of unlikely solutions are thrown up here and there, such as Sandyroft being a name which spread from that of the Sandyroft Coalworks (1760) which used the Old Canal for transport across the Saltney Marsh (p. 121); Asparagus in Broughton for The Sparrow Greaves which, most interestingly, bears such a similarity with the seventeenth-century popular forms sparagras and sparrow-grass for the word asparagus (p. 53 and OED s.v.); Cylinder Wood, where the first element is a compound containing OE sylen ‘muddy, dirty’, and Tiperdown for the Welsh ty + purdan ‘purgatory’, both in Shotton (pp. 133, 134), and the like.

Dr Owen may have to reconsider his view (s.g. Pont y bodkin p. 286) that the use of the Welsh definite article with a personal or surname is ‘most unusual’ in the light of evidence from parts of Glamorgan, and as noted by Melville Richards, (‘tuedd gyffredin iawn’) in BBCS 23 (1970), 323, s.v. Bachysylw (Suljyw) in Cilymaenllwyd, Carms. Also, in his review of Canon Ellis Davies’s earlier work on Flintshire Place-Names, and concerning the names of an area and houses containing the form Guern-to in Uwchmynydd Ucha (p. 298), the same authority rejects the explanation ‘straw thatched gwern’ (quoted by Dr Owen) as meaningless and suggests that gwern here means ‘alder grove’ where materials for thatching and roofing [to] could be found. He compares the use of gwaun ‘moor’ and cors ‘bog, swamp’ in other parts of Wales in combinations like Gwaun (y) to, and Cors (y) to. Further, could trochfa in Gweirglodd Trochfa on the Cymau Hall estate, ‘a meadow at a bend in the river Cegidog which has a pool’, not be compared with golchfa, as in the name yr Olchfa, near Swansea, and Abergeirw in Meirionnydd, Blaenyrolchfa, Llynyrolchfa etc. more specifically in allusion to a pool for dipping or washing sheep, despite being marked ‘Bath’ in 1852? (BBCS 15 (1952), 32–3).

That mention of such minor points has to be made is testimony to the overall quality of this first instalment of a comprehensive survey of the place-names of Clwyd which sets the high standard to which, there is little doubt on this evidence, the whole will adhere. Dr Owen is to be congratulated on the thoroughness of his investigation and the clarity of its presentation. It is unfortunate, however, that some printing errors remain uncorrected. Those in the Abbreviations list (titles and authors’ names) in particular are conspicuous and should have been avoided.


We must certainly give Gareth King the credit of putting the more informal varieties of the language on the map of linguistic description. However, when a work titled ‘Comprehensive Grammar’ professes on its first page the conviction that ‘... for the serious student of any language, grammar is a key to understanding and not an obstacle’ (vii), it is not over-rash to suspect the author has (or has had) some deep-lying misgivings about ‘grammar’. The book before us, I fear, amply confirms this inference.

As a veteran description linguist with an acquired taste and intense curiosity for the elegant intricacies of the grammatical structure of Welsh, I shall focus my critical comments on the work’s ‘linguistics’, its descriptive and presentative method, with some specifics of the written diacritics (my examples are from Kate Roberts and the defunct Y Faner), trying to react to some of the most conspicuously flawed shortcomings in the book.
Two interrelated preliminary issues of descriptive policity present themselves at the very outset. First, the variety database, i.e. the linguistic diasystem(s) depicted: dialects, registers, written of colloquial varieties, even genre-correlated grammatical usage or norms. Second, the grammar-book 'genre', determining its selection of methodological frame-of-reference: what kind of grammar—and what target readership?

As for the first question: the notoriously complicated, sensitive and agitated sociolinguistic and language-political picture of Modern Welsh ought to have been properly addressed here. Yet we get no statistical and distributional sociolinguistic and dialectological information on the state of the language; no introduction to regional and registral variance (just as we get none on its linguistic or literary history, of immediate relevance to synchronic linguistic balance or imbalance). Instead, we are subjected (3f.) to King's vituperatively expressed abhorrence of 'Literary Welsh'—'no-one's native language', 'artificial' (both almost tautologically true of any literary idiom) and conspiratorially proliferating 'at the expense of Colloquial Welsh, neglected and relentlessly disparaged by a powerful (Welsh-speaking) minority who had much to gain from putting the main means of expression of the cultural identity out of the reach of the majority' (frankly, I find it difficult to reconcile the image of Kate Roberts's writing with this description of a tentacled, scheming and rapacious 'literary language'.) While the author does occasionally refer to the 'literary language' as a valid system, this attention is largely wasted, for reasons enlarged on below.

Approaches to the complex Italian language-variety issue could be instructive in this context, with several dimensions resolved ('Italiano standard'—'regionale'—'dialetto' in one dimension, 'scritto'—'parlato' in another, 'colto'—'popolare' in another, register and genre varieties in yet another, with all possible blends and gradations.

King seems relatively well-disposed towards Cymraeg Byw. As a native speaker of Modern (Israeli) Hebrew, this reviewer frankly admits to first-hand involvement with his own language's political wasps' nest: personally, I believe King's ire would have been better directed against this latter construct, 'artificial' in the real and only linguistic sense, together with factiousness a sure-fire proven means for linguistic self-destruction.

The author's own puristic and normative-prescriptive lapses would be amusing, were they not basically so misguided: 'serious and basic errors', of the 'attempt to use o' in noun-expansion phrases (39); cf. 5, 39, 82 ('pronunciations that follow the spelling ... are very affected and should not be imitated', of the 3rd person possessive articles): King's brand of prescriptivism is no different from the one he rejects, whether he be in the 'majority' party or not.

The second point is no less crucial. This is no scientific grammar in any sense and by any standard. No methodological frame of reference is detectable, either as descriptive or applied linguistics; little sense of system is in evidence, and most general categories of grammar are misapprehended.

The terminological glossary (7ff.) is unacceptable for its naïve and uninformed definitions, and is of little scientific epistemological value; it seems straight out of the 1820 'Paths of Learning Strewn and Flowers':—schoolchildren get their terms of grammar explained on a more sophisticated level: 'adjective—a word that describes a noun, answers the question 'What kind of ...?': red, heavy, international; also my, this, etc.' I find especially misleading 'article', 'conditional', 'subject', 'syntax', 'verb-noun'. In the book itself, terminology and formulation are often worse ('letter' for morph(cm), e.g. 52; 'DRAWBACKS OF A GRAMMATICAL GENDER SYSTEM ... the essential disadvantage of a grammatical gender system for the
An animate nouns usually have their gender determined by meaning—male things are generally m., and female things f.' 41f; again, 'Adjectives are those words which describe people or things' (70, original Italics). One is shaken by statements such as 'Generally when the VN functions as a noun it corresponds to the -ing form of the verb in English, although ... sometimes the plain English verb without -ing can be more appropriate. This is usually a matter of deciding the better style in English for translation purposes—the VN is the same either way in Welsh' (130), or (135): '... the basic form of the verb ... is the VN, which is technically not a verb at all. To make it act as a verb, there are two main options in Welsh: the periphrastic method, and the inflected method...', or (138) [mi- and fe-] '... are optional ... they may be regarded as entirely optional', but 'are not meaningless'—with which I fully concur, but look in vain for a functional statement. 'What is in the garden?' is grammatically not an 'existential question' (it could well be for some, philosophically): the whole preminary discussion of existentials (160ff) is marred by conceptual shallowness and even vacancy, as is also that of the passive (216ff.—both English and Welsh) and many other grammatical topics. The pivotal nexus systems of statal {bod} predications, existential statements and ydy / yw Nominal Sentences are presented disjointedly and incoherently (141ff.), as is also the tense system in general and the responsive system, one of the elegancies of Welsh grammar (e.g. 147f., 157f.—the tags ought to have been included here); no distinction is made between word-class adverbs and adverbial-state nouns (236ff.); the homonymy of the various yn- morphs is misunderstood; so are substantival verb clauses ('that'— forms; cf. 311ff.); possession is treated in the section of 'English Words Causing Particular Translation Problems', and so on and so forth.

2. Occasional turns of phrase, explicit advice for 'the learner' (e.g. 139) and the prevalent generative way of expression, confirm the suspicion that the work is indeed meant as a practical guide for learners of Welsh. Even so several methodological defects still flaw the entire work. First, its 'cookbook (or DIY)-instruction' generative formulation: how to arrive at a construction by a mechanical series of acts (cf. 26, 24, 28, 39, 121, 135, 297, etc). This has long been proven detrimental to intelligent, i.e. non-automatic grasp of an acquired language. Second, the work is English-orientated—English-centred, in fact, and unfortunately not in the sense of a structural contrastive presentation, but in that of a Berlitz-style conversation-book (cf. 27, 38, 94, 100ff. and passim). It is out of the question to impart insightful understanding of a language by totally relating its salient idiosyncrasies to another, one typologically so different. King seems often to lose his footing as he enters these pseudo-contrastive meanderings: see for instance 29ff., 32ff., on the article; 142ff., on statal, copular and existential roles of 'be'. (Incidentally, compare Anna Laura and Giulio Lepschy's The Italian Language Today (1991), same publisher and same series as the book under review), an excellent anglophone-orientated grammar which provides instances of serious, didactically valid contrastivism). Sometimes King even finds himself in the hat of an English grammarian (216ff., on the passive, get and be). Third, the chaotic and fragmented exposition would appear to defeat all didactic objectives. The learner finds no morphological/syntactic tables, of forms and constructions, or structurally sound ('structure-logical') ruling, or helpful bibliographical materials such as dictionaries, texts, advanced grammatical discussion and bibliographical tools. For a textbook compiler, King (for all the practical experience he must have accumulated in teaching Welsh) has little sense of taxonomy or categorization. Attempting to list endless series of practical 'rules', the author ends up by a despairing admission of 'unpredictability' (cf. 46, 49, 153).
Finally, and in my opinion most damning, is the absence of any definite authenticated corpus in which the grammatical statements are founded. Surely, King’s rejection of ‘literary Welsh’ cannot extend to, say, Kate Roberts’s work with its gamut of linguistic diysystems, or to any recorded corpus of texts? One wonders, with a strangely dispirited feeling, what validity this ‘introspective corpus’ can have, as written grammar-book illustration texts or as data texts tout court. The author’s examples constitute a formless mixture of the colloquial and the literary, the (transcribed?) spoken and the written, the informal and formal, and again with no definition and programmatic explanation of his choice.

The ‘cosmetic’ problem of the impressionistic transcription of alleged spoken forms becomes real and acute when the claims made are morphological (cf. 232f.); if the author employs any established or in any degree conventional system, we should be told so, and be given an account of the phone-to-grapheme conversion; otherwise, he cannot expect his forms and constructions to carry the weight of grammatical data. Generally speaking, I felt the lack of any textual reference whatsoever to be an embarrassment and a strain on the credibility of the description.

3. King’s treatment shows little insight into the grammatical system of Welsh. He seems strangely unaware of the interrelation between phenomena (he is little interested in grammatical relations as such, at all), and has not got the measure of most central systems.

On a few specific points of central issue/import, following the order of King’s exposition:

The mutations (14ff.): a morpho-phonological signalling feature, not a mere phonological phenomenon. The listing on p. 17 is unstructured and imperspicuous; the ‘Grammatical Mutation’ list (19f.) makes incomplete, rough-and-ready, erroneous or dubious statements, e.g. on the lenition following a finite verb (‘after the subject of the sentence’, also 22f.), or on the sensitive system of grammatical-role marking in the finite verb: King’s momentous claim here, that all finite verbs are lenited, finds no discussion or development elsewhere. The author misses a descriptively as well as didactically precious opportunity for defining pertinent lenition in its essential status-signalling role, marking adverbal functions (predicative, object, adverbial, cf. also 23f.) The cohesion-marking lenition of the infinitive in the *r—with-infinitive* construction is misconstrued (23), as is the gender-motivated and cohesional ‘feminine’ lenition of substantive and adjective (31f., begging the question of gender marking; 40ff., this is not restricted to the definite article). Many special cases of lenition, e.g. Proper-Name appositive lenition, are simply ignored.

The syntagmatics and functional specifics of the various y n-morphs, especially as constituents of {bod} clauses, are handled extremely badly (24: ‘the particle written yn mutates nouns and adjectives, but leaves VNs unchanged’, fusing three homonyms and four different patterns!).

‘Focused Sentences’ (25ff.): there is total neglect of the range of issues roughly falling under the heading of ‘mise en relief’, so deliciously pervasive in Welsh; the Cleft Sentence is ignored, let alone its non-polemic role or form (Nhad gyd wedi marw; Be sy’; Lwsa? Wiliam ‘cw sy’n gas wrtha’i [T. Rowland Hughes], responsive-expllicative); the idiomatic Ydi, mae Cymru ar werth construction also calls for special attention. The grammar of pronouns, articles and determination in general is blurred and trivialized (cf. 29ff.: ‘this distinction’ [i.e. of zero and indefinite] matters only in English’; as in English, German, French (unlike Italian, Spanish or Greek and Latin), ffr, dy- are possessive determinators (‘articles’), not adjectives, 80ff.; ‘in spoken Welsh this ... is phrased as the ... here’, 85; ‘Pronouns are words that stand in place of nouns’, 90—as simple as that, and
all pronouns; the relative pronouns 'look [in English] like interrogatives ... but are used instead to refer back to something already mentioned', 102).

Mi- and fe- are as much a characteristic of literary Welsh as of the spoken variety (cf. 138); it is certainly not true that 'the inflected future does the job of the present in literary Welsh where an idea of continuity or state is involved' (140); the 'present-future' (better 'aorist', in the sense of an extratemporal tense, as in Turkish) is largely restricted in its non-future reference, especially to performative roles. Most examples of the gweud-future (189) are subtly modal ('wnei di di dim cu togi'r dydd y froth wrth ochmod'); neither am- nor i- futures are discussed.

4. One misses in this work unified, integrated, rational accounts of many important phenomena and subsystems of Welsh grammar. To take some examples in this reviewer's range of interest: the grammar of the Infinitive or verb-noun, besides its roles following prepositions (e.g. Y peth gorau ydi i mi beidio â duwed dim, or I mi gael dechrau yn y dechrau); Nominal Sentence ('Brawddeg Enwol') patterning with full constituency information and pattern specifics, including information structuring (theme/rheme, focus/topic constituents): King makes do with relating ydi / yw to bod and to some very immediate English translation-equivalents (100f., 142ff.). We miss an in-depth, unified treatment of the noun determination syndrome, extending beyond the articles, to comprise, for instance, expansion specifics for non-specific nuclei: golwg heb fod hollol o ddof'felly i greu trefn gymdeithasol wedi ei seilio ar gyfiau' (of the special deictic-existential nature and syntax of dyna/dyma, here almost wholly ignored; of the narratological and syntactic functioning of the narrative tenses; of the various grammatical roles of gweud, and so on. As a matter of fact, a comprehensive structural grammar of Modern Welsh, both literary and colloquial, is still an urgently needed desideratum. The book under review, for all its merit for putting the colloquial varieties of Welsh in focus, cannot be considered satisfactory in that respect; indeed it cannot be considered a scientific exposition of grammar for the serious student.

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Bydd croeso mawr i'r gyfrol hon, yr astudiaeth fwyaf sy'n sôn am enwau teuluol Llydaweg, ac un a ddylleu apelio at gyfraniw o bobol, yn Llydaw a'r tu hwnt. Ymdrinnir ynddi a thros 5,000 o enwau teuluol, gan gynnwys y 1,200 o enwau mwyaf cyffredin o fewn pum departement Llydaw. Mae fel y waith cryn dipyn yn fwy uchelgeisiol na 1700 noms de famille bretons (Sant-Brieg, 1982), tt. 1–80, gan yr un awdur. Cydnebydd Le Menn ei fod yn betrus wrth gyflwyno ei ymchwil i'r ymchwil rhywnewydd, gan fod y maes yn un anferth ac yn llawn anawsterau, yn enwedig wrth beidio ag ymgyfngu i ymdrin ag enwau o darddiad Celtaidd yn unig. Mae yn y pum departement thwng 75,000 a 80,000 o enwau teuluol, heb gyfrif y rhai hynny sydd bellach yn anarferedig. Cyflwynir y gyfrif fel gwaith anorffenedig, un y gofeithir ei ddiwygio a’i wella dros y blynyddoedd a chydy chymorth y darllenwyr. Mae’r enwau wedi’u rhestru yn nhrefn yr wyddor mewn argraffiadau bellach.