

Ling 103

Rhymes in Middle Welsh poetry

The *Gododdin* [godoðin] is the oldest known poem in the Welsh language. It records the disastrous battle fought by the north Britons (who were Welsh speaking) against the English around the year 600. (According to the poem, only three Britons returned alive.) The poem is preserved in a 13th century manuscript written in *Middle Welsh*, the medieval form of Welsh (comparable to *Middle English*), but is presumed to have been composed orally at least several centuries earlier.

Note on symbols:

[x] = German *ch* in *Bach*, a voiceless fricative version of [k]

[i̯] a vowel that sounds somewhat like the second vowel in *roses*

[ɬ] a fricative voiceless version of [l], like an [l] with no vocal cord vibration and a hissing sound

[r̥] a fricative voiceless version of [r]

[ae] is a diphthong -- one syllable nucleus, not two syllables

Stanzas in the *Gododdin* exhibit end-rhyme. In some stanzas, all lines rhyme; in others, there is more than one rhyme type in the stanza. In addition, most longer lines have an internal rhyme (a word in the middle of the line rhymes with the final word of that line, with the final word of the preceding line, or with an internal rhyme of the preceding, following, or same line). Normally, the end of every line rhymes with the end of some other line, or is paired with an internal rhyme in an adjacent line.

In the examples below, internal rhyme words are underlined>. Line-final words all participate in rhyme. The number of rhyme types in each stanza is given to you in brackets after the first line of the stanza.

Exercise: List the rhyme sets (sets of words which rhyme). Then hypothesize what properties two words must share in order for them to count as having a 'rhyme' in the *Gododdin*. State your results in terms of phonological properties such as place or manner of articulation.

Ling 103 Distinctive Features

Speech sounds in human languages can be classified according to a small set of discrete properties known as distinctive features. It is hypothesized by linguists that humans use only these properties to represent speech sounds in memory.

List of important distinctive features.

Places of articulation:

LABIAL: articulated with the lips

CORONAL: articulated with the tip or blade of the tongue

DORSAL: articulated with the body of the tongue

LARYNGEAL: the *primary* articulation is at the glottis (space between the vocal cords).

The place of articulation features above have only one value (they are there or they are not in representing a speech sound). All other features for present purposes can be assumed to have two values -- plus or minus.

LABIAL: [p b f v m u u o ɔ ɒ w]

CORONAL: [t d θ ð s z ʃ ʒ ʧ ʤ l r n]

DORSAL: all vowels, plus: [w j k g ŋ x]

LARYNGEAL: [h] and glottal stop [ʔ]

Other features.

[±cons]: Non-consonants include vowels and glides [w j]. Consonants are all other sounds.

[±son]: In sonorants the air pressure inside the oral or nasal cavity is approximately the same as the ambient air pressure. Sonorant sounds involve the relatively *free* flow of air out of the mouth or nose. Obstruents [-son] sounds involve an obstruction (either partial or total) of the air flow sufficient to create friction noise or a stoppage of air flow.

[±voice]: Voiced sounds have vocal cord vibration. Voiceless sounds don't.

[±cont]: In continuant sounds, air flows out of the mouth. In non-continuant air flows out of the nose or not at all.

Continuants can be either sonorant or obstruent. If they are obstruent they are called *fricatives* although there is no specific feature for fricatives. (They can be referred to as [+cont -son]).

- [±lat]: Laterals are [l] and [l]-like sounds. These involve lowering one or both sides of the tongue body. All other segments are non-lateral (median).
- [±strid]: Stridents have high frequency noise. English stridents include: [f v s z ʃ ʒ ʧ ʤ]. Note that [ð θ] are not strident, although they are continuant obstruents.
- [±ant]: Anterior sounds are pronounced with an obstruction at the teeth or directly behind them (at the alveolar ridge). Non-anterior sounds are pronounced with an obstruction further back. In English [t d θ ð s z] are all anterior. [ʃ ʒ ʧ ʤ] are posterior. Normally this feature is not used to classify sounds that are not articulated with the front part of the tongue (the tip or blade of the tongue).
- [±nas]: Nasals involve lowering the velum to allow air to escape out of the nose. In non-nasals (oral sounds) the velum is raised and air cannot escape out of the nose.
- [±back]: Back sounds involve pulling the tongue body back. These include velar consonants such as [k g ŋ x ɣ] as well as back vowels such as [u ʊ o ɔ ɒ ə ʌ ɪ ɑ].
- [±high]: High segments involve raising the tongue body. These include velar consonants such as [k g ŋ x ɣ] and high vowels [u ʊ i ɪ ɨ].
- [±low]: Low segments involve lowering the tongue body. These include low vowels [æ a ɑ ɒ].
- [±spread]: In spread glottis sounds the vocal cords are spread apart to produce an [h] or [h]-like sound such as aspiration.
- [±round]: In round(ed) sounds the lips are rounded. Rounded vowels include [u ʊ o ɔ ɒ]
- [±tense] Tense vowels are more at the extrema of the vowel space than their lax counterparts. For front vowels they are more front, for high vowels more high, for back vowels more back, and so forth.
- Tense: [i e u o ɑ ɒ]
Lax: [ɪ ʊ ε ɔ ə ʌ a]

The low front vowel ('ash') may be tense or lax depending on the word and the following sounds. There is a lot of variation in the pronunciation of this sound.

(all translations by A.O.H.Jarman)

Stanza 3

kaiog, kēnhorog men əð elai, [3]
difiŋ əmlaen bin, með a dalai,
tu† tal ei rodawr ən ə kləwai awr,
ni roðai nawð maint dilənai.
ni xiliai o gamawn oni verai waid,
mal bruən gomənai gwir ni dexai.
neis adrawð godoðin ar †awr mordai,
ƶag pəbə† madogpan atgoriai
namən ɪn gur o gant ni ðelai

Wearing a brooch, in the forefront wherever he
went,
Breathless before a maiden, he earned his mead;
Shattered was the front of his shield when he
heard the battle-cry,
He gave no quarter to as many as he pursued.
He did not retreat from battle until blood flowed,
Like rushes he cut down men who did not flee.
The men of Gododdin relate on the floor of the
hall
That before Madog's tent when he returned
There would come but one man from a hundred.

Stanza 18 (partial)

ei veð meðuawd, [3]
əvai win wirawd.
oið ervid vedel,
əvai win govel.
aervaið ən arveð,
aer gennin vedel.
aer adan glaer,
kenən ƶəwəð aer.

His mead was intoxicating,
He drank strong wine.
He was a reaper in battle,
He drank sweet wine.
Of daring purpose in war,
A reaper of battle-leeks.
Bright arm of battle,
They sang a song of war.

Stanza 22 (partial)

gwir a aeθ ƶatraeθ, biant enwawg : [3]
gwin a með o aur vi ei gwirawd
bluəðən ən erbən irðən ðevawd,
trəwər a θri ƶaint a θrəxant eirdorxawg.

Warriors went to Cartraeth, they were renowned:
Wine and mead from gold vessels was their drink
For a year according to honorable custom,
Three men and three score and three hundred,
gold-torqued.

Stanza 28

bi gwir mal amkeiðai gadlew, [6]
ni ðeilliis meirx neb marxlew.
heesid waəwawr əƶ ƶləw
i ar †emenig †uəbrdew.
kən ni vaged am vərŋ, am boƶθ,
dəwal ei ƶleðəval ən ei oƶθ.
heesid onn o bədəo†t ei law
i are veinie† vēgedoƶθ.
əd rannai ƶəƶi ei rəwin,
əd laðai a †avn vraiθ oiiθin.
val pan vel medel ar vreiθin
ə ƶunai varxlew waedlin.

It was true as Cadlew spoke,
No one's horses overtook Marchlew.
He cast spears in battle
From a bounding, wide-tracked charger.
Although his rearing was not with burdens, with
suffere=ing,
His sword-stroke was fierce in his battle-station.
He threw spears from the grasp of his hand
From his steaming slender bay horse.
The most lovable one distributed his plentiful
wine,
He slew with a blade, blood-stained and savage.
As a reaper strikes in unsettled weather
So Marchlew would cause blood to flow.

Stanza 38 (partial)

ni unaeθpuəd neiað mor ðiesig [3]
no xənon, larə vron, ƶeinion uledig.
neiv ev eisteðai ən nhal †eiθig,
ə neb a wanai, nid adwenid.

Never was a hall so lively
(a line seems to be missing in the manuscript
here)

Than generous-hearted Cynon, lord of graces.
Truly he would sit at the end of the bench,
Whomsoever he struck would not be struck again.

Stanza 50

guroleð gogleð, gur ai gorig, [7]
 †arə vron haelaðon n ei eisə†id :
 nid əmðə daear, mam nid əmðig
 mor eirian gadarn, haearn gaðig.
 o neŕθ ə kleðəv claer əm hamig,
 o garxar anwar daear əm dig,
 o gəvle angai, o angar did,
kenai va †əwarx, ðihavarx ðrid.

Heroic deed of the North, the warrior performed
 it,
 A generous-hearted bountiful lord by his nature:
 There does not travel the earth, no mother has
 brought forth,
 One so comely and powerful, armoured in iron.
 By the strength of his shining sword he defended
 me,
 From the cruel imprisonment of earth he
 delivered me,
 From a place of death, from enemy land, —
 Cenau son of Llywarch, undaunted, bold.

Stanza 52 [4]
 ergrən ei alon arv
 erər bruədrin, trin tra xwarð.
 kur ei vankeiru am gur bankaru,
 bæseð brəx briwant bar.
 ambuə†, amðistair, amðistarð,
 ambuə†, amroðig, amrəxwarð,
 əs browəs brəs treilioð ŕəs ən ŕodres :
 ni hi wə ni gafuə ei neges.
 nid anguə a wanuə oðiwes.

His enemies fear his weapon,
 A fierce eagle, laughing in battle.
 Sharp are his spears around Bancarw,
 The fingers of the freckled on shatter a head.
 Of many moods, genial, turbulent,
 Of many moods, thoughtful, merry,
 Rhys consumed with spirit, speed and
 ostentation:
 Not so those who do no achieve their purpose.
 Those whom he chances to overtake will not
 escape.

Stanza 95 (partial)

ev †aðoð †i mawr [3]
 əŕ ɲweŕθ ei adrawð.
 †aðoð mab nuəθon
 o eirdorxogion
 kant o deərneð
 həd pan grəbuə†er.

He slew a great host
 To achieve fame.
 The son of Nwython slew
 Of the gold-torqued
 A hundred princes
 So that he might be praised.

Stanza 100

†iθiesid adar ei adav, [5]
edəsməgav edeivniad,
eiθiniad a ŕuəgiad :
 ev gwisgus awr
 əŕ ɲhənnor gawr,
 əŕ ɲhənvaran edeivniad.
ballog, talgellog kad,
 trədəð engiriawl,
erləniad gawr,
 arθ aruənawl, aruəgiad.
gorvloðiad ria†i
ergluwiad hirl†,
 kain vi gibno mab gwengad.

His hand fed the birds,
 I honor him, great leader.
 Ravager, tearer:
 He wore gold
 In the van of battle,
 In the furious struggle of champions.
 The freckled dispenser of conflict,
 On of the Three Violent Ones,
 Pursuer in the onslaught,
 The terrible bear, attacker,
 A terrifying champion,
 The acclaim of a great host,