'CAD GODDEU', 'THE BATTLE OF THE TREES':

TEXTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Anne Elizabeth Wagstaffe, 1903773

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Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation

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Abstract

'Cad Goddeu', ('The Battle of the Trees'), a poem attributed to the legendary Welsh bard Taliesin, is found in its earliest extant form in the fourteenth-century Welsh manuscript known as *Llyfr Taliesin*, (*The Book of Taliesin*). This dissertation asks how the poem has been recreated over time through a network of texts linked to the medieval manuscript by intricate patterns of translation and transmission. By drawing from theorists such as Gérard Genette in his work *Palimpsests*, texts and other variants of the poem are studied, and examples of intertextual connections are reviewed, dating from the nineteenth-century to the twenty-first. The dissertation examines the place of *Llyfr Taliesin* in Welsh literature and connections between 'Cad Goddeu' and other early texts. Translation is discussed and an analysis of the repeated appearance of four lines from the poem in various pieces of writing gives a detailed picture of the intertextuality surrounding the poem. Obscurity and difficulty are often associated with 'Cad Goddeu', and the meanings that these concepts can bring to poetry are shown. Robert Graves's book *The White Goddess*, published in 1948 has played an important role in bringing the poem to new audiences, and Graves's concept of 'analepsis' as an entry point to the past is compared to perceptions of the poem in contemporary society. New readings of 'Cad Goddeu' are made by actively searching in the work for themes of ecology, gender and identity, as each text can be read from a new perspective, new interpretations are always possible. The dissertation demonstrates the value of looking closely at variants of a given poem to understand how words and meaning are transmitted through associated palimpsestic texts, a methodology which can be usefully applied to future research in this area.

Introduction

The word *disgyfrith,* 'unfettered' appears in the second line of the medieval Welsh poem 'Cad Goddeu','The Battle of the Trees', and this dissertation will show that where Taliesin, the shape-shifting persona of the poem exists in many forms until he is 'unfettered' as the voice of the poem, 'Cad Goddeu' versions are repeatedly unfettered and transformed in a variety of texts.[1] The poem appears in many forms and this dissertation will examine a selection of translations and other works including fictional writing and music to ask how this poem about identity, nature and enchantment has been recreated multiple times in a network of connected texts and artforms. The earliest extant version of 'Cad Goddeu', written in Middle Welsh, is found in the fourteenth-century manuscript *Llyfr Taliesin*, (*The Book of Taliesin)*, which is held at the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, manuscript Peniarth 2.[2] The poem in *Llyfr Taliesin* may be viewed as the source of many of the later related texts, but the manuscript itself will also have been produced as part of a similar process and is one link in a chain of transmission which both precedes it and develops from it. Although the poem in the manuscript can be seen as a source for many of the works surveyed here, behind the manuscript lie further sources, the possibility of unknown oral versions, and lost manuscripts.[3]

Many of the rewritten versions of 'Cad Goddeu' are contained within translations from Middle Welsh into English of *Llyfr Taliesin*, and it is through the publication of these translations from the nineteenth century that the work reached a wider audience.[4] There is a blurred line between translation and other textual variants of the poem and an example which represents the complex process of intertextual development is found in the book *The White Goddess* by poet and writer Robert Graves. In the *White Goddess* Graves composes a

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[1] For line two of the poem see Marged Haycock, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin*, (Aberystwyth: CMCS, 2015), p. 174, l.2. I have chosen to use Welsh titles for Welsh language writing and the title 'Cad Goddeu' is used for the poem in this dissertation. There are other titles and spellings of the title, see Appendix A, Transcriptions, Translations and Variants of 'Cad Goddeu'.

[2] The collection known as *Llyfr Taliesin* arrived at Hengwrt, as part of the library of Robert Vaughan, before 1656. Robert Vaughan made copies of the poems in the lost work *Y Kynfeirdh Kymreig* which was the basis of the medieval Welsh manuscripts listed by Edward Lhuyd in *Archaeologia Britannica*, 1707.The Hengwrt library became the foundation collection of the National Library of Wales in 1909. Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 3. The manuscript can be viewed on the National Library of Wales website. National Library of Wales, *The Book of Taliesin*, 1301-1350, Peniarth 2. <https://www.library.wales/discover/digital-gallery/manuscripts> [accessed 1 September 2021].

[3] I have summarised the key points in the poem in Appendix B to assist the reading of the dissertation.

[4] For details of translations see Appendix A.

new poem called 'Câd Goddeu' by discussing, rearranging, amending, supplementing and rewriting an earlier translation of the poem by D.W. Nash.[5] The English translation of 'Cad Goddeu' by Nash, first published in 1858 is quoted in full by Graves, a text within a text.[6] Graves's intention was not merely poetic composition, but to prove his theory that a coded message in 'Cad Goddeu' revealed key information about a lost form of goddess worship, the source of true poetic inspiration. According to Graves, the Goddess, closely associated with the moon, has been worshipped in many forms and across many cultures, therefore widespread evidence for this can be found in surviving traditions of myth.

> My thesis is that the language of poetic myth anciently current in the Mediterranean and Northern Europe was a magical language bound up with popular religious ceremonies in honour of the Moon-goddess, or Muse, some of them dating from the Old Stone Age, and that this remains the language of true poetry - "true" in the nostalgic modern sense of the "unimprovable original, not a synthetic substitute."[7]

His belief is that the message hidden in 'Cad Goddeu' was based on a Welsh tree alphabet, related to the Irish Ogham alphabet which uses trees for the names of some letters.[8] *The White Goddess* although criticised for its poor scholarship has nevertheless provided inspiration to many poets and writers creatively. One of the most well-known examples is the poet Ted Hughes who was given a copy of *The White Goddess* by his English teacher John Fisher before leaving to study English at Pembroke College, Cambridge in 1951.[9] *The White Goddess* has greatly raised awareness of 'Cad Goddeu' which has retained its identity through this channel into the twenty-first century and it is therefore an important element in this dissertation and a clear example of textual layering. It is often Nash's translation of 'Cad Goddeu' which is quoted from *The White Goddess*, Graves's theories about the goddess

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[5] Robert Graves (1895-1985) is also known for other writing, including the poetry he wrote during World War 1 while serving in the trenches as a British officer. *The White Goddess* was first published in 1948. For Nash's translation and the discussion and reconstruction of the 'Cad Goddeu' poem see Robert Graves, *The White Goddess*, (London: Faber, 1961), pp. 27-48.

[6] David William Nash (died 1876/7) was an antiquary and writer with an interest in Egyptian history as well as Welsh. He strongly refuted the idea that there was evidence of Druidry in the Taliesin poems. See D.W. Nash, *Taliesin, or The Bards and Druids of Britain*, (London: John Russell Smith, 1858), p. 228.

[7] Graves, *The White Goddess*, pp. 9-10.

[8] For more information on Ogham see Damian McManus, *A Guide to Ogam*, (Maynooth: An Sagart, 1991).

[9] For information on the influence of the book on Ted Hughes see Jonathan Bate, *Ted Hughes: The Unauthorised Life*, (London: William Collins, 2015), pp. 65-7.

and his own rewriting of the poem receiving less attention than the poem he embedded within it.

Since the writing of the Peniarth 2 manuscript then, 'Cad Goddeu' has been recycled many times into new forms and is therefore a good example to use in a study of textual connections. Indeed, the number of texts used in this discussion is limited by the required length of the dissertation and a large quantity of further material is available to research. Furthermore, this dissertation is concerned with the wide variety of texts and artforms emerging across a long period of time and there is scope for more in-depth study of a narrower range, for example there are many songs and other pieces of music named after or influenced by the poem and a study of their genre and lyrics would be a valuable area of study not included here.[10] The development of a network of connected texts involves more than the transplantation or translation of words from one text to another. It also involves transformation of the meanings attached to the texts. There are contrasts between the scholarly, the artistic and the spiritual interpretations of this poem and these contrasts demonstrate how Celtic literature can be conceptualised in different ways. The key work of scholarship in relation to 'Cad Goddeu' is the detailed work on the 'legendary' group of Taliesin poems by Marged Haycock, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* published in 2007, in which an English translation of 'Cad Goddeu' is printed alongside the Middle Welsh lines, accompanied by an introduction and 249 explanatory notes.[11] Haycock's scholarship underpins the work in this study, and it is her translation from *Legendary Poems* with the title 'Kat Godeu' that is referred to and quoted in the first instance in this dissertation. Two earlier papers by Marged Haycock examine the poem in detail. In an article published in 1990, 'The Significance of the Cad Goddau Tree-List in the Book of Taliesin' she proposes that the tree-list section of the poem is a parody of battle in Welsh heroic poetry.[12] Based

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[10] See Appendix C for a list of songs, music and artwork.
[11] Haycock, *Legendary* Poems, pp. 167-239.

[12] Marged Haycock, 'The Significance of the *Cad Goddau* Tree-List in the Book of Taliesin', in *Celtic Linguistics, Readings in the Brythonic Languages*, ed. by Martin J. Ball, James Fife, Erich Poppe and Jenny Rowland, (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1990), 297-331, (p. 307).

on a lecture given by Haycock, *Taliesin a Brwydr Y Coed*, (Taliesin and the Battle of the Trees), was published in 2006 and incorporates a Modern Welsh translation of the poem.[13]

In *The Gododdin of Aneirin: Text and Context from Dark-Age North Britain*, scholar John T. Koch uses a collection of early versions of the heroic poem *Y Gododdin*, *(The Gododdin*) to 'recover (so far as is possible) the more original state of the verses'.[14] This dissertation is also concerned with the study of a selection of texts, but unlike Koch's aim to restore an older version of an early Welsh poem, the aim in this case is to study the interaction of available 'Cad Goddeu' texts from medieval times into the twenty-first century. The approach taken draws from Julia Kristeva's concepts of intertextuality to demonstrate how 'the repetition of related yet alternative interpretations authenticates all voices, each a bond of an intertextual chain.'[15] Versions of 'Cad Goddeu' may be linked diachronically, newer texts descending from older ones or synchronically, through an overarching form of communication or discourse. Moreover, the process of translation, important in the study of 'Cad Goddeu', involves a close linking of two texts and 'translation has the characteristics of intertextuality both in appearance and in essence.'[16] By approaching the presentation of the poem in this way, the methodology used in the dissertation also draws from the work of Gérard Genette in *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* which uses a framework of definitions relating to textual relationships.[17] For Genette a 'hypertext' is developed from an earlier text labelled a 'hypotext', the 'hypertext' being grafted upon the 'hypotext'.[18] The word 'palimpsest' therefore suggests superimposed layers of writing, each bearing traces from the layer below and this is a useful concept to apply to versions of 'Cad Goddeu' which are closely associated with each other despite boundaries of time, language and genre. Processes of intertextuality and palimpsestic layering are so evident in this case that they

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[13] Marged Haycock, *Taliesin a Brwydr Y Coed,* (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2006).

[14] John T. Koch, *The Gododdin of Aneurin*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), p.ix.

[15] Kristy Butler, 'Kristeva, Intertextuality, and Re-imagining "The Mad Woman in the Attic"', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 47.1, (2014), 129-147 (p.133). See also Julia Kristeva, '"Nous deux" or a (Hi)story of Intertextuality', *Romanic Review*, 93.1-2 (2002), 7-13.

[16] Yi Long and Yu Gaofeng, 'Intertextuality, Theory and Translation', *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 10.9, (2020) 1106-1110, p. 1107.

[17] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. by Channa Newman, Claude Doubinsky and Gerald Prince, (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 1997). This was first published in French in 1982.

[18] Genette, *Palimpsests*, p. 5.

can be used as a model for study in less clear-cut areas. Further works by Genette are useful, including *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, a study of temporal structure within a narrative.[19] Both Graves and Genette use the terms 'prolepsis' (a shift forward) and 'analepsis' (a shift backward) to describe disturbances in linear timelines. Applied by Graves to a mode of thought during which he personally appeared to experience an alternative dimension of time, the terms were defined by Genette in reference to temporal structure within a text, which may be linear and regular or as in the 'Cad Goddeu' dislocated and uneven. The Taliesin persona, the voice of the poem, travels across time in a nonlinear manner and the poem itself has often been used as a means of linking to an imagined past, be it a nineteenth-century search for druids or a twenty-first century search for shamans.[20] Therefore, the significance of the poem as a representation of a lost time which can never be completely understood or recovered by the modern reader is explored, an idea applied to the Celtic bards by Fiona Stafford in *The Last of the Race*.[21]

The dissertation is structured into three parts. The first part outlines the early history of *Llyfr Taliesin* and 'Cad Goddeu', other early related texts, and discusses the title and the prominence of the poem. The second part assesses translations of the poem, analyses the transmission of four lines of the poem through a variety of texts and examines the meaning of obscurity and difficulty in the work. The third part looks at the role of Robert Graves's *The White Goddess* and the concepts of time which are associated with 'Cad Goddeu'. The final section of the third part proposes that although there are powerful and enigmatic themes of identity, nature and enchantment in 'Cad Goddeu' that have held meaning for readers over the centuries, it is always possible for new interpretations to evolve. Perhaps by recognising that each reading of a text is a new reading, new significance can be found in the work. By looking for the nature of human identity, the contrast between human and tree and the perceived absence of the female or the overtly feminine in the work, it is possible for new discourses taken from areas such as eco and feminist theories to be applied, new interpretations added to the existing network, and the texts rewritten once again.

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[19] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method,* trans. by Jane E. Lewin (New York: Cornell University Press, 1980). This was first published in French in 1973.
[20] For example, the Taliesin poetry has often been seen as evidence of ancient British Druidry. See Ronald Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe: The History of the Druids in Britain*, (Yale: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 314.
[21] Fiona Stafford, *The Last of the Race: The Growth of a Myth from Milton to Darwin*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), p. 93.

1.Llyfr Taliesin and 'Cad Goddeu'

Llyfr Taliesin

Part of the Peniarth collection of manuscripts held by the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth, *Llyfr Taliesin* (Peniarth MS 2), is a collection of 61 poems, written down in Middle Welsh on vellum by one scribe, in the first half of the fourteenth century.[22] All the poems in the book are by convention attributed to Taliesin, even though it is impossible to verify any historical facts about him. Taliesin is named in some of the *Llyfr Taliesin* poems, for example the title of 'Aduwyneu Taliessin', means gentle, sweet or fair Taliesin, and the line '*Mitwyf Taliessin',* (I'm Taliesin), in the poem 'Angar Kyfundawt', suggests Taliesin as author.[23] The first written record of the title, *Llyfr Taliesin,* the Book of Taliesin, was added some time after the creation of the manuscript, probably by the one-time owner of the collection, Robert Vaughan, (1592? -1667). Twelve of the poems, classified by Ifor Williams as the earliest compositions and according to Williams, written by the 'real' Taliesin, 'a genuine historical figure', are often grouped together, assumed to be of sixth-century date and given the title 'heroic poems.'[24] Although there are few claims of authorship in a medieval manuscript, for Ifor Williams the earlier poet subsequently had 'many ... poems falsely attributed to him, some of them modelled on his own'.[25] This type of distinction between Taliesin poems is seen at an earlier date in the work of Welsh scholar Thomas Stephens (1821-1875). Stephens included 'Cad Goddeu' in a list of 'poems fictitiously attributed to Taliesin' and classed it in a group which is close to modern scholarly dating of the poem, 'Romances belonging to the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries'.[26] The 'genuine' poems, panegyric verses, spoken by Taliesin the court bard, are chiefly in praise of his patron, Urien of Rheged, a ruler based in *Yr Hen Ogledd*, the old Brythonic north. Making up the other groups of 'inauthentic' poems, are legendary, prophetic and devotional poems.

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[22] The National Library of Wales, *The Book of Taliesin*, 1300-1350, Peniarth Collection MS 2. The place of origin is unknown, but Haycock suggests a monastic scriptorium, possibly Llantarnam or Cwm Hir. Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 2.

[23] The meaning of the title of this poem is unclear. Haycock, 'Angar Kyfundawt', in *Legendary Poems*, p. 123, l. 263.

[24] Ifor Williams, *The Poems of Taliesin*, trans. by J.E. Caerwyn Williams (Dublin: DIAS, 1968), p. xviii.

[25] Williams, *The Poems of Taliesin*, p. lxvi.

[26] Thomas Stephens, *The Literature of the Kymry: Being a Critical Essay on the History of Language and Literature in Wales*, (Llandovery: William Rees, 1849), p. 282.

'Cad Goddeu' is clearly a legendary poem in which Taliesin is presented as a supernatural and vastly knowledgeable shape-shifting figure. Haycock suggests that the author of the legendary Taliesin poems may have been the court bard Llywarch ap Llywelyn, alternatively named Prydydd y Moch, of the late twelfth to early thirteenth century. In her view by writing primarily to entertain and to enhance his status he developed a poetic persona attached to the earlier renowned bard Taliesin.[27] Although all poetry is written through a persona to some extent, the writer assuming a particular voice for the duration of the poem or series of poems, the persona of the 'legendary' Taliesin poems is not presented as a historical figure but as a 'legendary and extraordinary being...created at the world's beginning'.[28] The divisions between fact and fiction, history and story are evident in the categorisation of the *Llyfr Taliesin* poems and the idea of 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' poetry. An early date does not necessarily equate to a more authentic text because an earlier text can also be an 'inauthentic' replica of previous texts and the question of authorship and originality is faced again. Conversely, it may be argued that there is a sense in which every text is authentic, regardless of perceived authorship. In the same way as language is learned, reproduced and transformed over time, a text can only exist as a new product constructed from previous texts merged and transformed. The history of *Llyfr Taliesin*, complicated by the question of lost oral versions, some of which may themselves have been influenced by written text, demonstrates the complex nature of this process.

Taliesin: a survey of early references outside *Llyfr Taliesin*

The first known reference to Taliesin is found in *Historia Brittonum*, a 'history' of the early British people, for which an early ninth-century composition date is possible.[29] Taliesin is listed alongside fellow poets Talhearn Tad Awen, (father of inspiration), Neirin, Cian and Blwchfardd. Of these, other than Taliesin, only the work of Neirin or Aneurin, the author of Y *Gododdin* has survived in the thirteenth-century manuscript *Llyfr Aneirin*, (*The Book of Aneirin*), held at the National Library of Wales.[30] Thought to be the earliest surviving Welsh poem, Neirin or Aneirin's *Gododdin* is an elegy to men killed at the Battle of Catraeth. The

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[27] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, pp. 27-36.
[28] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 9.
[29] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*. p. 12.
[30] Haycock, *Legendary* Poems, ibid.

following lines from the poem echo line 24 of 'Cad Goddeu' 'I am not one who does not sing'.[31]

> it is I and yet not I, Aneurin.
>
> Taliesin of skillful song
>
> knows it.
>
> I sang the Gododdin
>
> before the dawn of the following day.[32]

In a further textual link between Taliesin and Aneirin, a comment written in one of the *Gododdin* manuscripts attributes the poem 'Gwarchan Maeldderw', which is mentioned in 'Cad Goddeu', to Taliesin.[33] Another association with poetry is found in the prose tale *Culhwch ac Olwen*, (Culhwch and Olwen), in which Taliesin is described as *Teliessin Ben Beirdd*, (Taliesin Head of the Bards).[34] The Breton 'Life of St Iudicael' found in manuscripts dated after 1400 names Taliesin, son of Dôn, an exiled traveller who foretells the birth of the saint.[35] This is a link to 'Cad Goddeu' in which Gwydion and Dylan of the Dôn family are referenced. Both characters are found in the early Welsh prose tales *Pedair Cainc y Mabinogi*, (The Four Branches of the Mabinogi), as is Taliesin. Gwydion and Dylan appear in the 'Fourth Branch' of the medieval Welsh tale *Pedair Cainc y Mabinogi* and Taliesin is to be found in the 'Second Branch' tale known as 'Branwen'. He is one of seven men who survive conflict against the Irish and with Branwen return to Britain with the severed head of Bendigeidfran. [36] Another link is shown in *Llyfr Taliesin* poem 'Golychaf-i Gulwyd' ('I Petition God') in which the Taliesin persona states, 'I was in the Battle of the Trees with Lleu and Gwydion.'[37] It is not known from current evidence if there was a lost *Mabinogi* story in which Taliesin played a fuller role, but there are certainly connections in texts between Taliesin and *Mabinogi* characters. In further textual links, Latinised as Telgesinus, in *Vita Merlini* Taliesin displays knowledge of the world in the style of medieval Spanish scholar

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[31] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 175, l. 24.

[32] John T. Koch, *The Gododdin of Aneurin*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), p. 97, ll. 548-52.

[33] Koch, *The Gododdin*, p. lxxiii.

[34] Sioned Davies, *The Mabinogion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 185.

[35] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 13.

[36] Sioned Davies, *The Mabinogion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 32. This is echoed by the seven survivors of the journey in the *Llyfr Taliesin* poem, 'Preideu Annwfyn' ('The Spoils of Annwfyn').

[37] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 276, l. 29. The title of the poem, 'Golychaf-i-Gulwyd' is translated by Haycock as 'I petition God'. Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 275.

Isidore of Seville while in dialogue with Merlin, Merlin being a figure comparable to Taliesin, linked to poetry, prophecy, and magic.[38]

The folkloric story *Hanes Taliesin* or *Ystoria Taliesin* has had a strong influence on modern interpretations of *Llyfr Taliesin* and 'Cad Goddeu'. It is found in many manuscripts, the earliest extant copy produced by Elis Gruffydd in the middle of the sixteenth century.[39] The story is most often told in prose with interspersed verses of poetry and opens with traditional story motifs, in particular the unusual background to Taliesin's birth.[40] As in 'Cad Goddeu', change of form is a key theme. During a chase, characters Ceridwen and Gwion Bach physically change into the forms of various animals. In an act of synthesis, reproduction and rejection, Ceridwen in the form of a hen eats Gwion Bach in the form of a grain, gives birth to him nine months later and places him in the sea. In the second part of the story set at the 'historical' court of sixth-century king Maelgwn Gwynedd, Gwion Bach becomes the poet Taliesin, in possession of poetic gifts powerful enough to release his patron Elffin ap Gwyddno from chains. In an important transition it was the inclusion of this story in Lady Charlotte Guest's *Mabinogion* published between 1838 and 1849 that launched the story of *Hanes Taliesin* to a wider audience, linking it in English to the Taliesin poems.[41] These examples show how a mesh of texts and oral traditions connect, each one a many-layered palimpsest.

Llyfr Taliesin and Poetic Form in Middle Welsh

The category of *Cynfeirdd* 'early poets', first appears in the title of an anthology of early Welsh poetry copied by the antiquary Robert Vaughan (1592-1667) from his library of manuscripts at Hengwrt, with the title *Y Kynfeirdh Kymreig*, (The Early Poets of Wales). *Llyfr Taliesin* was one of the works in the anthology and Taliesin is therefore closely associated with the use of the term. The current thinking on the composition dates of the legendary Taliesin poems places them at a later period than is understood by *Cynfeirdd* even though

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[38] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p.13. For further examples of Taliesin outside *Llyfr Taliesin* see Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, pp. 12-21.

[39] Patrick K. Ford, *The Mabinogi and Other Medieval Welsh Tales*, Kindle edn. (Oakland: University of California Press, 1977), p. 151.

[40] For a complete version of the story in English see Ford, *The Mabinogi*, pp. 151-72.

[41] Lady Charlotte Guest (1812-1895) produced the first English translation of the *Mabinogion*. Lady Charlotte Guest, *The Mabinogion: From the Llyfr Coch O Hergest and Other Ancient Welsh MSS, with an English Translation and Notes,* (London: Longmans, 1849), pp. 471-500.

the term originally applied to the entirety of poems in *Llyfr Taliesin*. Vaughan's anthology has only survived in fragments, but its title was included in 1707 as part of Welsh scholar Edward Lhuyd's survey of medieval Welsh manuscripts, *Archaeologica Britannica*. From this source the term *Cynfeirdd* became more widespread in use followed by *Gogynfeirdd* defined as a category for the 'not so early poets', the court poets of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. *Hengerdd* also developed as a term for 'old poetry' written by the C*ynfeirdd*. Later scholars such as Sir Ifor Williams used *Cynfeirdd* in a specific way, applying it to the five poets, Taliesin included, named in *Historia Brittonum*.[42]

A forerunner of the Welsh 'chiming' verse form c*ynghanedd*, the use of rhyme, stress, alliteration and syllabic patterns in the poetry of *Llyfr Taliesin* provides a structure for the combination of sound, and meaning, aided by complex Welsh diphthongs or vowel sounds.[43] The metrical form of 'Cad Goddeu', sometimes called the Taliesin metre, appears in many of the 'legendary' Taliesin poems and is made up of short lines between four and seven syllables, linked into rhyming couplets.[44] Marged Haycock proposes that the numerous hexasyllabic lines in 'Cad Goddeu' evidence a style of accentuation in the early metre comprising two strong and two to four weak accents.[45] The distinctive use of rhyme is a clear sign that the threshold between mundane language and poetry has been crossed. The centrality of sound through rhyme in the poem raises difficulties in translation, for example compare the endings of lines 106 to 112 in Middle Welsh and in Marged Haycock's English translation: *bernissit, aryfgryt, vyt, byt, Moryt, ffynyessit, glessyssit*, adjudged, conflict, Dogwood, fray, Moryt, flourished, verdant.[46]

'Cad Goddeu': Early Parallel Texts Outside Llyfr Taliesin
There are references outside *Llyfr Taliesin* to the poem 'Cad Goddeu'. *Trioedd Ynes Prydein*, (The Triads of the Island of Britain), is a catalogue of names found in early Welsh manuscripts, grouped by theme into threes. The Battle of Goddau is named in Triad 84, 'Teir

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[42] M.E. Haycock, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, entry for c*ynfeirdd*, (2006) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/95355> [accessed 11 June 2021].
[43] Gwyneth Lewis and Rowan Williams, *The Book of Taliesin: Poems of Warfare and Praise in an Enchanted Britain*, (London: Penguin, 2019). pp. lxii -lxviii.

[44] Lewis, *The Book of Taliesin*, p. lxx.

[45] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 37.
[46] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 179, ll. 106-12.

Ouergat Ynys Prydein', ('Three Futile Battles of the Island of Britain'), with the statement 'it was brought about because of the bitch, the roebuck and the plover.'[47] A section from the seventeenth-century manuscript, Peniarth 98B with the title 'Englynion Cad Goddau' has played a greater role than the triads in the development of ideas around 'Cad Goddeu'. This short text provides details about the battle, stating that it was also known as the 'Battle of Achren'. In an echo of Triad 84, and of the references to figures from the *Mabinogi* in 'Cad Goddeu', in the 'Englynion Cad Goddau' the battle is triggered by the theft of a white roebuck and a whelp from *Annwn*, (the underworld), and fought between Amathaon ab Don and Arawn, King of Annwn. Gwydion ab Don secures victory by guessing the name of the man on the opposing side. Conversely, if the name of the woman Achren, had been revealed, Gwydion's army would have failed. Two early Welsh verse forms which are still composed today called *englynion* follow, apparently sung by Gwydion. Bran is the name revealed and is associated with branches of alder.[48] This document was copied in Middle Welsh from an unknown source by seventeenth-century Welsh scholar John Davies of Mallwyd and although nothing is known about the origins of the verses, he is generally known as a reliable copyist.[49] The way in which a chain of publications starting with inclusion in *The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales* (1801), alerted readers to this fragment of information and the consequences for perceptions of 'Cad Goddeu' are significant because the two texts became so closely entwined that they are often treated as one.[50]

Edward Davies writing in 1804 discussed the two texts together, concluding that 'symbolical sprigs' arranged in order formed an alphabet for the Druids.[51] Lady Charlotte Guest published the extract in English in 1849 in her *Mabinogion* and this is how the poem from

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[47] Rachel Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Triads of the Island of Britain*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), p. 217.

> [48] Lines from one of the *englynion* are: 'Sure-hoofed is my steed impelled by the spur;/The high sprigs of alder are on thy shield;/Brân art thou called, of the glittering branches.' Guest, *The Mabinogion*, p. 347.

[49] Dr John Davies of Mallwyd (1567-1644). Catherine McKenna states that 'we may with some confidence regard these *englynion* as of genuinely medieval origin.' Catherine McKenna, 'Cyfarwydd as Poet in the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi', *North American Journal of Celtic Studies*, 1.2 (2017), 107-20 (p. 15 [online page number]) <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:41687324> [accessed 21 May 2021].
[50] For the first publication of 'The Englynion Cad Goddeu' see Owen Jones, Edward Williams, and William Owen Pughe, eds, *The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*, Volume 1, (London: S. Rousseau, 1801), p. 167.

[51] Edward Davies (1756-1831) was also known as 'Celtic Davies'. Edward Davies, *Celtic Researches: On the Origin, Traditions & Language of the Ancient Britons*, (London: [n.pub.],1804), p. 265.

Llyfr Taliesin became associated in English language publications with a puzzle to be solved, the basis of Graves's theory in *The White Goddess.* Graves's book, initially titled *The Roebuck in the Thicket*, a reference to Triad 84, fused the two texts together with *Hanes Taliesin* to the extent that in subsequent references by other writers 'Cad Goddeu' the poem is sometimes used as a term for the merged texts. For example, folklorist Ari Berk writing online about the 'The Battle of the Trees' in 2010, merges the story of the *englynion* with the Triad and the poem from *Llyfr Taliesin* to state that 'the ancient Welsh poem' is the tale of 'a bold theft, a vengeful Otherworldly King, a fight over stolen goods', elements which are not found in the *Llyfr Taliesin* poem.[52] The three parallel texts of poem, triad and *englynion* are linked by title, although it is impossible to unravel the exact connections between them. It is possible to ascertain, however, that the poem and the *englynion* were published in *The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales* in 1801, and it is from this hypotext that layers of new text developed.

The Title

The Welsh poem 'Cad Goddeu' is known in English as 'The Battle of the Trees', a short title which immediately suggests a story of conflict, nature and the supernatural. [53] On hearing the title, we may ask the same question as Macbeth in a scene often compared to the Welsh poem.

> That will never be.
>
> Who can impress the forest, bid the tree
>
> Unfix his earth-bound root?[54]

'Paratext' is the term used by Genette for secondary signals surrounding a text such as title, foreword and book cover. Discussing the structure and function of a title, Genette states that it is received and transmitted not only by readers of the work but by non-readers who

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[52] Ari Berk is described on his website as writer, folklorist, artist, scholar of literature, iconography and comparative myth. He is Professor of Folklore and Mythology at Central Michigan University. Ari Berk, *The Battle of the Trees*, (2010) <http://www.ariberk.com/battleofthetrees.html> [accessed 4 August 2021].
[53] Alternative translations of the Welsh title have been suggested, for example Goddeu could refer to the region of Goddau in the kingdom of Rheged. Haycock, *Legendary Poems,* p.170. It could also mean 'intent' or 'purpose' see Haycock, *Legendary Poems,* p. 199.

[54] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth, (*London: Chancellor Press, 1982), Act 4. Scene 1. ll. 94-6. Macbeth speaks about the prophecy that he will not be vanquished until Birnham Wood rises to march against him.

can be involved in various ways.[55] This happens frequently to the title of 'Cad Goddeu' which is often discussed in texts without the presence of the poem itself. The title primarily acts to designate the work but can also indicate style and draw in the reader.[56] In the case of 'Cad Goddeu' the title has meaning in many texts without the poem being printed next to it and could be described as a synecdoche, a part representing a whole. In Genette's terms it has a thematic function which communicates more than a designated reference.[57] The usual English title of 'The Battle of the Trees' communicates the drama of battle and presents a puzzle, for how can trees act in this way? The frequent retention of the Welsh title in English writing signals the origins of the piece to the reader, the text is marked in translation scholar Lawrence Venuti's terms as 'foreign'.[58] To the English language reader, it can suggest the 'otherness' of the poem and an expectation of difficulty in understanding it, for if the title is in words that are not understood, the expectation is that the rest of the poem will follow this pattern. Versions of the poem's title are weighted with meaning, and function as an independent means of communication, informing the reader of the nature of the text to follow.[59]

The Prominence of the Poem

'Cad Goddeu' is the tenth poem of 61 in the Peniarth 2 manuscript.[60] At 249 lines in Marged Haycock's Middle Welsh transcription and English translation, it is only exceeded in length by the preceding poem of the collection, 'Angar Kyfundawt'. 'Cad Goddeu' has for a long time held prominence over similar Welsh medieval works. Writing in 1868, William F. Skene's one line comment on 'Angar Kyfundaw' was 'This poem contains no historical allusions. It is in the same class as No. iii.', whereas he wrote 21 lines on 'Cad Goddeu'.[61] In Haycock's *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* it is covered over 72 pages compared

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[55] For example, I could order a book, collect it from a bookshop and pass it on to someone else without reading it. The title would be an important part of this process. Gérard Genette, 'The Structure and Function of the Title', trans. by Bernard Crampé, *Critical Inquiry*, 14.4 (1988), 669-720 p. 707.

[56] The function of designation would require no more than a reference number. Genette, 'The Structure and Function', p. 708.

[57] For further detail on thematic title see Genette, 'The Structure and Function', pp. 711-14.

[58] Lawrence Venuti writes about the contrast between a fluent domesticated translation and one that retains 'disconcerting' 'foreign' words. For Venuti in both cases equivalent translation is impossible. Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 5.

[59] See Appendix A for full details of titles given to translations and variants.

[60] For a conspectus of *Llyfr Taliesin* see Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, pp. 558-9.

[61] William F. Skene, *The Four Ancient Books of Wales, Volume 2*, (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas,1868), pp. 399-400.

to 60 on the longer preceding poem 'Angar Kyfundawt'.[62] On the *Wikipedia* website page for 'Welsh Mythology' 'Cad Goddeu' is the fifth title listed in the contents after 'The Four Branches of the Mabinogi' and their four titles.[63] Some of the factors involved in the prominence of the poem have origins in the interest of nineteenth-century scholars which was taken up by later writers and will be discussed further in the dissertation. In this section the history of 'Cad Goddeu', its context and relationship to other texts is outlined. The prominence of the poem and the cascading effect whereby one text after another takes up the same threads will be debated further in Part 2 in a study of translations, a survey of four lines from the poem which have a history of their own and an analysis of obscurity, difficulty and meaning.

2.Translations, Textual Transmissions and Meaning

Translation

In a study centred on Welsh poet, historian, transcriber of manuscripts and forger Iolo Morganwg, Mary-Ann Constantine writes of the similarities between translation and forgery, the latter also a process of transition feeding from an original.[64] Analysis of 'Cad Goddeu' shows further blurred distinctions between translations and other textual variants. All versions written in English are translations in the sense that they are taken directly or indirectly from a Middle Welsh source. They are not necessarily produced by one translator working only from the early Welsh manuscript but are most often influenced by other related texts. The translator produces a 'hypertext' by grafting on to a 'hypotext', but this is not a simple linear process   Genette writes that 'no translation can be absolutely faithful, and every act of translation affects the meaning of the translated text.'[65] He gives to poetry 'the glorious privilege of untranslatability.'[66] Poetry relies on a unity of form, sound and meaning that cannot be dismantled and rebuilt equivalently in a new language. Furthermore, Genette finds difficulty in the translation of ancient works because by using

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[62] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, pp. 106-239. Compared to 'Angar Kyfundawt' there are three more pages in the introduction and ten more pages in the notes for 'Kat Godeu'.

[63] It is placed as a subtitle of 'Math fab Mathonwy'. Wikipedia, *Welsh Mythology*, (2021) <https://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welsh_mythology> [accessed 23 May 2021].

[64] Iolo Morganyg, 1747-1827, also known as Edward Williams, was one of the editors of *The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*, referred to above. Mary-Ann Constantine, *The Truth Against the World*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 195.

[65] Genette, *Palimpsests*, p. 214.

[66] Genette, ibid.

modern language the sense of distance is lost, but the use of archaic target language is artificial.[67] Given the added problems of illegible, incorrectly copied or unknown words in a medieval manuscript, any translation of 'Cad Goddeu' is problematic. The poem demonstrates that meaning can be found in a translation that is distanced from the literal meaning of words in the translation's source. An example of this is the word 'Fferyll' in the poem's last line. Nash translates this as 'goldsmith', writing that Dr Owen Pughe incorrectly translated the line as 'from the oppression of the chemist' and Edward Davies incorrectly used 'the invading host of the Fferyll'.[68] The accepted translation today is 'Virgil' who like Taliesin, was viewed as a magician in medieval times.[69] There is a connection to the modern Welsh word for chemist or pharmacist, *fferyllydd*, which is thought to be derived from the name Virgil, as his books were associated with alchemy and chemistry.[70] A 'wrongly' translated word can still be effective, for example Nash's use of 'goldsmith' for 'Fferyll' in line 249 reinforces the theme of line 246, translated by Haycock as '*Eurem yn euryll*' ('a magnificent jewel in a gold ornament').[71]

'Cad Goddeu', A Survey of Translations

The copying of manuscripts was widespread in Wales prior to the nineteenth century, to the extent that copies of early Welsh texts were widely circulated before formal publication in any language took place.[72] A copy of *Llyfr Taliesin* by John Davies in modern orthography made between 1631-4 is evidence of this early interest in the manuscript.[73] In the next century, Welsh scholar Evan Evans translated one of the *Llyfr Taliesin* poems in *Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Ancient Welsh Bards.* He noted with pride the difficult

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[67] Genette, *Palimpsests*, p. 217. This is close to Lawrence Venuti's writing on the 'foreign' and the 'domestic' in translation. Venuti, *The Translator's*, p. 5.

[68] Nash, *Taliesin*, p. 234. I have been unable to track down a published translation by William Owen Pughe of 'Cad Goddeu' but in his Welsh dictionary, '*feryll*' is given as 'chemist'. William Owen, *A Dictionary of the Welsh Language*, (London: E. Williams, 1804), [no page numbers]. Haycock translates the last two lines as 'and I am exhilarated/by the prophecy of Virgil.' Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 186, ll. 248-9.

[69] See Juliette Wood, 'Virgil and Taliesin: The Concept of the Magician in Medieval Folklore', *Folklore*, 94 (1983), 91-104.

[70] Davies, Ceri, '"The Prophecies of Virgil": Virgilian Reception in Wales', *Proceedings of the Virgil Society*, 29 (2017) 31-48 p.31. In this article Ceri Davies discusses connections between Virgil, Taliesin and 'Cad Goddeu'. Davies, 'The Prophecies', pp. 31-2, 47.

[71] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 186, l. 246. Nash's 'goldsmith' line is found in Nash, *Taliesin*, p.234.

[72] Constantine, *The Truth*, p. 93.

[73] The copy of the manuscript by Dr John Davies of Mallwyd is held by the National Library of Wales NLW 4973B, see Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 3.

language of the Taliesin poems and other early Welsh literature, interpreting it as a sign of authenticity, in comparison to the clarity of the discredited Ossian poems of Scotland.[74]

> [T]hey are so difficult to be understood, on account of their great antiquity, and numerous obsolete words, and negligence of transcribers, that it is too great a task for any man at this distance of time to go about a translation of them.[75]

In Volume 1 of *The Myvyrian Archaiology of* Wales (1801) a transcription of the Middle Welsh *Llyfr Taliesin* was published alongside other early Welsh poetry.[76] Although the book became tainted when forgeries in the work of editor Iolo Morganwg came to light, it was important in the history of Welsh scholarship and is the first known publication of the poem 'Cad Goddeu'.[77] The first translation of *Llyfr Taliesin* to be published in English was by David William Nash in 1858, *Taliesin, Or, The Bards and Druids of Britain*.[78] Ten years later, William Forbes Skene's *the Four Ancient Books of Wales* appeared in print. Much of the translation was attributed to Daniel Silvan Evans but *Llyfr Taliesin* was translated for Skene by Robert Williams of Rhydcroesau.[79] Skene's intention, which highlights a problematic element in all translation, was for translators Evans and Williams to keep their work 'as literal and accurate as possible, even though the meaning might be obscured thereby;'[80] Published by Gwenogvryn Evans in 1915, English translations of the poems alongside a transcription of the Middle Welsh equivalents appeared in *Poems from the Book of Taliesin*. This was accompanied by the publication of the technically accomplished *Facsimile & Text of the Book of Taliesin* by the same author, via which:

> Every worker can thus examine the materials in their earliest known form, and in his own workshop.[81]

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[74] Evan Evans (1731-1788) was a scholar, poet and cleric also known as Ieuan Fardd and Ieuan Brydydd Hir. Evan Evans, *Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Ancient Welsh Bards*, (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1764) p. 7.
[75] Evans, Evan, *Some Specimens*, p. 53. Evans is referring to a collection of poems from the book of Taliesin.
[76] In the *Myvyrian Archaiology* the date given for Taliesin is 520-570. The poems of *Llyfr Taliesin* are interspliced with other material, for example 'The Dialogue between Merddin and Taliesin' which is from *Llyfr Du Caerfyddin,* the *Black Book of Carmarthen*. Jones, *The Myvyrian*, p. 48.
[77] For the importance of *The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales* to Welsh literary history see Constantine, *The Truth*, p. 91.
[78] Nash, *Taliesin*, pp. 227-34.
[79] William F. Skene, *The Four Ancient Books of Wales: Volume1*, (Edinburgh, Edmonston and Douglas, 1868), p. 18.
[80] Skene. *Volume 1*, ibid.
[81] Gwenogvryn J. Evans, *Facsimile & Text of the Book of Taliesin*, (Llanbedrog: n. pub. 1915), Preface, p. i.

Writing about the translation of Irish material into English by Irish scholar and politician Douglas Hyde, Michael Cronin argues that the work was not merely 'witness to the past' but aimed to 'actively shape the future', emerging at a time of political change and pride in the Irish language.[82] In Wales, the editors of *The Myvyrian Archaiology* aimed to foster a strong sense of Welsh identity through the Bardic tradition, by portraying early Welsh literature as the true literature of Britain.

> These books are venerable moments of enlightened periods of literature amongst the Britons, while scenes of barbarity were acted over Europe, and darkened the light of our island: a literature whose origin was not borrowed, but matured at home, under that extraordinary system, the Bardic Institution.[83]

A similar process is seen in Brittany, a region which has exerted a separate identity from France through emphasis on the Breton language and culture. A key figure in this process, writer Theodore Hersart de La Villemarqué fostered a cultural revival in Brittany and forged close connections with Wales.[84] Out of this Breton history, three French translations of 'Cad Goddeu' emerge. Two of them were published in *Ogam* a journal of Celtic traditions published in the Breton city of Rennes. The third was written by Breton writer and Celtic scholar Jean Markale.[85]

In *Canu Taliesin*, Ifor Williams limited his translation to the heroic poems of *Llyfr Taliesin*. An English translation of this by J. E. Caerwyn Williams was published as the *Poems of Taliesin* in 1968.[86] Following the example of Ifor Williams in *Canu Taliesin* and his book *Armes Prydein*, *(Prophecies of Britain)*, Marged Haycock, divided the *Llyfr Taliesin* poems into two parts, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* and *Prophesies from the Book of Taliesin*, published in separate volumes. Haycock's 'Kat Godeau' belongs with the legendary poems,

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[82] Douglas Hyde 1860- 1949 was the first president of the Republic of Ireland. Michael Cronin, 'Ireland in Translation: the tension between Irish and English has led to a creative space for translation and to a unique use of Irish English', *English Today*, 27.2, (2011) 53-57, p. 54.
[83] Jones, *The Myvyrian*, p. v.
[84] Theodore Hersart de la Villemarqué (1815-1895) published *Barzaz Breiz*, a collection of Breton ballads in 1839 although the authenticity of the ballads was later questioned. He viewed Welsh literature as belonging to Brittany due to the closeness of the two cultures and languages. For a discussion of his connections to Wales see Constantine, *The Truth*, pp. 151-198.
[85] The three French translations identified are: Christian Guyonvarc'h, 'Kat Godeu', *Ogam: Tradition Celtique*, 30 (1953), 111-120. Pierre Le Roux, 'Le Kat Godeu', *Ogam*, 11 (1959), 185-205. Jean Markale, *Les Celtes et la Civilisation Celtique: Mythe et Histoire*, (Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages, 1999), pp. 363-68.
[86] Williams, *The Poems of Taliesin*.

not the prophecies. The scholarship of Ifor Williams's *Canu Taliesin* and Marged Haycock's *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin*, 2007, and *Prophecies from the Book of Taliesin*, 2013, laid the foundations for the publication in 2019 of *The Book of Taliesin: Poems of Warfare and Praise in an Enchanted Britain* translated by Gwyneth Lewis and Rowan Williams, a more poetic, less academic interpretation.[87]

It is difficult to draw a line between translation, rewriting of a translated text and creative rewriting of the poem. Some of the texts based on the poem do not follow it line by line and Robert Graves's interpretations are in this group. A piece of writing called 'The Battle of the Trees' by songwriter and storyteller Robin Williamson is based on 'Cad Goddeu' and the *englynion*.[88] Combining prose and verse, it is not a translation across two languages, but in a wider sense of the word 'translation' it communicates ideas in a new form. Meirion Pennar's book, *The Battle of the Trees, Cad Goddau* follows the poem line by line in the usual manner of a translation, but the text is supplemented by creatively interpreted illustrations which bring in new meaning.[89] In a video produced by the British Druid Order called *Cad Goddeu, The Battle of the Trees: A Medieval Healing Charm*, a new version of the poem is narrated over scenes from nature and accompanied by harp music.[90] The music and the images are an integral part of the meaning of the video in the same way as the paratextual significance of notes, commentaries and explanations in one form or another so often found alongside the poem. 'Cad Goddeu' is always surrounded by context.[91]

The Textual Transmission of Four Lines from the Poem

> and a fierce battalion
>
> beneath the root of his tongue;
>
> and another battalion is
>
> in [each] of his napes.[92]

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[87] Lewis, *The Book of Taliesin*, Acknowledgements, p. xi.

[88] Robin Williamson, *The Wise and Foolish Tongue: Celtic Stories & Poems*, (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1991), pp. 77-79.

[89] Meirion Pennar, *The Battle of the Trees, Cad Goddau*, (Market Drayton: Tern Press, 1992).

[90] British Druid Order, *Cad Goddeu, The Battle of the Trees, a Medieval Healing Charm* [video]. 2020 <htttps://youtu.be/rvXt-QLbZ3U> [accessed 9 July 2021].

[91] See Appendix A for details of commentaries and footnotes published alongside the poem.

[92] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 175, ll. 32-5.

As 'Cad Goddeu' is too long at 249 lines to be fully compared across translations and interpretations in a dissertation of this length, a shorter discussion is made in this section of the textual transmission of the four lines quoted above, lines 32 to 35 of Marged Haycock's English translation. There are areas not covered here such as font, text size, page layout and the physical nature of the material through which the reader receives the text, all these are paratext which may additionally affect reader reception. As this survey is of a small part of the poem, it does not cover these wider issues. In terms of word for word translation, the most difficult word in the lines is *wegilyd*, translated as various parts of the head and neck and given above as 'napes'. The *GPC* Welsh dictionary cites *wegilyd* in 'Cad Goddeu' as an early form of *gwegil* meaning 'nape of the neck'.[93] It may be the 'occiput' or 'skull' but in most cases here is given as the back of the head or heads, or the back of the neck or necks, the plural adding to the image of the multi-headed site of battle.

Although extracted from the main body of the poem by several writers, the four lines make far less sense when taken out of context. They are positioned in the poem after the opening transformation section where Taliesin names the inanimate and animate shapes that he has inhabited, for example a shield and foam in water, and are set in the following section where he describes past exploits as a singer and in battle. The immediately preceding two lines are:

> I pierced a great-scaled beast
>
> there were a hundred heads on him[94]

which indicates that the battle is located on the monster's body. By isolating lines 32-35 from lines 30-31 different meanings are harnessed to them, and the poem is potentially rendered more obscure, perhaps intentionally. The lines had been singled out as early as 1804 by the Reverend Edward Davies in his book *Celtic Researches*. His English translation of lines 32-35, italicizes the last three.

> And a battle was contested,
>
> *Under the root of his tongues:*

[93] University of Wales Centre for Advanced and Celtic Studies, *GPC Online* (2014) < https://www.welsh-dictionary.ac.uk/gpc/gpc.html > [Accessed 11 July 2021].

[94] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 175, ll. 30-1.

> *And another conflict there is,*
>
> *In the recesses of his heads.*[95]

In explanatory notes, Davies proposes that the many heads of the monster represent the many language-families of human society, so that 'the topography of battle, in the *organs of speech*, and in the *seat of understanding*, clearly points out the nature of this allegory.'[96] William F. Skene in *The Four Ancient Books of Wales* (1868), isolates the same lines in his notes on 'Cad Goddeu' and proposes that they refer to the contrast between the Cymric and Gaelic languages 'the interchange of gutturals and labials, which might be called a combat at the root of the tongue.'[97] The connection between 'tongue' and 'language' identified in these interpretations is present in English, but more pronounced in the French word for tongue '*langue*' *w*hich also means language. A French translation of the poem by Christian Guyonvarc'h gives '*la base de sa langue*' for 'tongue root.'[98] A later French version by Jean Markale uses '*la racine de sa langue*'.[99] If these terms are loosely translated back into English as 'the base of his language' and 'the root of his language' the meaning intensifies. The role of the tongue as both a physical part of the body and a metaphor for language makes it 'an apt emblem for the embodied nature of poesis', a means for the divine to be made physical through speech.[100]

Indeed, Robert Graves builds from this. In *The White Goddess* he breaks up the poem to make new versions, interspersing poetry with explanation, which is an unusual method of presenting his new compositions of the poem, but is a style often found surrounding early translations of 'Cad Goddeu.'[101] Mary-Ann Constantine has written of the 'filling-in process' such as footnotes used by early scholars to interpret the fragmented obscure past.[102] Graves follows this tradition, utilizing commentary to fit around the poetry. The lines under

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[95] Davies, *Celtic Researches*, p. 261, ll. 32-5.

[96] Davies, *Celtic Researches*, p. 261.
[97] Skene, *The Four Ancient Books: Volume 2*, p. 399.

[98] Guyonvarc'h, 'Kat Godeu', p. 112.
[99] Markale, *Les Celtes*, p. 363.
[100] Tiffany Beechy, 'Consumption, Purgation. Poetry, Divinity: Incarnational Poetics and the Indo-European Tradition', *Modern Philology*, 114.2 (2016), 149-169 (p. 166).
[101] See Appendix A for details of commentary accompanying translations of 'Cad Goddeu'.
[102] Constantine, *The Truth*, p. 197.

discussion appear three times in Graves's work. Firstly, in the inserted translation by D.W. Nash with the title 'Câd Goddeu'.

> And a grievous combat
>
> At the root of the tongue
>
> And another fight there is
>
> At the back of the head.[103]

The second instance is a new version called 'The Battle of the Trees', written in a ballad metre. where Graves claims to retain lines belonging exclusively to the tree battle section. The new verse keeps the four lines together, separated from the previous lines connecting them to the hundred-headed beast. He rewrites them and reinserts them as the third stanza of this 'tentative restoration' of the poem.

> Under the tongue-root
>
> A fight most dread,
>
> And another raging
>
> Behind, in the head.[104]

He then repeats the exact lines above as the ninth stanza in his reordered, rewritten 'resurrection' of the poem, now called 'Câd Goddeu'.[105] Graves, therefore, transmits the lines into new forms via three poems contained within one chapter of his book. It is not coincidental that the four lines have been taken out of context again; Graves explicitly discusses the reference to them in Edward Davies's *Celtic Researches*, stating that the battle is not physical 'but a battle fought intellectually in the heads and with the tongues of the learned.'[106] The point crosses texts again when picked up by John Matthews in his book *Taliesin: The Last Celtic Shaman*. Matthews argues that it was Graves's belief that the battle took place in the tongue and the head which guided the poet to see the battle of the trees as a struggle to uncover secret names and mysteries rather than a physical form of combat.[107]

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[103] The subtitle '(The Battle of the Trees)' is used. Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 31.
[104] Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 36.
[105] The subtitle ''The Battle of the Trees'' is used. Graves, *The White Goddess*, pp. 45-6.
[106] Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 38.
[107] John Matthews, *Taliesin: The Last Celtic Shaman*, (Rochester VT: Inner Traditions, 2002), p. 300.

In an author's note at the end of her Young Adult fantasy novel *Darkhenge*, Catherine Fisher explicitly embeds other texts into her writing by acknowledging the influence of Graves's *The White Goddess* and John Matthews's *Taliesin* on her work.[108] Throughout *Darkhenge* she draws heavily from 'Cad Goddeu', inserting several short lines of adapted verse, attributed to 'The Battle of the Trees'. In her story, the forest is a representation of the tangled connections in a human brain and each chapter is named after a tree, building towards the last section of the book, 'The Battle of the Trees'. Her interpretation of the four lines under scrutiny takes a prominent place at the beginning of the final chapter. This is clearly an inner battle, taking place literally inside the head of character Chloe as she struggles to escape a strange land while lying unconscious in a coma. The precise lines are once again taken together as a unit out of the poem's context, as seen in the other examples.

> Under the root of the tongue
> is where the battle is fought.
> The war is won
> In the mind's mazes[109]

Scholar Dimitra Fimi discusses Fisher's adaptation of these lines from 'Cad Goddeu' in her work on Celtic myth in children's literature, believing that Fisher successfully transforms ideas from the work of Graves and Matthews into an effective piece of fictional writing.[110] By contrast, Fimi writes that Lloyd Alexander's Prydain series, also children's fantasy fiction drawing from Graves, is 'often problematic, based on dubious sources, and built upon the foundations of an old-fashioned romanticized "Celticism" that harkens back to outdated perceptions of Celticity.'[111] The older texts are blamed for the perceived shortcomings of Alexander's fiction. Fimi states that like Fisher, Graves and Matthews, 'engage with the spiritual and the numinous, as opposed to the rational and the scientific', but unlike Fisher, their works both 'masquerade as an academic study'.[112] Graves and Matthews both write non-fiction and draw from academic styles of writing, but both books include poetry

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[108] Catherine Fisher, *Darkhenge*, Kindle edn. (London: Random House, 2005), p. 315.
[109] Fisher, *Darkhenge*, p. 305.
[110] Dimitra Fimi, *Celtic Myth in Contemporary Children's Fantasy: Idealisation, Identity and Ideology*, (New York: Springer, 2017), pp. 204-7.
[111] Fimi, *Celtic Myth*, p.116.
[112] Fimi, *Celtic Myth*, p.207.

composed by the author, a feature unusual in an academic text. The dividing line between different writing genres is not always clear and the creative way in which Fisher uses the four lines in her fiction is inextricably linked to the early scholarship surrounding 'Cad Goddeu' texts and Graves's and Matthews's interpretation.

To turn to another creative interpretation of the four lines, American composer John Williams, renowned for his prolific work on film scores, has credited the influence of the 'Battle of the Trees' on his music.[113] His work *The Five Sacred Trees* draws from the poem as does a horn section from *Concerto for Horn and Orchestra* titled 'Battle of the Trees' with the subheading 'Swift Oak...Stout Guardian of the Door'.[114] The lines of the subheading are taken from Graves's 'Câd Goddeu' in *The White Goddess*.[115] The composer, described by scholar Jeremy Orosz as 'a clever paraphraser who uses pre-existing material as a creative template'[116] turned to 'Cad Goddeu' again in the score for a 1999 *Star Wars* film. Employing an extreme form of paraphrase, he produced from the four lines under discussion the words sung by full chorus accompanied by the London Symphony Orchestra in the theme 'Duel of the Fates', played during a key lightsaber scene of *Star Wars, Episode 1, The Phantom Menace.*[117] In an interview Williams has explained that he wanted the choral piece to feel 'ritualistic, pagan, antique' and a 'mystical cryptic piece of business.'[118] The lines taken from the *White Goddess* were reduced by Williams to the concentrated form 'most dread/inside the head'. They were translated into Celtic (sic), Greek and Sanskrit at which point he chose the Sanskrit version for the most effective vowel sounds. Williams's aim, therefore, was in Venuti's terms, to completely 'foreignize' the words. They were translated in order to render them unintelligible to an English language audience. He then scrambled the Sanskrit words and syllables to create the sounds best suited to the piece musically, intending the result to

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[113] Stefancos, *John Williams Talks the Phantom Menace Part II*, [video]. 2007 < https://www.youtu.be/TpacQ6_V6ZM> [accessed 9 July 2021].

[114] John Williams, 'F Horn, Battle of the Trees' *Concerto for Horn and Orchestra*, (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), p. 4.
[115] See Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 47.
[116] Jeremy Orosz, 'John Williams: Paraphraser or Plagiarist?', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 34.4, (2015), 299-319 (p. 299).
[117] A lightsaber is a supernatural sword-like weapon employed by characters in the *Star Wars* series of films. Music and lyrics can be found in John Williams, *Music from Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace*, (Miami: Warner Bros, 1999), pp. 6-14.
[118] Stefancos, 1997.

be 'mysterious, old, dramatic and I hope effective.'[119] Where translation usually prioritises sense over sound, in the final process Williams translated for sound alone, the requirements of the music taking priority. The resulting 'translation' is therefore meaningless in terms of the sung words but is loaded with meaning transferred from contemporary conceptualisations of 'Cad Goddeu' absorbed by the composer. Ideas about ancient power are expressed in a symbolic language that can never be completely translated or understood. A parody video of Williams and the London Symphony Orchestra performing 'Duel of the Fates' is available online. It imposes subtitled words over the recording which fit the sounds made by the choir. To give a few of the lines:

> Corn on the cob,
>
> Cola, grilled kabob,
>
> Soda, catalogue.[120]

The parody takes the communication of ancient mystery in the music and flips it into a list of modern-day trivialities, the evocative choral piece becomes a collection of everyday items. Terms for food and drink replace the distorted lines of 'Cad Goddeu' in a 'mock-heroic pastiche', to use Haycock's term for the 'Cad Goddeu' tree-list.[121] The video parody can only work because the music is loaded with meaning expressed in words that have no literal meaning. In an ekphratic process, words from 'Cad Goddeu' were reconstructed into musical form by Williams. In the parody, a new palimpsest emerges as the comedic subtitles are superimposed on the video recording.

In this discussion the transmission of a few lines of text and attached meaning have been followed from 1804 to the twenty first century. It is impossible to know the exact intention of the medieval writer here, but ideas about language and a battle for understanding associated with the four lines have been transmitted in changing forms through these texts. Furthermore, signification from the entire poem and related texts is attached to the lines, so they are viewed as ancient and mysterious regardless of their intended literal meaning, even when transformed into musical form. The study of four lines has demonstrated that

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[119] Stafancos, ibid.

[120] Vernon Wilmar, *Star Wars- Duel of the Fates (Sing-Along)* [video]. 2013 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFDT2L5bPFI > [accessed 9 July 2021].

[121] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p.172.

valuable insights can be gained from the comparison of textual variants, and there is scope for future analysis of the poem and other works by using this methodology to closely track the route taken by fragments of text.

The Meaning of Obscurity and Difficulty

The poems of Taliesin and 'Cad Goddeu' specifically, are often described as obscure or difficult. Indeed, the Oxford Reference entry for the poem describes it as 'a short obscure poem of great antiquity'.[122] *The Oxford Dictionary of English* definition of 'difficult' is 'needing much effort or skill to accomplish, deal with or understand.'[123] By comparison the word 'obscure' has origins in the sense of darkness, gloom, something concealed and 'hard to make out or define'.[124] It can mean 'not discovered or known about', 'not clearly expressed or understood' but in usage as a verb 'to obscure' is to 'keep from being seen, conceal.'[125] Sarah Kay has discussed the 'horizon of expectation' that shapes the interpretation of a text, for example to literary historians the Middle Ages may be perceived as 'other' to the Renaissance and this division skews the understanding of texts from each period.[126] Given the 'otherness' of 'Cad Goddeu', a medieval poem written down in Middle Welsh and often seen to contain a hidden message from a lost Celtic past, high expectations of obscurity and difficulty are certain to further shape the reception of the poem.

The obvious source of obscurity lies in archaic unknown forms of vocabulary and grammar. Gaps remain, even in the scholarly translation of the poem by Marged Haycock, for example line 58 '*gobeith an godeu*' is translated as '? An unexpected [source of] hope.'[127] In examining the translation of early Irish material and another Taliesin poem, 'Preiddeu Annwn' ('The Spoils of Annwn'), Anna Strowe discusses the concept of 'radical cultural specificity', a point in translation where knowledge of a culture is inaccessible, and elements

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[122] Oxford Reference, *Cad Goddeu*, (2021), <https://www.oxfordreference.com> [accessed 21 September 2021].

[123] Angus Stevenson, ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of English,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), current online version 2015, <www.oxfordreference.com> [accessed 3 July 2021].

[124] Angus Stevenson, ibid.

[125] Angus Stevenson, ibid.

[126] Sarah Kay, *The Chansons de Geste in the Age of Romance: Political Fictions*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) pp. 1-4.

[127] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 177, l. 58.

of a text are therefore 'untranslatable in a very fundamental sense'.[128] In this view, the specific cultural context of 'Cad Goddeu' is irretrievably lost in the past and cannot be completely understood. However, all translation and on a wider level, all types of communication are imperfect, and it is impossible to draw a definitive line between the translatable and the untranslatable. All texts, including 'Cad Goddeu' are on a spectrum of translatability.

Obscurity in the poem is not all explained by translation difficulties. According to John T. Koch, the obscure style of Taliesin poetry is found largely in the legendary poems rather than the older heroic ones and is closely associated with the shapeshifting Taliesin persona.[129] Koch views obscurity as a 'dramatic necessity' for the legendary Taliesin, a means of suggesting the extent of his vast knowledge to audiences internal and external to the poems.[130] The poems confounded the early audience by deliberately pushing beyond 'the frontier of every sort of learning known in pre-Norman Wales.'[131] However, obscurity and difficulty are traits found in other poetry and can be a feature that distinguishes poetry from other formations of language.[132] In examining the relationship between narrative and poetry, Bruce Heiden points out that 'documentary report' is the model most often found in the study of narratology.[133] Poetry does not necessarily adhere to the rules of documentary report and for Heiden it may not need to, as the defining purpose of poetry is to 'inspire readers and audiences to contribute significance spontaneously.'[134] It achieves this through techniques other than the production of clear unambiguous meaning, for example sound repetition, striking figures of speech, allusions and the 'incantatory quality' of verse.[135]

It could it be argued therefore, that the some of the obscurity of 'Cad Goddeu' is not a negative quality but is true to its nature as poetry. Indeed, the complex traditions of Welsh

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[128] Anna Strowe, 'Radical Cultural Specificity in Translation', *University of Manchester Research,* [paper accepted for publication], <https://www.manchester.ac.uk/portal/en/researchers//anna-strowe> [accessed 3 September 2021].

[129] John T. Koch, 'Obscurity and the Figure of Taliesin', *Medievalia*, 19 (1993), 41-73 (p. 41).

[130] Koch, *Obscurity*, pp. 49-50.

[131] Koch, *Obscurity*, p. 64.

[132] Difficulty is not only to be found in some modern poetry. The poet Mallarmé is an example discussed below. Other early examples are the English metaphysical poets such as John Donne and sixteenth-century French poet Maurice Scève.

[133] Bruce Heiden, 'Narrative in Poetry: A Problem of Narrative Thinking', *Narrative,* 22.2, (2014) 269-283 (p. 271).

[134] Heiden, 'Narrative in Poetry', p. 276.

[135] Heiden, ibid.

verse and metre move the work away from clarity of syntax and deeper into the poetic domain. Internally, the poem is also engaged with ideas about the creative power of words. In the supernatural elements of 'Cad Goddeu' the summoning power of words is both effected by the poem itself and within the poem. Catherine McKenna has suggested that the word *cyfarwydd* often translated as 'storyteller' and attached to magician Gwydion, in the story known as 'Math' of *Pedeir Cainc y Mabinogi* (The Four Branches of the Mabinogi), encompasses a sense of 'magical power to transform, whether for good or ill; and with divine creative power.'[136] She notes that Gwydion in 'Cad Goddeu' conjures the trees by means of language and therefore magic and poetry share an ability to create through language.[137] Gwydion is casting a 'spell', the English word 'spell' being associated with magic and with the production of words. Where the spelling of a word is straightforward, the casting of a spell is an obscure process. Among a long list in the Arthurian *Mabinogion* tale *Culhwch ac Olwen*, is the name Gwydden Astrus, one of two whelps of the she-wolf Rhymhi.[138] In the tale God mysteriously transforms the wolf and her two cubs back to their true form when Arthur and his band surround them.[139] Although little is known of Gwydden Astrus, scholar Sarah Higley connects the name to the poet-magician Gwydion of 'Cad Goddeu' who takes on a wolf form as punishment in the tale 'Math' of the *Mabinogi.*[140] The word *astrus* translated as 'abstruse', 'perplexing', 'obscure', 'complicated' or 'intricate' can be applied to Gwydion, to the Taliesin persona of 'Cad Goddeu' and to the poem itself.[141] Gwydion uses words in 'Cad Goddeu' to perform a transformation of trees and these words, unwritten in the poem, are *astrus* to readers, part of his unknowable power which mirrors that of Taliesin, the poem's assumed narrator and creator. The role of obscurity in poetry can perhaps be seen in the same light, a powerful *astrus* tool used to enhance the 'magical' experience of the poem, not an omission or a defect.

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[136] Catherine McKenna, 'Cyfarwydd as Poet', p. 19.

[137] McKenna, 'Cyfarwydd as Poet', p. 18.

[138] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 187.

[139] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 205.

[140] Sarah Higley, *Between Languages: The Uncooperative Text in Early Welsh and Old English Nature Poetry*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993, p. 191.

[141] The Welsh dictionary *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* gives for *astrus* 'abstruse, obscure, complicated, intricate, inconceivable; difficult (of person), intractable, perverse, surly, peevish, rough, severe; cunning, guileful, evil.' The fourteenth century reference to Gwydden Astrus in the Mabinogion is listed in the dictionary as one of the early written examples of the word.
University of Wales Centre for Advanced and Celtic Studies, *GPC Online* (2014) < https://welsh-dictionary.ac.uk/gpc/gpc.html > [Accessed 11 July 2021].

The Anglocentric view of early Welsh poetry as difficult in comparison to early English poetry is examined by Sarah Higley in *Between Languages: The Uncooperative Text in Early Welsh and Old English Nature* Poetry. She proposes that the active, clear, purposeful 'historical' poetry of Taliesin has been favoured by scholars such as Ifor Williams over the 'mythological' Taliesin poems like 'Cad Goddeu'.[142] She writes of a dynamic in some Welsh poetry, like 'Cad Goddeu' , that uses 'contrast, manipulated by a juxtaposition instead of a grammatical explanation.'[143] Although reasons for difficulty in medieval Welsh poetry may arise from inadequate translation due to archaic language, loss of the bardic context or errors in textual transmission, intentional difficulty can occur, where the poem deliberately fails to 'disclose all its message in verbally explicit terms.'[144] She makes the point that the 'kaleidoscopic powers of Taliesin' were highly regarded by the medieval redactors who used time and skill to write them down, a regard not always shared by modern critical scholars.[145] There are long-running divisions in philosophy between analytical approaches and approaches that embrace contradiction. In the same way for Higley, an academic tradition based on English clarity struggles to connect to poetic texts that are 'incomplete, palimpsistic and ambiguous'.[146] She exhorts us not to aim to recover the poem's lost medieval audience, but rather to focus on 'The Third Thing', the interests and perspectives each reader brings to a text.[147] This dissertation takes a similar perspective.

Building to a certain extent from the work of Sarah Higley, David Callander's *Dissonant Neighbours: Narrative Progress in Early Welsh and English Poetry* compares the narrative style of the two genres, using the poem 'Cad Goddeu' as part of his analysis. Taking up the idea that medieval Welsh poetry is viewed as 'difficult' and lacking in the narrative progress often seen in early English poetry he looks for an explanation in the use of narrative techniques, comparing the English to the Welsh.[148] For David Callander the narrative found in early Welsh poetry may not be the narrative that is expected or the narrative that is positioned in the poem at an expected place. Relevant to 'Cad Goddeu' is the 'stylistic device

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[142] Higley, *Between Languages*, p. 54.
[143] Higley, *Between Languages*, p. 144.
[144] Higley, *Between Languages*, p. 188.
[145] Higley, *Between Languages*, p. 203.
[146] Higley uses the spelling 'palimpsistic'. Higley, *Between Languages*, p. 10.
[147] Higley, *Between Languages*, p. 253.
[148] David Callander, *Dissonant Neighbours: Narrative Progress in Early Welsh and English Poetry*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2019), p. 14.

of the list', which acts as a narrative tool in some early Welsh literature.[149] Therefore, the tree-list in the poem may be seen as an alternative method of moving the action forward. Instead of relaying action of the battle in linear time, each tree is listed and described in isolation, the poem moves forward by moving on to the next tree in the list. Furthermore, the ever-present poet narrator, an alternative narrative feature used throughout *Llyfr Taliesin*, demonstrates in this poem 'a tour de force of the Taliesinic persona, a "different" telling of a battle.'[150] Another method utilised in the Welsh texts, according to Callander, is 'radiality', where repetition and 'encirclement of the same events' are used in place of narrative progression.[151] In 'Cad Goddeu' when the speaker of the poem later repeats the poem's opening theme of changing form, the word '*kylchyneis*' (circulated) is used explicitly for his actions, a word linking his persona to the structure of the poem.[152] To back up his discussion, David Callander uses scientific methodology to produce analytical tables of statistics comparing lines of 'narrative sequence' in 'Cad Goddeu' and other early Welsh and English poems. 'Narrative sequence' is narrative that relates a sequence of linked events in temporal order.[153] The percentage of 'narrative sequence' in 'Cad Goddeu' is 11.2%, lower than the Welsh poem average of 43.6% and far lower than the early English poem 'Brunanburh' at 69.9%.[154] David Callander's conclusion is that Welsh poems do not lack narrative, 'but this narrative is less obvious to modern readers.'[155] This is one facet in an understanding of why 'Cad Goddeu' may appear obscure in cultures which take English poetic traditions as the norm.

There is textual evidence that the concept of difficulty in early Welsh poetry has a long history. In the *Mabinogion* tale *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, (Rhonabwy's Dream), poets perform at Arthur's court and 'no one understood the poem...except that it was in praise of Arthur.'[156] In Patrick K. Ford's the 'Tale of Taliesin', a reconstruction from manuscript versions of the sixteenth century and later of the traditional story, the expertise of the bard

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[149] Callander, ibid.
[150] Callander, *Dissonant Neighbours*, p. 58.
[151] The term 'radiality' was first used for Welsh poetry by poet and translator Joseph Clancy. See Callander, *Dissonant Neighbours*, p. 20.
[152] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 186, l. 235.
[153] Callander, *Dissonant Neighbours*, pp. 26-7.
[154] Callander, *Dissonant Neighbours*, p. 59.
[155] Callander, *Dissonant Neighbours*, p. 123.
[156] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 225.

Taliesin at the court of Maelgwn Gwynedd is highlighted and the 24 court poets are denigrated. By using the words 'blerum blerum' Taliesin magically restricts the poets from uttering anything but these words, another example of a spell cast by speech. By contrast Taliesin's song, in keeping with the use of the word *disgyfrith* (unfettered) in 'Cad Goddeu', can free Elphin from fetters and summon up a wind. Taliesin asks:

> Why does the tongue articulate
>
> More than any one organ?
>
> But also
>
> Minstrels of malfeasance make
>
> Impious lyrics; in their praise
>
> They sing vain and evanescent song,
>
> Ever exercising lies.[157]

The early poetry of Taliesin was a tradition inherited by the *Gogynfeirdd*, the not so early Welsh poets of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Of this group, *Beirdd y Tywysogion*, the court poets of the Welsh princes, undertook nine years of professional training. In the production of eulogies and elegies to their patrons they deliberately imitated the *Cynfeirdd*, the old poets such as Taliesin, for example by using archaic vocabulary in their work.[158] Turning to the older poetry, they followed 'a conscious design to maintain their craft as an esoteric art.'[159] The result was often a disconcerting 'obscure' style, not caused by confused thought but by the intentional use of artifices such as unusual word order and juxtaposition.[160] Current scholarship dates the composition of 'Cad Goddeu' to this later period, and the style of the poem may be understood in this context.[161] The concept of poetry tightly linked to the past and with meanings only clear to those with special knowledge is close to some of the interpretations of Taliesin's poetry today.

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[157] Ford, *The Mabinogi*, p.168.

[158] John J. Parry, 'The Court Poets of the Welsh Princes', *PMLA*, 67.4, (1952), 511-20 (p. 513).
[159] John Lloyd-Jones, 'The Court Poets of the Welsh Princes', *Proceedings of the British Acadamy*, 34 (1948), 167-197 (p. 171).
[160] Lloyd-Jones, 'Court Poets', pp. 172-3.
[161] As mentioned above, Haycock suggests that 'Cad Goddeu' was possibly composed by Prydydd y Moch also known as Llywarch ap Llywelyn (fl. 1173-1220). Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 30.

However, the difficulty in 'Cad Goddeu' lies beyond a discussion of deliberate obscurity in court poetry. Francesco Benozzo in *Landscape Perception in Early Celtic Literature* observes that this poem of 'different narrative registers' is unusual in its exclusive focus on the physical landscape.[162] To Benozzo words can be monuments to an intricate layered landscape and can be 'an aware and articulate expression of a complex vision of things.'[163] The poem will be difficult because it is concerned with difficult things. It will be difficult because it is positioned 'in the fascinating border country where psychology and geography meet and interact.'[164] Poetry in Benozzo's view can be considered as a 'valuable instrument to understand a cognitive process, a fundamental connection, the coming to the surface of an ontological kernel.'[165] If this is so, it is to be expected that some poetry is obscure and difficult.

To illuminate difficulty as an inherent characteristic of some poetry, the following discussion compares 'Cad Goddeu' to the perception of difficulty in the work of French symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898). In his book *Mallarmé and the Art of Being Difficult*, scholar Malcolm Bowie approaches Mallarmé's symbolist poetry in ways that can be usefully applied to the Welsh poem. For example, Mallarmé's work is said to 'leave an abiding residue of unsolved questions.'[166] In the French poems 'uncertainty and speculation' are found in place of 'coherence and intelligibility'.[167] As in 'Cad Goddeu' there are gaps, elisions, discrepancies and unannounced shifts.[168] It has been said of early Welsh verse that 'lines in which sense is sacrificed to sound are by no means uncommon, even in the works of their greatest poets.'[169] A possible example in 'Cad Goddeu' is *godeu* in line 58, a repetition of the same sound in line 57 and 'very uncertain' in meaning.[170] Like the Welsh verse, which is a precursor of the complex c*ynghanedd* form, the French writer employs constraining

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[162] Francesco Benozzo, *Landscape Perception in Early Celtic Literature*, (Aberystwyth: Celtic Studies Publications, 2004), p. 121.

[163] Benozzo, *Landscape Perception*, p. viii.

[164] Benozzo, *Landscape Perceptions*, p. 34.

[165] Benozzo, *Landscape Perception*, p. 52.

[166] Malcolm Bowie, *Mallarmé and the Art of Being Difficult*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. ix.

[167] Bowie, *Mallarmé*, p. x.

[168] Bowie, *Mallarmé*, p.5. The meaningful use of gaps is also seen in the work of playwright Harold Pinter (1930-2008). Known as 'Pinteresque pauses', they are given as an example in the entry for 'subtext' by Chris Baldick, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), published online 2015 <https://oxfordreference-com> [accessed 2 July 2021].

[169] Robert Gurney, *Bardic Heritage*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969), p. ix.

[170] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 200.

forms of line structure and rhyme, so that arresting intricate sounds taking priority over meaning.[171] The Taliesin persona speaking in 'Cad Goddeu' journeys not as an observer but by existing as different forms: 'I was a path, I was an eagle'.[172] This is mirrored by the unresolved questions of identity in Mallarmé's untitled swan poem, where the swan is both separate from the surroundings and continuous with them.[173] Given the many interpretations of the Taliesin poem, it is like Mallarmé's swan poem 'richly productive as a sense-making system.'[174] Furthermore, politician, critic and dramatist Saunders Lewis saw a connection between medieval Welsh poetic traditions favouring sound over sense and the symbolist ideal of *la poésie pure* (pure poetry) associated with Mallarmé.[175]

 It is impossible to know exactly how medieval poetry was received in the past and it was produced in a very different environment to that of French symbolist poetry. However, to a modern audience difficulty in both the swan poem and in 'Cad Goddeu' adds to the intensity of meaning. In words attributed to French psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan 'the less you understand the better you listen'.[176] The poetry in 'Cad Goddeu' does not easily accommodate the search for clarity and disambiguation favoured by Anglo-American academic traditions. Difficulty in poetry is perhaps better suited to the lens of continental theorists such as Lacan and French philosopher Derrida, who do not attempt to break down ambiguity and contradiction in the analysis of meaning, rejecting the use of reductive positivistic methodology influenced by Western science.[177]

3.Further Interpretations and Influence

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[171] Bowie, *Mallarmé*, p. 10.

[172] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 174, l. 13.

[173] Bowie, *Mallarmé*, p. 11.

[174] Bowie, *Mallarmé*, p. 12.

[175] Pennar Davies, 'His Criticism' in *Presenting Saunders Lewis*, ed. by Alun R. Jones and Gwyn Thomas, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press,1983), pp. 93-105 (p .97).

[176] Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, (Abingdon, Routledge, 2006), p. 90.

[177] Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) shunned concepts of absolute universal truth, developing theories based around 'deconstruction' and the term '*différance'*, an amalgamation of French words for difference and deferral. For Derrida a meaning is dependent on its difference from other meanings and is thus endlessly deferred from one meaning to another. See Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978). This was first published in French in 1967.

The Textual Origins of The White Goddess

This part of the dissertation looks further into the part played by Robert Graves in perceptions of 'Cad Goddeu' as a link to the past. Some recent examples of the poem's influence are discussed and to bring the dissertation to a close, the possibilities for new readings of the work are explored. Although poet and writer Graves was born in Wimbledon, then part of Surrey, and was 'not a Welshman, except an honorary one', the foundations of the Celtic elements in *The White Goddess* partly lie in his family background.[178] In 1912 his father, Alfred Perceval Graves included a poem by Robert with the title 'Will-o-the-wisp' as an example of an *Englyn* 'wrought after the Welsh pattern' for the benefit of 'English readers' in Alfred's book of translated poems *Welsh Poetry Old and New*.[179] In the foreword to the same book, A.G. Asaph wrote of Robert Graves's father:

> He has for the most part stuck closely to his originals, but it is not difficult, I think, to trace the hand of the poet, despite the shackles of the translator.[180]

Favouring fluidity of thought over literal interpretation, the hand of the poet is dominant in Robert Graves's versions of 'Cad Goddeu', themselves a type of translation. His family background paved the way to the role of 'Cad Goddeu' in *The White Goddess*, his father being the London Representative of the Council of the Celtic Association, and member of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, with the bardic name Canwr Cilarné, (the Singer of Killarney).[181] Furthermore, the poem at the front of the same volume by Alfred Perceval Graves dedicated to John Lloyd Williams, Director of Music at Bangor University College to celebrate their friendship and the union of Welsh music and poetry, contains lines that foreshadow the future work of Robert Graves:

> Searcher out in their last lone lairs
> Of Gwalia's golden olden airs,
> Searcher out of Life's mysteries
> Beside her moon-swayed summer seas,[182]

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[178] The quotation is from Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 29.
[179] Alfred Perceval Graves, *Welsh Poetry Old and New in English Verse*, (London: Longmans, Green, 1912), p. 139.

[180] Graves, *Welsh Poetry*, p. vii.
[181] Graves, *Welsh Poetry*, p. v.
[182] *Gwalia* is a Latin name for Wales.

Additionally, in ways Alfred Perceval Graves could not have predicted, the following lines, also directed to his friend, suggest the future influence of *The White Goddess* in translating ideas relating to the Welsh 'Cad Goddeu' into English culture*:*

> Because you have helped their sire to mould
>
> Into Sassenach mintage Her Bardic gold;[183]

The White Goddess also has close connections to earlier Celtic revivals through Robert Graves's grandfather Charles Graves, the Bishop of Limerick. Charles Graves was an Irish antiquarian and completed several papers on the understanding of Ogham inscriptions.[184] Alfred Perceval Graves was himself an important figure in the Irish literary revival, and a friend of W.B.Yeats and although Robert Graves rejected his father's Celtic ideals, he made use of Alfred's collection of books, passed down from Charles, when writing *The White Goddess*.[185] Welsh poetry and 'Celtic' texts of the antiquarian and Romantic eras were well known to Robert Graves when he chose 'Cad Goddeu' as the linchpin of his goddess theory.

'Cad Goddeu', a Step Back in Time

In *The White Goddess* Graves suggests that the origins of the medieval poem 'Cad Goddeu' lie in the Bronze Age.[186] Over a shorter span of time, the origins of his book lie in the antiquarian and Romantic eras. Traces of the 'Cad Goddeu' tree alphabet theory are found in Iolo Morganwg's unevidenced ideas about the *Coelbren* of the Bards, an early form of Welsh writing on wood.[187] Indeed, Graves acknowledges the influence on his work of Iolo's follower Edward Davies who wrote about 'Cad Goddeu' and a symbolic tree device in 1804.[188] In the commentary accompanying his translation of the poem in 1858, Nash opposes Davies's beliefs and dismisses any idea that Welsh bards once used a tree alphabet.[189] Despite this, Graves describes Nash's translation as a 'medley' to be

Graves, *Welsh Poetry*, p. 6.

[183] Graves, *Welsh Poetry*, ibid.

[184] For more information see the list of academic papers by Charles Graves at, St. Andrews University, *MacTutor: Charles Graves*, (2016) < https://mathshistory.st-andrews.ac.uk/Extras/Graves_papers/ > [accessed 11 July 2021].

[185] Grevel Lindop, 'Editorial Introduction' in *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*, Robert Graves, (London: Faber & Faber, 1999) pp. ix-xl, (p. xviii).

[186] Graves suggests that the poem depicts the overthrow of a surviving Bronze Age priesthood by united groups of Brythonic invaders and agricultural tribes. Graves, *The White Goddess*, p.56.

[187] For details of Iolo Morganwg's Welsh alphabet theory see Iolo Morganwg, *The Barddas of Iolo Morganwg, Volume 1*, ed. by J. Williams ab Ithel (Llandovery: The Welsh Mss. Society, 1862), pp. 56-7.

[188] Graves, *The White Goddess*, p.38. For Edward Davies's comments see Davies, *Celtic Researches*, p. 263.

[189] Nash, *Taliesin*, p. 235.

deconstructed and deciphered, proposing that the trees represent a system comparable to the Irish Ogam alphabet.[190]

In the academic world *The White Goddess* has received negative criticism. In 1991 scholar Ronald Hutton commenting on *Llyfr Taliesin* poems, labels Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg), Owen Pughe and Edward Davies as 'pseudo-Celtists' who 'mistranslated' the works, Williams and Pughe even composing their own versions.[191] For Hutton, the action of these men caused 'exceptional damage' as their work was reused by Lady Charlotte Guest in *The Mabinogion*, then taken up from there by Graves in *The White Goddess*, a book in Hutton's view based on forgery.[192] More recently Dimitra Fimi has supported Hutton's stance on *The White Goddess*, writing that Graves reshaped forged medieval documents in the book.[193] In *The White Goddess*, however, Graves notes on this exact point that Iolo Morganwg was 'a celebrated eighteenth-century "improver" of Welsh documents' and Graves's book is not based solely on the writing of Lady Charlotte Guest, his treatment of 'Cad Goddeu' is mostly worked from the translation by Nash, a critic of the 'pseudo-Celticists'.[194] Graves's interpretation of the tree list as a symbolic alphabet is rejected by Haycock on the grounds that many of the tree names begin with the same letter.[195] While accepting criticism of Graves's scholarship, Mary-Ann Constantine identifies the value of narrative that is close to poetry in use of metaphor, finding Graves's style reminiscent of medieval scholarship.[196] Indeed, Graves acknowledges somewhat the hybrid nature of his book:

> But it is only fair to warn readers that this remains a very difficult book, as well as a very queer one, to be avoided by anyone with a distracted, tired or rigidly scientific mind.[197]

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[190] Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 43.
[191] Ronald Hutton, *The Pagan Religions of the British Isles*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 320.
[192] Hutton, *The Pagan Religions*, ibid.
[193] Fimi, *Celtic Myth*, p. 115.
[194] Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 27.
[195] Haycock, *The Significance*, p. 306.
[196] Mary-Ann Constantine, 'The Battle for the Battle of the Trees' in Ian Firla and Grevel Lindop eds. *Graves and the Goddess: Essays on Robert Graves's the White Goddess*, (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2003), pp. 40-51, (p. 48).
[197] Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 9.

Scholar Fiona Stafford suggests that from the perspective of eighteenth-century writers, the early Welsh bard is viewed as close to sources of creativity through access to sublime natural power unhindered by civilisation.[198] Two centuries later, Graves perhaps presented himself in a similar way, a poet who could revisit the ancient sources of creativity and reveal them to the modern world. For Graves the modern world is a 'civilization in which the prime emblems of poetry are dishonoured.'[199]

The terms 'prolepsis' and 'analepsis' outlined in the introduction, are used very specifically by Graves to denote leaps in time personally experienced by an individual. Through prolepsis, the foreknowledge required for invention and originality is gained. Through analepsis, lost events of the past are recovered and relived.[200] Graves is unusual in claiming to use analepsis as a technical method to carry out research for his books. His use of analeptic thought is described by Grevel Lindop as a type of 'historical clairvoyance'.[201] This mode of thinking comes close to skills employed in storytelling to induce an audience into the story world. For example, storyteller Michael Harvey has written about the use of 'summoning' to bring the audience into a zone where myth and reality are co-present. In this state changes of perception and awareness occur while time is suspended.[202] In the same way, 'Cad Goddeu' functions in several texts and art to link the reader to a past imbued with heightened meaning.

The terms 'analeptic' and 'proleptic' are also used in narrative theory to describe a disturbance of chronological order. For structural theorist Gérard Genette, they are found in the temporal structure of narrative, prolepsis evoking an event that takes place later, analepsis evoking an event that took place earlier.[203] Within the narrative of 'Cad Goddeu' in Genette's terms, there is analepsis, for example Taliesin's creation is introduced in the middle of the work. Furthermore, the temporal structure of the 'thing told', (the signified) is

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[198] Stafford, *The Last of the Race*, pp. 92-3.

[199] Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 14.

[200] Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 343.

[201] Lindop, 'Editorial Introduction', p. xxii.

[202] Michael Harvey has used 'Cad Goddeu' in his storytelling work. Michael Harvey, 'Naming Summoning, Journeying, and Implicating', *Storytelling, Self, Society*, 14.1 (2018), 68-82 (p. 72).

[203] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 40.

very complex in the poem.[204] For example, long stretches of time are covered in a few words:

>   I was a string in a harp
>
>   under enchantment for nine years[205]

Subsequently time slows down to describe the precise actions of the trees in battle. The changing pace of time in this Taliesin poem is one of the features that enhances its 'uncanniness' in comparison to the usual linear view of temporal progress.[206]

Juliette Wood, writes that Robert Graves articulates 'a continuity between past and present; a past where the Goddess was worshipped in a unified and harmonious society...reach[ing] out to inform the present.'[207] Graves's book post-dates the antiquarians and the Romantic era but reaches back to their texts, diverging from the route of subsequent scholarship. Therefore, 'Cad Goddeu' becomes a bridge from the eighteenth and nineteenth century to the latter part of the twentieth century and beyond. In a sense Graves represents the last bard, his time travelling analeptic self, heroically carrying an old form of poetic knowledge into twentieth century Europe. Graves views himself like Taliesin as the omniscient all-knowing author and 'Cad Goddeu' as the key to unlock his totalising goddess theory which encompasses all times and cultures. The poem, however, retained its identity and has resurfaced in many subsequent texts as a bridge to the past, often without reference to goddess theory which is at the heart of *The White Goddess*.

'Cad Goddeu' in Twenty-first Century Culture

Although the origins of the Peniarth 2 poem are unclear, the persistent transmission of the poem into the twenty-first century and onto the internet leaves a trail of evidence. The author of the website *Fabled Harmony* offers tarot readings, shamanic journeys and shamanic healing. Five lines from 'Cad Goddeu' are quoted on *Fabled Harmony* on a page

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[204] Genette, *Narrative*, p. 32.

[205] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 175, ll. 19-20.

[206] Sigmund Freud's *Das Unheimliche* (The Uncanny), first published in 1919, explores human psychological unease when faced with something ambiguously familiar and unfamiliar such as a double. Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. by David McLintock, (London: Penguin, 2003).

[207] Juliette Wood, 'The Concept of the Goddess', in *The Concept of the Goddess*, ed. by Sandra Billington and Miranda Green, (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 8-25 (p. 12).

titled 'Celtic Shamanism- Ancient Roots and Modern Practices.'[208] The book recommended on the page for further reading is *Taliesin: The Last Celtic Shaman* by John Matthews, published in 1992. Matthews met Graves in 1968 to discuss the nature of Taliesin and acknowledges his influence on the book.[209] In addition to 'Cad Goddeu', the early Irish poem, 'The Song of Amergin', which also has a shape-shifting narrator, is quoted and discussed on the website, by Matthews, and in *The White Goddess*.[210] Connections run through the three texts but meaning has shifted in Matthews writing and on the *Fabled Harmony* website towards a shamanic interpretation. The website's author suggests that 'if we interpret these works literally, it clearly is describing a shamanic practice.'[211] She sees in this poetry 'references to being something other than human' which she relates to the shaman's journey to other realms of existence.[212] The theme of being 'other than human' is developed further in a later section of the dissertation.

To take another example from recent contemporary culture, the complex intertextuality to be found surrounding 'Cad Goddeu' is demonstrated by a review of the 2019 film *Mr. Jones*.[213] In an interview, the film's director observes that by reciting lines from 'the same old ridiculous poem about The Battle of the Trees', the film's main character shows he is 'awkward, nerdy and pushy'.[214] The poem's role here is as a Welsh cliché. However, in an online review of the film *Mr. Jones: Trees, Journalists and Gareth Jones*, Jana Monji suggests that lines from 'enigmatic Welsh poem' 'Cad Goddeu' in the film link the revelation of a name in the poem to the revelation of the true nature of Stalinism in the film.[215] The poem

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[208] Fabled Harmony, *Celtic Shamanism- Ancient Roots and Modern Practice*, (2020) <https://fabledharmony.com/blog/celtic-shamanism-ancient-roots-and-modern-practices> [accessed 19 July 2021]. The lines quoted appear to be slightly adapted from Nash's translation. To compare, see lines 1,3,5,6,7 and 24 in Graves, *The White Goddess*, pp. 30-1.

[209] Matthews, *The Last Celtic Shaman*, p. ix.

[210] Robert Graves writes his own version of 'The Song of Amergin'. Graves, *The White* Goddess, p.13. John Matthews adapts his version from the Irish original and the translation of R.A.S. Macalister. Matthews, *Taliesin*, p.55. The Fabled Harmony website quotes Tom Cowan, *Fire in the Head: Shamanism and the Celtic Spirit*, (London: HarperCollins, 1993).

[211] Fabled Harmony, 2020.

[212] Fabled Harmony, ibid.

[213] The film centred on Welsh journalist Gareth Jones and his work in Eastern Europe during the 1930s was directed by Agnieszka Holland.

[214] Ola Salwa, *Agnieszka Holland, Director of Mr. Jones,* 2019, < https://cineuropa.org/en/interview/368276/> [accessed 16 July 2021].

[215] Jana J. Monji, *'Mr Jones': Trees, Journalists and Gareth Jones*, (2020) <https://www.ageofthe geek.org/2020/08/15/mr-jones-trees-journalists-and-gareth-jones-***/> [accessed 16 July 2021]. As discussed earlier, the name guessing element is not explicit in the *Llyfr Taliesin* poem but emerges from other texts.

has now become a symbol for the revelation of a hidden truth. The review continues by quoting an extract from 'Cad Goddeu', said by Monji to reflect the character and drive of Gareth Jones, with the lines used in the film shown in bold text.[216] The bold text is a palimpsestic layer, marking out the film's lines from their source. The extract is presumably from Nash's translation reproduced in *The White Goddess* as line 190 is numbered, a detail occurring in Graves's book but not Nash's 1858 translation.[217] From the Taliesin lines spoken by the film's Gareth Jones character, Monji creates meaning in the review by bringing in more 'Cad Goddeu' material.

Furthermore, a connection is made to the Ents of the film *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* by suggesting a similarity to the Welsh poem and by posting a link to a clip from the film.[218] The Ents, first appearing in J.R.R. Tolkien's book *The Two Towers* (1954) on which the film is based, are creatures with characteristics of both humans and trees who rise and march to assist in a desperate battle.[219] They are often compared to the battling trees of 'Cad Goddeu', and this comparison creates intertextuality and alters reception of both texts, regardless of any direct influence from the Welsh poem on Tolkien's writing.[220] As professor of Anglo-Saxon at Pembroke College, Oxford and later Professor of English Language and Literature at Merton College Oxford, Tolkien had expertise in the early literature of the British Isles and his fiction combines many traditional strands. However, recent scholarship has identified Tolkien's one-time interest in Celtic texts and approximately a third of Tolkien's library held in Oxford at the English Faculty and the Bodleian Library can be categorised in the field of Celtic Studies, including Lady Charlotte Guest's *Mabinogion*.[221] During a period when the writer 'was deeply engaged with Celtic languages and mythologies', Tolkien used a Breton verse form called a lay in his composition *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun*.[222] The piece, first published in *The Welsh Review* in 1945, is thought to

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[216] The lines in bold are '(I know) the light whose name is Splendour, And the number of the ruling lights.' Monji, 2020.

[217] To compare the two texts, see Graves, *The White Goddess*, pp. 34-5, ll. 186-99.
Nash, *The Bards and Druids*, p. 233.

[218] The scene where the tree-like Ents rise to attack the dark forces of Isengard is found in the film *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, 2002, directed by Peter Jackson.

[219] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Two Towers: Being the Second Part of the Lord of the Rings*, (London: Harper Collins, 2012).

[220] The similarity between the two texts is noted by Haycock. Haycock, *Taliesin a Brwydr*, p. 16.

[221] Dimitra Fimi, Tolkien's "Celtic" Type of Legends', *Tolkien Studies*, 4 (2007) 51-71 (p. 51).

[222] Verlyn Flieger, 'Introduction', in J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun*, Kindle edn. (London: Harper Collins, 2016), paragraph 3.

have been influenced by La Villemarqué's *Barzaz-Breiz: Chants Populaires de la Bretagne*, (Ballads of Brittany: Popular Songs of Brittany), Tolkien having purchased both volumes of the work in 1922.[223] There are lines in Tolkien's Celtic lay, the tragic story of a man beguiled by a supernatural woman in the forest of Brocéliande, which are suggestive of both 'Cad Goddeu' and the Ents of *The Two Towers.*

> In Brittany beyond the seas
>
> the wind blows ever through the trees;
>
> in Brittany the forest pale
>
> marches slow over hill and dale.[224]

By using an internet link to connect 'Cad Goddeu' and the Ents of *The Two Towers*, Monji reinforces the association between the two texts, however the theme of tree as human is pervasive in literature and it is difficult to disentangle these threads.

Monji's review continues to demonstrate the intricate layering of one text over another. At the end of the article the whole of Nash's translation of 'Cad Goddeu' is inserted, presumably taken again from Graves as his line numbering is followed.[225] The poem in the review is credited via a web hyperlink which is no longer available, a reminder that levels of intertextuality are complicated by internet use and that transmission of text from one web page to another is ubiquitous and often impermanent. To sum up, the review is steeped in text from 'Cad Goddeu', from the word 'trees' in the title to the inclusion of the entire poem at the end of the piece. In Genette's terms much of this is 'quotational intertext' rather than less explicit textual allusion used in other forms of writing such as novels.[226] The poem itself becomes a sign, a synecdoche of something ancient, enigmatic and ambiguous and is drawn into the review for this purpose.

The Trees, Gender and Identity

In 2019 artist Jessica Van Deursen combined artworks, soundscapes, lighting and smoke effects in *Cad Goddeu*, a piece performed in the Dutch town of Dordrecht. The audience experienced a dreamlike environment inspired by the animated trees of the poem in 'a

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[223] Flieger, 'Introduction', paragraphs 3-5.
[224] J.R.R.Tolkien, *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun*, Kindle edn. (London: Harper Collins, 2016), pp. 11-12, ll. 243-46.
[225] See Graves, *The White Goddess*, pp. 20-36.
[226] Genette, *Palimpsests*, p. 8.

modern version of nature reclaiming its position'.[227] The theme of nature as an active force, which Van Deursen identifies in 'Cad Goddeu', is discussed in this section alongside the poem's presentation of gender and human identity. The forest and the wood in literature are often 'othered' places outside civilisation. Driven mad by the loss of his lord in battle, Myrddin Wyllt (Wild Myrddin) of early Welsh literature retreats to the Celyddon forest.[228] The Breton Forest of Brocéliande is a place of enchantment and legend, and it is to the Forest of Morrois that Tristan and Yseult flee in a richly symbolic medieval story.[229] Within the biodiversity of a wood an unknown number of processes interact in one landscape and in 'Cad Goddeu' Benozzo finds in the trees a dynamic landscape, a 'multiplicity ...at the same time a unitary cohesion.'[230] Gwydion conjures 34 trees and plants in 'Cad Goddeu' and this level of detail in naming the species moves the focus away from human to tree.[231] A similar multiplicity of species is listed in Latin writer Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where the music of Orpheus summons the trees.

> Shade came in plenty. Every tree was there:
>
> Dodona's holy durmast, poplars once
>
> The sun's sad daughters, oaks with lofty leaves,
>
> Soft limes, the virgin laurel and the beech;[232]

Although there is no evidence of a direct connection between Ovid's retellings of Graeco-Roman stories and the composition of the Welsh poem, they are thematically linked by changes of form and by concerns of human and non-human identity.[233]

From another viewpoint, trees are resources exploited by humans for firewood and timber. From the perspective of 2017 book *Energy Humanities*, it is important to place ecological concerns at the forefront and to 'sort texts according to the energy sources that made them

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[227] Jessica Van Deursen, *Cad Goddeu Pictura*, (2019), <https://jessicavandeursen.com/?page=Artwork-Alter-Moderns> [accessed 16 August 2021].

[228] For a discussion of Myrddin Wyllt and associations with Merlin and Taliesin see Bromwich, *Trioedd*, pp. 458-461.

[229] Béroul, *The Romance of Tristan: The Tale of Tristan's Madness*, trans. by Alan S. Fedrick, (London: Penguin, 1970).

[230] Benozzo, *Landscape Perception*, p. 115.

[231] For a full list and discussion of the different species of tree and plant in 'Cad Goddeu' see Haycock, 'The Significance', pp. 321-25.

[232] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by A.D. Melville, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 227.

[233] Haycock states that there is no indication of 'direct borrowing' from *Metamorphoses* in 'Cad Goddeu'. Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 171.

possible.'[234] Burning wood, the primary energy source of medieval society is physically embodied by Taliesin in 'Cad Goddeu' as he forms 'a tinder-spark in a fire' and 'a tree in a conflagration'[235] In the poem, Gwydion summons the trees to aid as energy sources in battle, an echo of human exploitation of trees for energy and construction. The emphasis on the attributes of the tree and plant species in battle mirrors human focus on the attributes of non-human resources that are beneficial to perceived human need. The role of the trees and shrubs in the battle, however, is an active one. Arguing that environmental discourse should be integral to literary studies, scholar Lawrence Buell writes of texts that depict the non-human environment 'as an active presence'.[236] In 'Cad Goddeu', there is clarity in the active presence of the trees and shrubs and the active presence of Taliesin, someone not entirely human, with a previous existence in non-human forms. Taliesin by existing as burning energy source and other states, steps outside human identity into other categories of being.

Questions of gender also flow from the fluid identities of the poem. In a study with the title 'Matrilineal Subjects: Ambiguity, Bodies and Metamorphosis in the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi', Sarah Sheehan observes that brothers Gwydion and Gilfaethwy in the tale 'Math' 'completely lost their human gendered identity' when changed into male and female animal forms as punishment.[237] The character of Gwydion, once a reproducing female animal in the *Mabinogi*, is also the male magician of 'Cad Goddeu' who can transform gender-neutral trees into warriors, assumed to be male or masculine. Recent work in the field of archaeology has reviewed the use of gendered assumptions for identification of artefacts and remains. In the excavation of an Iron Age burial site on the Isles of Scilly, the grave goods of one individual included a 'male' iron sword and a 'female' bronze mirror, upsetting

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[234] Patricia Yaegar,' Literature in the Age of Wood, Tallow, Coal, Whale Oil, Gasoline, Atomic Power and Other Energy Sources', in *Energy Humanities: An Anthology*, ed. by Imre Szeman and Dominic Boyer, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2017) pp. 440-444, (p. 441).

[235] 'Bum yspwg yn tan (I was a tinder-spark in a fire) bum gwyd yn gwarthan (I was a tree in a conflagration)'. Haycock, *Legendary* Poems, p. 175, ll. 22-23.

[236] Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*, (Hoboken NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), p.25. This is echoed by the view of Francesco Benozzo that landscape in 'Cad Goddeu' is perceived as a dynamic force. Benozzo, *Landscape Perceptions*, p. 111.

[237] Sarah Sheehan, 'Matrilineal Subjects: Ambiguity, Bodies and Metamorphosis in the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 34.2 (2009), 319-342 (p. 332).

the usual gender assignments connecting 'materials and persons.'[238] While medieval Welsh society is not directly comparable to that of the British Iron Age and this burial is unusual, entrenched gender divisions are exposed if the idea of a female warrior in the poem is met with greater disbelief than, for example, Taliesin's transformation into a bridge. The trees can be read as female warriors and Taliesin may have taken the forms of a female warrior's sword and shield. Haycock in her translation of 'Cad Goddeu' gives line 63, '*Dyar gardei bun'*, as 'Sorely groaned a woman'.[239] In Irish folklore the *bean chaointe* (keening woman) can be interpreted as *Badhbh* or the raven aspect of Irish goddess Mórrigán, crying out from the battlefield to warn those about to die in conflict.[240] Thus, a side-lined woman on the battlefield is given a powerful narrative. Haycock offers an alternative interpretation of line 63 in her notes: 'in the van of the battle-line (was) the foremost woman'.[241] This could bring the battle scene closer to the tradition recorded in Peniarth 98b referred to above, of the woman Achren's presence at the battle, alternatively named 'The Battle of Achren'. Gendered identity in the poem's narrator can also be questioned. The Taliesin persona appears to be male, but Gwyneth Lewis and Rowan Williams attribute the following section from line 151 to line 162 to the voice of the female character Blodeuwedd, created from flowers in the *Mabinogi* tale 'Math'.[242]

> Neither of mother
>
> Nor of father was I formed;
>
> My creation was created...
>
> From primroses and gossiping flowers;[243]

If the first-person voice of Blodeuwedd is heard in the poem, the gender of the narrator is called into question for the rest of the work.[244] There is no clear division between the

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[238] Due to the condition of the recovered bones, archaeologists were unable to determine the sex of the individual. Alexis M. Jordan, 'Her Mirror, His Sword: Unbinding Binary Gender and Sex Assumptions in Iron Age British Mortuary Traditions', *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 23.3, (2016), 870-899 (p. 870).

[239] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 177, l.63.

[240] Gearóid Ó Crualaoich, *The Book of the Cailleach*, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2003), p. 53-54.

[241] Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 202.

[242] Lewis, *The Book of Taliesin*, p. 203.

[243] This is an extract from Lewis and Williams's translation of 'Cad Goddeu'. Lewis, *The Book of Taliesin*, p. 59, ll. 151-153, l. 157.

[244] Many lines of the poem can be spoken by a narrator of any gender. There are, however, combative references and other instances of masculine identity, for example *heussawr* herdsman and *lleenawr* man of letters. Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 186, l. 232; l. 234.

beginning and end of the 'Blodeuwedd voice' in 'Cad Goddeu' and there is no reason to assume that the metamorphosing Taliesin persona is male gendered for the length of the poem.[245] In a study of French and Occitan courtly literature, Simon Gaunt identifies subversive elements in medieval stories of Narcissus, because the character's self-love and death challenge binaries of male/female and homosexual/heterosexual.[246] In the same way, identifying ambiguous gender in 'Cad Goddeu' challenges the narrow definition of male and female categories often expected in medieval texts.

Themes of embodiment and identity are explored by academic Donna Haraway in her writing on science, feminism and the nature of the cyborg. She envisages in post humanist cyborg imagery an escape from Western concepts of dualism: 'It means both building and destroying machines, identities, categories, relationships, spaces, stories.'[247] The difficulty in conceptualising the embodiments of the Taliesin persona and the fusion of tree or plant and human in 'Cad Goddeu' can be reread in the light of Haraway's dream of a 'powerful infidel heteroglossia'.[248] The concept of heteroglossia, the copresence of many languages within one language is a metaphorical aid to the understanding of a poem where boundaries of nature, gender and human identity are blurred within one text. It is possible to find in the transformations of 'Cad Goddeu' the pattern of eco-scholar Timothy Morton's 'mesh' theory, in which each life-form is like language 'a temporary manifestation of an indivisible whole', part of an everchanging interdependent mesh-like structure.[249] There is scope for further observation of 'Cad Goddeu' texts using methodologies such as these, divergent from the conventional dualities of human and nature, male and female, self and other.

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[245] Lewis and Williams state that Taliesin resumes speaking at line 163 'I was conjured by Math'. Lewis, *The Book of Taliesin*, p. 203. However, the following lines tell us that the narrator was conjured by Math and Gwydion which applies to Blodeuwedd and there is no detectable break following this to suggest that the Taliesin voice takes over from the Blodeuwedd voice. Lewis, *The Book of Taliesin*, p. 59, ll. 163-5.

[246] Simon Gaunt, *Love and Death in Medieval French and Occitan Courtly Literature: Martyrs to Love*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 169.

[247] Haraway breaks down the distinctions between human, animal, nature and machine. Donna Haraway, 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s', in *The Haraway Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 7-45, (p. 39).

[248] Haraway, 'A Manifesto', ibid. In the field of Celtic Studies, Elizabeth Kempton has applied Haraway's post humanist models to a study of the shapeshifting Morrígan of early Irish literature. Elizabeth Kempton, 'Challenging Masculine Discourses of Violence: Posthumanist Approaches to the Figure of the Morrígan in Táin Bó Cúailnge', *Hortulus: The Online Graduate Journal of Medieval Studies*, 13.1, (2016) [no page numbers].

[249] Timothy Morton, 'The Mesh', in *Environmental Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Stephanie LeMenager, Teresa Shewry and Ken Hiltner (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 19-30 (p. 29).

Conclusion

This dissertation is a study of the textual transmission and significance of the medieval Welsh poem 'Cad Goddeu' across time and in different formations. By taking an approach focussed on relationships between texts informed by the writing of theorists such as Gérard Genette, the entangled textual versions of 'Cad Goddeu' are highlighted and the process by which meaning is loaded onto text is clarified. By placing the focus on one poem, the dissertation demonstrates how a palimpsestic layering of texts laid the foundations for the reception of 'Cad Goddeu' in the twenty first century. The Peniarth 2 manuscript is linked by title and by content to other early texts, an indication that the search for 'the original' is problematic, as the development of the poem is unlikely to have taken place through a linear line of descent from an original source and each text is part of a wider contextual environment. The publication of the poem and related *englynion* in *The Myvyrian Archaiology* allowed wider access to readers, but it was through translation and publication in English that the poem was 'unfettered'. In a further process of 'unfettering', Robert Graves's work in *The White Goddess* heavily influenced by texts rooted in the Celtic revival and by related writings in his family background, provided a way for 'Cad Goddeu' to reach new audiences and bypassed subsequent scholarly studies to reach a path coloured by poetic, artistic, musical and shamanic interpretations.

Alongside the reproduction and transformation of words from one text to another is the reproduction and transformation of meaning. This is demonstrated in the dissertation through the analysis of four lines from 'Cad Goddeu'. By tracing the use of the four lines in both scholarly and creative texts over time, this study has shown how meaning may be attached to fragments of text and transferred from one place to another. A further strand of the dissertation analyses the way that difficulty and obscurity can give meaning and significance to poetry, rather than displaying absence or loss of meaning. The conceptualisation of nonlinear time in the poem and in interpretations of the poem has also been shown in relation to the ideas of both Graves and Genette regarding 'prolepsis' and 'analepsis'. 'Cad Goddeu' is seen as a connection to something powerful lost in the past. The section on twenty-first century culture by looking closely at the role of the poem in some recent texts, highlights the continued layering process. The poem retains its identity as an

emblem of the ancient and enigmatic. It is often linked to creative works such as writing, music, storytelling and art or to spiritual concepts such as shamanism. Unlike the scholarly traditions which aim to clarify and disambiguate all aspects of the poem, creative interpretations of 'Cad Goddeu' use its associations with antiquity and obscurity to effectively engage an audience in a process close to Graves's experience of analepsis.

The final section of the dissertation showed that a text is not static with unchanging meaning. Each reading of a text is unique, and each interpretation is dependent on perspective. In the same way that translation from a source text to a target language can never be complete, the understanding of a text can never be complete. New interpretations of 'Cad Goddeu' are always possible. By actively seeking themes of ecology, gender and fluid identity in the poem, new readings emerge. The Taliesin persona existed in forms that are not human, such as a burning energy source and the battling trees have both human and arboreal characteristics. Although women appear to be rarely present in the poem, a change of emphasis can cast new light on questions of gender. As this survey has shown, 'Cad Goddeu' still has currency today. The poem is a multifaceted demonstration of how words and meaning are interwoven in poetry, in texts and in language. Visualised as a series of palimpsests bearing traces of texts from medieval times to the twenty-first century, the study of 'Cad Goddeu' reveals an overview of the processes involved as texts and meanings develop around a given poem. The origins of the poem are lost in time, but the investigation of a unique pattern of textual variants is a productive area of study. Many early Celtic texts have a rich afterlife, and therefore there are opportunities for future research in the field of Celtic Studies using the approach taken here, research that can reveal new insights into a complex process.

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The following list provides details for transcriptions, translations and other variants of 'Cad Goddeu' in chronological order, the earliest first. The list was compiled from information found in the literature research for the dissertation and by online research. It includes information on the published works that first opened access to the poem, the versions produced by poet Robert Graves, and more recent examples, both scholarly and non-scholarly. There are three French translations by Breton writers, all with an interest in Brittany as part of a wider Celtic culture, but the study has not extended to translations in other languages, an area open to further research. The locations of commentary and footnotes related to the poem are included, as they are important elements in the textual transmission of the work. The distinctions between transcriptions, translations, variants and artworks influenced by the poem are blurred, but I have included here the examples which preserve 'Cad Goddeu' as a poem with close links to the *Llyfr Taliesin* version.

The earliest extant version of 'Cad Goddeu' in *Llyfr Taliesin* (The Book of Taliesin), the Peniarth 2 Manuscript, can be viewed online through the website of *Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru* (The National Library of Wales):

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'Kat Godeu':English translation. Found in: William F. Skene, *The Four Ancient Books of Wales, Volume 1*, (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1868), pp. 276-84, commentary pp. 205-7.

'Kat Godeu': Middle Welsh transcription. Found in: William F. Skene, *The Four Ancient Books of Wales, Volume 2*, (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1868), pp. 137-44, commentary pp. 399-400.

'Kat Godeu or the Battle of Godeu': English translation of lines 24-56. Skene is referenced but the translation differs from Skene's. Found in: John Rhys, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by Celtic Heathendom*, (London: Williams and Norgate, 1888) p. 258, commentary pp. 257-9.

'Cad Godeu or The Battle of the Scrub': Middle Welsh transcription and English translation. Found in: Gwenogvryn J. Evans, *Poems from the Book of Taliesin*, (Llanbedrog: J. Gwenogvryn Evans, 1915,) pp. 26-41.

'Kat Godeu': Middle Welsh transcription alongside facsimile of the *Llyfr Taliesin* manuscript. Found in: Gwenogvryn J. Evans, *Facsimile & Text of the Book of Taliesin*, (Llanbedrog: J. Gwenogvryn Evans, 1915), pp. 23-7.

'Battle of the Trees, (long poem)': Details not known as unable to access. Probably the same poem as published in *The Complete Poems in One Volume*, see below. Found in: Robert Graves, 'Battle of the Trees, (long poem)', *Wales*, 5.21, (1945), pp. 22-5.

'Câd Goddeu (The Battle of the Trees)': This is Nash's English translation inserted into the text of Robert Graves's book *The White Goddess*, although Nash's footnotes and interspersed commentary are omitted, and line numbers are added. Found in: Robert Graves, *The White Goddess,* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), pp 30-6. First published in 1948.

'The Battle of the Trees': A reordering and adaptation of selected lines from Nash's English translation. Found in: Robert Graves, *The White Goddess*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), pp.42-3, commentary and further reinterpretation of verses pp. 43-5. First published in 1948.

'Câd Goddeu "The Battle of the Trees"': A significantly altered English version of the poem, composed by Robert Graves. Found in: Robert Graves, *The White Goddess*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), pp. 45-8. (This was also published in collections of Graves's poetry, for example 'The Battle of the Trees': found in: *Robert Graves: The Complete Poems in One Volume*, (Manchester: Carcanet, 2000), pp. 422-4.) First published in 1948.

'Kat Godeu/ Le Combat des Arbrisseaux': Middle Welsh adjacent French translation. Found in: Christian Guyonvarc'h, *Ogam: Tradition Celtique,* 5.30, (1953)*,* pp. 111-17, commentary pp. 117-20.

'Le Kat Godeu': French translation. Found in: Pierre Le Roux, 'Les Arbres Combattants et la Forêt Guernière: Le Mythe et l'Histoire', *Ogam: Tradition Celtique*, 11 (1959), commentary pp.1-10, translation and commentary pp.185-205.

'Le Cad Goddeu': French translation. Found in: Jean Markale, *Les Celtes et la Civilisation Celtique: Mythe et Histoire*, (Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages, 1999), pp. 363-68 commentary pp. 362-82. First published in 1969.

'Cad Goddeu': English translation. Found in: Patrick K. Ford, *The Mabinogi and Other Welsh Medieval Tales*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 175-8, introduction p.175. (Kindle edition.)

'The Battle of the Trees': Short story with interspersed verses in English. Found in: Robin Williamson, *The Wise and Foolish Tongue: Celtic Stories & Poems*, (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1991) pp. 77-79. footnotes pp. 153-3.

'The Battle of the Trees, Cad Goddau': English translation with illustrations. Found in: Meirion Pennar, *The Battle of the Trees, Cad Goddau*, (Market Drayton: Tern Press, 1992), no page numbers.

'Cad Goddeu': English translation by John Matthews and Caitlín Matthews. Found in: John Matthews, *Taliesin: The Last Celtic Shaman*, (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 1991) pp. 296-300, commentary pp. 300-301.

'Kat Godeu': Middle Welsh transcription placed line by line with Modern Welsh translation. Found in: Marged Haycock, *Taliesin a Brwydr Y Coed*, (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2006), pp. 21-36, commentary pp. 3-21.

'Kat Godeu': Middle Welsh transcription placed line by line with English translation. Found in: Marged Haycock, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin*, (Aberystwyth: CMCS, 2nd ed. 2015) pp. 174-86, introduction, pp. 167-73, footnotes pp. 167-86, line by line commentary pp. 187-239.

'The Battle of the Trees': English translation. Found in: Gwyneth Lewis and Rowan Williams, *The Book of Taliesin: Poems of Warfare and Praise in an Enchanted Britain*. (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2019), pp. 54-62, introduction p. 54, footnotes pp. 202-4.

'Cad Goddeu, the Battle of the Trees: A Medieval Healing Charm': The narration of an English version of the poem with images and music in video format. Found on YouTube: British Druid Order, 2020 <https://www.youtu.be/rvXt-QLbZ3U> [accessed 9 July 2021].

Appendix B: Summary of 'Cad Goddeu'

As 'Cad Goddeu' is a long and complicated poem, I have summarised the content, features and themes below to aid the reader of the dissertation. (The division into separate sections follows the sections identified by Marged Haycock, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin*, (Aberystwyth: CMCS, 2015), p. 167.)

1.Transformation into many forms, lines 1-23

The poem is spoken in the first-person voice of the poet. Using the repeated word *bum,* 'I was'*,* he gives 18 past forms of his existence. The diverse forms range from constructed objects such as a sword, a book a bridge a path, a coracle to natural phenomena such as a raindrop, starlight, a tinder-spark to living things such as an eagle and a burning tree.

2.Presence at the battle, lines 24-40

The speaker not only sings from the trees as a bard but partakes in combat. He attacks horses, a hundred-headed monster with armies under its tongue and on its body. He attacks a hundred-clawed toad and a snake with tortured souls in its flesh.

3.Gwydion conjures up the trees to aid in battle, lines 41-74.

Gwydion calls on God to aid the Britons in battle and as a result uses enchantment to form an army of trees. The trees attack the enemy in a bloody conflict lasting thirty days. The Flood, the Crucifixion of Christ and the Day of Judgment are referenced.

4.Description of the trees and plants in battle, lines 75-150

This section lists 34 trees or plants and describes their role in the battle. Each is named, followed by a description of their actions in the fray.

5.The Creation of Taliesin, lines 151-77

Math and Gwydion created the narrator from fruit, flowers, earth and water. He was brought up by five enchanters and was made before the world existed.

6.Boasting, lines 178-206

The speaker, a gifted poet, has been in the fortress of Dylan and has visited kings. His spears came from heaven and the underworld and have struck 8000 men. He had far more passion in battle than anyone else. The last lines in this section are of unclear meaning.

7.Transformation into further forms, lines 207-10

Reverting to the use of *bum*, 'I was', the narrator gives past formations as a snake, a viper, a billhook and a hunting spear.

8.Boasting, reference to Arthur, lines 211-45

The speaker owns valuable possessions. His swift horse, Melyngan, is a hundred times better than six fair horses. The speaker moves quickly along the shore and causes nine hundred warriors to bleed. His shield is made of rubies and gold. He has undergone many changes and travelled to many places. A prophecy about Arthur is introduced, then the Flood, the Crucifixion of Christ and the Day of Judgment are referenced again.

9.Boasting, prophecy and reference to Virgil, lines 246-9

The speaker is a splendid jewel set in gold. The speaker is experiencing the prophecy (of Christ's arrival) made by Virgil.

Appendix C: 'Cad Goddeu' in Art and Music

In the dissertation I have focussed on the textual transmission of 'Cad Goddeu' in literature, with some examples of music and other forms discussed. The following list gives examples of a range of artworks and music influenced by 'Cad Goddeu'. In many cases the close connection between the poem and the work is acknowledged by the naming of the work after the poem, but I have included examples where the influence is less obvious, for example the reference in the description of Sarah Poland's artwork, in order to demonstrate the different ways in which a text can be linked to a creative work. The list is categorized by art type, then in alphabetical order by artist. Research for the list was undertaken online, searching databases such as the British Library, (<https://www.bl.uk>) and music database discogs (<https://www.discogs.com>), as well as general searches. The number of musical examples is striking, and it would be useful to look at this in more detail by identifying musical genre and the analysis of lyrics.

Another area with potential for further study is research based on languages other than English. There are some European works here, identified through English language websites, but there is scope for a multilingual approach embracing the perspective of other languages. Furthermore, most of the entries date from the twenty-first century and this may be suggestive of the role of the internet in the transmission of the text. Further research in these areas would be valuable.

Art

The Ash Project, Sarah Poland, 2016. Mixed media artworks motivated by ash dieback affecting trees in Wales. 'Cad Goddeu' is referenced by the artist in a description of work exhibited at the Minitopian Art Gallery in Swansea.
<https://www.minitopianartgallery.co.uk/featured-artists/sarah-poland>.

The Battle of the Trees, Ulrike Rosenbach, 1989. Video work using lines from poem interlaced with documentary clips of battle and takes of twigs, leaves and tree crowns. Ulrike Rosenbach is a German media-artist.
<https://www.ulrike-rosenbach.de/english-information/videoworks/>.

Cad Goddeu, Jessica Van Deursen, 2019. Live soundscape performance with art installations. Performed at Pictura, Dordrecht, Netherlands. 2019.
<https://www.jessicavandeursen.com/?page=Artwork-Alter-Moderna>. This is discussed in the dissertation.

Music

'Battle of Trees', Tori Amos,
track from *Night of Hunters*, 2011, Deutsche Grammophon.

'Taliesin- The Battle of the Trees', Argonath (2),
track from *Lugnasad*, 2020, Gondolin Records.

'Crwydryn: The Song of Taliesin/ The Battle of the Trees', Emrys Atkinson,
track from *Taliesin: The Emrys Atkinson Collection*, 2006, Big Noise.

'Cad Goddeu', Francesco Benozzo and Fabio Bonvicini,
track from *Ponte del Diavalo*, 2014, RadiciMusic Records.

'The Battle of the Trees', P.D. Brown,
track from T*he Battle of the Trees: Four Traditional Stories About Trees*, 2002, P.D. Brown.

'Cad Goddeu', Emerald,
track from *Restless Souls*, 2019, Rock of Angels Records.

'Cad Goddeu', Gwydion,
track from *Gwydion,* 2020, Art Gates Records.

'Cad Goddeu', Hugin the Bard,
track from *Bardic Tales from the Mabinogion*,1997, Llewellyn Music.

'Battle of the Trees', Katell Keinig,
track from *Jet*, 1997, Elektra.

Kampf der Bäume, (Battle of the Trees) Bronius Kutavicius,
piece for soprano and chamber ensemble, 1996.

'Cad Goddeu', LTO,
track from *Daear*, 2021, Denovali Records.

'Kat Godeu', Ceri Rhys Matthews and Beverley Evans,
track from *Yscolan*, 2005, Disgyfrith.

'Câd Goddeu', François Moity and Nicolas Yvan Mingot,
track from *Echoes from Earth*, 2001, Une Musique.

'Cad Goddeu-Revised', Nest,
track from *Retold*, 2016, Serein.

'Cad Goddeu (The Battle of the Trees)', Christopher Painter,
from *Yr Hanes Swynol (A History of Charms)* for flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano, 2005.
(Winner of *Tlws y Cerddor* musicians medal at the National Eisteddfod of Wales, August 2005.

Through a Network of Lines that Interlace, Thomas M. Stoll, 2010. A musical composition with sung lines from 'Cad Goddeu', part of the work for a doctoral thesis in music at the University of Buffalo, New York.

'Kat Godeu (The Battle of the Trees)', Wilde Roses,
track from *Woven*, 2020, Rubicon Classics.

'Battle of the Trees "Swift Oak...Stout Guardian of the Door"', John Williams,
from *Concerto for Horn and Orchestra*, (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005). Music inspired by 'Cad Goddeu'. This is discussed in the dissertation.

'Duel of the Fates', John Williams, from *Music from Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace*, (Miami: Warner Bros. 1999) Choral piece inspired by words from 'Cad Goddeu' composed for the Star Wars film. This is discussed in the dissertation.

'Battle of the Trees', Robin Williamson,
track from *Five Bardic Mysteries*, 1985, Pig's Whisker Music.

'Cad Goddeu (The Battle of the Trees)', Cernunnos Woods,
track from *Awaken the Empire of the Dark Wood*, 1996, Cruel Moon International.

'Cad Goddeau', Zoviet France,
track from *Eostre*, 1984, Red Rhino Records.

Music in Performance/Drama

The Battle of the Trees/ Cad Goddeu, Christine Cooper, 2012. Storytelling performance with music based on 'Cad Goddeu' by a Welsh performer, toured 2012-2014.
<https://www.christinecooperartist.tumbir.com/BoT>.

The Birds of Rhiannon, The 29th Grove Play, Waldemar Young, 1930. One of the annual musicals performed by the San Francisco Bohemian Club. It features a character called Taliessin and music is heard from the treetops about armed warriors.
<https://d.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/text/waldemar-young-birds-of-rhiannon>.

Dreaming the Nightfield, Michael Harvey, produced by Adverse Camber, 2017. Storytelling performance 2017-2019 based on the story of 'Math' in the *Mabinogi*, includes lines from 'Cad Goddeu'. <https://www.adversecamber.org/shows/dreaming-night-field-2/> This is discussed briefly in the dissertation.