Once again, the grammars fail to elaborate upon the importance of the compound noun, although they distinguish it as a class.

In their treatment of gender, the grammars are faithful to the Latin texts; there are said to be three genders in Welsh, while in fact there were but two in Middle Welsh. The masculine and feminine genders were perceived as naturally inherent; accordingly, "a masculine noun pertains to a man" ("Gwrwf yw hynn a berthyno ar wr"); "a feminine noun pertains to a woman" ("Banw yw hynn a berthyno ar wreic"); common gender "pertains to both masculine and feminine" ("Kyffredin yryngthunt yw hynn a berthyno ar bob vn, ac ar wrwf ac ar vanw"). In actuality, the Welsh system of gender was more grammatically based than this would suggest; in fact, with but a few exceptions, the system was a grammatical one. When we look at the examples provided by the text for masculine, feminine, and common nouns (e.g., *gwynn*, *kryf*; *gwenn*, *kref*; *doeth*, *tec*—masc., fem., and common, respectively), we see that the compiler has concentrated on the noun-adjective which does change its form in certain instances according to the gender of the noun it modifies. And while all noun-substantives were either masculine or feminine, a few nouns could vacillate between the two (e.g., *breidwyt* "dream"), while some others, originally masculine, could be changed into feminine by the

52/Charles Thurot suggested some years ago that defining a noun in terms of substance was characteristic of early medieval grammars. Thurot, *Notices et extraits de divers manuscrits latins pour servir à l'histoire des doctrines grammaticales du moyen âge*. Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Impériale et autres bibliothèques, tome 22, pt. 2 (Paris, 1874).

53/GP, p. 42; *Peniarth 20*, lines 43–44.

addition of the suffix *-es* (e.g., *arglwyd* “lord,” *arglwydes* “lady”). On the whole, the Welsh grammars are badly incomplete in their treatment of gender, even failing to remark on the distinctive force it exerts on the mutation of the feminine noun.

Indeed, the weaknesses of the Welsh grammars in their categorization and analysis of the noun are many, and only some of them are inherited from their source(s). Though the methods of forming the plural are most distinctive and immensely varied, the Welsh tracts fail to provide formally descriptive criteria and even fail to itemize representative plural suffixes (e.g., *-[i]eu*; *-[i]on*; *-[i]eit*; *-i*; *-yd*; *-ed*; *-ot*; *awt*; etc.). Nor do they note that plurals were also typically formed by changing the internal vowel (e.g., *a ei*, *bard/beirdd* “bard/bards”; *o y*, *pont/pynt* “bridge/bridges,” and so on through nine additional types), or that singular endings (*-yn* for masculine nouns and *-en* for feminine) were commonly added to plurals and collectives to form singulars. That a compiler who could provide such an elaborate and careful account of native syllables and diphthongs could not depart from his source to describe the native features of his nouns (both the substantives and adjectives) might strike one as regrettably inconsistent. The answer, however, may well rest on the fact that such details were not important bardic considerations.

There are many other areas involving the noun and adjective where the Welsh grammars fall short. In both method and doctrine they barely depart from the Latin. All in all, the discussion of the noun is scarcely a discussion at all. Rather, it is a multitiered classification of the types of nouns in Welsh which correspond to the semantically referential classes itemized in their sources. Yet to the extent that they provide some classification of the Welsh nouns, and their examples yield us some discriminate selections, they make at least a modest contribution. Then, too, in their definitions and methodology they followed an overpowering and authoritative tradition whose influence was inescapable.

The Verb

“Beryf yw pob peth o’r arwydokao gwneuthur neu diodef drwy amser a pherson.”⁵⁴ (“A verb is everything which signifies doing or suffering through tense and person.”)

This traditional formula borrows Donatus’s criterion of meaning in its reference to the active and passive conditions of the verb and incorporates two of the three formal criteria (i.e., the reference to tense and person; it lacks the standard reference to number) which the Latin grammars typically contain.⁵⁵ Although the Welsh treatment of the verb is by no means comprehensive or entirely systematic, and though it is heavily dependent on Latin notions and categories, it offers at least a superficial classification that is in most instances accurate enough, though certain glaring inaccuracies do occur. As there was within the Latin tradition itself no standard classification of the verb,⁵⁶ and as we have not identified the source of the Welsh grammars, we cannot determine whether the Welsh compiler modified

54/GP, p. 43; *Peniarth* 20, lines 31–32.

55/Donatus 2.12 (in Keil, 4:381).

56/This point is made by Ian Michael in a significant work, *English Grammatical Categories and the Tradition to 1800* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 92. Michael supplies, in the first 143 pages, a comprehensive and well-documented survey of the Western tradition which has no match. This interesting and informative book has helped me on many points.

or edited the treatment of the verb he found in his source. In any case, the Welsh grammars safely select fairly universal features; what is said of the Welsh verb could be said of most other Western vernaculars. The Welsh grammars exclude all formal criteria from their description, drop certain categories (e.g., the neuter and substantive verbs) which appear in the Latin grammars, but include perfunctory statements regarding tense, mood, and voice which introduce or reflect both confusion and error.

There is no covering definition of mood supplied by the Welsh grammars, but they accept the traditional five instead of dropping the optative and infinitive which were lacking in Welsh: (1) indicative (*managedic* "declarative"); (2) imperative (*archedic* "commanded"); (3) optative (*damunedic* "desirable"); (4) subjunctive (*kysylltiol* "conjunctive"); and (5) infinitive (*anterfynedic* "interminable"). In all five instances the notional terminology which translates the Latin has today been replaced. The Middle Welsh translation of "subjunctive" as "conjunctive," however, is a curious one which suggests Martianus Capella's *conjunctivus* (as opposed to the established subjunctive), which he added to the traditional system and applied to verb forms such as *legerem* when used after words like *ut* or *cum*.⁵⁷

It is conceivable that the Welsh compiler, given to classifications based on meaning, was easily enough misled into accepting the optative and infinitive as necessary and existing moods. Yet if he had reviewed the formal features of the Welsh verb he would have realized that there were no separate inflections for an optative. In fact, his example of a verb in the optative—"I want to be a bishop" ("Mynwn vy mot yn esgob")—is inflected for the imperfect.⁵⁸ While this confusion between the optative mood and the imperfect tense reflects the inadequacy of meaning-based criteria, it nonetheless had some basis in Welsh usage, which expressed the conditional by both the imperfect indicative and the subjunctive and in addition used the subjunctive to denote various meanings of the imperative and optative. For the optative, the *Llyfr Coch Hergest* compiler (or scribe?) attempts a supplementary clarification not found in the other early grammars. Having listed the five moods and supplied examples corresponding to those in the other texts (including the optative example which he also expresses by the imperfect form *mynwn*), the *Llyfr Coch Hergest* compiler adds: "Ac vn mod arall yssyd a elwir gwediedic, pan wedier am beth, val y mae *Du*, *trugarhaa wrthyf*."⁵⁹ ("And there is one other mood which is called the optative [*gwediedig* < "entreaty"], as when one prays for a thing, as: *God, have mercy on me*."') Here we have a second term for the optative and a second explanation of its use—in its serial classification of moods, *Llyfr Coch Hergest* initially describes it as *damunedic*, "that which expresses a wish." Moreover, the example given in this addendum is posed in the imperative. Either the compiler or the copyist was astute enough to explain at once that "this mood is maintained under the imperative" ("A'r mod hwnnw a gynhelir y dan *archedic*").

57/On this, too, I am indebted to Michael; *ibid.*, p. 115 and n. 1. there.

58/It is difficult to determine whether it is the imperfect indicative or imperfect subjunctive since the suffix *-wn* was typical of both in the first-person singular. It must, however, be the subjunctive because it could denote the various meanings of the optative.

59/*Llyfr Coch Hergest*, lines 1–4; GP, p. 5.

We are still left with the more striking inclusion of the infinitive and the mistaken identification of it with the verbal noun. This inaccurate identification indicates how indebted the compiler's grammatical concepts were to Latin, for the constructions of the verbal noun are those of the noun. It may, for example, take the definite article, be qualified by an adjective, function as subject or object, be governed by a preposition; and it cannot take the finite-verb negatives but must instead form its negative by the preposition *heb* "without."

On the other hand, there were enough basic similarities between the system of tenses in Latin and Welsh to have encouraged the Welsh compiler to copy his Latin source without making adjustments even when such were called for. The Welsh grammars classify the verb into three primary tenses: present (*cyn-ddrychiol*), past (*perffeith*), and future (*ffutur*), though there was no separate set of inflectional forms for the future which, like Old English, expressed the future by the simple present. As an example of a verb in the future, the Welsh grammars cite a verb in the present subjunctive form (*karwyfi* "I love"). Since the grammars do not supply an example of a first-person singular present subjunctive, one wonders what form would have been forthcoming. Yet here again there is a certain justification in this assignment of the future to the present subjunctive because the subjunctive verb in a subordinate clause could commonly denote what might happen in the future. In addition, the present subjunctive in main clauses frequently expressed futurity in the early poetry—although it was very early poetry indeed—and was rarely so used in prose.

The Welsh grammars also follow the Latin in distinguishing three past forms: preterite (*perffeith*, a term obviously borrowed from *perfectum*); imperfect (*amherfeith*, another direct translation from the Latin); and pluperfect (*mwy no pherfeith*, literally, "more than perfect," which translates the Latin *plusquam perfectum*). It would seem, from the descriptions given the tenses, that the Welsh compiler closely followed a source which concentrated its distinctions of tense on temporal distinctions and not on equally conventional distinctions such as between completed and uncompleted action. Thus, the preterite clearly denotes the simple past to the Welsh compiler, although it was frequently used to express the present perfect—albeit with some additional paraphernalia. Nor does his description of the imperfect as "that which has not completely passed" (*hwinn nyt aeth ymeith etwa kwbyl*) reflect the many applications of the Welsh imperfect.⁶⁰

As regards voice, the Welsh grammars accept three of the five genera given in the Latin—active (*gwneuthuredic* "doing"); passive (*diodefedic* "suffering"); common (*cyffredin yryngthunt* "common to both of them")—while dropping the neuter and deponent. There were in Middle Welsh but two voices, active and passive, the passive having only one form, the third-person singular.⁶¹ In the synoptic treatment of voice, the active and passive are duly described in the traditional terms of action performed or received. The inclusion of the common voice must have given the compiler some trouble. His example, "I am" (*wyf*), illustrates the historic confusion surrounding such self-sufficient verbs as the sub-

60/For a review of the uses of the imperfect, and for the verbal system in full, see Evans (n. 22 above), pp. 109 ff.

61/The Welsh passive is really an impersonal active. It takes infixed pronouns (see *ibid.*, pp. 55–57) in the accusative case to indicate person and number.

stantive or a verb such as "I live," which, though not transitive, is not intransitive either, because the question of having or not having an object is irrelevant. And we see in the treatment of transitive and intransitive verbs, which immediately follows the review of voice, that the Welsh grammars fuse semantic and syntactic criteria in their attempt to distinguish between the two. Like the substantive noun, the intransitive verb is partially defined by syntactic means; that is, it can stand alone. It is also described in terms of meaning: it has sufficient sense in itself.⁶² The complementary description of the transitive verb draws on the same two criteria: the transitive verb does not have sufficient meaning by itself and thus requires an object which receives the action of the verb.⁶³

Throughout the discussion of the verb, as throughout the discussion of the noun, the Welsh grammarians were unable to see the fundamental distinctions between formal and semantic criteria. In fact, the Welsh grammars uniformly ignore the various morphological suffixes of the two major parts of speech; this is somewhat puzzling since the Latin grammars so regularly incorporate such criteria. Joining scores of other medieval and Renaissance grammarians, the Welsh grammarians see mood mainly as a statement of attitude and tense as a temporal category only. Unable to break with the authoritative weight of the classical tradition, the Welsh grammarians never looked closely at their own grammar. On their behalf, it must be added that they were not alone, and, further, that for all we know the omission of such verbs as the neuter and deponent or of the future imperfect tense represents some sensible editing by the Welsh compiler.

The Pronoun

"Rann arall ymadrawd ysyd a dodir weithyeu yn lle henw ac a arwydokaha hayach vnryw a henw, ac a elwir rachenw. Sef yw rackhenw, pob peth o'r a arwydokao personolyaeth, neu vedyant, neu amouyn."⁶⁴ ("There is another part of speech which is used in place of the noun and which denotes almost the same thing as a noun, and it is called a pronoun. A pronoun is everything which denotes personality, or possession, or interrogation.")

Like Priscian, the Welsh grammars consider the pronoun after the verb and not after the noun, as do Probus and Donatus. The threefold classification into personal, possessive, and interrogative pronouns, and the subsequent listing of twenty-four pronouns which are incorrectly claimed for Welsh, is more indicative of the medieval zeal for exhaustive classification and itemization than it is of the Welsh pronominal system. Nor do the Welsh texts provide even the most minimal description of the classes they identify. The classification itself is incomplete, and a number of the pronouns are misclassified; for example, *hwenn*, *llall*, and their various forms are classed as personal pronouns. *Hwenn* is a demonstrative; *llall* is but one of a large number of pronominalia which included indefinite pronouns, adjectives, and substantives with pronominal functions. Wanting, too, is a recognition of such major features as gender (and the various mutations caused by the

62/"Y bo digawn o synnwyr yndi e hun." GP, p. 44; *Peniarth* 20, lines 20–21.

63/"Ny bo digawn o synnwyr yndi e hun heb wrthrych wrth beth arall yn y hol." GP, p. 44; *Peniarth* 20, lines 22–23.

64/GP, p. 44; *Peniarth* 20, lines 25–28.

possessive adjectives which the compiler does include in his list of Welsh pronouns), of the system of infixed and affixed pronouns,⁶⁵ of the prepositional pronoun,⁶⁶ and of the three classes of the independent personal pronoun.⁶⁷

Units of Discourse

The final section of the grammar is concerned with proper and improper constructions which may occur in various grammatical and rhetorical situations. A sentence is said to be a perfect utterance if it possesses a noun and a verb,⁶⁸ although the definition of a perfect utterance is neither semantically nor syntactically satisfying. The compiler recognized that the word was the necessary minimal unit but was either unwilling or unable to define "utterance" (*ymadrawd*) more precisely than "a collection of many words together" (*Ymadrawd yw kynnull-eidua llawer o eiryeu y gyt*). This definition lacks even its historical notional component. We might note, however, that the use of *ymadrawd* here parallels that of the Latin *oratio* from which it was translated; thus, it can mean "phrase," "clause," and "sentence" as well.

The imperfect constructions are those which contain either a series of nouns without a verb or a series of verbs without a noun. This description follows the Latin grammars closely, but the Welsh compiler's restriction of his description to this minimal statement shows a signal failure to identify the sentence with its predication as either conceptual or propositional. Were the compiler following a speculative text or working within the speculative tradition, he could not have avoided turning to the logical applications of the sentence. The perfect construction, predictably, is a construction which finds its completion in a subject and verb, although presumably predication is meant.

On the whole, the description of the sentence is so abbreviated as to be almost useless, for it fails to observe that nonfinite sentences are permissible in Welsh, while the truncated examination of the sentence itself amounts to little more than an identification of its component parts.

A natural bridge between the *ars grammatica* and the *ars metrica* is the account of native solecisms which are classed as "incorrect perfect constructions": perfect, presumably because such constructions have a noun and verb; incorrect, because of the lack of agreement between the subject and verb or because of an improper sequence of tenses. The compiler's overreliance on his source, however, allows him to mistake the singular *llu* ("host") in one of his examples for a collective noun and to treat it as a plural. Later he makes a similar error when he dismisses the grammatically correct "four man" (*pedwargwr*), correcting it to "four men" (*pedwargwyr*), even though Welsh does not employ the plural form of a noun following a numeral indicating plurality.

65/See Evans, pp. 55–58. Affixed pronouns are used as auxiliaries; infixed are abbreviated forms of pronouns used as objects and fixed to a preceding grammatical unit, such as verbal particles, conjunctions, etc.

66/Conjugated prepositions are one of the delicacies of Celtic languages, results of old formations joining the preposition so closely to the personal pronouns which it governed that they became attached and capable of conjugation through number and person. See *ibid.*, pp. 58–60.

67/Independent personal pronouns are primarily personal pronouns used in the familiar ways. They are, being Celtic, a bit more complicated; see *ibid.*, pp. 49–53.

68/GP, p. 46; *Peniarth* 20, lines 8–12.

In the survey of the three figures of speech which are said to apply to Welsh (*Teir ffigur Kymraec ysyd yn ymadrawd*)—namely, syllepsis, synecdoche, and evocation—the compiler is moved to some nice grammatical descriptions. For instance, in his treatment of syllepsis, the compiler neatly selected examples which illustrate some striking features of Welsh, particularly, lenition and modification. The first example, *gwr gwynn y law* ("the white man's hand," literally, "the man white his hand"), includes an adjective (*gwynn*) in its masculine form, an unlenited masculine noun (*gŵr*), and a feminine noun (*llaw*) correctly lenited after the third-person singular masculine possessive pronoun (*y*). In explaining the procedure of modification, the compiler accounts for both the normal syntactic order of *N* + attributive adjective and the required agreement of gender between noun and adjective, pointing out that, as *llaw* is feminine and *gwynn* is masculine, *gwynn* must be applied to *gŵr* which is also masculine.

His second example—*gwreic wenn y throet* ("the white woman's feet," literally, "the woman white her feet") requires him to make the same grammatical distinctions. Here, however, the first noun (*gwreic*) is feminine and the second (*troet*) is masculine. The masculine noun in this instance is subject to the spirant mutation because it follows the feminine possessive *y* ("her").

The second and third figures receive the same systematic treatment, although in the analysis of evocation, and later in the review of poetic "faults" of language (as opposed to faults of rime), the grammars fail to adjust to the differences between Welsh and Latin.

The real matter of interest to the Welsh compiler was the section on meters, versification, and poetic principles which follows and far exceeds the *grammatica* in length and detailed analysis. The *ars metrica* is introduced with a statement underscoring the utilitarian value of the preceding discussion of grammar: "Kany's o'r ymadrodyon perfeith kyuyawn y byd mydyr neu brydyat, wrth hynny, reit yw gwybot beth yw mydyr neu brydyat. Mydyr neu brydyat yw kyuansodyat ymadrodyon perfeith kyuyawn, a dekaer o eiryeu gwann arderchawc, adwyn, adurn, a arwydokawynt molyant neu ogan, a hynny ar gerd dauawd ganmoledic."⁶⁹ ("Because the correct forms of speech occur in meter or poetry, accordingly, it is necessary to know what meter and poetry are. Meter, or poetry, is a composition of proper and correct utterances, with fair words, worthy and excellent, fine and embellished, and they relate praise or satire, and these are praiseworthy in *cerdd dafod*.")

The unit on bardic principles almost certainly represents an older, native tradition of bardic usage, although it has been presented by a compiler who was not expert. While it purports to be a manual of twelfth- and thirteenth-century bardic usage, supplemented by examples from an even earlier period, it may constitute an attempt to codify contemporary fourteenth-century practice. But even in this, as suggested earlier in this paper, the compiler's idiosyncratic appreciation of both traditions casts serious doubts on the authoritative value of the *ars metrica*. However, that both the *ars grammatica* and the *ars metrica* were intended as teaching texts seems undeniable. They are certainly elementary texts, with a certain number of garbled data, but there is also a redeemable amount of

69/Ibid.

sensible material contained in them. They are clearly not speculative or theoretical tracts. They are attempts at a systematic disciplining of complex grammatical and poetic materials, the former almost entirely dependent on Latin sources, the latter a curious amalgam of older bardic usage and the compiler's sometimes eccentric perception of contemporary bardic practice.

I do not believe that the three early grammars, in their grammatical units, are directly derived from either Priscian or Donatus; they omit various generalizations, details, and distinctions made by the Latin grammarians which would have been readily transferable to Welsh. In their relative brevity and serial classification, the Welsh grammars are paced much like Donatus's *Ars Minor*. But perhaps the omissions of the Welsh grammars are instructive. While the Latin texts incorporate extensive references to formal criteria, the Welsh grammars virtually ignore all accident of the verb which was highly inflected, seriously pass over the pronoun which had many distinctive forms, and, except for a fairly zealous cataloging of kinds of nouns, trivialize the formal features of the noun. It is hard to believe that such lapses were caused entirely by the lack of similarity between Welsh and Latin on these points, as the Welsh compiler proved a capable enough linguist in his analysis of the syllables and diphthongs.

Yet the medieval Welsh grammars illustrate in their own way both the stability and the idiosyncrasies of the late Latin grammatical tradition as it was adopted in the European vernaculars. The continuity of the tradition was perpetuated by a number of factors—not the least of which was an apparent, though not always real, similarity between the classical and vernacular Western languages. When, as in the case of the syllables and diphthongs, a medieval compiler or grammarian is moved to innovative departures from the authoritative tradition, his contribution is sizable, if not staggering. Indeed, it has taken an additional six centuries for us to move away from the categories and prescriptions of the Latin grammars. That the Welsh compiler's linguistic sense should have been so extensively influenced by Latin is not in the least surprising. What we must assume is that the compiler believed that he was accurately describing his own language and doing so with a practical purpose in mind.

The Welsh bardic grammars are distinctly medieval products and intelligible as such. They rest with the manuals of instruction, rhetorics, handbooks, and encyclopedias of the Middle Ages—works of immense popularity and influence, but compilations which also occupy an important place in the intellectual history of the West. Finally, we might do well to remind ourselves further that *compilatio* quite accurately reflects the activity of those men who regularly feigned an authoritative knowledge of subjects on which they often had less than complete mastery.

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