

2010 SIR JOHN RHŶS MEMORIAL LECTURE

# More than ‘skimble-skamble stuff’: the Medieval Welsh Poetry Associated with Owain Glyndŵr

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I SHOULD LIKE at the outset to thank the British Academy for the very great honour of being invited to deliver this year’s Sir John Rhŷs Lecture. Despite the location of the lecture my topic rather obviously relates to Welsh literature and history, although Scottish history offers a relevant backdrop to one part of my story. Anticipating that part of my lecture, I should perhaps assure you that I come in peace to your great city of Edinburgh unlike, alas, the Welshman who is the focus of my lecture when he came here 625 years ago.

In Shakespeare’s *Henry the Fourth, Part 1* a jaundiced Hotspur pours scorn on Owen Glendower (as the playwright calls him) for his devotion to prophecy:

... Sometimes he angers me  
With telling me of the moldwarp and the ant,  
Of the dreamer Merlin and his prophecies,  
And of a dragon and a finless fish,  
A clip-winged griffin and a moulten raven,  
A couching lion and a ramping cat,  
And such a deal of skimble-skamble stuff  
As puts me from my faith. ...<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>William Shakespeare, *King Henry IV Part 1*, ed. D. S. Kastan, The Arden Shakespeare Third Series (London, 2002), 3.1.144–51.

Shakespeare—who in substance and tone is here following the English Tudor chroniclers Holinshed and Hall<sup>2</sup>—was certainly correct in attributing to Glyndŵr (as I shall call him) a predilection for prophecy. As that great Welsh historian Sir Rees Davies—in his magisterial account of Glyndŵr’s revolt—asserted, ‘Owain was a leader who clearly took “the prophecy” seriously,’<sup>3</sup> and a recent revisionist attempt to deny this is clearly misconceived.<sup>4</sup> Yet, whilst Owain had a *propheta*—a word which often had Merlinic connotations in late medieval Latin<sup>5</sup>—amongst the company who declared him Prince of Wales in 1400,<sup>6</sup> and later, in 1403, consulted a learned ‘maister of Brut’ to predict his fate,<sup>7</sup> pure, unalloyed Welsh prophetic poetry indisputably dateable to the Glyndŵr revolt has not survived,<sup>8</sup> possibly because of the random nature of manuscript survival or perhaps the popular and largely oral nature of the genre. The poems I shall survey today, therefore—with one hybrid exception—belong not to the genre of prophecy, ‘skimble-skamble stuff’ or otherwise, but to that of eulogy, the predominant genre in the surviving poetry of late medieval Wales.

<sup>2</sup>For the relevant passage from Holinshed (1587) see G. Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, Vol. IV (London and New York, 1962), p. 185. Holinshed cites a disparaging reference by Hall (1542) to Welsh prophecies featuring Glyndŵr, quoted more fully by Bullough, *ibid.*, n. 8.

On Glyndŵr as portrayed by Shakespeare see R. R. Davies, ‘Shakespeare’s Glendower and Owain Glyn Dwr’, *The Historian*, 66 (Summer 2000), 22–5; D. J. Baker, ‘Glyn Dwr, Glendower, Glendourdy and Glendower’, in *Shakespeare and Wales: from the Marches to the Assembly*, ed. W. Maley and P. Schwyzer (Farnham and Burlington, VT, 2010), pp. 43–57.

<sup>3</sup>R. R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (Oxford and New York, 1995), p. 160; cf. *idem*, ‘Shakespeare’s Glendower’, 23: ‘For Shakespeare, Merlinic prophecies and astrological predictions were indeed “skimble-skamble stuff”’; for Owain and his supporters they were matters of deadly seriousness.’

<sup>4</sup>H. Fulton, ‘Owain Glyn Dŵr and the uses of prophecy’, *Studia Celtica*, 39 (2005), 105–21. For a response see G. A. Williams, ‘Gwrthryfel Glyndŵr: dau nodyn’, *Llên Cymru*, 33 (2010), 180–7 at 183–7.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 184–6.

<sup>6</sup>G. O. Sayles (ed.), *Select Cases in the Court of King’s Bench under Richard II, Henry IV and Henry V*, vol. 7 (London, 1971), pp. 114–17; G. C. G. Thomas, ‘Oswestry 1400: Glyndŵr’s supporters on trial’, *Studia Celtica*, 40 (2006), 117–26; J. E. Lloyd, *Owen Glendower* (Oxford, 1931), p. 31; Davies, *Revolt*, p. 159.

<sup>7</sup>H. Ellis (ed.), *Original Letters, Illustrative of English History*, 2nd ser., vol. 1 (London, 1827), p. 23; Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, pp. 68–9; Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 159–60.

<sup>8</sup>A few vaticinal poems in a mid-fifteenth century Glamorgan manuscript, National Library of Wales, Peniarth MS 50, refer to Glyndŵr and may derive from the time of the revolt, M. B. Jenkins, ‘Aspects of the Welsh Prophetic Verse Tradition in the Middle Ages’, Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1990, p. 229. But none are certainly dateable to the revolt. On the vaticinal poem with the best claim to be contemporaneous with the revolt (National Library of Wales, Peniarth MS 50, 18) D. Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr: Hanes Beirniadol Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg 1300–1525*

Despite the late thirteenth-century English conquest of Wales and the loss of princely patronage, Welsh bardism continued to flourish and develop in the fourteenth-century. A sixteenth-century bardic statute explained the change in the nature of patronage by claiming that ‘after the princes the men of noble birth, who issued from the blood of the princes, took the men of song to them’.<sup>9</sup> Its overly simplistic nature notwithstanding, this claim is partly true and can be applied to the case of Owain Glyndŵr, who descended from the three main princely dynasties of pre-conquest Wales.<sup>10</sup> Poems from the 1260s in praise of two minor princes of the Deheubarth (south-west Wales) and Powys (mid-Wales) dynasties are the latest addressed to any of his ancestors to survive,<sup>11</sup> but as bardic patronage ran in families it is likely that a better preserved bardic record would have included poems addressed to later members of his line. As to Owain himself, six indubitably authentic poems addressed to him—amounting to a total of 482 lines—are extant. If surviving poems are a reliable measure Owain would seem to have been in the foremost rank of Welsh bardic patrons of his day: in this respect he stands alongside Ifor Hael (the ‘Generous’), chief patron of the famous Dafydd ap Gwilym, Hopcyn ap Tomas, patron of the Red Book of Hergest (Owain’s ‘maister of Brut’ and, as Walter Bower’s *Scotichronicon* reveals, a significant military figure in the revolt),<sup>12</sup> and Goronwy Fychan of Anglesey, descendant of Llywelyn the Great’s seneschal and great-grand-uncle of Henry VII. Some 150 manuscript copies of the poems addressed to Owain survive, their large number being an index of his posthumous renown and his status as a magnet for antiquarian and patriotic interest. The copies are dispersed in over ninety manuscripts, the earliest of them written in the late fifteenth century but the majority deriving from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The chronological distribution of the sources is not untypical for fourteenth-century poems composed in the *cywydd* metre, as were all the Glyndŵr poems. The *cywydd* was a fourteenth-century

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(Cardiff, 2005), p. 353 rightly remarks that it may refer to the return of Glyndŵr in the period after the revolt.

<sup>9</sup>T. Parry, ‘Statud Gruffudd ap Cynan’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 5 (1929–31), 25–33 at 27 (National Library of Wales, Peniarth MS 270 text; my translation).

<sup>10</sup>Davies, *Revolt*, p. 130.

<sup>11</sup>Maredudd ab Owain ap Gruffudd (d. 1265) and Gruffudd ap Madog ap Gruffudd Maelor (d. 1269) were both great-great-great-grandfathers of Owain. For the poetry addressed to them see *Gwaith Bleddyn Fardd a Beirdd Eraill Ail Hanner y Drydedd Ganrif ar Ddeg*, ed. Rh. M. Andrews *et al.* (Cardiff, 1996), poems 8–13, 25–6.

<sup>12</sup>D. E. R. Watt (ed.), *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower in Latin and English*, vol. 8 (Aberdeen, 1987), p. 96. This reference is discussed in Williams, ‘Gwrthryfel Glyndŵr’, 181–3.

innovation, and whilst manuscript loss—consequent in part perhaps on the ravages of the Glyndŵr revolt—may have distorted the picture, it is possible too that poems composed in the new metre may have been largely dependent on oral transmission before gaining the full seal of scribal approval in the course of the fifteenth-century.<sup>13</sup>

The poems I shall discuss are the work of two named poets, Iolo Goch and Gruffudd Llwyd. Iolo, a native of the lordship of Denbigh, was one of the major figures of fourteenth-century Welsh bardism,<sup>14</sup> second in achievement only to Dafydd ap Gwilym, but considerably more influential in relation to subsequent bardic practice. Following the emergence of the *cywydd* metre as a medium for poems of love and nature—especially in the work of Dafydd ap Gwilym—it was Iolo who normalised the use of the metre as the medium for formal eulogy,<sup>15</sup> formerly the preserve of the venerable *awdl* and *englynion* metres, thus paving the way for the *cywydd*'s overwhelming predominance as the vehicle for praise poetry for some three centuries.<sup>16</sup> Iolo plied his craft in the courts of patrons, lay and clerical, for some sixty years, beginning in the 1340s. In addition to members of the Welsh gentry class, such as the Tudor ancestors of Anglesey,<sup>17</sup> and prominent Welsh warriors in crown service such as Sir Rhys ap Gruffudd of Carmarthenshire and Sir Hywel ap Gruffudd, constable of Cricieth castle<sup>18</sup>—they fought at Crécy and Poitiers respectively—Iolo addressed poems, probably at the behest of gentry patrons, to two eminent non-

<sup>13</sup> D. Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Cardiff and Aberystwyth, 2000), pp. 88–91.

<sup>14</sup> The standard modern edition of his work is *Gwaith Iolo Goch*, ed. D. R. Johnston (Cardiff, 1988) (hereafter cited as *GIG*). For a text with parallel English translations see *idem, Iolo Goch: Poems* (Llandysul, 1993). Johnston's edition supersedes in most respects H. Lewis's edition in *Cywyddau Iolo Goch ac Eraill, 1350–1450*, ed. H. Lewis, T. Roberts and I. Williams (Bangor, 1925), pp. 3–119 (new edn. (Cardiff, 1937), pp. 3–87), which in turn superseded the edition of C. Ashton, *Gweithiau Iolo Goch* (Oswestry, 1896). For general accounts of Iolo's work by Johnston see *GIG*, introduction, pp. xv–xxxii; 'Iolo Goch and the English: Welsh poetry and politics in the fourteenth century', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 12 (1986), 73–98; *Iolo Goch*, 'Llên y Llenor' series (Caernarfon, 1989); introduction to *Iolo Goch: Poems*, pp. ix–xxii; 'Iolo Goch (fl. 1345–1397)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), vol. 29, p. 316 and <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14440?docPos=1>>; *idem, Llên yr Uchelwyr*, pp. 169–83 *et passim*. Also of value (though superseded in some points of detail) are the highly perceptive studies by E. I. Rowlands cited below, n. 15.

<sup>15</sup> E. I. Rowlands, 'Nodiadau ar y traddodiad moliant a'r cywydd', *Llên Cymru*, 7 (1962–3), 217–43 at 231–8; *idem*, 'Iolo Goch', in J. Carney and D. Greene (eds.), *Celtic Studies: Essays in Memory of Angus Matheson 1912–1962* (London, 1968), 124–46 at 138–9; Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr*, p. 98.

<sup>16</sup> For a useful survey of the history and development of the *cywydd* see *ibid.*, pp. 90–108.

<sup>17</sup> *GIG*, poems IV–VI.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, II, VII.

Welsh figures, namely King Edward III of England and Roger Mortimer, fourth Earl of March and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (Mortimer was Iolo's lord in the lordship of Denbigh).<sup>19</sup> A poem by Iolo cast in the form of a humorous dialogue between body and soul traced the bardic wanderings of the body—Iolo himself—to visit named patrons at locations in mid- and south-west Wales.<sup>20</sup> Iolo's recreated bardic circuit ended in north-east Wales, at Sycharth, home of Owain Glyndŵr on the Welsh border and at the court of Ithel ap Robert, Archdeacon of St Asaph, both of them evidently locations where the poet had enjoyed significant patronage. When Archdeacon Ithel died in 1382 Iolo commemorated him in a majestic elegy.<sup>21</sup> The body and soul poem shows that Iolo frequented Sycharth before 1382, at least three years and possibly much longer before his first extant poem to Glyndŵr. Iolo may have received patronage from both the young Glyndŵr—he was probably born in 1359<sup>22</sup>—and his father Gruffudd Fychan, who had died by 1370.<sup>23</sup> The other poet who addressed poems to Glyndŵr was Gruffudd Llwyd,<sup>24</sup> a native of Powys. In Gruffudd's case bardism was probably a family inheritance: a paternal uncle was certainly a poet, and there may have been two other poets among his kinsmen.<sup>25</sup> His family's likely origins in Merioneth—his line probably hailed not far from Glyndyfrdwy, Glyndŵr's ancestral home in the county<sup>26</sup>—may well have drawn him to seek Owain's patronage. Apart from his two surviving poems

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, I, XX.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, XV.

<sup>22</sup> When he testified on 3 September 1386 in a hearing at Chester relating to the Scrope and Grosvenor heraldic controversy Glyndŵr was 'del age xxvij anz & pluys', N. H. Nicolas (ed.), *The Scrope and Grosvenor Controversy* (London, 1832), vol. 1, p. 254. Lloyd (*Owen Glendower*, p. 18) does not reject outright other dates (1349 and 1354) claimed as his year of birth, but states that '1359 comes beyond question from the best authority'.

<sup>23</sup> R. I. Jack, 'New light on the early days of Owain Glyndŵr', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 21 (1964–6), 163–6 at 164.

<sup>24</sup> His work (and that of his likely bardic kinsmen) is edited in *Gwaith Gruffudd Llwyd a'r Llygliwiaid Eraill*, ed. Rh. Ifans (Aberystwyth, 2000) (hereafter cited as *GGLI*; references are usually to poem and line nos.). This edition supersedes that of T. Roberts in *Cywyddau Iolo Goch ac Eraill*, ed. Lewis, Roberts and Williams, pp. 123–60 (new edn., pp. 113–53).

<sup>25</sup> The paternal uncle was Hywel ab Einion Lygliw. In the case of the other poets edited in *GGLI*, Llywelyn ap Gwilym Lygliw and Rhys ap Dafydd Llwyd ap Llywelyn Lygliw, the epithet *llygliw* (mouse-coloured) may or may not indicate kinship.

<sup>26</sup> His grandfather was probably the Einion Lygliw listed in the Merioneth subsidy roll of 1292 as resident in the commote of Penllyn and who held offices in the commote of Tal-y-bont, see *GGLI*, p. 3. An Einion Lygliw featured as a *capellanus* who held land in Ruthin, also not far from Glyndyfrdwy, in the 1340s and who died during the Black Death, see *ibid.*, pp. [3]–4, but the identification with the Merioneth Einion Lygliw is uncertain.

to Glyndŵr, a poem he addressed to Sir David Hanmer, Glyndŵr's father-in-law, also suggests an intimacy with Owain and his circle.<sup>27</sup> Gruffudd's surviving corpus amounts to a mere fourteen poems: the fact that one of his poems to Glyndŵr<sup>28</sup> survives in only two copies illustrates the vulnerability of medieval Welsh poetry to the accidents of manuscript survival and serves too as a caveat regarding the hazards of extrapolating wider literary history from items randomly preserved.

Poets such as Iolo Goch and Gruffudd Llwyd—professional representatives of the highest echelon of bardism who composed poems of courtly sophistication—employed in their verse the feature called *cynghanedd*.<sup>29</sup> Developing from rudimentary beginnings in early Welsh verse, by the fourteenth-century *cynghanedd* had evolved into a strict and sophisticated system, featuring either matching consonantal sequences deployed around a line's main accents, a combination of consonance and internal rhymes, or matching internal rhymes. Mandatory in every line in the canonical bardic metres, among them the *cywydd*, *cynghanedd* imparted sonority to verse, imposing a distinctive aural aesthetic and complementing the musical accompaniment when the poetry was declaimed. Within the relatively short heptasyllabic line of the *cywydd*, the requirements of *cynghanedd* imposed considerable technical demands on poets. The difficulties were triumphally overcome by the verbal ingenuity and imaginative energy of the best practitioners, but the work of even the most fluent poets inevitably displayed occasional tensions between sense and sonority. In *cynghanedd* verse—still much practised today—sound is prioritised: words are selected to provide consonance or supply internal rhymes, some of them contributing only tangentially to the thrust of meaning. It is inevitable, of course, that much of the essence and force of such poetry evaporates in translation. Be that as it may, it was within the restrictive bounds of this highly rhetorical art—which, whilst being specific to Wales, had technical affinities with classical Gaelic and Irish poetry—that our poets sang the praises of Owain Glyndŵr.

The modern reader of medieval Welsh bardic eulogies will encounter certain generic features. Firstly, the portrayal of patrons in these poems tends to be highly conventional. A fourteenth-century bardic grammar

<sup>27</sup> *GGLI*, poem 10.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, poem 12.

<sup>29</sup> J. Morris-Jones's *Cerdd Dafod* (Oxford, 1925) remains the standard analysis and description of *cynghanedd* despite minor refinements by later scholars. For its historical development see T. Parry, 'Twf y gynghanedd', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1936, 143–60.

prescribed the qualities for which poets should praise an *uchelwr* (literally ‘a high person’, a member of the gentry or noble class):

Vchelwr a uolir o’y dewred, a’y gedernit, a’y vilwryaeth, a’y bryt, a’y voned, a’y adwyndra, a’y haeloni, a’y digrifwch, a’y doethinab . . .

[A gentleman is praised for his bravery, his might, his military feats, his appearance, his descent, his nobility, his generosity, his agreeableness, and his wisdom . . .]<sup>30</sup>

Thus in praise-poems the idealised patron tends to dominate the foreground: the particular individual addressed is a more shadowy background figure, only fleetingly glimpsed. That is true of the poems addressed to Owain Glyndŵr. His depiction largely conforms to the expected norms. He features predominantly as the brave warrior who destroys and scatters his enemies and the ever bountiful host: beyond this, particularities must be sought interstitially. The modern reader too will find little narrative content in these poems. Narrative elements occur only incidentally, randomly and sparsely emerging amidst the contours of eulogy: we have no Welsh medieval equivalents of Barbour’s *The Brus* or Blind Hary’s *The Wallace* or even of the Border Ballads. A modern reader must learn too to cope with hyperbole, the common coin of bardic discourse. Iolo Goch described the gate of Glyndŵr’s court Sycharth as being wide enough to admit a hundred loads:<sup>31</sup> we should read this to mean no more than ‘wider than usual’. But the presence of hyperbole should not lead us to think that poems were shameless constructs of unalloyed mendacity. Whilst a certain amount of hyperbole was expected and, no doubt, humorously appreciated by the gathered audience at a patron’s court, what might be identified as blatant untruths would have fatally undermined a poet’s offering. In reading this poetry, whilst being aware of hyperbole, we should beware too of adopting a posture of outright disbelief and cynicism.

Consideration of the earliest extant poetry relating to Owain Glyndŵr demands the recall of an episode in Scottish history, one much impressed

<sup>30</sup> G. J. Williams and E. J. Jones (eds.), *Gramadegau’r Penceirddiaid* (Cardiff, 1934), p. 56 (my translation). The excerpt quoted is from the National Library of Wales, Peniarth MS 20 version of the grammar. For corresponding, but not identical, passages in other manuscript versions of the grammar see *ibid.*, pp. 16, 34. For a discussion of this section of the grammar—the *prydylyfr*—see A. T. E. Matonis, ‘The concept of poetry in the Middle Ages: the Welsh evidence from the bardic grammars’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 36 (1989), 1–12 at 5. Matonis derives the *prydylyfr* from native tradition, unlike the earlier, widely influential discussion by S. Lewis in *Braslun o Hanes Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg* (Cardiff, 1932), pp. 51–69 *passim*, where it is viewed primarily as a product of Christian Platonism.

<sup>31</sup> *GIG*, X. 26.

on contemporary and later Scottish consciousness. The early 1380s witnessed rising tensions between England and Scotland, and when the truce of 1369 expired in February 1384 the two nations edged towards open war. Scottish attacks on the English-occupied zone of southern Scotland prompted a retaliatory cross-border expedition from Berwick by John of Gaunt in the spring of 1384,<sup>32</sup> but the arrival in May 1385 of a substantial force of Scotland's French allies under Jean de Vienne, Admiral of France,<sup>33</sup> was the cue for a much more serious English response. Issuing a general feudal levy for a force to advance, according to the summons 'against the said Scots, to restrain manfully and powerfully, their rebellion, perfidy and evil',<sup>34</sup> Richard II, at nineteen years of age exercising his first command and eager to impress, summoned one of the largest English armies of the fourteenth-century, a total of almost 14,000 men,<sup>35</sup> an impressive host which included, according to the chronicler Henry Knighton, 'the flower of English knighthood: earls, barons, knights, esquires, and their attendants'.<sup>36</sup> Advancing from Newcastle and crossing into Scotland on 6 August in three battle formations—each member of the force according to the king's ordinances of war bearing the arms of St George before and behind<sup>37</sup>—the English army advanced in a destructive swathe, a medieval equivalent of 'shock and awe'. The Westminster chronicler wrote of the army 'giving free and uninterrupted play to slaughter, rapine, and fire-raising all along a six-mile front and leaving the entire countryside in ruins behind them';<sup>38</sup> Walter Bower, drawing later on bruised Scottish memories in his *Scotichronicon*, referred to 'an arrogant host, destroying everything

<sup>32</sup> J. Campbell, 'England, Scotland and the Hundred Years War in the fourteenth century', in *Europe in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. J. R. Hale, J. R. L. Highfield and B. Smalley (London, 1965), pp. 184–216 at 209; R. Nicholson, *Scotland: the Later Middle Ages*, The Edinburgh History of Scotland, vol. 2 (Edinburgh, 1974), p. 196.

<sup>33</sup> Campbell, 'England, Scotland and the Hundred Years War', pp. 209–10; Nicholson, *Scotland*, p. 197.

<sup>34</sup> *Foedera*, vii. 473, quoted in C. Fletcher, *Richard II: Manhood, Youth, and Politics, 1377–99* (Oxford, 2008), p. 132.

<sup>35</sup> N. B. Lewis, 'The last medieval summons of the English feudal levy, 13 June 1385', *English Historical Review*, 73 (1958), 1–26 at 5. Lewis states that if the numbers he quotes (4,590 men-at-arms and 9,144 archers) are correct 'it was (apart from Bannockburn) the third largest army which any English king assembled in the fourteenth century'.

<sup>36</sup> *Knighton's Chronicle 1337–96*, ed. and trans. G. H. Martin (Oxford, 1995), pp. 335–6.

<sup>37</sup> M. Keen, 'Richard II's ordinances of war of 1385', in *Rulers and Ruled in Late Medieval England: Essays Presented to Gerald Harriss*, ed. R. E. Archer and S. Walker (London, 1995), pp. 33–48 at 40.

<sup>38</sup> *The Westminster Chronicle 1381–1394*, ed. and trans. L. C. Hector and B. F. Harvey (Oxford, 1982), pp. 128–9.

on all sides and saving nothing'.<sup>39</sup> Having laid waste to Lothian the English reached Edinburgh and destroyed it by fire, not sparing the church of St Giles.<sup>40</sup> The abbeys of Melrose, Dryburgh and Newbattle were also burned and destroyed during this punitive campaign,<sup>41</sup> which ended with the return of the English army to Newcastle after a fortnight's ravaging in Scotland.<sup>42</sup>

In the absence of a native polity it was in English armies fighting in France, Scotland, and Ireland that the nobility of post-conquest Wales—with few dissident exceptions—found an outlet for military action. Owain Glyndŵr's own grandfather had been summoned to campaign in English armies 'contra Scotos inimicos et rebelles nostros' in 1333 and 1334.<sup>43</sup> And it was in connection with the events just recalled that his grandson served his military apprenticeship. Muster rolls show him—together with his brother Tudur and Crach Ffynnant, his 'prophet' in 1400—serving in the English garrison of Berwick in 1384 under the command of a veteran Welsh captain, Sir Gregory Sais (his surname means 'Englishman', denoting one of English inclinations or of English tongue).<sup>44</sup> And Owain's deposition in 1386—'aged twenty-seven years and more'—in connection with the Scrope/ Grosvenor dispute before the Court of Chivalry confirms his presence in the royal army which devastated Scotland in 1385.<sup>45</sup> Further

<sup>39</sup> *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower in *Latin and English*, vol. 7, ed. A. B. Scott, D. E. R. Watt *et al.* (Aberdeen, 1996), pp. 406–7.

<sup>40</sup> *Johannis de Fordun: Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, 2 vols., ed. W. F. Skene (Edinburgh, 1871), vol. 1, p. 383, vol. 2, p. 372; *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, ed. F. J. Amours (Edinburgh and London, 1903), p. 314; *Scotichronicon*, vol. 7, pp. 406–7.

<sup>41</sup> *Fordun*, vol. 1, p. 383, vol. 2, pp. 371–2; *Wyntoun*, p. 314; *Scotichronicon*, vol. 7, pp. 406–7. For comments on this aspect of the English campaign see R. D. Oram, 'Dividing the spoils: war, schism and religious patronage on the Anglo-Scottish Border, c.1332–c.1400', in A. King and M. Penman (eds.), *England and Scotland in the Fourteenth Century: New Perceptions* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 136–56 at 149; A. Goodman, 'Anglo-Scottish relations in the later fourteenth-century: alienation or acculturation', *ibid.*, pp. 236–53 at 237.

<sup>42</sup> The chronology of the expedition is summarised by Lewis, 'Last medieval summons', Appendix I, 15–16.

<sup>43</sup> *Rotuli Scotiae in Turri Londinensi et in Domo Capitulari Westmonasteriensi Asservati*, vol. 1, ed. D. Macpherson *et al.* (London, 1814), pp. 228–9, 284, 294–5.

<sup>44</sup> R. R. Davies, 'Owain Glyn Dŵr and the Welsh squirearchy', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1969, 150–69 at 164; A. Goodman, 'Owain Glyndŵr before 1400', *Welsh History Review*, 5 (1970–1), 67–70 at 67; A. D. Carr, 'A Welsh knight in the Hundred Years War: Sir Gregory Sais', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1977, 40–53 at 50. The documentary sources are TNA E101/39/39 and TNA E101/39/40, see 'The Soldier in Later Medieval England' database (Universities of Reading and Southampton), <[http://www.icmacentre.ac.uk/soldier/database/search\\_musterdb.php](http://www.icmacentre.ac.uk/soldier/database/search_musterdb.php)>.

<sup>45</sup> Nicolas (ed.), *Scrope and Grosvenor Controversy*, vol. 1, p. 254.

confirmation of this occurs in a Iolo Goch poem addressed to Glyndŵr,<sup>46</sup> probably in early July 1385, as he set off for the war in Scotland, very likely in the retinue of the Earl of Arundel, whose lands in the Welsh March bordered on those of Owain.<sup>47</sup>

The massing of armies, in what the Westminster chronicler described as the hot summer of 1385,<sup>48</sup> is vividly conveyed in the opening couplet of Iolo's poem which refers to a 'Great movement' of lords.<sup>49</sup> The Virgin Mary's protection is invoked for the departing hero, Owain's battle-charge is compared to that of Bendigeidfran (Brân the Blessed), legendary king of Britain, and Owain's grandfather and father cited for their renown.<sup>50</sup> Having lauded Owain briefly as his parents' filial paragon and cited his love of poets,<sup>51</sup> Iolo then draws on a topos of Welsh eulogy, in which the hero is dually conceived, being both a bold challenger of the mighty and one who is mild-mannered before the weak. He firstly asserts Owain's innate gentleness as one who would not forcefully seize a toy from a young boy or even admonish him verbally (this may reflect Owain's likely domestic status at the time as a young paterfamilias).<sup>52</sup> But then the tone changes abruptly as the contrasting aspect of the topos is developed and emphasised. A different Owain appears as Iolo turns to portray him in his full military might, specifically citing his service at Berwick under Sir Gregory Sais the previous year. A cameo portrait of Owain replete with terms relating to knightly military equipment (some of them, significantly, loanwords from English or Anglo-French) would, no doubt, have fed the young esquire's self-image as he set off again for Scotland:

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Pan aeth mewn gwroliaeth gwrdd,   | When he went with mighty prowess,                |
| Gorugwr fu garw agwrdd,           | He was a terrifying and powerful piercer.        |
| Ni wnaeth ond marchogaeth meirch, | He did nothing but ride steeds,                  |
| Gorau amser, mewn gwrmseirch,     | Enjoying the best of times, in dark-blue armour, |
| Dwyn paladr, gwaladr gwiwlew,     | Bearing a lance, fine and valiant lord,          |
| Soced dur a siaced tew,           | With a steel spearhead, in a thick arming coat,  |
| Arwain rhest a phenffestin        | Sporting a rest and mail cap                     |
| A helm wen, gŵr hael am win,      | And a white helmet, a generous provider of wine, |
| Ac yn ei phen, nen iawnraifft,    | And surmounting it, fine-plumed lord,            |

<sup>46</sup> *GIG*, IX.

<sup>47</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 146–7.

<sup>48</sup> *Westminster Chronicle*, pp. 120–1.

<sup>49</sup> *GIG*, XI. 1.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, XI. 3, 10, 13–16. On Bendigeidfran see P. C. Bartrum, *A Welsh Classical Dictionary: People in History and Legend up to about A.D. 1000* (Aberystwyth, 1993), pp. 51–2.

<sup>51</sup> *GIG.*, XI. 21–4.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, XI. 27–32. Owain's marriage to Margaret Hanmer may have taken place in 1383, Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, p. 25.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Adain rudd o edn yr Aifft.                 | A red-winged phoenix crest. <sup>53</sup>      |
| Gorau sawdwr gwrs ydoedd                   | For a while he was the best soldier            |
| Gyda Syr Grigor, iôr oedd,                 | With Sir Gregory, he was a lord,               |
| Ym Merwig, hirdrig herwdref,               | In Berwick, a long-enduring town under attack, |
| Maer i gadw'r gaer gydag ef. <sup>54</sup> | He was a steward defending the fort with him.  |

The poet then enlarges upon Owain's knightly prowess, seemingly distinguishing between single combat in tournament and action in battle.<sup>55</sup> Even if this, as is likely, is mere conventionalised praise, it passes the test of verisimilitude: tournaments had been held in the Scottish borders at times of war since the thirteenth century,<sup>56</sup> and the 1380s saw what Juliet Barker has called 'a sudden resurgence of tourneying activity' there,<sup>57</sup> largely around Berwick; in view, too, of John of Gaunt's chevauchée into Scotland from Berwick in the spring of 1384 and the fighting that occurred in the East March that summer it is conceivable that Glyndŵr may have seen some military action.<sup>58</sup> The final section of the poem recalling the alleged effects of Owain's previous tour of duty in Scotland, though patently conventional and hyperbolic, is not without interest. According to Iolo, all Scotland will remember the terror caused by 'the candle of battle', a metaphor, of course, with incendiary connotations.<sup>59</sup> The routed Scots, identified—with interesting ethnic confusion—as 'Deifr' (literally 'the men of Deira', remembered as enemies of the Britons in the heroic age of Welsh tradition), are depicted as crying like wild goats.<sup>60</sup> Iolo Goch was no Celtophile; he had harsh words to say too about the Irish kings of Ulster and Leinster who resisted Richard II.<sup>61</sup> The Welsh poet was, of course, an

<sup>53</sup> Cf. A. Breeze, 'Owen Glendower's crest and the Scottish campaign of 1384–5', *Medium Aevum*, 73 (2004), 99–102. In *GIG*, p. 230, 42 n. *edn yr Aifft* (lit. 'bird of Egypt') is understood as 'flamingo'.

<sup>54</sup> *GIG*, IX. 33–46. The translation is mine. For alternative translations of this and other quotations from Iolo see Johnston, *Iolo Goch: Poems*.

<sup>55</sup> *GIG*, IX. 47–52.

<sup>56</sup> D. Crouch, *Tournament* (London and New York, 2005), p. 52; R. Barber and J. Barker, *Tournaments: Jousts, Chivalry and Pageants in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1989), p. 34; J. Barker, *The Tournament in England 1100–1400*, pbk repr. (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 34–5

<sup>57</sup> J. Barker, *Tournament in England*, p. 35.

<sup>58</sup> In this connection Goodman, 'Owain Glyndŵr before 1400', 67, n. 1, notes that there was 'hard fighting in the East March in the summer of 1384'.

<sup>59</sup> *GIG*, IX. 54. In this context cf. the references to the burning of woods, villages, and manors during John of Gaunt's 1384 expedition, *Knighton's Chronicle*, p. 335; also *The Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham 1376–1422*, trans. D. Preest (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 215.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, IX. 56–7.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Iolo's poem in praise of Roger Mortimer, fourth Earl of March, *ibid.*, XX, discussed by G. A. Williams, 'Cywydd Iolo Goch i Rosier Mortimer: cefndir a chyd-destun', *Llên Cymru*, 22 (1999), 57–79.

eager participant in what one historian has called ‘a discourse of abuse’ commonly aimed at the Scots from south of the border at this time.<sup>62</sup> In the genealogy of Scotophobic insults Iolo’s ‘wild goats’ is a hybrid: it echoes such barbs as an anonymous Latin poet’s *gens bruta Scotiae* (‘the wild people of Scotland’)<sup>63</sup> and Ranulph Higden’s *barbari satis et silvestres* (‘very savage and wild’)<sup>64</sup> and various disparaging animal metaphors, such as featuring Scots as dogs and swine.<sup>65</sup> Iolo ends his poem in a crescendo of hyperbole, his patron’s allegedly booty-laden service in Scotland being grimly depicted as ‘A year feeding wolves’, its destructive swathe being such that neither grass nor dock-leaves grew ‘From English-founded Berwick’ (*O Ferwig Seisnig ei sail*)—as the poet significantly calls it—to Maesbury in eastern Shropshire, a mere stone’s throw from Glyndŵr’s home at Sycharth.<sup>66</sup>

A poem addressed to Owain by Gruffudd Llwyd shares a historical context with Iolo’s poem, being a celebration of Owain’s safe return from war in Scotland, probably at some time during September 1385 after the English army had dispersed from Newcastle.<sup>67</sup> References to Owain as ‘defender of the Glen of the great Dee of the rapid water’ (*Mur Glyn . . . Dyfrdwy fawr dwfr diferydd*) and as ‘My favourite in the manor above the Dee’ (*F’enaidd uwch Dyfrdwy faenawr*) suggest that the setting for the poem was Owain’s ancestral home on the banks of the River Dee at Glyndyfrdwy in Merioneth,<sup>68</sup> the only poem addressed to Owain for which

<sup>62</sup> M. A. Penman, ‘*Anglici caudati*: abuse of the English in fourteenth-century Scottish chronicles, literature and records’, in King and Penman (eds.), *England and Scotland in the Fourteenth Century*, pp. 216–35 at 217. Citing instances (*ibid.*, 218) of anti-Scottishness in fourteenth-century English writing Penman argues that anti-Englishness in Scottish writing did not match the virulence of the former until the fifteenth century. On English anti-Scottishness see also J. Barnie, *War in Medieval Society: Social Values and the Hundred Years War 1337–99* (London, 1974), pp. 50–1; T. B. James, ‘John of Eltham, history and story: abusive international discourse in late medieval England, France and Scotland’, in *Fourteenth Century England II*, ed. C. Given-Wilson (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 63–80 at 64. Further anti-Scottish sentiments by Iolo Goch occur in *GIG*, XVII, a poem occasioned by Bishop John Trevor of St Asaph’s embassy to Scotland on behalf of Richard III in 1397.

<sup>63</sup> T. Wright (ed.), *The Political Songs of England from the Reign of John to that of Edward II* (London, 1839), p. 167.

<sup>64</sup> *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis*, ed. C. Babington, Rolls Series (London, 1865), p. 386.

<sup>65</sup> *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I, and Edward II*, ed. W. Stubbs, vol. 2, Rolls Series (London, 1883), p. 128 (*‘canes ad vomitum revertentes’*); Wright (ed.), *Political Songs*, p. 179 (*‘Quasi sus insurgeret leonis virtuti, | Sic expugnant Angliam Scotici pollut’*).

<sup>66</sup> *GIG*, IX, 59–64.

<sup>67</sup> *GGLI*, poem 11.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, 5–6, 31.

this can be confidently claimed. Having hailed Glyndŵr as ‘Owain of the fine helmet’ (recalling Iolo Goch’s mention of the red phoenix crest),<sup>69</sup> Gruffudd Llwyd recalls the former joy of carousing on mead and wine at his patron’s court and his disquiet and grief following Owain’s departure for war in Scotland.<sup>70</sup> He relates that when his anxiety was at its most intense relief came in the form of a messenger’s tidings that Owain had gained great renown in battle,<sup>71</sup> a theme which he revisits at the end of his poem. He then proceeds to elevate his patron by means of comparisons which clearly reflect the chivalric tastes of Owain and his court. Owain is compared to a trinity of knightly heroes of romance: Uther Pendragon, father of King Arthur, Glyndŵr’s namesake Owain son of Urien (as depicted in the Welsh tale of *Owain* or *The Lady of the Well*, counterpart of Chrétien de Troyes’ *Yvain*), and Fulk Fitz Warin, hero of an Anglo-Norman romance from the Shropshire March.<sup>72</sup> Of these comparisons—which, combining native and non-native exemplars, typify the hybridity of late medieval upper-class Welsh culture—that with Owain son of Urien, which at one point exactly replicates the wording of the Welsh version of the tale,<sup>73</sup> is much the more extended. This may reflect the poet’s greater familiarity with the source or be due in part to the fact of homonymy, the shared name of Owain prompting the comparison. Gruffudd Llwyd then proceeds to portray Glyndŵr the warrior in conventional terms: the force of his charge shatters his lance which strikes through the chinks in his enemy’s armour with the effect of thunderbolts; he scatters his adversaries in all directions, and his spear is suitably bloodied.<sup>74</sup> The depiction of warfare is stylised: it owes more to both Welsh bardic exemplars and the depiction of warfare in romances than to the irregular actuality of war as experienced by Glyndŵr in Scotland in 1385 in an army which never saw formal battle. The poet ends by claiming to have heard tidings of Owain from a herald:<sup>75</sup> whether literally true or not, in what was something of a golden age for heralds—prime disseminators of tales of deeds of prowess<sup>76</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 11. 2.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 11. 7–22.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 11. 23–8.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 11. 35–58. For notes on these figures see *ibid.*, pp. 254–6.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 11. 42. With Gruffudd Llwyd’s ‘*Y marchog duog*’ (*ibid.*) cf. ‘*y marchawc duawc*’, in *Owain*, lines 276, 281 in the text ed. R. L. Thomson, *Owein or Chwedyl Iarles y Ffynnawn* (Dublin, 1968). For Thomson’s comment on this formation see *ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>74</sup> *GGLI*, 11. 61–78.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 11. 79–80.

<sup>76</sup> On this aspect of their role see M. Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1984), pp. 138–9, who terms them ‘registrars of prowess’; also C. Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: the Writing of History in Medieval England* (London, 2004), pp. 107–8.

—and a time when oral reports of valour were crucial in promoting martial reputations, the claim does not lack verisimilitude. Gruffudd Llwyd rejoices that his heraldic informant had brought news that Owain was unharmed and that his valiant deeds were widely hailed, then concludes by juxtaposing the pathos of sad cries heard in Scotland with the feats and triumphant conquests of ‘the knight of the Glen’ which, the poet exults, had earned his patron renown (Welsh *clod*).<sup>77</sup> That such an equation of participation in war with the seeking of renown and reputation reflects contemporary chivalric ideals hardly needs emphasis.

In contrast to the military focus of the two poems hitherto discussed, a poem by Iolo Goch—composed after 1386 and before the revolt of 1400, possibly in the 1390s—places Owain in the pacific and domestic setting of his motte and bailey residence of Sycharth near Llansilin on the Welsh border.<sup>78</sup> As already noted, there is evidence that Iolo had visited Sycharth before 1382, and it has been suggested that the poem in question celebrates a new building:<sup>79</sup> the early sixteenth-century bardic statute of Gruffudd ap Cynan refers to a former right of poets, by then rescinded, to receive gifts from a patron on the occasion of the building of a new house, and a number of surviving poems focusing on architectural details of patrons’ courts, as does the core of Iolo’s poem, tend to confirm the existence of such a custom.<sup>80</sup> Describing himself as an old man who is fulfilling two previous promises to visit Sycharth, and depicting his journey there as a pilgrimage<sup>81</sup>—the first of many religious metaphors in the poem—Iolo

<sup>77</sup> *GGLI*, 11.81–8.

<sup>78</sup> *GIG*, X. A likely *terminus post quem* of 1386 for the poem is indicated by the reference to Owain’s wife, Margaret Hanmer, as ‘a fair daughter from the line of a knightly lord (*‘merch eglur llin marchoglyw’*)’, *ibid.*, X. 83. Her father, David Hanmer, was probably knighted in that year, Davies, *Revolt*, p. 138. For an excellent discussion of the poem and the light it casts on the architecture of Sycharth see E. Roberts, ‘Tŷ pren glân mewn top bryn glas’, *Transactions of the Denbighshire Historical Society*, 22 (1973), 12–47. See also D. B. Hague and C. Warhurst, ‘Excavations at Sycharth Castle, Denbighshire, 1962–63’, *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 115 (1966), 108–27 at 109–12 for translated excerpts from the poem and comments by Roberts. For a percipient literary appreciation of the poem see Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr*, pp. 181–2. The approach by A. T. E. Matonis, ‘Some rhetorical topics in the early cywyddwyr’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 27 (1978–80), 47–72 at 65–7 where the poem is interpreted in terms of classical literary topoi is more controversial.

<sup>79</sup> Roberts, ‘Tŷ pren glân’, 15.

<sup>80</sup> For the passage from the statute see D. Klausner (ed.), *Wales, Records of Early Drama*, 18 (London and Toronto, 2005), p. 164 (text from British Library, Additional MS 19711). Roberts, ‘Tŷ pren glân’, 15 lists poems which are examples of the genre.

<sup>81</sup> *GIG*, X. 5–8.

lays the foundation for his praise by evoking the appeal of Sycharth in glowing general terms: it is ‘The court of a baron, a place of refinement, | Where many poets frequent, a place of the good life’ (*‘Llys barwn, lle syberwyd, | Lle daw beirdd aml, lle da byd’*).<sup>82</sup> Turning to specifics, he first refers to the moat surrounding Owain’s residence: its encircling water is implicitly compared to a golden ring and described as being crossed by a bridge leading to a gateway, wide enough, says the poet, to admit a hundred loads.<sup>83</sup> Moats, of course, were contemporary status symbols: as Christopher Dyer has said, ‘If a lord was unable to afford a castle, a moat was the next best thing.’<sup>84</sup> Iolo’s eye then focuses on the fine timberwork of Owain’s court, which features prominently in the poem. Here it is worth quoting Lawrence Butler’s remark about medieval Welsh gentry timber halls, ‘The festive hall was an owner’s pride, a bard’s joy, and a carpenter’s masterpiece.’<sup>85</sup> In a couplet ingeniously binding in the tight bonds of *cyng-hanedd* different but related words deriving from *cwpl*, English ‘couple’—meaning one of inclined beams or crucks converging at the top to support a roof—he replicates verbally the aesthetically pleasing interlocking of the timbers: ‘Cyplau sydd, gwaith cwplws ŷnt, | Cwpledig pob cwpl ydynt’ (‘There are couples, they are coupled work, | Each couple is coupled together’).<sup>86</sup> The awe-inspiring aspect of the timberwork inclines Iolo towards ecclesiastical metaphors: a poet’s eye could well have seen ornamented crucks or couples as timber replications of Gothic ecclesiastical pointed arches of stone. Sycharth reminds Iolo, firstly, of ‘Patrick’s bell tower, fruit of French workmanship’ (*‘Clochdy Padrig, Ffrenigig ffrwyth’*), the tower of St Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin, newly built around 1370 by Archbishop Thomas Minot;<sup>87</sup> and, secondly, of ‘The cloister of Westminster,

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, X. 19–20.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, X. 23–6.

<sup>84</sup> *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England c.1200–1520* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 107.

<sup>85</sup> L. A. S. Butler, ‘Rural building in England and Wales: Wales’, in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol. 3, ed. E. Miller (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 891–919 at 903.

<sup>86</sup> *GIG*, X. 27–8. Matonis, ‘Some rhetorical topics’, 65 sees in these lines the rhetorical device of *tradioctio*, defined as the repetition of a word in a different case or form for emphasis. A possible humorous secondary meaning, where *cwpl* and its derivatives are understood as having connotations of sexual union (cf. *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1954–2001), s.v. *couple* (n.), 1b and *couplen* (v.), 1(c)) has not hitherto been noted by critics.

<sup>87</sup> *GIG*, X. 29. On Minot’s tower, built after a fire in 1362, see M. O’Neill, ‘The architectural history of the medieval cathedral’, in *St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin: a History*, ed. J. Crawford and R. Gillespie (Dublin, 2009), pp. 96–119 at 113–16. Iolo’s *Ffrenigig ffrwyth* is explained by the Gothic style of the cathedral, described *ibid.*, p. 96 as ‘the most ambitious piece of Gothic architecture in Ireland.’ See also Roberts, ‘Tŷ pren glân’, 40–1; R. Mackay, ‘Minot, Thomas (d. 1375)’, in

gentle enclosure' (*Clostr Wesmustr, clostir esmwyth*'), a feature of the abbey rebuilt by Abbot Nicholas Litlyngton before his death in 1386.<sup>88</sup> These comparisons with distant contemporary ecclesiastical structures of distinction tell us something about the cultural reach of both poet and patron: neither Iolo nor Glyndŵr—both familiar with an upper class world of relative geographical mobility and broad horizons—were isolated backwoodsmen ignorant of metropolitan developments.<sup>89</sup> The suggestion of an affinity with ecclesiastical architecture is repeated in a comparison of Sycharth's timberwork with the symmetry and splendour of a gilded chancel and with stone vaulting.<sup>90</sup> Further, having evoked Sycharth's lofty aspect atop its grassed motte, Iolo playfully imagines its high timber pillars as raising it literally nearer heaven (*'Mae'i lys ef i nef yn nes'*);<sup>91</sup> there are once again obvious religious connotations, and at the same time the wording implies that Owain's court is indeed a virtual heaven. The court's storeyed sleeping quarters—described as being atop pillars—are then evoked. Four bedchambers where poets slept are said to have been turned into eight,<sup>92</sup> a claim born perhaps of hyperbole suggestive of an abundance of bardic visitors and thus of Owain's reputation for liberality. Amongst the luxury features at Sycharth noted by Iolo are a 'tiled roof' (*to teils*') on every building<sup>93</sup>—finds of blue roofing slates during excavations in the 1960s suggest that the tiles referred to may have been in fact slates, an occasional meaning at this time<sup>94</sup>—and a chimney to

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*Dictionary of Irish Biography from the Earliest Times to the Year 2002*, ed. J. McGuire and J. Quin (Cambridge, 2009), vol. 6, p. 520.

<sup>88</sup> *GIG*, X. 30. Litlyngton's rebuilding of the west and south cloisters at Westminster is cited by John Flete, see *The History of Westminster Abbey by John Flete*, ed. J. A. Robinson (Cambridge, 1909), p. 135. See also B. F. Harvey, 'Litlyngton, Nicholas (b. before 1315, d. 1386)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 34, pp. 14–15 and <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16775>>.

<sup>89</sup> It is noteworthy that the young Glyndŵr may have spent a period as an apprentice at law at Westminster, see Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, pp. 19–20; Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 144–5. In his poem to Roger Mortimer, fourth Earl of March (*GIG*, XX) Iolo Goch displays considerable knowledge of Irish affairs in the 1390s, possibly derived from Philip ap Morgan, the earl's steward in Denbigh, who visited Ireland on the earl's business, see Williams, 'Cywydd Iolo Goch i Rosier Mortimer', 77–9.

<sup>90</sup> *GIG*, X. 31–34. Roberts's suggestion, 'Tŷ pren glân', 41–4, that these lines imply a comparison with the shrine of Edward the Confessor at Westminster Abbey cannot be justified on textual or lexicographical grounds, see Johnston, *GIG*, p. 234, X. 32 n.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, X. 37–40.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, X. 41–6.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, X. 47.

<sup>94</sup> Hague and Warhurst, 'Excavations at Sycharth', 125–6 where it is stated that the slates found resembled those illustrated by E. M. Jope and G. C. Dunning in 'The use of blue slate for roofing

funnel smoke,<sup>95</sup> a marker of a high status house in a period more commonly of sooty open hearths. Wealth and luxury are also evoked by a comparison of Sycharth's wardrobes—in the former sense of storage rooms for clothing, armour and similar articles—to a shop in Cheapside ('*Siop lawndeg fal Siêp Lundain*'), the principal shopping street of medieval London (the metropolitan comparison is again significant).<sup>96</sup> To end his celebration of Sycharth's architecture Iolo reverts to ecclesiastical imagery, drawing, as Dr Enid Roberts rightly emphasised, on the traditional Welsh poetic technique of *dyfalu*, description employing extravagant comparisons.<sup>97</sup> His fanciful description of Owain's court as 'a lime-washed church transept of fair circumference' ('*Croes eglwys gylchlwys galchliw*') was probably prompted by a layout consisting of a central hall with projecting cross-wings, a common feature of ambitious gentry houses.<sup>98</sup> He also cites 'Chapels with fine glass windows' ('*Capelau â gwydrau gwiw*'),<sup>99</sup> a description not to be taken literally—Sycharth is unlikely to have had a private chapel<sup>100</sup>—but an image in the style of *dyfalu* echoing the previous ecclesiastical metaphors. Like its slate roof and chimney, Sycharth's glazed windows—common in churches but a luxury in domestic abodes at this

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in medieval England', *Antiquaries Journal*, 34 (1954), 209–17, but that 'it is not possible to state categorically that they are fourteenth century'. But cf. Roberts, 'Tŷ pren glân', 26–7, who cites an example from 1390 of *tiles* in the sense of 'slates' and examples of medieval slate-quarrying pertinent to Sycharth's location.

<sup>95</sup> *GIG*, X. 48. Johnston, *ibid.*, adopts the reading *lle magai'r mwg* found in eleven of the twenty-four manuscripts where the poem occurs in preference to *ni fagai fwg* of the majority of manuscripts (the reading adopted in Lewis's edition in *Cywyddau Iolo Goch ac Eraill*). *lle magai'r mwg* is the reading in relatively early manuscripts such as British Library Additional MSS 14967 and 14997 considered by Johnston to be authoritative (*ibid.*, pp. xxix, 231). *Magu* (lit. 'to nurture') is here used figuratively.

<sup>96</sup> *GIG*, X. 52. Iolo cites *naw gwardrob* ('nine wardrobes'), having cited *Naw neuadd* ('nine halls') in X. 51, but these references should not be understood literally: nine here denotes perfection or plenitude, or may reflect the traditional nine buildings of the king's court specified in the Welsh Laws, see Roberts, 'Tŷ pren glân', 32–3. On *wardrobe* in the sense cited see *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. *warde-robe*, and cf. Roberts, 'Tŷ pren glân', 34–5. On medieval Cheapside see D. Keene, 'Shops and shopping in medieval London', in *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology*, ed. L. Grant (London, 1990), pp. 29–46.

<sup>97</sup> Roberts, 'Tŷ pren glân', 15. *Dyfalu* is commonly found in love poetry and poems of solicitation, but has affinities too with the style of satirical poetry, see R. Bromwich, *Dafydd ap Gwilym: Poems* (Llandysul, 1982), p. xix. The most extended treatment of the technique, centred on its use in poems of solicitation, is B. O. Huws, *Y Canu Gofyn a Diolch c.1350–c.1630* (Cardiff, 1998), chap. 10, pp. 160–210.

<sup>98</sup> *GIG*, X. 53. On the status of houses built to this plan see P. Smith, *Houses of the Welsh Countryside*, 2nd enlarged edn. (London, 1988), p. 42.

<sup>99</sup> *GIG*, X. 54.

<sup>100</sup> See comments by Roberts, 'Tŷ pren glân', 38–9.

time<sup>101</sup>—were details selected by the poet to depict a dwelling of high status and lordly refinement.

Turning away from the architecture of Sycharth, Iolo provides a cameo of its exterior appurtenances, features of Owain's demesne essential to sustain his lordly existence. In the sharp clarity of its detail and its seigneurial setting it is a verbal counterpart of some of the idealised calendar illustrations of the *Très Riches Heures* of the Duke de Berry.<sup>102</sup> Iolo cites a bakehouse, an orchard, a vineyard, a mill, a stone dovecote, and a fish-pond (whose remains are still to be seen at Sycharth) replete with pikes and whitefish.<sup>103</sup> Owain's demesne is portrayed as the haunt of peacocks and herons; there are hay and grass meadows, corn in carefully tended fields, a rabbit-warren, strong work-horses for drawing ploughs, and an adjoining deer-park.<sup>104</sup> And the fortunate Owain too has his bondsmen ('*caith*') to undertake what Iolo blithely calls 'all good work' ('*pob gwaith gwiw*').<sup>105</sup> Some four centuries later another Iolo—the strongly radical literary forger Iolo Morganwg (Edward Williams, 1747–1826)—read these lines in manuscript. Incensed, he was moved to write in the margin 'Slaves! Damn Owain with all his mock patriotism ... The same argument for slavery in Wales as our present pseudo Christians urged for the west indian slavery.'<sup>106</sup> We are properly reminded how the earlier Iolo's portrait of Sycharth bears the unmistakable hallmark of class discourse.

Towards the end of his poem Iolo casts his eye back to the court's interior. Conveyed there are the best brew of Shrewsbury beer, bragget, white bread, wine, and meat destined for the kitchen. Sycharth, with its daily plenitude, is a veritable pavilion providing shelter for poets and is hailed as the finest timber court in the kingdom ('*Tecaf llys bren ... O'r deyrnas*'), fully deserving of God's protection.<sup>107</sup> Then comes a warm evocation of domestic bliss: Owain's wife, Margaret Hanmer, whom he is said to have married in 1383, daughter of Sir David Hanmer, Justice of the King's Bench, is a fleeting female presence in the otherwise unremittingly

<sup>101</sup> Smith, *Houses of the Welsh Countryside*, p. 266.

<sup>102</sup> Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 65/1284, reproduced in facsimile e.g. by H. Malo, *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* (Paris, 1945).

<sup>103</sup> *GIG*, X, 55–62.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 63–70.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 71.

<sup>106</sup> British Library, Additional MS 14970, quoted by Ashton, *Gweithiau Iolo Goch*, p. 179. On Iolo Morganwg and slavery see A. Davies, '“Uncontaminated with human gore”? Iolo Morganwg, slavery and the Jamaican inheritance', in *A Rattleskull Genius: the Many Faces of Iolo Morganwg*, ed. G. H. Jenkins (Cardiff, 2005), pp. 293–313.

<sup>107</sup> *GIG*, X, 73–60.

male world of the Glyndŵr poems; we hear also of their children (referred to as coming ‘in pairs’, perhaps suggesting a 1390s date for the poem):<sup>108</sup>

|  |   |
|--|---|
| A gwraig orau o'r gwragedd,                | And the best woman of all women,                  |
| Gwyn fy myd o'i gwin a'i medd!             | Blessed am I in enjoying her wine and her mead!   |
| Merch eglur llin marchoglyw,               | A fair daughter from the line of a knightly lord, |
| Urddol hael anianol yw;                    | She is noble and generous by nature;              |
| A'i blant a ddeuant bob ddau.              | And his children come in pairs,                   |
| Nythaid teg o benaethau.                   | A fair nestful of chieftains.                     |
| Anfynych iawn fu yno                       | It was very rare to see there                     |
| Weled na chliced na chlo,                  | Either a bolt or lock,                            |
| Na phorthoriaeth ni wnaeth neb;            | Neither did anyone perform portorage;             |
| Ni bydd eisiau, budd oseb,                 | There will be no want, a beneficial trait,        |
| Na gwall na newyn na gwarth,               | Nor lack nor hunger nor shame,                    |
| Na syched fyth yn Sycharth. <sup>109</sup> | Nor thirst ever in Sycharth.                      |

The poem's last lines provide a welcome snapshot, stylised and frustratingly compressed, of Glyndŵr's physical appearance, describing him as *gŵr meingryf*, a slim and strong man:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Gorau Cymro, tro trylew,                      | It's the best Welshman of the brave deed,    |
| Piau'r wlad, lin Pywer Lew,                   | Who owns the land, of the line of Pywer Lew, |
| Gŵr meingryf, gorau mangre,                   | A slim and strong man, best of locations,    |
| A phiau'r llys, hoff yw'r lle. <sup>110</sup> | And he owns the court, a delightful place.   |

In Iolo's poem a medieval microcosm endures in words. The only other contemporary description of Sycharth is less effusive and very different in tone. In a letter written at the height of Owain's revolt in May 1403 by Henry, the King's eldest son (the later Henry V), to his father, King Henry IV, he relates how he and his army came to Sycharth, a court that was well-built and Glyndŵr's principal residence (*'bien edifie, que feu son principale mansion appelle Saghern'*). He tells how, finding it abandoned, they

<sup>108</sup> On the date of the marriage see Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, p. 25. On Sir David Hanmer see R. A. Griffiths, *The Principality of Wales in the Later Middle Ages*, I (Cardiff, 1972), pp. 114–15; Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 137–8; B. O. Huws, 'Rhan o awdl foliant ddiennw i Syr Dafydd Hanmer', *Dwned*, 9 (2003), 43–64. P. C. Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies AD300–1400*, 8 vols. (Cardiff, 1974), vol. 1, p. 32 ('Bleddyn ap Cynfyn 5') lists six sons and six daughters born to Owain and his wife together with a further illegitimate son of Owain's, but cf. the author's subsequent 'Corrigenda Vol. 1' (n.d.), p. 1 where two of the listed daughters are deemed to be illegitimate.

<sup>109</sup> *GIG*, X, 81–92.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 93–6. Pywyr (var. Bywyr, Howyr) Lew was a remote ancestor of the Powys dynasty. In Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies*, genealogy 23 (no pagination) an approximate birthdate of 630 (generation 10) is indicated for him. For further references see *idem* (ed.), *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts* (Cardiff, 1966), index, p. 173. Iolo associates Owain with Pywyr in his two other poems addressed to him, *GIG*, VIII, 32 and IX, 6.

burnt it totally together with the nearby dwellings of Owain's tenants.<sup>111</sup> When the motte at Sycharth was excavated in the 1960s fragments of burnt oak were found,<sup>112</sup> sorry remnants of the 'finest timber court' which inspired the muse of Iolo Goch.

In the poetry so far considered there are no pointers to the rebel Glyndŵr of 1400. Bardic portrayal of him suggests an upper-class Welshman fully and comfortably assimilated to the conditions of English rule, an eager participant in English armies in their imperial mode, married to a daughter of a Justice of the King's Bench, at ease, like his English squirely counterparts, in the enjoyment of the good life, whose material aspects paid heed to metropolitan models. Viewed in the light of modern postcolonial theory—and, as Sir Rees Davies amply demonstrated, post-Conquest Wales did indeed amount to a colony<sup>113</sup>—the Glyndŵr of the bards so far revealed is a participant in the mimicry seen as endemic to the colonial condition by Homi Bhabha in his classic account 'Of mimicry and man' in *The Location of Culture*.<sup>114</sup> But as Bhabha points out, colonial mimicry was a complex phenomenon. The colonial mimic was destined to cut an ambivalent figure, being, in Bhabha's famous words, 'almost the same, but not quite';<sup>115</sup> he remarks—with the Indian colonial experience specifically in mind—that to be Anglicised 'was emphatically not to be English'.<sup>116</sup> Relocating these insights in fourteenth-century Wales, we can say that if Owain Glyndŵr played the role of the colonial mimic convincingly, he was far from being a fully fledged Englishman. A fuller examination of the poetry associated with him will detect more 'not-quiteneſs' in relation to the colonial condition than so far revealed and significant traces of ambivalence. I shall now, therefore, turn to two poems where we edge towards a more ambivalent Glyndŵr, one who is almost the same, but

<sup>111</sup> Ellis, *Original Letters*, pp. 11–12.

<sup>112</sup> Hague and Warhurst, 'Excavations at Sycharth', 119.

<sup>113</sup> The *locus classicus* in this respect is R. R. Davies, 'Colonial Wales', *Past and Present*, 65 (Nov. 1974), 3–23. But this perception is an underlying theme in much of his writing on medieval Wales. For its specific application to fourteenth-century Wales see e.g. *The First English Empire: Power and Identities in the British Isles 1093–1343* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 185–6. The reception and influence of this aspect of Davies's work is discussed by D. F. Evans, "'Bardd arallwlad": Dafydd ap Gwilym a theori ôl-drefedigaethol', in *Llenyddiaeth mewn Theori*, ed. O. Thomas (Cardiff, 2006), pp. 42–3. For a recent chronological extension of Davies's colonial/imperial template see P. Crooks, 'State of the Union: perspectives on English imperialism in the late Middle Ages', *Past and Present*, 212 (Aug. 2011), 3–42.

<sup>114</sup> H. K. Bhabha, 'Of mimicry and man: the ambivalence of colonial discourse', in *The Location of Culture* (London and New York, 1994), pp. 85–92.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

really not quite the same, a complex and nuanced figure whose contours—placed in the social and political context of late fourteenth-century Wales—trace in faint outline the leader of the 1400 revolt.

The first poem to be considered in this context was addressed to Owain by Gruffudd Llwyd, almost certainly in 1386–7.<sup>117</sup> Its first part is a jeremiad, its bleak opening statement setting the tone: ‘This is a black and sad world where life is transient’ (*‘Byd dudrist, bywyd hydraul, | Ydyw hwn’*).<sup>118</sup> The poet then utilises the ancient topos of the *mundus inversus* (the world upside down)—often used historically to express upper class discomfiture—to bewail the evils of the times:<sup>119</sup> serfs have much gold and silver, which they hoard; those most lacking in gentility are uppermost whilst the highest of old are reduced to the lowest; dregs at the bottom of the sack have risen to the top, and kites have become hawks, an allusion which reflects an avian hierarchy derived from falconry.<sup>120</sup> To compound things, adds the poet, the very land is failing, there being neither corn nor ploughing.<sup>121</sup> Very similar complaints—partly reflecting economic disruptions caused by the Black Death—also occur in John Gower’s *Vox Clamantis*, a Latin elegiac poem almost contemporary with Gruffudd Llwyd’s *cywydd*. He laments that the peasants ‘are sluggish, they are scarce, and they are grasping. For the very little they do they demand the highest pay’; he bitterly contemplates too a dislocated *mundus inversus*, ‘The bitter thing is now becoming sweet, the sweet is now becoming bitter, and the foul is becoming fair, since the fixed order of things is no more. . . . Servants are

<sup>117</sup> *GGLI*, 12.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 12. 1–2. A reference (*ibid.*, 12. 39–42) to David Hanmer as a knight who was then living indicates the date of the poem. He was probably knighted in 1386 but died in 1387, Davies, *Revolt*, p. 138.

<sup>119</sup> For a selection from the vast bibliography on this topos see M. Jones, ‘Folklore motifs in late medieval art I: proverbial follies and impossibilities’, *Folklore*, 100 (1989), 201–17 at 211, n. 8. The most extensive treatment is by G. Cocchiara, *Il Mondo alla Rovescia* (Turin, 1963).

<sup>120</sup> *GGLI*, 12. 6–8, 13–20. I translate *gweilch* (pl. of *gwalch*) of the original (12. 19–20) as ‘hawks’, rather than ‘falcons’, cf. the comments by D. Jenkins, ‘gwalch: Welsh’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 19 (Summer, 1990), 55–67. For a similar disparaging contrast between kites and (gos)hawks cf. *Kyng Alisaunder*, ed. G. V. Smithers, Early English Text Society, 227 (London, 1952), 3043–4: ‘Niltou neuere, late ne skete, | A goshauk maken of a kete’. Cf. D. Evans, ‘The nobility of knight and falcon’, in *The Ideals and Practice of Medieval Knighthood*, III, Papers from the fourth Strawberry Hill conference 1988, ed. C. Harper and R. Harvey (Woodbridge, 1990), pp. 79–99 at 91 who contrasts ‘noble hunters such as falcons and hawks and ignoble, non-noble, base ones, such as harriers, buzzards and kites, that Western falconers despised as useless for the chase, since they were either scavengers or fed on insects, field-mice and other small creatures’. It is noted *ibid.* that the distinction between these birds was proverbial in French literature.

<sup>121</sup> *GGLI*, 12. 23–4.

now masters and masters are servants.<sup>122</sup> Yet, for all the similarity of their conservative complaints, there is a difference between Gruffudd Llwyd and Gower. For the *mundus inversus* deplored by the Welsh poet has a distinctly national aspect. Deploying an arresting image to convey national degradation, he says that the oppression suffered by the Welsh is so great that they are ‘a wretched people resembling drunken crows’ (*‘Cenedl druain fal brain brwysg’*).<sup>123</sup> Their current misery compares starkly with their past glories, wistfully evoked with reference to the heroes of old. Drawing on native mythology and Geoffrey of Monmouth he cites three ‘emperors’ (*‘Tri amherodr’*) of the Britons, Bendigeidfran (Brân the Blessed), Constantine and Arthur, and boasts of the five score crowned British (that is, Welsh) kings—from Brutus to Cadwaladr—who ruled the island of Britain.<sup>124</sup> (Claims of a multitude of past kings boosted national egos: Gruffudd Llwyd’s Welsh regal throng is paralleled by the Irish Remonstrance of c.1317 which boasted that 197 native kings had ruled over Ireland and by the Declaration of Arbroath’s assertion that 113 kings of Scottish stock had reigned in Scotland.<sup>125</sup>) Yet the poet’s remedy for the woes of his fallen nation is not a call to revolt; rather it is profoundly establishmentarian. The perceptions of postcolonial criticism are certainly applicable here. Homi Bhabha, writing about the colonial condition, ascribed to it a ‘psychic uncertainty’ manifested in doubled or split representations. He observes that ‘The fantasy of the native is precisely to occupy the master’s place while keeping his place in the slave’s *avenging* anger.’<sup>126</sup> Gruffudd Llwyd classically illustrates such duality, effectively

<sup>122</sup> *Vox Clamantis*, V. 9, VII. 4, quoted from *The Major Latin Works of John Gower*, trans. E. W. Stockton (Seattle, WA, 1962), pp. 208, 259. For the original passages see G. C. Macaulay, *The Complete Works of John Gower*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1899–1902), vol. 4, pp. 217, 278. Cf. also ‘*Confessio Amantis*’, prologue, 26–31, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 2, where the poet complains that the world ‘stant all reversed’. Chaucer, ‘Lack of Stedfastnesse’, 5–6 similarly complains that ‘turned up-so-doun | Is al this world’, L. D. Benson *et al.* (eds.), *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edn. (Oxford, 1987), p. 654; for a discussion see J. Klene, ‘Chaucer’s contribution to a popular topos: the world upside down’, *Viator*, 11 (1980), 321–34 at 331–2.

<sup>123</sup> *GGLI*, 12. 9–10.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 12. 29–38. Constantine (*Custennin*) is likely to be either the emperor Constantine the Great whom Geoffrey of Monmouth depicted as the son of Constantius, king of Britain, Custennin Fendigaid (‘the blessed’), grandfather of Arthur according to Geoffrey, or Custennin son of Macsen Wledig, cited as one of the ‘Twenty-four mightiest Kings’, see *GGLI*, 12. 33 n., p. 261; Bartrum, *Welsh Classical Dictionary*, pp. 156–8.

<sup>125</sup> R. R. Davies, ‘Presidential Address: the peoples of Britain and Ireland, 1100–1400: IV Language and historical mythology’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 7 (1997), 1–24 at 20.

<sup>126</sup> ‘Interrogating identity: Franz Fanon and the postcolonial prerogative’, in *The Location of Culture*, p. 44 (the author’s italicisation).

straddling two places at once, locating himself ambiguously in both the culture of the colonised and that of the coloniser. He cites three contemporary Welshmen elevated to knighthood, Glyndŵr's recently knighted father-in-law, Sir David Hanmer, Justice of the King's Bench, Sir Gregory Sais, Owain's commander at Berwick, and the deceased hero of the battle of Poitiers, Sir Hywel ap Gruffudd.<sup>127</sup> A rhetorical question as to who should replace Sir Hywel—he died around 1381—is answered unhesitatingly: it is, of course, Owain, lord of Glyndyfrdwy, a lord, says the poet, who is unsurpassed, the lordly and bountiful son of Sycharth.<sup>128</sup> Having hailed Owain as the descendant of an ancient line, the poem concludes with a description of him resplendent in a fringed scarlet garment, gilded armour, and fine fur, a projection of him arrayed for a knighting ceremony.<sup>129</sup> Owain's success in a tournament ('*Yn ymwan ar dwrneimant*'), winning shoes and buskins of Cordovan leather, is anticipated<sup>130</sup>—Juliet Barker has referred to 'a connection in chivalric minds between the assumption of knighthood and participation in *hastiludes*'<sup>131</sup>—and he is finally envisaged in a congenial and elevated social milieu seated at high table in the company of earls, a depiction, no doubt, of a knighting or tournament feast.<sup>132</sup> An Owain who achieved such status in reality would certainly have fulfilled the desire to occupy his master's place. To a poet of

<sup>127</sup> *GGLI*, 12. 39–48. On Hanmer see above, n. 108. On Sir Gregory Sais see Carr, 'A Welsh knight in the Hundred Years War'; on Sir Hywel ap Gruffudd see *idem*, 'Welshmen and the Hundred Years War', *Welsh History Review*, 4 (1968–9), 21–46 at 29–30; *idem*, 'Hywel, Sir, ap Gruffudd (d. 1381?)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 29, pp. 174–5 and <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13972?docPos=1>>.

<sup>128</sup> *GGLI*, 12. 61–6.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 12. 70–2. The reference to the wearing of scarlet (*ysgarlad*) is significant in relation to the ceremony of knighting. Cf. the influential thirteenth-century poem, *L'Ordene de Chevalerie* where Hugh, Count of Tiberias, when knighting Saladin (in a bizarre demonstration of the ceremony) clothes him in a *robe vermeille* to signify the knight's duty to be ready to shed his blood in defence of the holy church, E. Barbazan and M. Méon (eds.), *Fabliaux et Contes des Poètes Français des XI, XII, XIII, XIV et XV Siècles*, nouvelle ed., tome premier (Paris, 1808), p. 65. In a treatise on the 'Making of knyghte of the Bathe' (1429) reference is made to clothing the aspirant knight in a kirtle 'of rede tartaryne', see the appendix to *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry*, ed. A. T. P. Byles, Early English Text Society, original series vol. 168 (London, 1926), p. 128. In 1204 King John bought three scarlet robes in connection with the dubbing of a knight, A. V. B. Norman, *The Medieval Soldier* (New York, 1971), p. 149.

<sup>130</sup> *GGLI*, 12. 74–8.

<sup>131</sup> *The Tournament in England*, p. 115.

<sup>132</sup> On the association of feasting with knighting ceremonies see R. W. Ackerman, 'The knighting ceremonies in the Middle English romances', *Speculum*, 19 (1944), 285–313 at 289, 304–5. On feasts held at the conclusion of tournaments see D. Crouch, *Tournament* (London and New York, 2005), pp. 108–9. He observes 'For a man outside a comital or ducal household to receive an invitation to these final events was to receive social patronage of a high order.'

conservative disposition, such as Gruffudd Llwyd, the elevation of Owain, thereby granting lineage and nobility its due, denotes the restoration of the right order of things in contrast to the *mundus inversus* of the first part of the poem. The poet's inflated image of Owain may be mere flattery designed to curry favour, but if he was voicing Owain's own authentic ambition—one ultimately unrealised—it may be that a frustrated hope of advancement was one element which spurred Owain towards his 1400 revolt.<sup>133</sup> But at least equally significant—and probably more so—in relation to the revolt is the poem's revelation of a Welsh consciousness of national degradation, humiliation and oppression: in this respect, it is highly likely that Gruffudd Llwyd is an authentic spokesman for sentiments current among Owain and his circle. A similar mood is revealed in a manuscript written about this time for Hopcyn ap Tomas, Owain's future 'maister of Brut' and supporter: it referred to the Welsh 'until today ... suffering pain, adversity and exile in their native land' (*'hyt hediw ... yn godef poen ac achenocit ac alltuded yn eu ganedic dayar'*).<sup>134</sup> It would appear that it was in soil permeated with a sense of grievance, alienation and resentment that the seeds of Owain's future revolt were sown. An Owain who aspired to knighthood bestowed by an English king was indeed 'almost the same' and adept at colonial mimicry, but there are signs too in this poem of ambivalence vis-à-vis the colonial regime, an aspect grounded in an awareness of national wrongs and injustices and a loss of past glory shared with his people. His poet, Gruffudd Llwyd—despite the ambiguous subjectivity of his poem—reveals, however tentatively, the potential for a future unleashing of 'the slave's *avenging* anger'.

A poem by Iolo Goch, essentially a celebration of Owain's lineage,<sup>135</sup> was composed some time after his military adventures in Scotland in 1385 (it cites Owain as one who had subdued Scots, this time characterised as *Brynaich*, the men of Bernicia). Gerald of Wales tells of the role of the

<sup>133</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, p. 130 notes that Owain was qualified in property terms for knighthood, but cf. *ibid.*, p. 134: 'No one could have been as profoundly frustrated and disillusioned as Owain Glyn Dŵr: by far the greatest of "the barons of Wales", he could not even make it to the rank of a knight in England.' He may have been specifically disappointed that he was not among the squires knighted by the earl of Arundel following the naval victory of 1387, *ibid.*, p. 149. On Owain's apparent failure to secure local office see *ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>134</sup> B. F. Roberts, 'Un o lawysgrifau Hopcyn ap Tomas o Ynys Dawy', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 22 (1966–8), 223–8 at 227 (quoted from The Public Library Company of Philadelphia MS 8680.O; my translation). On Hopcyn's military career in support of Glyndŵr see Williams, 'Gwrthryfel Glyndŵr: dau nodyn', 180–3.

<sup>135</sup> *GIG*, VIII. For a valuable discussion of this poem see Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 129–31.

bards in preserving genealogical records of the Welsh princes;<sup>136</sup> yet, the poem in question has, significantly, no surviving earlier model in respect of the extent of its genealogical content. Having hailed Owain as a ‘baron’<sup>137</sup>—he held his land by ‘Welsh barony’, the tenure-in-chief by which the descendants of the Welsh dynasties held their land after the English conquest<sup>138</sup>—as ‘peacock of Sirwern’,<sup>139</sup> a reference to the Cardiganshire commote where his mother’s ancestral lands were situated, and as ‘lord of the watered land of Glyndyfrdwy’,<sup>140</sup> Iolo focuses on Owain’s main ancestral patrimony of Powys. In reality Owain held but a tiny fraction of the lands of his princely ancestors, but Iolo’s highly significant words imply resentment certainly, and perhaps ambition, in relation to this state of affairs. Referring to wider tracts of Powys—the two commotes of Maelor and that of Mathrafal<sup>141</sup>—than those held by Owain, he asks who rightfully owns them ‘if the world were as it should be’ (*‘ped fai fyf’*), a question answered by a question, ‘Who but Owain?’<sup>142</sup> The point is repeated in a further question: ‘Who will subdue the land of Powys, if there were rightful law and dealing?’ (*‘Pwy a ostwng Powystir, | Pe bai gyfraith a gwaith gwir?’*).<sup>143</sup> The conditional clauses appended to the questions hardly imply a passive and indifferent acceptance of the status quo of late fourteenth-century Wales. If shared by Owain himself—and Iolo is unlikely to have voiced sentiments uncongenial to his patron—the frustration implicit in these lines is a pointer towards the revolt of 1400. Owain’s mask of colonial mimicry is now beginning to slip. Having identified Owain as the rightful heir of Powys, the poet then proceeds to authenticate this by expanding upon his paternal Powysian genealogy. Together with Owain’s father, ten Powysian ancestors are cited, a mixture of historical figures such as Gruffudd Maelor (d. 1191) and Bleddyn ap Cynfyn (d. 1075), regarded as the founder of the later Powys dynasty, and others more

<sup>136</sup> *Descriptio Cambriae*, I. 3, *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, vol. VI, ed. J. F. Dimock, Rolls Series (London, 1868), pp. 167–8.

<sup>137</sup> *GIG*, VIII. 1, also 41–3.

<sup>138</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 133–4. On the pre-conquest origins of this tenure and instances of its survival after 1282–3 see A. D. Carr, ‘An aristocracy in decline: the native Welsh lords after the Edwardian Conquest’, *Welsh History Review*, 5 (1970–1), 103–30.

<sup>139</sup> *GIG*, VIII. 6. For Sirwern (< Is Hirwern) in the commote of Is Coed see M. Richards, *Welsh Administrative and Territorial Units* (Cardiff, 1969), p. 95.

<sup>140</sup> *GIG*, VIII. 8.

<sup>141</sup> Maelor Gymraeg (= Bromfield) and Maelor Saesneg, Richards, *Administrative and Territorial Units*, p. 148. Mathrafal corresponded to the commote of Caereinion, *ibid.*, 154.

<sup>142</sup> *GIG*, VIII. 9–12.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII. 13–14.

remote and nebulous—like Pywer Lew and Maig Mygrfras—who may have lived as much as seven or eight centuries earlier.<sup>144</sup> The line of Owain's mother—that of the southern dynasty of Deheubarth—is also featured, although much less prominently; only two ancestors of this line, the Lord Rhys and Tewdwr Mawr, are named.<sup>145</sup> But a number of the ancestral possessions of his mother's line in south-west Wales are cited,<sup>146</sup> with a hint that these lands may have been contested, although this is far too muted a theme to warrant a suggestion that a legal dispute over these lands occasioned the poem.<sup>147</sup> Iolo does not neglect either to cite Owain's connection—more tenuous than to the lines of Powys and Deheubarth—to a third princely house of Wales, that of Gwynedd, naming his great-grandmother, Gwenllian, a descendant of Cynan ab Iago, an eleventh-century prince of Gwynedd.<sup>148</sup> It is emphasised that Owain's princely descent gives him precedence; by virtue of his descent he is, claims Iolo, a baron compared to whom all other barons are worthless.<sup>149</sup> The genealogically weaker but politically resonant Gwynedd connection—the house of Gwynedd, with its chief seat at Aberffraw in Anglesey, achieved primacy over the other princely dynasties in the last century of the age of the princes—is reiterated at the end of the poem: having been lauded as 'The splendid pure fruit of the lord of Aberffraw' ('*Aur burffrwyth iôr Aberffraw*'), Owain is then given the supreme accolade by being declared 'the sole head of Wales' ('*Un pen ar Gymru*').<sup>150</sup>

Iolo's poem was probably declaimed and recited many times. As its editor—Professor Dafydd Johnston—has rightly noted, the great variation in line order and the numerous verbal variants evident in its manuscript copies are indicative of oral transmission.<sup>151</sup> It is also probably no accident that there exist more manuscript copies of this poem—thirty-

<sup>144</sup> *GIG*, VIII. 19–24, 27–32, 37. On Pywer Lew see above, n. 110. According to the genealogies Maig Mygrfras (also Myngfras) was the brother of the sixth-century Brochwel Ysgithrog of Powys, cf. Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies*, genealogy 14 (no pagination). For further references see *GIG*, pp. 223–4.

<sup>145</sup> *GIG*, VIII. 26, 35. The lord Rhys (Rhys ap Gruffudd), who died in 1197 was the great-grandson of Tewdwr Mawr, Bartrum, *Welsh Genealogies*, p. 776 ('Rhys ap Tewdwr').

<sup>146</sup> *GIG*, VII. 60 (Tref y Traeth), 62 (Tref y Garn), 64 (Acharn). On the location of these see Johnston's textual notes, *ibid.*, pp. 225–6. Iolo also refers to the commotes of Is Coed (VIII. 77) and Is Aeron (VIII. 90).

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Johnston, 'Iolo Goch and the English', 90–1 who speculates that the claim to the lands in south-west Wales 'was the immediate practical occasion of the poem'. On the ownership of one of the territories in question, Trefgarn (Tref y Garn) see Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, p. 19.

<sup>148</sup> *GIG*, VIII. 46.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII. 43–4.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII. 96–7.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221.

three in all—than of the other poems by Iolo Goch addressed to Owain before his revolt.<sup>152</sup> This was a popular poem, one which epitomised Owain's claim to be Prince of Wales: it was eminently fitted to elicit support for Owain and could well have been used to this end both before and during the revolt. One textual aspect of the poem may indicate an awareness of its potential as propaganda. Four lines towards the end of the poem in Professor Johnston's edition occur in only two manuscripts: these lines include the highly charged description of Owain as 'The splendid pure fruit of the lord of Aberffraw', resonantly echoing the style *princeps de Aberfrau* used by Llywelyn the Great, with its connotation of primacy among Welsh rulers.<sup>153</sup> These lines may well be authentic, as Professor Johnston supposes,<sup>154</sup> but they may also be a propagandist interpolation added—as an afterthought in opportune political circumstances by Iolo Goch himself or by someone else—in order to specifically highlight Owain's claim to be the *de facto* heir of the princes of Aberffraw, a potent aspect of his eventual call to arms directed at his fellow countrymen. Be that as it may, whatever its original ideological mission, this poem portends the metamorphosis of the colonial mimic into the leader of a national revolt.

Owain ultimately rose in revolt in September 1400, being proclaimed Prince of Wales at a gathering of his adherents—including his *propheta* Crach Ffynnant—in Glyndyfrdwy.<sup>155</sup> What of the role of poets and poetry during the revolt? It is evident that a Penal Law of 1402, citing the evils brought about in Wales by 'wasters, rhymers, minstrels and other vagabonds' ('*Westours Rymours Ministrax & autres vacabondes*') and prohibiting their maintenance by subsidies ('*Kymorthas*') derived from the common people ('*la commune people*') was aimed at bardic propagators of Owain's cause—probably of varying literary status—and indicated their popular reach and appeal.<sup>156</sup> It is significant that documentary evidence implicates three bards from opposite ends of Wales as Glyndŵr adherents, Gruffudd ap Maredudd ap Dafydd and Gwilym ap Sefnyn from Anglesey and Ieuan Gethin from Glamorgan.<sup>157</sup> Poems by other poets indicate both their

<sup>152</sup> Cf. *ibid.* IX (9 copies), X (24 copies).

<sup>153</sup> The lines in question are *ibid.*, VIII. 93–6. On the style *princeps de Aberfrau* see H. Pryce (ed.), *The Acts of Welsh Rulers 1120–1283* (Cardiff, 2005), p. 76.

<sup>154</sup> *GIG*, p. 221.

<sup>155</sup> Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, p. 31.

<sup>156</sup> *The Statutes of the Realm*, ii (London, 1816), p. 140 (4 Hen. IV, c. 27).

<sup>157</sup> G. Roberts, 'The Anglesey submissions of 1406', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 15 (1952–4), 39–61 at 49; A. D. Carr, 'Rhai beirdd ym Môn', *ibid.*, 28 (1978–80), 599; B. O. Huws, 'Dyddiadau Ieuan Gethin', *Llên Cymru*, 20 (1997), 46–55 at 47.

authors' support for Owain and the intensification of anti-English sentiment during the revolt. Two poems of uncertain authorship were addressed to two combatant brothers—Hywel Coetmor and Rhys Gethin—descendants of Llywelyn the Great from the commote of Nanconwy on the edge of Snowdonia, praising the former as 'the affliction of the English' and as 'Owain's kinsman' and elevating his brother by direct comparison of his military prowess with that of Owain himself.<sup>158</sup> Adopting a self-deprecating pose the poet Llywelyn ab y Moel recorded his participation in a skirmish in mid- or south-east Wales where Owain's men were routed by a force from Usk; in another poem he related his exploits as an outlaw in a forest on the Welsh/Shropshire border, exulting that the forest—'the London of Owain's men'—provided cover to 'Capture an Englishman and disarm him'.<sup>159</sup> A poem by Madog ap Gronw Gethin expressed gratitude to the River Dee whose flood had drowned members of an English force invading north-east Wales.<sup>160</sup> Characterising the river's water as ale he implies its potent effect on the English invaders, asserting that 'The ale was good against the children of Alice', a soubriquet often applied by the medieval Welsh to the English, recalling Alice Rhonwen, the legendary daughter of the Saxon leader Hengist.<sup>161</sup>

Whilst indicative of the native literary intelligentsia's affinity with Owain, the poems just cited were not specifically addressed to him. The first major edition of Iolo Goch's work, published by the amateur scholar Charles Ashton in 1896, in addition to the pre-1400 poems which Iolo addressed to Owain, contained a number of poems attributed in manuscript to Iolo and deemed by Ashton to be either addressed to Glyndŵr during the revolt or vaticinal poems relating to the conflict;<sup>162</sup> later scholarship has conclusively shown that the majority of them were neither about Glyndŵr

<sup>158</sup> The poems are attributed to Iolo Goch in manuscript and despite Lewis's reservations on stylistic grounds (introduction, p. 1) were published as his work in the first edition (1925) of Lewis, Roberts and Williams (eds.), *Cywyddau Iolo Goch ac Eraill*, pp. 115–19. In the subsequent edition (1937) they were relegated to a section of poems of uncertain authorship, pp. 107–10. For a further discussion see Johnston, *GIG*, introduction pp. xxv–xxvi who confirms the rejection of Iolo's authorship.

<sup>159</sup> R. I. Daniel (ed.), *Gwaith Dafydd Bach ap Madog Wladaidd 'Syypyn Cyfeiliog' a Llywelyn ab y Moel* (Aberystwyth, 1998), poems 9, 10. For a discussion of their background see the textual notes *ibid.*, pp. 108–9, 143–5.; *idem*, 'Agweddu ar waith Llywelyn ab y Moel', *Dwned*, 2 (1996), 31–50.

<sup>160</sup> For a text and discussion see D. H. Evans, 'An incident on the Dee during the Glyn Dŵr Rebellion?', *Transactions of the Denbighshire Historical Society*, 24 (1988), 5–40.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Bartrum, *Welsh Classical Dictionary*, pp. 11, 559.

<sup>162</sup> Ashton (ed.), *Gweithiau Iolo Goch*, nos. XI, XII, XIV, XVI, XVIII–XXI.

nor the work of Iolo.<sup>163</sup> Among the discards was a *cywydd* described in the rubric in many of its manuscript sources as being addressed to Owain ‘when his might was greatest’ (*pan oedd fwyaf ei rwysg*).<sup>164</sup> In an article published in 1922 the great Welsh scholar Sir Ifor Williams argued that this poem was addressed to a mid-fifteenth-century figure from south-west Wales, Owain ap Gruffydd ap Nicholas, and that—despite the unanimous manuscript attribution to Iolo Goch—it was the work of the south Wales poet Lewys Glyn Cothi.<sup>165</sup> Further, Sir Ifor dismissed the poem’s unambiguous reference to its recipient being ‘of Glyndyfrdwy’ as being a mere comparison with Owain Glyndŵr.<sup>166</sup> This dismissal had no syntactical basis, and it has to be said too that the suggestion that the poem was addressed to Owain ap Gruffydd ap Nicholas is tendentious and wholly unconvincing. It must be emphasised that Sir Ifor’s Owain ap Gruffydd ap Nicholas was a figure of only local significance, a player on the confined stage of south-west Wales:<sup>167</sup> the high-blown rhetoric attached to the recipient of our poem—he is described as ‘conquering afar’ (*pell ores-gyn*), as being ‘a great lord’ (*mawr waladr*), and, most significantly, as one worthy to wear the crowns of the three historical kingdoms of Wales (*tair talaith teilwng*)—would be risibly inappropriate for such a figure. It is, however, commensurate with what might be thought applicable to Owain Glyndŵr. Since 1922 too there have been many advances in our knowledge of medieval Welsh metrics:<sup>168</sup> it is now evident that the *cyghanedd* patterns

<sup>163</sup> Cf. J. H. Davies in E. Owen, ‘Owain Lawgoch—Yeuain de Galles’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1899–1900, 6–105 at 90–2; W. J. Gruffydd, ‘Iolo Goch’s “I Owain Glyndŵr ar ddifancoll”’, *Y Cymmrodor*, 21 (1908), 105–12; H. Lewis, ‘Rhai cywyddau brud’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 1 (1921–3), 240–55; T. Roberts, ‘Pedwar cywydd brud’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 7 (1933–4), 231–46 at 245–6; J. E. Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, pp. 154–7 summarised the views of contemporary scholarship regarding the authenticity and authorship of putative Glyndŵr poems, but his view that a poem by Ieuan ap Rhydderch was unique as ‘the one poem which may without hesitation be connected with the wars of Glyn Dŵr’ (p. 156) was shown to be mistaken by Roberts, ‘Pedwar cywydd brud’, 231–4.

<sup>164</sup> Ashton (ed.), *Gweithiau Iolo Goch*, XII. I have discussed and re-edited the poem in ‘Adolygu’r canon: cywydd arall gan Iolo Goch i Owain Glyndŵr’, *Llên Cymru*, 23 (2000), 39–73. My comments in this paragraph summarise my more detailed comments *ibid*.

<sup>165</sup> ‘Llyma fyd rhag sythfryd Sais’, *Y Llenor*, 1 (1922), 62–70.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 63. For my comments see ‘Adolygu’r canon’, 46.

<sup>167</sup> See *ibid.*, 48. On Owain ap Gruffydd ap Nicholas’s career see R. Griffiths, ‘Gruffydd ap Nicholas and the rise of the house of Dinefwr’, *National Library of Wales Journal*, 13 (1963–4), 256–65 at 263–4; *idem*, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas and His Family: a Study in the Wars of the Roses and Early Tudor Politics* (Cardiff, 1993), p. 17.

<sup>168</sup> Critical in this respect are T. Parry, ‘Datblygiad y cywydd’; *idem*, *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym* (Cardiff, 1953), pp. xc–xcviii; E. Rolant, ‘Arddull y cywydd’, *Ysgrifau Beirniadol*, 2, ed. J. E. C. Williams (Denbigh, 1966), pp. 36–57.

of the poem are incompatible with a mid-fifteenth-century date and utterly untypical of the work of Lewys Glyn Cothi. The *cynganedd*, however, fully accords with the practice of Iolo Goch and other poets of his generation.<sup>169</sup> More significantly still the poem contains a number of collocations and word combinations found in the undoubtedly authentic poems of Iolo, as well as similarities in vocabulary, including compound words, and end-rhymes; further, one line is identical word for word with a line in a poem by Iolo.<sup>170</sup> It is reasonable to conclude that the case for Iolo's authorship is as watertight as that for any of the poet's recognised works.<sup>171</sup> Known to have addressed a poem to John Trevor, Bishop of St Asaph, as late as 1397,<sup>172</sup> Iolo could well have lived on beyond 1400. The case for regarding the poem as a product of the early years of the revolt and of Iolo's extreme old age—he was probably born about 1325<sup>173</sup>—is compelling. In the poem Owain is said to be 'avenging the wrong done to the south' ('*Yn dial cam y Deau*') and to be 'conquering afar' ('*pell oresgyn*'). A plausible setting for the poem would be either 1402, the year of the battle of Pilleth and attacks by Glyndŵr forces in Glamorgan and south-east Wales, or 1403, when he threatened English power centres in Carmarthen and Pembroke.<sup>174</sup> During these heady years Owain was indeed 'conquering afar' from his bases in north Wales.

The first line of the poem deplores a world blighted with English arrogance ('*Llyma fyd rhag sythfryd Sais*'), and is followed by the poet's declaration that he had often wished for a lord from among his own people

<sup>169</sup> See 'Adolygu'r canon', 49–53. A crucial consideration in this respect is the very high proportion (51.9 per cent) of *cynganedd sain* in the poem. The average percentage of *cynganedd sain* in Iolo's *cywyddau* is 38.23, with 26 *cywyddau* having in excess of 30 per cent. The average percentage of this *cynganedd* in the *cywyddau* of Lewys Glyn Cothi is 17.45. Of Lewys's 133 *cywyddau*, only three have *cynganedd sain* in excess of 30 per cent.

<sup>170</sup> These are listed, *ibid.*, 55–60. 'Llyma fyd', 50 ('*Poed gwir, bywyd hir i hwn!*') is identical with *GIG*, XIII. 104.

<sup>171</sup> Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr*, pp. 353–4 fully concurs that the poem was composed during the revolt and has Glyndŵr as its subject, but entertains a lingering doubt as to its authorship, stating '*ni welir yma y math o strwythur rhesymegol cadarn sy'n nod amgen ar gywyddau dilys Iolo*' ('the kind of robust logical structure which is a distinctive feature of Iolo's genuine *cywyddau* is not to be seen here'). But the perception that Iolo's *cywyddau* in general possess such a logical structure is highly subjective and debatable; even if conceded, the absence of such a structure in the poem in question could be attributed to its partly vaticinal nature compared to the mainstream eulogies which constitute the bulk of Iolo's oeuvre.

<sup>172</sup> *GIG*, XVII. See textual notes, *ibid.*, p. 281. The occasion of the poem was the bishop's embassy to Scotland on behalf of Richard II in 1397.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. the discussion in *GIG*, pp. xviii–xx.

<sup>174</sup> Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, pp. 51–2, 54, 64–9; Davies, *Revolt*, 107–8, 111–12.

(‘*Ohonom ni ein hunain*’).<sup>175</sup> That lord is then declared to be Owain of Glyndyfrdwy, portrayed in all his military might in a series of epithets: he is ‘the pure, brave and fear-inducing weapon of Glyndyfrdwy’, ‘a wrathful defender with a bright and bloody blade’, ‘the splendid sword of the people’, and ‘a terror with his might against fighting-men’.<sup>176</sup> The proliferation of such phrases—almost twenty occur in the poem’s fifty-two lines—ensure an unremitting focus on Owain’s martial aspects. Significantly too Owain is specifically associated by Iolo with *darogan*, ‘prophecy’,<sup>177</sup> a resonant word which evokes the tradition of the *mab darogan* or son of prophecy, the long foretold deliverer of the Welsh from English oppression.<sup>178</sup> Some elements in the poem derive from the vaticinal tradition, and the poem is rightly viewed as a hybrid combining elements of eulogy and vaticination. In antecedent vaticinal tradition the son of prophecy was often identified as Owain, and this enables Iolo to cite three Owains,<sup>179</sup> placing Glyndŵr firmly in a potent succession: he is the latest in a trinity of sons of prophecy, the others being Owain ‘disperser of the men of Deira’, the sixth-century Owain ab Urien of the old northern kingdom of Rheged, and Owain ‘the invader’, Owain Lawgoch or Owain of Wales, the descendant of the princely house of Gwynedd whose abortive attempts to invade Wales with French aid in the 1370s excited much vaticinal expectation.<sup>180</sup> A further attempt to imply Glyndŵr’s status as the son of prophecy is represented by the description of him as ‘the generous lord of Rome’;<sup>181</sup> this implicitly equates him with Cadwaladr, last king of Britain of British (or Welsh) stock who according to Geoffrey of Monmouth died in exile in Rome and whose second coming as a national redeemer featured often in

<sup>175</sup> Lines 1–4. The line numbers cited refer to my edited text of the poem in ‘Adolygu’r canon’, 63–4.

<sup>176</sup> Lines 6, 7, 9, 10.

<sup>177</sup> Line 12.

<sup>178</sup> On the *mab darogan* see E. R. Henken, *National Redeemer: Owain Glyndŵr in Welsh Tradition* (Cardiff, 1996), chap. 2, ‘The pattern of the redeemer-hero’, pp. 23–56; M. E. Griffiths, *Early Vaticination in Welsh with English Parallels* (Cardiff, 1937), chap. 4, ‘Welsh prophetic poems—to the fourteenth century’, pp. 139–93. Fulton’s claim, ‘Owain Glyn Dŵr and the uses of prophecy’ at p. 117 that ‘there is no evidence at all that Owain Glyn Dŵr associated himself with the Welsh tradition of the *mab darogan*’, cannot be sustained in view of the poem here discussed, of which she was unaware.

<sup>179</sup> Lines 18–24. On Owain as the name of the *mab darogan* see Henken, *National Redeemer*, pp. 30, 44–51; Griffiths, *Early Vaticination*, pp. 145–64.

<sup>180</sup> For Owain ab Urien see Bartrum, *A Welsh Classical Dictionary*, pp. 518–20. For Owain Lawgoch see Owen, ‘Owain Lawgoch—Yeuain de Galles’; A. D. Carr, *Owen of Wales: the End of the House of Gwynedd* (Cardiff, 1991).

<sup>181</sup> Line 34.

the vaticinal tradition.<sup>182</sup> This ‘lord of Rome’ is said by the poet to be worthy of the three crowns (*‘tair talaith teilwng’*) of the historical principalities of Wales,<sup>183</sup> Gwynedd, Powys, and Deheubarth, echoing deliberately an earlier bardic perception of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd (d. 1282), the last native prince of Wales.<sup>184</sup> A key feature of Iolo’s *cywydd*—reflecting both its debt to the vaticinal tradition and, no doubt, actual exacerbation of an old antagonism engendered by the revolt—is the ferocity of its anti-Englishness. The poem lauds Glyndŵr as one who vents his fury on those of foreign tongue (*‘Llidiog wrth wŷr â llediaith’*), as a victorious king who slays the English (*‘Llwydd brenin yn lladd Brynaich’*), and as one who will despoil the corpses of all the men of bloodied England (*‘Llygra gyrff holl wŷr Lloegr goch’*).<sup>185</sup> These descriptions are trumped in bloodthirstiness by an extraordinary image heavy with vaticinal associations, one which evokes the phrase ‘arithmetic of slaughter’ once applied here in Scotland by George Neilson to Blind Hary’s *Wallace*.<sup>186</sup> Owain, says the poet, is a lord who will kill four hundred thousand of the race of Horsa in a battle-bog (*‘Pôr a ladd mewn ymladdgors | Pedwar can mil o hil Hors’*), an allusion to the bog of Cors Fochno in north Ceredigion, long established in vaticinal tradition as the blood-drenched location of ultimate Welsh triumph over the English.<sup>187</sup> To modern sensibilities the bloodied rhetoric of vaticination is strong stuff indeed, unmerciful in its perception of the Other, coldly objectified as the hated enemy. Observed from a comfortable twenty-first-century vantage point, Iolo’s poem might elicit revulsion and righteous condemnation as racist discourse. Though understandable, such a perception would lack historical perspective. This is a piece of its own extraordinary time, a time of desperate war and of open wounds in the Welsh psyche, and its likely potency as propaganda within the context of

<sup>182</sup> A. Griscom (ed.), *The Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth* (London, 1929), XII.xvii–xviii, pp. 533–4. Geoffrey confused Cadwaladr (d. 664) with Ceadwalla, king of Wessex who died in Rome in 689, see Bartrum, *A Welsh Classical Dictionary*, pp. 80–1. On Cadwaladr and the vaticinal tradition see Henken, *National Redeemer*, pp. 31–41 *passim*, pp. 54–5; Griffiths, *Early Vaticination*, pp. 112–14, 164–6.

<sup>183</sup> Line 36.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. P. I. Lynch (ed.), ‘Canu Llygad Gŵr’, in Rh. M. Andrews *et al.* (eds.), *Gwaith Bleddyn Fardd a Beirdd Eraill Ail Hanner y Drydedd Ganrif ar Ddeg* (Cardiff, 1996), 24. 120; J. B. Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: Prince of Wales* (Cardiff, 1998), pp. 182, 336–7, 595–6.

<sup>185</sup> Lines 27, 30, 32.

<sup>186</sup> G. Neilson, ‘On Blind Harry’s Wallace’, in *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, 1, ed. A. C. Bradley (Oxford, 1910), pp. 85–112 at 98.

<sup>187</sup> Lines 41–2. On Cors Fochno as a battle site in the prophecies see Griffiths, *Early Vaticination*, p. 94 *et passim*; R. G. Gruffydd, ‘Why Cors Fochno?’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1995, new series, vol. 2 (1996), 5–19.

its own age and circumstance cannot be denied. I need hardly add that the poem marks the full metamorphosis of the colonial mimic into the leader of a war of national liberation, and of his poet—the erstwhile eulogist of Edward III and of martial feats in English armies in Scotland—into the fervent laureate of revolt.

Despite its weight of convention and hyperbole and the occasional distortion of its rhetoric, the poetry surveyed in this lecture opens a unique window on Owain Glyndŵr and his world, some of it providing clues to his progression from an outwardly conformist colonial mimic to the leader of a national revolt. As depicted in the poetry Owain's was an upper-class world permeated by martial values, which placed great store on feats of arms and the gaining of renown; a world which delighted in tales of chivalry and in the ritual of the tournament; a privileged world of ease and comfort in 'the fairest of timber courts' with its moat, deer-park and fishpond; a world, however, whose feudal foundations were quaking and which from an upper-class perspective presented an image of a dislocated *mundus inversus*; a colonial world where elevation to the ruling master's honours and table were coveted; a world of pride in a princely lineage which encouraged dreams of leading a nation, one depicted as glorious in myth but lately conscious of degradation and oppression, a mood which eventually exploded into open revolt and bloody hatred of the oppressor; a world where prophecy had credence and in which ancient hopes were focused on a national redeemer. This might not be the whole world of Owain Glyndŵr, but it was a very substantial part of it. It was, of course, a world very far removed from our experience in time and temper, but yet it endures vividly in the words of the bards.

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