

BILINGUALISMS AND MULTILINGUALISMS IN MEDIEVAL WALES: EVIDENCE AND INFERENCE

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Abstract

Evidence for bilingualism and multilingualism in medieval Wales is very patchy and scattered. This paper makes the case for using recent work on the methodologies of language contact in the ancient and early medieval worlds as a way to fill in the gaps in the evidence. Different approaches are discussed and evaluated. The paper ends with a brief case-study using the English plural marker *s* in Welsh as an example of how matters might not always turn out to be as clear as we might think.

trwy uwrch y dinas ffoxas ffohyn
through the ramparts of the fortress the ‘foxes’ will flee¹

How to make sense of language-contact, bilingualism, and/or multilingualism in the past is one of the more intractable problems confronting historical linguists. The evidence is less than complete but by contrast most theoretical frameworks are concerned with modern scenarios where the evidence is plentiful; application of such frameworks to the past, then, requires careful philological interpretation of the evidence. Put another way:

One of the difficulties with questions of language-contact and multilingualism in the past is that we can observe numerous situations where we strongly suspect that our speakers were operating in more than one language. The problem [...] is that it is very difficult to take things further unless there is the right kind of evidence to hand. And even when it is to hand, the irony and the paradox are that it is so specific (because it needs to be) that it is difficult to be sure how far one can generalise from it.²

¹ *Armes Prydein. The Prophecy of Britain*, ed. by Ifor Williams, trans. by R. Bromwich. Medieval and Modern Welsh Series 6 (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1982), pp. 6-7 (l. 62). A version of this paper was presented as the Annual Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion / Learned Society of Wales Lecture 2018 at Cardiff University in December 2018. I am grateful first to Sara Pons-Sanz for the original suggestion to speak in the context of an AHRC-funded network on multilingualism and Middle English, and then to both societies for the invitation to speak, for making the arrangements, and for their hospitality, and to the audience for the stimulating and helpful discussion after the paper.

² Paul Russell, ‘Latin and British in Roman and Post-Roman Britain: Methodology and Morphology’, *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 109 (2011), 138-57 (p. 223).

Some of the issues are nicely brought out in the line from the tenth-century prophecy poem, *Armes Prydein*, quoted at the top of this paper. The English foxes (*ffoxas*) are imagined to be fleeing through the ramparts of the fortress (*trwy uwrch y dinas*) on the way to departing the country entirely. Both *ffoxas* and *bwrch* (lenited as *uwrch*) are loanwords from Old English. Does this tell us anything about the linguistic situation where the poet composed this prophecy? Probably not: both words are *hapax legomena* in Welsh. In this poem they refer to the English and it is clear that the poet knows they are English words.³ All this tells us is that the poet was familiar with them, but they teach us nothing about how embedded they were in early Welsh. This highlights another problem in addition to those indicated above, namely that much of our evidence for language-contact in medieval Wales is literary, and often poetical, and in this particular example it is clear that the poet is playing with these words for the poetical effect; that said, we must presume that for the effect to work the audience was able not only to recognise these as Old English words but also to know what they meant.⁴

Discussion of language contact in Wales, and more generally early Britain, is a complex story with a long timeframe and the languages in question and the relationships between them may change. In recent years the linguistic situation of Roman and post-Roman Britain has received considerable attention: “[...] this period and geographical area has become, depending on one’s view, a methodological playground, testing-ground and/or battlefield for theories of language-contact, bilingualism and multilingualism”.⁵ Several different strands of the debate have emerged: the changing linguistic situation in Britain in this period (asking questions, for example, about the nature of the Latin spoken, and where and for how long it was spoken);⁶ and the extent to which the language of the English

³ Another insulting term used of the English in *Armes Prydein* is *cechmyn* ‘scavengers’ (lit. ‘shit-men’) using the ‘suffix’ *-mon* (plural *-myn*) taken over from English *man*. *Armes Prydein*, pp. 4-5 (ll. 27 and 40), pp. 14-15 (l. 184)). For *-mon*, see Paul Russell, “Verdunkelte Komposita” in Celtic’, *Studia Celtica*, 30 (1996), 113-25 (pp. 123-4).

⁴ On the problem of single attestations, see below, pp. 15-16.

⁵ Paul Russell, ‘Latin and British in Roman and Post-Roman Britain’, p. 141.

⁶ The bibliography is substantial but see, for example, Peter Schrijver, ‘The Rise and Fall of British Latin: Evidence from English and Brittonic’, in *Celtic Roots of English*, ed. by Markku Filppula, Juhani Klemola, and Heli Paulasto (Joensuu: University of Joensuu, Faculty of Humanities, 2002), pp. 87-110; Peter Schrijver, ‘Early Celtic Diphthongization and the Celtic-Latin Interface’, in *New Approaches to Celtic Place-names in Ptolemy’s Geography*, ed. by Javier De Hoz, Ernesto R. Luján and Patrick Sims-Williams (Madrid: Ediciones Clásicas, 2005), pp. 55-67; the essays in *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Nick Higham (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), including Peter Schrijver, ‘What Britons Spoke around 400 AD’, pp. 164-71; and Richard Coates, ‘Invisible Britons: the View from Linguistics’, pp. 172-91. In addition, Paul Russell, ‘*An habes linguam Latinam? Non tam bene sapio*: Views of Multilingualism from the Early-Medieval West’, in *Multilingualism in the Graeco-Roman Worlds*, ed. by Alex Mullen and Patrick James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 193-224; David Parsons, ‘Sabrina in the Thorns: Place-Names as Evidence for British and Latin in Roman Britain’, *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 109 (2011), 113-137; Peter Schrijver, *Language Contact and the Origins of the Germanic Languages* (London: Routledge, 2014).

settlers was influenced by British, etc.⁷ Even so, more needs to be done. For example, the collections of Latin loanwords made by Lewis and Haarmann have been underexploited for any understanding of the phonology and morphology of British Latin and British.⁸ For early medieval Wales there are surveys and studies, both with specific texts or with the relationship between particular languages, mainly Welsh – English or Welsh – French.⁹ But there has also been work on Welsh – Latin, especially in the early medieval period.¹⁰ Later medieval Wales has received

⁷ For the terminology of ‘British’ and ‘Brittonic’ used in this paper, see Russell, ‘Latin and British in Roman and Post-Roman Britain’, p. 139. On British influence on English, see the volumes of essays in *Celtic Roots of English*; ‘Special issue on re-evaluating the Celtic hypothesis’, ed. by Markku Filppula and Juhani Klemola, *English Language and Linguistics*, 13 (2009), 155–334; especially Peter Schrijver, ‘Celtic Influence on Old English: Phonological and Phonetic Evidence’, pp. 193–211; *English and Celtic in Contact*, ed. by Markku Filppula, Juhani Klemola, and Heli Paulasto (London: Routledge, 2008); Hildegard L. C. Tristram, *The Celtic Englishes*, Anglistische Forschungen, 247 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Carl, Winter 1997); *The Celtic Englishes II*, Anglistische Forschungen, 286 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Carl, Winter 2000), including Ingo Mittendorf and Erich Poppe, ‘Celtic Contacts of the English Progressive?’, pp. 117–45; *The Celtic Englishes III*, Anglistische Forschungen, 324 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Carl, Winter 2003), including Graham R. Isaac, ‘Diagnosing the Symptoms of Contact: some Celtic-English Case Histories’, pp. 46–64, and Erich Poppe, ‘Progress on the Progressive? A Report’, pp. 65–84; and *The Celtic Englishes IV* (Potsdam: Universitätsverlag Potsdam, 2006); *The Celtic Languages in Contact. Papers from the Workshop within the Framework of the XIII International Congress of Celtic Studies, Bonn, 26–27 July 2007* (Potsdam: Universitätsverlag Potsdam, 2007); and Hildegard L. C. Tristram, ‘Why Don’t the English Speak Welsh?’, in *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 192–214.

⁸ On loanwords, see the collections and studies in Henry Lewis, *Yr Elfen Ladin yn yr Iaith Gymraeg* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1943), and Harald Haarmann, *Der lateinischen Lehnwortschatz im Kymrischen* (Bonn: Romanisches Seminar der Universität Bonn, 1970).

⁹ Michael Richter, *Sprach und Gesellschaft von der Mitte des elften bis zum Beginn des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1979); Helen Fulton, ‘Negotiating Welshness: Multilingualism in Wales Before and After 1066’, in *Conceptualizing Multilingualism in England, c. 800 – c. 1250*, ed. by Elizabeth M. Tyler, *Studies in Early Middle Ages*, 27 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), pp. 145–70, and ‘The Status of the Welsh Language in Medieval Wales’, in *The Land Beneath the Sea: Essays in Honour of Anders Ahlqvist’s Contribution to Celtic Studies in Australia*, ed. by Pamela O’Neill, *Sydney Series in Celtic Studies*, 14 (Sydney: University of Sydney Press, 2013), pp. 59–74, broader surveys including reference to Old and Middle English and French); and ‘Translating Europe in Medieval Wales’, in *Writing Europe, 500–1450: Texts and Contexts*, ed. by Aidan Conti, Orietta Da Rold and Philip A. Shaw, *Essays and Studies*, 68 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 159–74; T. H. Parry-Williams, *The English Element in Welsh* (London: Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1923); Mary Surridge, ‘Romance Linguistic Influence on Middle Welsh’, *Studia Celtica*, 1 (1966), 63–92; Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, ‘Crossing the Borders: Literary Borrowing in Medieval Wales and England’, in *Authority and Subjugation in Writing of Medieval Wales*, ed. by Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (New York, London: Palgrave, 2008), pp. 159–73.

¹⁰ Paul Russell, ‘*An habes linguam Latinam?*’, pp. 197–218 (Welsh, Irish, Latin); and ‘Beyond Juvenecus: an Irish Context for Some Old Welsh Glossing?’, in *Early Medieval Ireland and Europe: Chronology, Contacts, Scholarship. Festschrift for Dáibhí Ó Cróinín*, ed. by Pádraic Moran and Immo Warntjes, *Studia Traditionis Theologiae*, 14 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), pp. 203–14 (Welsh, Irish, Latin); and ‘“Go and Look in the Latin Books”: Latin and the Vernacular in Medieval Wales’, in *Latin in Medieval Britain*, ed. by Richard Ashdowne and Carolinne White, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 206 (London: British Academy, 2017), pp. 213–46 (Welsh and Latin); and cf. Anthony Harvey, ‘Cambro-Romance? Celtic Britain’s Counterpart to Hiberno-Latin’, in *Early Medieval Ireland and Europe*, pp. 179–202 (on the possible continuity and survival of spoken Latin in early medieval Wales).

rather less attention, but even so the landscape has been sketched out if perhaps in a more descriptive manner than might be helpful.¹¹ But essentially this becomes a discussion less about evidence (because there is relatively little of it and it is very scattered and difficult to control) and more about methodology.

The rest of this paper falls into three parts. Problematic though the evidence might be, not least in that it is both chronologically and geographically scattered, we need to, firstly, get a sense of what there is. What follows is not intended as a complete compilation and not all of it will be discussed, but I shall draw attention to certain features. Secondly, we consider ways in which more general theories of language-contact can help to make sense of this scattered mess of evidence. Thirdly, we shall take one strand of the arguments and briefly consider one example, if only to show that matters are sometimes not so straightforward as they sometimes appear.

In all of what follows, the focus will be on the interaction between Welsh and English. For much of the period in question French would also have been spoken, at least in the southern part of Wales and the March, and it is likely that in certain contexts speakers were operating trilingually. However, one difficulty in dealing with loanwords from French is that, while they are relatively easy to identify, it is less clear whether they derive directly from French or by way of Middle English. If the latter, they offer further evidence for the influence of English on Welsh. The methodological issues involved in making these distinctions make it simpler for the present discussion to concentrate on the relationship between Welsh and English.

Evidence

Three types of evidence can be distinguished.¹² First, there is historical evidence for scenarios where bilingual exchanges are recounted or at least can be inferred.

¹¹ Llinos Beverley Smith, 'Yr Iaith Gymraeg cyn 1536', in *Yr Iaith Gymraeg yn ei Disgleirdeb*, ed. by Geraint H. Jenkins (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), pp. 15-44; ead., 'The Welsh language before 1536', in *The Welsh Language before the Industrial Revolution*, ed. by Geraint H. Jenkins (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), pp. 15-45; ead., 'The Welsh and English Languages in Late-Medieval Wales', in *Multilingualism in Later Medieval Britain*, ed. by David Trotter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 7-21; Helen Fulton, 'Class and Nation: Defining the English in Late-Medieval Welsh Poetry', in *Authority and Subjugation*, pp. 191-212; Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, 'Prophecy and Welsh Nationhood in the Fifteenth Century', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1985), 9-26. It is also worth pointing out that the numerous volumes (mainly emanating from presses in Cambridge or Turnhout) with titles working the theme of 'Multilingualism in Britain' are disappointingly thin on discussion of Welsh matters (usually with a maximum of one chapter, if that).

¹² Helen Fulton, 'Literature of the Welsh Gentry: Uses of the Vernacular in Medieval Wales', in *Vernacularity in England and Wales, c. 1300-1550*, ed. by Helen Fulton, E. Salter and H. Wicker (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), pp. 199-223; ead., 'Negotiating Welshness'; ead., 'The Status of the Welsh Language in Medieval Wales'; Llinos Beverley Smith, 'The Welsh and English Languages in Late-Medieval Wales'.

Gerald's Welsh works are full of interesting anecdotes, as is that of Walter Map.¹³ The multilingualism of Gruffudd ap Cynan a century earlier can be inferred from his background and upbringing.¹⁴ But one particular incident may be telling: the Latin version of his life, *Vita Griffini*, relates Gruffudd's encounter with Magnus, which leads to the latter's death.¹⁵ The term *interpres* is used, but it is hardly likely that Gruffudd required an interpreter to talk to Magnus (since he would have been perfectly capable of talking speaking Norse to him) and it probably here means 'guide'. But in the Welsh version, perhaps dating to the early thirteenth century *interpres* is rendered as *ieithydd* 'interpreter'.¹⁶ Presumably by that period it would have been reasonable for the translator of our text, looking back a century, to think that an interpreter would have been required. More generally, interpreters raise interesting issues: there are numerous examples of interpreters being used, especially in the March.¹⁷ But there is sometimes an assumption that the two parties could not communicate without them, but the function of 'latimers' and others seems to have been at least as much to do with protocol and the management of discussions as with the linguistic transactions themselves. As with conversations between modern politicians, translators may well have been used even when each side could speak the other's language so as to ensure that no misunderstandings or confusions could arise; not all speakers of medieval Welsh, even if they had a working knowledge of English, would have been up to the nuances of a political discussion in their second language. In other words, it does not follow that the use of interpreters indicates that each side was monolingual.¹⁸ One much-discussed case where I think we need to assume the use of interpreters is the so-called tenth-century

¹³ Ad Putter, 'Multilingualism in England and Wales, c. 1200: the Testimony of Gerald of Wales', in *Medieval Multilingualism. The Francophone World and its Neighbours*, ed. by C. Kleinhenz and Keith Busby, *Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Britain*, 20 (Turnhout, Brepols, 2010), pp. 83-105; Paul Russell, '*Externarum linguarum excellens*: the Rhetoric and Reality of the Languages of Gruffudd ap Cynan, Ruler of Gwynedd († 1137)', in *Multilingualism in Medieval Britain (c. 1066-1520): Sources and Analysis*, ed. by J. A. Jefferson and Ad Putter (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 73-87 (pp. 79-80); Joshua Byron Smith, *Walter Map and the Matter of Britain* (Philadelphia: Penn State Press, 2017), esp. pp. 11-17.

¹⁴ Russell, '*Externarum linguarum excellens*'.

¹⁵ *Vita Griffini Filii Conani. The Medieval Latin Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan*, ed. and trans. by Paul Russell (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), §28/3.

¹⁶ *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan*, ed. by D. Simon Evans (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1977), p. 26 (l. 2); translated in *A Medieval Prince of Wales. The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan*, ed. by D. Simon Evans (Felinfach: Llannerch Press, 1990), p. 77 (ll. 33-4).

¹⁷ Constance Bullock-Davies, *Professional Interpreters and the Matter of Britain* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1966). On interpreter familie, see Frederick C. Suppe, 'Who was Rhys Sais? Some Comments on Anglo-Welsh Relations before 1066', *Haskins Society Journal*, 7 (1995), 63-73; id., 'Roger of Powys, Henry II's Anglo-Welsh Middleman, and his Lineage', *Welsh History Review*, 21 (2002), 1-23; id., 'Interpreter Families and Anglo-Welsh Relations in the Shropshire-Powys Marches in the Twelfth Century', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 30 (2007), 196-212; id., 'The Career and Subsequent Reputation of Iorwerth Goch, Bi-cultural Denizen of the Medieval Welsh Marches', *North American Journal of Celtic Studies*, 2 (2018), 133-54. On English armies, Adam Chapman, *Welsh Soldiers in the Later Middle Ages 1287-1422* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2015), pp. 65, 91 (n. 59, 187).

¹⁸ On 'latimers' as possible transmitters of literature, see also Smith, *Walter Map and the Matter of Britain*, p. 161.

‘Agreement of the Dunsæte’ which involves rights of pursuit of stolen goods across a river, often thought to be in southeast Wales, and how this is negotiated.¹⁹ While the Welsh and English speakers on either side might well have had a sufficient grasp of the other language for everyday conversation, it seems likely that a competent interpreter would have been required to deal with the linguistic and legal niceties involved.²⁰ A later example where it is clear that translators were needed has to do with the collection of depositions relating to the canonization of Thomas Cantelupe in 1307 as some would have needed translating from Welsh.²¹

In addition to anecdotal evidence, another type of evidence may be termed contextual. Under this heading we might put the co-occurrence of Welsh and English texts in the same manuscript;²² similarly, instances of writing English in Welsh orthography, such as the astrological texts discussed by Brady, and examples in Sir John Prise’s commonplace book (Oxford, Balliol College, 353).²³ We might also

¹⁹ Thomas Charles-Edwards, ‘The Three Columns of Law: a Comparative Perspective’, in *Tair Colofn Cyfraith. The Three Columns of Law in Medieval Wales: Homicide, Theft and Fire*, ed. by T. M. Charles-Edwards and P. Russell (Bangor: Welsh Legal History Society, 2005), pp. 26-59 (pp. 53-9); Michael Fordham, ‘Peacekeeping and Order on the Anglo-Welsh Frontier in the Early Tenth Century’, *Midland History*, 32 (2007), 1-18; George Molyneux, ‘The Ordinance Concerning the Dunsæte and the Anglo-Welsh Frontier in the Late Tenth and Eleventh Centuries’, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 40 (2012), 249-72; Lindy Brady, *Writing the Welsh Borderlands in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), pp. 1-6.

²⁰ The agreement survives in Old English but we might wonder about how many languages were involved; might the original have been in Latin with an Old English and Old Welsh version produced for each side?

²¹ Michael Richter, ‘Collecting Miracles along the Anglo-Welsh Border in the Early Fourteenth Century’, in *Multilingualism in Later Medieval Britain*, pp. 53-61; cf. from the early modern period, Gianetta M. Hayes, ‘Ordination Rituals and Practice in the Welsh-English Frontier, circa 1540-1640’, *Journal of British Studies*, 44 (2005), 713-27.

²² Daniel Huws, ‘MS Porkington 10 and its Scribes’, in *Romance Readings on the Book: Essays on Medieval Narrative Presented to Maldwyn Mills*, ed. by J. Fellows, R. Field, G. Rogers, and J. Weiss (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), pp. 188-207; Jason O’Rourke, ‘Imagined Histories: an English Prophecy in a Welsh Manuscript Context’, *Journal of the Early Book Society*, 5 (2002), 151-60, and ‘English and Latin Texts in Welsh Contexts: Reflections of a Multilingual Society in National Library of Wales MS Peniarth 12’, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 33 (2003), 53-63; William Marx, ‘Middle English Texts and Welsh Contexts’, in *Authority and Subjugation*, pp. 13-26; Fulton, Helen, ‘The Geography of Welsh Literary Production in Late Medieval Glamorgan’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 41 (2015), 325-40; Simon Meecham-Jones, ‘Language Contact in the Welsh Penumbra: Evidence in NLW MS Brogyntyn II.1’, in *The Second International Conference: ‘Language, Culture and Society in Russian/English Studies’*, ed. by Jane Roberts and Emma Voloderskaya (London: University of London, 2012), pp. 50-74, and ‘Code-Switching and Contact Influence in Middle English Manuscripts from the Welsh Penumbra – Should We Re-interpret the Evidence from *Gawain* and the *Green Knight*?’, in *Multilingual Practices in Language History: English and Beyond*, ed. by Päivi Pahta, Janne Skaffari, and Laura Wright (Boston, Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2018), pp. 97-120.

²³ See, for example, Parry-Williams, *The English Element in Welsh*, p. 254; Lindy Brady, ‘Booklet Ten of Peniarth 359: an Early Modern English Astrological Manual Encoded through Welsh Phonology’, *Studia Celtica*, 45 (2011), 159-83; Cf. discussion of Welsh influence on the Harley Lyrics: A. T. E. Matonis, ‘An Investigation of Celtic Influences on MS Harley 2253’, *Modern Philology*, 70 (1972), 1-21; Helen Fulton, ‘The Theory of Celtic Influence on MS Harley 2253’, *Modern Philology*, 82 (1985), 239-54; A. T. E. Matonis, ‘The Harley Lyrics: English and Welsh Convergences’, *Modern Philology*, 86 (1988), 1-21.

note a relatively early example in the mid-fifteenth century macaronic poem by Tudur Penllyn where he attempts to seduce an English girl, each speaking their own language.²⁴ Admittedly, many of these examples tend to be late and learned but it is reasonable to assume that someone writing English can speak it and the use of Welsh orthography indicates a level of literacy in Welsh (and presumably the ability to speak it as well). Similarly, poems which present a negative view of English poets and performers can be read as evidence for literary performance in English in Wales and we can assume that there was an audience for it.²⁵

The last and most focused type of evidence is the use of English loanwords in Welsh literary texts. Much useful work has been done on this;²⁶ a notable sub-set of this evidence relates to poetry on towns, such as the following by Tudur Aled on Oswestry:²⁷

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

Chests of goods, expensive for outsiders,²⁸ cumin, box,
 we get wine without tax, sugar, sarsnet, velvet and fur,
 silk shops like Cheapside [...] Beer and sugar in a
 castle of mulled-wine, confits, pomegranates, and
 wine.

²⁴ *Gwaith Tudur Penllyn ac Ieuan ap Tudur Penllyn*, ed. by Thomas Roberts (Cardiff: Cardiff University of Wales Press, 1958), poem 31 (pp. 53-4; notes on p. 127), with a facing English translation in *Canu Maswedd yr Oesoedd Canol. Medieval Welsh Erotic Poetry*, ed. by Dafydd Johnston (Cardiff: Tafol, 1991), poem 14 (pp. 74-7).

²⁵ See Fulton, 'Class and Nation', pp. 206-7.

²⁶ T. Powell, 'The Treatment of English Borrowed Words in Colloquial Welsh', *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1884), 355-78; Parry-Williams, *The English Element in Welsh*.

²⁷ *Gwaith Tudur Aled*, ed. by T. Gwynn Jones, 2 vols (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1926), 1, poem 65 (pp. 261-4; ll. 61-4, 89-90); on this poem, see Fulton, 'Class and Nation', p. 208 (her translation); see also Dafydd Johnston, 'Towns in Medieval Welsh Poetry', in *Urban Culture in Medieval Wales*, ed. by Helen Fulton (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), pp. 95-115; id., *Language Contact and Linguistic Innovation in the Poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym*, E. C. Quiggin Lecture, 19 (Cambridge: Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, 2017). Cf. also Helen Fulton, 'Trading Places: Representations of Urban Culture in Medieval Welsh Poetry', *Studia Celtica*, 31 (1997), 219-31; ead., 'Y Cywyddwyr a'r *encomium urbis* Cymreig', *Dwned*, 12 (2006), 49-71; ead., 'The *encomium urbis* in Medieval Welsh Poetry', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 26 (2006), 54-72; ead., 'Cheapside in Wales: Textiles and Commodities in Medieval Welsh Poetry' (unpublished Oxford O'Donnell Lecture, 2018).

²⁸ I would be inclined to take *dierth* as adverbial so that (*y*)n *costio dierth* means 'eye-wateringly expensive'; but since its basic sense has to do with 'coming from elsewhere' the idea of something foreign and imported may also be suggested in it.

As Fulton points out, ‘the barrage of English consumer items, barely assimilated into Welsh phonetics and orthography, mirrors the invasion of English urban consumerism into traditional Welsh life’.²⁹ The ‘barely assimilated’ nature of these words also emphasizes their otherness and novelty, that they can only be obtained in a great metropolis like Oswestry; put another way, if you could not pronounce them or did not know what they were, you could probably not afford them. Collections of loanwords are all very well and very useful but such passages as these show how important it is to get a flavour of the words in context. Such passages are relatively rare but the urban context to which we shall return is important.

Literary texts such as these exploit English loanwords for literary effect. By contrast another category of texts were non-literary texts which were translated into Welsh from English or French and bringing with them a technical terminology, some of which was untranslatable, taken over from those languages. For example, while Welsh, unsurprisingly, had a well developed agricultural lexicon at this period, the Welsh versions of Walter of Henley’s farming treatise contains a number of technical terms, e.g. *arerag* ‘arrearage’, *bwyssel* ‘bushel’, *ffodyr* ‘fodder’, *marlu* ‘marling’, etc., all of which are borrowed from English (or French) and seem to be the earliest attestations of the words in Welsh.³⁰ Another similar type of text, which deserves more attention for its loanwords, is heraldry where much of the terminology is taken over from French;³¹ in some cases it is difficult to tell whether the terminology is borrowed or whether the translator is code-switching.³²

This is not the place for a full collection of the evidence, but not only the different types of evidence, but, also and more importantly, the patchiness and broad chronological range of this evidence are worth noting.

Inference

The evidence adduced in the previous section can give us snapshots of interesting data but it is difficult to join up the dots; how can we make sense of these scattered fragments of data? One possible way is to deploy some of the thinking derived from theoretical work in the field. The problem is that much of the scholarship and theories is based on work on languages in the modern period where evidence is usually plentiful. But perhaps we may draw on recent excellent work on language contact in the ancient and early medieval worlds; in particular, we might make use

²⁹ Fulton, ‘Class and Nation’, p. 208.

³⁰ *Welsh Walter of Henley*, ed. by Alexander Falileyev, Medieval and Modern Welsh Series, 12 (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2006), ll. 226, 102, 209, 169, respectively.

³¹ Michael P. Siddons, *The Development of Welsh Heraldry*, 4 vols (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1991–2006), 1, pp. 35–7, 347–70 (the vocabulary of Welsh heraldry); cf. E. J. Jones, *Medieval Heraldry: Some Fourteenth Century Heraldic Works* (Cardiff: William Lewis, 1943).

³² For ‘code-switching’ see below, p. 15.

of ideas developed in the essays edited by Mullen and James, and especially Mullen's introduction to that volume.³³

Moving from the particular (such as the type of evidence discussed above) to the more general, two levels of analysis are worth distinguishing, the micro- and macro-levels. The former involves a continuum of features involving code-switching, borrowing, and interference. Code-switching has to do with switching from one language to another at the level of phrases and sentences, and can be subdivided into intersentential (which may also include 'tag-switching' where a common exclamation or phrase is in a different language from the matrix of the sentence), and intrasentential code-switching. Work on this is underdeveloped for medieval Wales largely because we do not have the kind of texts where this might occur, certainly not in Welsh – English.³⁴ A very common place for this to occur is in bureaucratic and legal texts where terms which may be native to the area are kept in the local language, but most examples of this kind of text from medieval Wales have a Latin matrix, such as in Latin versions of the medieval Welsh laws which contain large numbers of Welsh legal terms.³⁵ Typically, in code-switching the forms retain the phonology and morphology of the donor language. By contrast, when words are borrowed from one language to another, the forms accommodate to the phonology of the borrowing language and subsequently undergo sound changes in that language.³⁶ Most attention has been devoted to this level of contact, but it is important, though often ignored, to be able to get a sense of the level of absorption of the borrowed word. This is the point about *ffoxas* and *bwrch* in *Armes Prydein*; they are only attested once, perhaps for a precise poetical affect (though *bwrch* appears in place-names like *Niwbwrch*) and seem to belong to a relatively superficial level of borrowing; it is difficult to believe that these words had a widespread

³³ *Multilingualism in the Graeco-Roman Worlds*, especially Alex Mullen, 'Introduction. Multiple Languages, Multiple Identities', pp. 1-35 (pp. 15-29), which is an excellent introduction to the morass of terminology.

³⁴ Cf. the kind of work that has been and is being done on medieval Irish, e.g. Jacopo Bisagni, 'Prolegomena to the Study of Code-Switching in the Old Irish Glosses', *Peritia*, 24/25 (2014), 1-58; Nike Stam, *A Typology of Code-switching in the Commentary to the Féilire Óengusso* (Utrecht: LOT, 2017); Nicole Müller, 'Kodewechsel in Der Irischen Übersetzungsliteratur: Exempla et Desiderata', in *Übersetzung, Adaptation Und Akkulturation Im Insularen Mittelalter*, ed. by Hildegard Tristram and Erich Poppe, Studien und Texte zur Keltologie (Münster: Nodus Publikationen, 1999), pp. 73-86.

³⁵ For editions of the different redactions, see Hywel Emanuel, *The Latin Texts of the Welsh Laws* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1967). A particularly rich text is 'Latin C' (including Welsh glosses on Latin terms and Latin glosses on the Welsh ones), for which also see Paul Russell, *Welsh Law in Medieval Anglesey. British Library, Harleian MS 1796 (Latin C)*, Texts and Studies in Medieval Welsh Law, 2 (Cambridge: Seminar Cyfraith Hywel, 2011). For bureaucratic texts with code-switching into Welsh for technical terminology, see, for example, G. Rex Smith, 'The Extent of Anglesey, 1284', *Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society* (2009), 70-119 (p. 98); id., 'The Manor of Aberffraw, 1284-1339', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 60 (2010), 81-91 (pp. 86-9); id., 'The Extent of the Lordship of Chirk, 1332', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 63 (2012), 91-100 (pp. 97-8).

³⁶ See the collections, in e.g. Lewis, *Yr Elfen Ladin*; Haarmann, *Der lateinischen Lehnwortschatz*; Parry-Williams, *The English Element in Welsh*; Surridge, 'Romance Linguistic Influence on Middle Welsh'.

currency in medieval Wales but only happened to be attested once in a literary text. While a single attestation may be telling, likewise several attestations scattered over several hundred years may indicate that a word has been borrowed several times over but never really been absorbed into the lexicon. A better test of the degree to which a word has been absorbed might be the extent to which its derivatives (e.g. adjectives, abstract nouns, or verbs) are attested and when they were formed. Dictionaries are not always very helpful in distinguishing between *hapax legomena* and better attested words as the examples are usually representative rather than exhaustive, but recent databases of medieval Welsh will allow us to gain a better sense of frequency.³⁷ In addition, we should bear in mind the calquing of technical terms and loanshifting where a native word takes on a wider semantic range under the influence of a semantically parallel word in a contact language.³⁸ The latter phenomenon has been well discussed in medieval Welsh by Dafydd Johnson in relation to Welsh *mwyn* ‘soft, etc.’ which took on a range of sense parallel to that of French *gentil* and English *gentle*.³⁹

Most work at this level tends to deal with phonology or the lexicon with the latter providing the data for the former; rarely does the discussion extend to morphology or broader issues. Even so, work can be done at this level; for an earlier period it has been, for example, argued that the Brittonic pluperfect formation arose in a contact situation where speakers of British came into contact with the Latin pluperfect subjunctive and created a pluperfect on that model.⁴⁰ Examples of interference at the level of syntax are harder to detect (and often debated),⁴¹ but

³⁷ *Rhyddiaith y 13eg Ganrif Fersiwn 2.0*, ed. by Graham Isaac, Simon Rodway, Silva Nurmio, Kit Kapphahn and Patrick Sims-Williams (Aberystwyth: Department of Welsh, Aberystwyth University, 2013), supported by the British Academy project ‘Datblygiad yr Iaith Gymraeg’ (‘The Development of the Welsh Language’); *Welsh prose (Rhyddiaith Gymraeg) 1300–1425*, ed. by Peter Wynn Thomas, D. Mark Smith, Diana Luft, et al. (Cardiff: Cardiff University, 2007–present) <<http://www.rhyddiaithganoloesol.caerdydd.ac.uk>>; *Rhyddiaith y 15eg Ganrif: Fersiwn 1.0*, ed. by Richard Glyn Roberts, Sarah Rowles, and Patrick Sims-Williams (Aberystwyth: Aberystwyth University, 2015), in development.

³⁸ For Irish examples, see D. A. Binchy, ‘Semantic Influence of Latin on Old Irish Glosses’, in *Latin Script and Letters AD 400–900: Festschrift Presented to Ludwig Bieler on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday*, ed. by J. J. O’Meara and Bengt Naumann, (Leiden: Brill, 1976), pp. 167-73; Thomas Charles-Edwards, ‘*Dlged*: its Native and Latinate Usages’, *Celtica*, 24 (2003), 65-78.

³⁹ Johnston, *Language Contact and Linguistic Innovation*, pp. 7-9; cf. also at an earlier period the well-documented features of the Latinity of speakers of Celtic languages, such as the extension of ordinal numbers to mean ‘one of *n*’, and the use of, for example, *dextralis* ‘right-hand’ and *sinistralis* ‘left-hand’ to mean ‘southern’ and ‘northern’, etc.. For a recent summary, see Jean Rittmueller, ‘Construe Marks, a Contraction Mark, and an Embedded Old Irish Gloss in an Hiberno-Latin Homily on the Octave of Easter’, in *Culture and Tradition in Medieval Ireland. Festschrift for Dáibhí Ó Cróinín*, ed. by Jacopo Bisagni and Pádraic Moran (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), pp. 537-76 (pp. 539-42).

⁴⁰ Russell, ‘Latin and British’, pp. 150-3; cf. also Proinsias Mac Cana, ‘Latin Influence on British: the Pluperfect’, in *Festschrift Presented to Ludwig Bieler*, pp. 194-206. The development of compound prepositions in Brittonic languages may be another example. Russell, ‘Latin and British’, pp. 147-50. For an instance of the borrowing of morphological markers, see below, pp. 20-2.

⁴¹ Cf. the arguments about the possibility of Brittonic influence on periphrastic tenses and the *do*-periphrasis in English. See n. 7 above for references.

again it has been argued that the Latin of Welsh speakers can be affected by the native language of the author;⁴² often in such cases it can be difficult to distinguish between texts which have been translated from Welsh into Latin and those composed in Latin by speakers of Welsh, but features, such as the extended use of impersonal verbs and the use of *in* as a predicative marker in the Latin texts of the Welsh laws, seem to reflect the latter rather than the former.

At the macro-level, there are numerous ways of thinking about bilingualism and multilingualism. One common feature of such terminological discussions is the setting up of binary distinctions; for example, we may think of bilingualism as ‘stable’ (where both languages are maintained) as against ‘unstable’ (leading to loss of one language). For our purposes, this is less useful as neither language involved (Welsh and English) disappears, but it is useful for understanding the broader context of such discussions.⁴³ Another binary way of thinking about language-contact involves the notion of superstrate and substrate languages (with an emphasis on the difference in the relative statuses of the languages);⁴⁴ it has proved most useful when considering how languages change through contact.⁴⁵ In basic terms it is frequently characterized in terms of loanwords ‘dripping down’ from the superstrate to the substrate language, while morphological features are more likely to move the other way when native speakers of a substrate language learn the superstrate language and their usage of the latter is influenced by the formations of the former. It is also the case that super- and substrate languages may over time change places presumably through phases of stable and unstable bilingualism.⁴⁶ Superstrate/substrate models seem most appropriate when dealing with broad brush accounts of language shift and change, and seem less useful for thinking about different registers of languages and more nuanced linguistic choices.

In such circumstances it may be helpful to think in terms of diglossia and heteroglossia, where language choice is determined by ‘domain’ (for example, status, role relationships, settings, topics, etc.): ‘where linguistic varieties can be assigned H(igh) and L(ow) prestige values *and are functionally compartmentalised* [...]’.⁴⁷ For example, it is conceivable that, in a town in medieval Wales (probably

⁴² Russell, “‘Go and Look in the Latin Books’”, pp. 238-9.

⁴³ It might be noted in this context that French does disappear and so presumably was in some sense ‘unstable’. But the loss of French is something which happens throughout Britain and so was probably part of a larger sociolinguistic development.

⁴⁴ This has been best developed in the work of Sarah G. Thomason, *Language Contact: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001); ead., ‘Contact as a Source of Language Change’, in *Handbook of Language Variation and Language Change*, ed. by J. K. Chambers et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 687-712; Sarah G. Thomason and Terence Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolization and Genetic Linguistics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988).

⁴⁵ Cf. Schrijver, ‘The Rise and Fall of British Latin’, and *Language Contact and the Origins of the Germanic Languages*.

⁴⁶ This has been argued for post-Roman Britain by Schrijver, though not without criticism from other scholars.

⁴⁷ Mullen, ‘Introduction. Multiple Languages, Multiple Identities’, p. 24 (author’s italics), and pp. 15-29 for discussion and references; cf. also Fulton, ‘The Status of the Welsh Language in Medieval Wales’, pp. 60-1.

a Norman foundation), Welsh was spoken at home, but another language (English or French) was spoken in other contexts external to the home, such as business or legal transactions; in ecclesiastical contexts Latin may well have been spoken alongside Welsh, French or English.⁴⁸ It is also worth observing that, while it is conventional to think in terms of different languages, such terminology can also include variation in ‘register’ in the same language, and so may well have involved different registers of Welsh in different contexts.

Another useful term which figures in such discussions is ethnolinguistic vitality: ‘The vitality of an ethnolinguistic group is “that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and collective entity within the intergroup setting”’.⁴⁹ Factors which may be significant involve high-low levels of, for example, economic status, perceived language status (within and outside group), existence of territory, concentration of speakers, proportion of speakers, etc.⁵⁰ Thinking in these terms may prove more useful when considering how languages fail to survive, and so it might be thought that this was of less significance in thinking about medieval Wales. But, if we are thinking about the relative vitality of all the languages spoken in Wales, then it is relevant; after all, something presumably happened to the ethnolinguistic vitality of Flemish and Welsh in Pembrokeshire in the late medieval period, or of Irish in sixth-century Ceredigion and Brycheiniog such that they died out. By contrast, apart from in Pembrokeshire Welsh generally seems to have retained a high ethnolinguistic vitality though that may have varied depending on domain.

The advantage in thinking in terms of some of the more nuanced approaches outlined above is that they are not binary but involve assessment of gradations and degrees of language-contact and shift. As such, they can provide frameworks within which we can think about and situate the snippets of data of the sort discussed above. Even so, they are not without their problems, which are sometime exacerbated when they are applied to linguistic scenarios in the past when we have to do with a paucity of evidence and all that goes with that. Some of these issues have been alluded to already. For example, an almost inevitable consequence of schematization is that there is a tendency to slip into binary terms, but in many cases the factors involved lie on a continuum and are themselves complex; some of this is controllable in linguistic studies of modern spoken languages but hard to manage with the patchy evidence of languages in the past. As we have seen, that evidence is both patchy and necessarily literate and it is difficult to overestimate the significance of the latter: much of the evidence for medieval Wales comes not only from literary texts

⁴⁸ Such models also seem more suitable for explaining how Gaulish words for wheeled vehicles were borrowed into Latin; even within a situation where Latin was the superstrate language, there would have been functional contexts (such as the wagon factory at Carpentorate) where much of the technical terminology was derived from Gaulish.

⁴⁹ Mullen, ‘Introduction. Multiple Languages, Multiple Identities’, pp. 26-9 (p. 26, quoting Howard Giles, Richard Bourhis, and D. Taylor, ‘Towards a Theory of Language in Ethnic Group Relations’, in *Language, Ethnicity, and Intergroup Relations*, ed. by Howard Giles (London: London Academic Press, 1977), 307-48 (p. 308)).

⁵⁰ Cf. also Salikoko S. Mufwene, ‘Language Birth and Death’, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 33 (2004), 201-22, for a problematic discussion of language in ‘settlement’ vs ‘exploitation’ colonies.

but also from verse where, as we have seen with the example from *Armes Prydein*, other nuances and connotations are often present but difficult to control adequately. We can line up the anecdotes but every one of them requires careful analysis and probing to ensure that we really do understand them properly.

In addition, there is always going to be more variation that can be controlled. If we are lucky we can control the date of the attestation of the linguistic feature in question, but that may simply be the date of the earliest manuscript containing the text; for example, much of the evidence for Irish being spoken in Wales in the early medieval period comes from inscriptions which can only be dated epigraphically and even then not very precisely. While dating is much less precise early in the medieval period, the later we go, the more accurate our chronology is likely to be; for example, we have more named poets whose *floruits* can be dated with reasonable precision. Social factors, including especially the effects of gender, are well known to be significant and decisive factors in sociolinguistic studies, but it is very rarely the case that these can be accessed for the past; as ever, we know much about high-status linguistic interaction and very little, if anything, about low-status exchanges.

Another factor is also important and is one where perhaps more progress could be made, and that is geography. Wales is not a large country but the range of different political and social contexts in the medieval period would have been significant; for example, in c. 1250 the linguistic situation in south Wales with a significant French-speaking presence must have been markedly different from that in Gwynedd or in the parts of Powys away from the March. Where these contact events took place, whether in the north or south, east or west of Wales, presumably, was significant. Modern sociolinguists regard the urban environment as an important locus of linguistic change, and so the rise of towns in medieval Wales would also have had an important implications for language-contact.⁵¹ In a recent discussion, Stevens distinguishes different types of towns in Wales – those of economic origin and those of a military-economic origin. Of the former in c. 1300 he observes, ‘Overall [...] towns of predominantly economic origin typically contained the highest proportion of Welsh tenants or taxpayers. These are towns in which the Welsh language would have been commonly heard in the streets and used to transact business, and in which the parish churches were most often dedicated to Welsh saints.’⁵² But other towns, for example, Caernarfon, were almost completely English, and so we must assume a very different linguistic situation, presumably one where Welsh traders came in to trade but did so in English. But it is also important to point out that all of this would have changed over time. But at any period and in any part of Wales, as the poems on towns testify, towns would have been very important venues for language contact, especially with regard to high-

⁵¹ Cf. the essays in *Urban Culture in Medieval Wales*, ed. by Helen Fulton (e.g. Ralph A. Griffiths, ‘Who were the Townsfolk of Medieval Wales?’, pp. 9-18); generally there is relatively little discussion of linguistic matters.

⁵² Matthew Frank Stevens, ‘Anglo-Welsh Towns of the Early Fourteenth Century: a Survey of Urban Origins, Property-Holding and Ethnicity’, in *Urban Culture in Medieval Wales*, pp. 137-62 (p. 140); cf. Matthew Frank Stevens, *Urban Assimilation in Post-Conquest Wales. Ethnicity, Gender and Economy in Ruthin, 1282–1348* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), pp. 227, 229-30.

status foodstuffs, cloth, etc.⁵³ But we cannot expect to develop one single model that fits all, and often our ideas about language have to proceed by inference as much as by being based on evidence.

The borrowing of English plural -s before 1500

We may conclude with a case study which exemplifies some of the above but also illustrates how problematic the evidence can be: a characteristically English feature in Welsh, the English plural *-s* (more accurately described as the English plural suffix [vowel + *-s/ʃ*]). The data on this feature from before 1500 was collected from Parry-Williams and supplemented from Nurmio.⁵⁴ The advantage of this data-set is two-fold; first, Parry-Williams was collecting it so as to understand the chronology of the phonological form of loanwords from English, while it is being used here to consider a morphological question; that is, the data does not have any particular morphological bias as it was collected for other purposes. Secondly, thinking about borrowed morphological features can be particularly illuminating as they seem to require a much more deeply embedded stable bilingualism to occur and so tend to be rarer.⁵⁵ The forms, sorted into semantic groups, are as follows:

Armour, weaponry, military terms: *blattys* ‘blades’, *gwns* ‘guns’, *maelus* ‘chain-mail’, *plats* ‘pieces of armour’, *trwps* ‘troops’.⁵⁶

Building materials: *brics* ‘bricks’, *klaspys* ‘clasps’, *cofrys* ‘coffers’, *latys* ‘lathes’, *teilyst/tiglist* ‘tiles’, *ysglates* ‘slates’.

Clothing, material: *botas* ‘boots’, *rhobs* ‘robes’, *siwels* ‘jewels’, *wrllys* ‘borders’.

Fruit, herbs, spices, etc.: *almys* ‘almonds’, *baeas* ‘bay’, *clofes* ‘cloves’, *cwrrens* ‘current’, *datas* ‘dates’, *ffigys* ‘figs’, *grabs* ‘grapes’, *graens* ‘grains’, *mintys* ‘mint’, *plwmmas*, etc. ‘plums’, *seifys* ‘chives’.

⁵³ On poems about towns, see Fulton, ‘Trading Places’, and ‘Y Cywyddwyr a’r *encomium urbis* Cymreig’, and ‘The *encomium urbis* in Medieval Welsh Poetry’; Johnston, ‘Towns in Medieval Welsh Poetry’.

⁵⁴ Parry-Williams, *The English Element in Welsh*, pp. 97-104; Silva Nurmio, *Grammatical Number in Welsh: Diachrony and Typology* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2019), pp. 80-4; cf. Glyn Lewis, ‘Migration and the Decline of the Welsh Language’, in *Advances in the Study of Societal Multilingualism*, ed. by Joshua A. Fishman (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), pp. 263-351 (p. 339). Words have been checked against *GPC* for dates.

⁵⁵ Cf. the discussion of the pluperfect tense and compound prepositions with references in n. 40 above.

⁵⁶ Cf. Chapman, *Welsh Soldiers in the Later Middle Ages*.

Plants, etc.: *betys* ‘beets’, *cecys* ‘stalks’, *hocys* ‘mallows’.
 Collectable shellfish, etc.: *cocys* ‘cockles’, *chwalkys*
 ‘whelks’, *oestrys/westrys* ‘oysters’.
 Other: *aliwns* ‘aliens’, *bribis* ‘fragments’, *cwmins*
 ‘commons’, *cwtys* ‘fates, lots, portions’, *cwplys*
 ‘couples’, *dropas* ‘drops’, *ffloks* ‘flocks’,
gardas ‘garter’, *hwrswns* ‘whore-sons’, *owtils*
 ‘outer-isles’, *perls* ‘pearls’, *rhywlys* ‘rules’,
siartres ‘charters’, *singlys* ‘bells’, *taplys/taplas*
 ‘gaming-tables’.

While the semantic range is broad, they are probably best viewed as words which are most likely to have been borrowed in an urban environment, words which refer to objects which would have been available for sale at market stalls, builders’ merchants, clothiers, and drapers (with clothing and material looming large in the Welsh poetry on towns); or to activities most likely to be encountered in towns. From a linguistic perspective, the analysis of these forms in Welsh is striking; while all these examples are marked as plural in English and exist alongside a singular form without the plural morpheme, they are not analysed as such in Welsh, rather they are treated as collectives sometimes with associated singulatives (e.g. *bricsen* ‘brick’, *latsen* ‘lathe’, *teilsen* ‘tile’, treating *brics*, etc. as the stem. Cf. also, with slightly later attestations, *colsyn* ‘a live-coal’, *cwilsyn* ‘a quill-pen’, *locsyn* ‘a lock of hair’, *persen* ‘a pear’). In other words, it seems that only English plurals in *-s* which were analysable as collectives were borrowed at this period; that is not to say that English words which happened to have a plural in *-s* were not borrowed, but they were borrowed in the singular form. The point about the forms above is that the form marked with *-s* is treated as the basic form. The realization that in Welsh the analysis of these forms is different also helps to explain another group of forms which are described by Parry-Williams as ‘double-plurals’ (e.g. *botasau*, *cytysae*, *syartryssei*, etc.). In fact, the stems are collective and are then marked as plural to signify a semantic difference; thus *botas* ‘a pair of boots’ (and other variant forms of effectively the same word) gives a plural *botasau* ‘multiple pairs of boots’, or the like; *siartrys* ‘charters’ beside *siartrysau* meaning perhaps ‘bundles of charters’. The pluralization of collectives is very rare in Welsh, but has been discussed for Breton by Acquaviva, who has argued that there is usually a semantic difference between the collective and its plural.⁵⁷ Thus in these Welsh examples, rather than the same category being marked twice, the pluralized collectives probably meant something different.

⁵⁷ Paolo Acquaviva, *Lexical Plurals: A Morphosemantic Approach*, Oxford Studies in Theoretical Linguistics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 10, 67, 234-65, especially 257-63; cf. also Nurmio, *Grammatical Number in Welsh*, pp. 122-8.

A final point worth making here is that the English *-s* marker seems not to have spread very far into Welsh at all in that it is rarely used with Welsh nouns. In the modern language, Peter Wynn Thomas notes forms like *brawdwr*, *pregethwrs*, etc. which seem to be mainly attested in the north and restricted to nouns ending in *-wr*.⁵⁸ It might be wondered whether the use of *-s* was to avoid the irregular *-wyr* or perhaps is analogous to the English *-er* with plural *-ers*.

Conclusion

The main contention of this paper has been that, in order to make sense of the scattered and anecdotal evidence discussed here, we need to draw on the substantial theoretical work on bilingualism and multilingualism. Just as in the classical world, the medieval world does not tell us everything, or sometimes not even very much, but theories developed in modern data rich linguistic communities do at least give us a sense of the different possibilities available. One thing that has emerged from this discussion is a strong indication that the linguistic variety which developed in the towns was an important catalyst for further linguistic development; as such, they deserve further detailed scrutiny. That said, we cannot know everything about the linguistic transactions of the past and we have to acknowledge the complexities and difficulties which lie behind the tantalizing fragments of evidence left for us. The example of the re-analysis of English plural *-s* as a collective (with concomitant singulative) is a salutary reminder that we need to pay attention to the evidence and what it is telling us.

⁵⁸ Peter Wynn Thomas, *Gramadeg y Gymraeg* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), p. 175. I am grateful to Dylan Foster Evans for the information that these are mainly northern.