The literature of Wales is one of the oldest continuous literary traditions in Europe. The earliest surviving poetry was forged in the battlefields of post-Roman Wales and the 'Old North' of Britain, and the Welsh-language poets of today still write within the same poetic tradition. In the early twentieth century, Welsh writers in English outnumbered writers in Welsh for the first time, generating new modes of writing and a crisis of national identity which began to resolve itself at the end of the twentieth century with the political devolution of Wales within the United Kingdom. By considering the two literatures side by side, this book argues that bilingualism is now a normative condition in Wales. Written by leading scholars, this book provides a comprehensive chronological guide to fifteen centuries of Welsh literature and Welsh writing in English against a backdrop of key historical and political events in Britain.

Geraint Evans grew up in a Welsh-speaking community in north Wales and studied at the universities of London, Swansea, and Cambridge. After teaching Celtic Studies at the University of Sydney, he returned to Wales where he is now Senior Lecturer in English at Swansea University and a member of the Centre for Research into the English Literature and Language of Wales (CREW). His research interests include modernism, Welsh writing in English, and the history of the book in Britain.

Helen Fulton trained as a Celticist at the University of Oxford and did postdoctoral research in medieval Welsh poetry at the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies in Aberystwyth. She taught at the University of Sydney before returning to the UK where she held chairs of medieval literature at the universities of Swansea and York. She is now Professor of Medieval Literature at the University of Bristol. She has published in both Welsh and English and specializes in the politics of literary production in medieval Wales and England.
THE CAMBRIDGE
HISTORY OF
WELSH LITERATURE

Edited by
GERAINT EVANS
Swansea University
HELEN FULTON
University of Bristol
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Contributors

SUSAN ARONSTEIN is Professor of English and Honors at the University of Wyoming. She is the author of *Hollywood Knights: Arthurian Cinema and the Politics of Nostalgia* (2005) and *British Arthurian Narrative* (2012) as well as the co-editor of *Disney’s Middle Ages: A Fairy Tale and Fantasy Past* (2012). Her articles on medieval Arthurian romance, medieval film, medievalism, and Disney have appeared in numerous books and journals, including *Exemplaria, Prose Studies, Assays, Cinema Journal, Theatre Survey, Women’s Studies,* and *Studies in Medievalism.*

WILLIAM CHRISTIE is Professor and Head of the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. He was foundation president of the Romantic Studies Association of Australasia (2010–2015) and is the author of *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Literary Life* (2006) – awarded the NSW Premier’s Biennial Prize for Literary Scholarship in 2008 – *The Letters of Francis Jeffrey to Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle* (2008), *The Edinburgh Review in the Literary Culture of Romantic Britain* (2009), *Dylan Thomas: A Literary Life* (2014), and *The Two Romanticisms, and Other Essays* (2016). Recent research includes an Australian Research Council project entitled ‘An Open University: Public Lecturing in the Romantic Period’ and a network of scholars exploring cultural relations between China and the West in the modern world. For many years president of the Dylan Thomas Society of Australia (1998–2005), he is also the author of *Under Mulga Wood* (2004), an award-winning imitation of Dylan Thomas’s *Under Milk Wood* that has enjoyed performances around Australia and has been broadcast on ABC national radio.

MARY-ANN CONSTANTINE is Reader at the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies. She works on the literature and history of Romantic-period Wales and Brittany, and has a particular interest in travel...
List of Contributors


Michelle Deininger is Co-ordinating Lecturer in Humanities in Continuing and Professional Education at Cardiff University. Michelle completed her AHRC-funded doctoral thesis at Cardiff University, which mapped a tradition of the female-authored short story in Wales. She has published a number of articles and book chapters and her recent research includes a monograph, Scholarship and Sisterhood: Women, Writing and Higher Education.

Elizabeth Edwards is Research Fellow at the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth. Her publications include English-Language Poetry from Wales 1789–1806 (2013) and Richard Llwyd: Beaumaris Bay and Other Poems (2016). Recent research includes a monograph on eighteenth-century women’s writing.

Alice Entwistle is Professor of Textual Aesthetics and Contemporary Poetry at the University of South Wales. Research projects include critical monographs on the work of bilingual Welsh poet Gwyneth Lewis and the Belfast-based writer Ciaran Carson.

Geraint Evans is Senior Lecturer in English at Swansea University. His research interests include literary modernism, Welsh writing in English, and the history of the book in Britain, often with a focus on the languages and cultures of Wales and their interaction with England and with international English culture.

Helen Fulton is Professor of Medieval Literature at the University of Bristol. She has published widely on medieval Welsh and English literatures, including Arthurian literature, political poetry, and urban culture. She is a Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales and of the Society of Antiquaries. Recent publications include the edited collection Urban Culture in Medieval Wales (2012) and the co-edited volume Anglo-Italian Cultural Relations in the Later Middle Ages (2018).
List of Contributors

Katie Gramich is Professor of English Literature at Cardiff University. She specializes in modern literature from Wales, women’s writing, poetry, and translation. Her monographs Twentieth-Century Women’s Writing in Wales: Land, Gender, Belonging (2007) and Kate Roberts (2011) are both published by the University of Wales Press. Recent research includes an edition and translation of the work of the fifteenth-century poet, Gwerful Mechain.

Melinda Gray completed her PhD in the Department of Comparative Literature at Harvard University. Her research focuses on cultural relationships between Wales, England, and North America in the late nineteenth century.

Tudur Hallam is Chair and Professor of Welsh at Swansea University. His publications include a book on literary theory and canon formation, Canon Ein Llên: Saunders Lewis, R. M. Jones ac Alan Llywyd (2007) and a study of Saunders Lewis’s poetics as playwright, Saunders y Dramodydd (2013). In 2016–2017, he was a Fulbright visiting professor at the University of Houston, based at Arte Público Press.

E. Wyn James was formerly professor in the School of Welsh at Cardiff University and co-director of the university’s Centre for Welsh American Studies. He is an authority on Welsh literature and culture of the modern period and has published widely in areas relating to religion, identity, gender studies, folklore, and book history. Particular research interests include the anti-slavery movement and the Welsh diaspora in Patagonia. Professor James has held visiting fellowships at the universities of Harvard and Cambridge and is a Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales.

Dafydd Johnston is Director of the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies in Aberystwyth. Formerly Professor of Welsh at Swansea University, he led the AHRC-funded project based there which produced the online edition of the poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym (www.dafyddapgwilym.net) and was main editor of the print volume, Cerddi Dafydd ap Gwilym (2010). Among his recent publications is The Literature of Wales (2017).

David Klausner is Professor Emeritus of English and Medieval Studies at the University of Toronto, where he teaches Old and Middle English and Middle Welsh. His publications include the volumes in the series Records of Early English Drama for Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and Wales, and he is completing the research for the North Riding of Yorkshire.
List of Contributors

Stephen Knight is Honorary Professor in Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne. He previously held professorial chairs at the universities of Sydney and Cardiff. He has published extensively on Welsh and English literature from the Middle Ages to the present day.

Llŷr Gwyn Lewis studied at Cardiff and Oxford before completing a doctorate on the work of T. Gwynn Jones and W. B. Yeats. Following periods as a lecturer in Welsh at Swansea and Cardiff universities, he now works as resource editor at the Welsh Joint Education Committee in Cardiff. He has published articles, poetry, and fiction in periodicals including Llên Cymru, the International Journal of Welsh Writing in English, Ysgrifau Beirniadol, Poetry Wales, Taliesin, and O’r Pedwar Gwynt.

Diana Luft is a Wellcome Trust Research Fellow at the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies in Aberystwyth, where she is editing the corpus of medieval Welsh medical texts.

Seán Aeron Martin completed an MA in History at Bangor University in 2017. His MA dissertation explored Euroscepticism in Britain during the early 1990s. His PhD at Bangor University, funded by the Great Heritage Project, examines the politics of nuclear power and nuclear landscapes in north Wales.

Catherine McKenna is Margaret Brooks Robinson Professor of Celtic Languages and Literatures at Harvard University. She is one of the editors of the standard edition of the Poets of the Princes (Cyfres Beirdd y Tywysogion) and has also written on Welsh narrative prose and on the structure of some medieval Welsh manuscripts.

Jamie Medhurst is Reader in Film, Television and Media and co-director of the Centre for Media History at Aberystwyth University. He is also lead editor of the journal Media History. He has published widely on broadcasting history, including A History of Independent Television in Wales (2010). He is writing a book on the early years of television and the BBC and is leading a Leverhulme Trust Research Project on ‘Television and Society in Wales in the 1970s’. Jamie sits on advisory boards for the Wales National Broadcast Archive and the ‘BBC Connected Histories’ project.

Paul O’Leary is the Sir John Williams Professor of Welsh History at Aberystwyth University. He writes on migration, urban development, and interactions between Wales and the wider world. He is co-editor of the Welsh

Katharine K. Olson received a joint PhD in History and Celtic Studies from Harvard University. She subsequently held the Sir John Rhys Scholarship in Celtic Studies at Jesus College, Oxford, and postdoctoral fellowships from the British Academy and Harvard University. Formerly Lecturer in Medieval and Early Modern History at Bangor University, she is Assistant Professor of History at San José State University (California State University) in California and an Honorary Research Associate of Bangor University. Research projects include a major monograph on religion, culture, and Reformation in Wales and the Marches for Oxford University Press and the British Academy.

Angharad Price is Professor of Welsh at Bangor University and has published widely on modern Welsh literature, especially in comparative contexts. Her study of the early career of T. H. Parry-Williams, *Ffarwél i Freiburg* (2013), won the Ellis Griffith Prize and was shortlisted for the Wales Book of the Year award in 2014.


Euryn Rhys Roberts is Lecturer in Medieval and Welsh History at Bangor University. He was a contributor to the Polish National Science Centre-funded project ‘Imagined Communities: Constructing Collective Identities in Medieval Europe’ from 2013 to 2016. His recent research is on Welsh identity in the period between the Norman and Edwardian conquests.

Lisa Sheppard is Lecturer in Welsh at Cardiff University. Her research examines the contemporary literature of Wales in both Welsh and English, with a particular focus on how the relationships between different linguistic
and ethnic communities in Wales are portrayed. Her monograph *Y Gymru ‘Ddu’ a’r Ddalen ‘Wen’* (2018) examines the depiction of multiculturalism in contemporary Welsh fiction.

**M. WYNN THOMAS** is Professor of English and Emyr Humphreys Professor of Welsh Writing in English, Swansea University. A Fellow of the British Academy and a Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales, he has published over two dozen books on the poetry of Walt Whitman and on the two literatures of Wales. His most recent publications are *Cyfan-dir Cymru* (2017) and *All That Is Wales* (2017), Welsh Book of the Year 2018.


**ANDREW WEBB** is Senior Lecturer at Bangor University, where he specializes in Welsh Writing in English. His monograph *Edward Thomas and World Literary Studies* was published in 2013.

**MARI ELIN WILLIAM** is Lecturer in Modern History at Bangor University. She specializes in post-1945 Wales and has published on the history of Welsh devolution. Her recent research is on identity and modernization, particularly in north-east Wales.

**CHRIS WILLIAMS** is Head of the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences at University College Cork. Previously he was Professor of History and Head of the School of History, Archaeology and Religion at Cardiff University. His most recent publication is ‘A Question of “Legitimate Pride”? The 38th (Welsh) Division at the Battle of Mametz Wood, July 1916’ (Welsh History Review, 2017), and he continues to work digitally on the cartoons of J. M. Staniforth (1863–1921) at www.cartoonww1.org.

**GRUFFYDD ALED WILLIAMS** is Emeritus Professor of Welsh at Aberystwyth University. He has published widely on Welsh medieval and renaissance literature. His recent publications include *Dyddiau Olaf Owain Glyndŵr*, winner of the Literature Wales creative-non-fiction prize in 2016, also published in an English version, *The Last Days of Owain Glyndŵr* (2017). In 2017 he
List of Contributors

published in the journal Llên Cymru a study of Anglo-Welsh cultural interaction at Lleweni, Denbighshire, home of the Salusbury family during the Tudor and early Stuart period.

Kevin Williams is former Professor of Media and Cultural History at Swansea University. His main research area is the history of mass communication, including print and broadcast media. He has published widely on these topics and on the media in Wales.

Mark Williams is Associate Professor in Global Medieval Literature and Fellow and Tutor in English at St Edmund Hall, University of Oxford. He is the author of Fiery Shapes: Celestial Portents and Astrology in Ireland and Wales, 700–1700 (2010) and Ireland’s Immortals: A History of the Gods of Irish Myth (2016). Recent research includes a book of essays on magic and enchantment in medieval Irish and Welsh literature.
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Abbreviations

AHRC Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK)
BBCS Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies
BL British Library, London
CMCS Cambrian [formerly Cambridge] Medieval Celtic Studies
GPC Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru, Dictionary of Welsh
Mod. W. Modern Welsh
MW Middle Welsh
n.d. no date (of publication)
NLW National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth
plu. plural
RED: Wales Records of Early Drama: Wales (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005)
s.a. Latin sine anno, ‘without date’ (of publication)
s.l. Latin sine loco, ‘without a place’ (of publication)
s.n. Latin sine nomine, ‘without a name’ (of publisher)
THSC Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion
TNA The National Archives, Kew
W. Welsh
**Glossary of Welsh Literary Terms**

*awdl, plu. awdlau*
Any long poem, written in *cynghanedd*, which uses the traditional strict metres. This term also applies to the poem which is normally required in the competition for the chair in modern *eisteddfoda*.

*bro, plu. broydd*
A richly connotative term for ‘environ, region, valley, neighbourhood’.

*brut, brud*
A chronicle which derives from or which continues Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*. The term *brud* also refers to prophecy in Welsh.

*canu rhydd*
Poetry or song composed in free metre (non-syllabic). It became popular in the late Middle Ages and especially after the decline of the bardic order.

*cynfardd, plu. cynfeirdd*
The poets of the earliest period whose work has survived, including Taliesin and Aneirin, whose work is placed in the sixth century by the *Historia Brittonum*.

*cynghanedd*
An intricate system of consonantal repetition and internal rhyme which was codified over centuries and which is normally required in every line of strict-metre poetry.

*cywydd*
One of the most popular of the twenty-four metres practised by the professional poets of medieval Wales, particularly associated with the period after the Poets of the Princes, that is, c. 1300–1500. The *cywydd* today is a verse
Glossary of Welsh Literary Terms

paragraph of rhyming couplets, written in *cynghanedd*, where each line is of seven syllables and the final syllables in each rhymed couplet must be stressed and unstressed. There is a competition for the best *cywydd* at the National Eisteddfod.

**cywyddwr**, plu. *cywyddwyr*
The poets of the period after the Poets of the Princes who mostly composed in the *cywydd* metre.

**eisteddfod**, plu. *eisteddfodau*
Originally an assembly of poets, the modern eisteddfod is a competitive cultural festival for literary, musical and other disciplines. The National Eisteddfod takes place every year during the first week of August.

**englyn**, plu. *englynion*
One of the most popular of the traditional metres for *cynghanedd* poetry, of which there are a number of variations. Verses are usually of three or four lines.

**englyn unodl union**
The most popular form of the *englyn*, a four-line single-rhymed stanza in full *cynghanedd* with a syllable count of ten, six, seven and seven.

**gogynfardd**, plu. *gogynfeirdd*
The Poets of the Princes, who flourished between the first half of the twelfth and the second half of the fourteenth century, but excluding those later poets who used the *cywydd* metre.

**hengerdd**
The poetry of the *cynfeirdd*, a term which was originally used to denote the work of the sixth-century poets mentioned in the *Historia Brittonum*, including Taliesin and Aneirin, but now used for all the early poetry before the *gogynfeirdd*.

**hir-a-thoddaid**
One of the twenty-four traditional metres for poetry written in *cynghanedd*, it forms the first two lines of the popular *englyn unodl union*.

**Mabinogi, Mabinogion**
The Four Branches of the *Mabinogi, Pedair Cainc y Mabinogi*, are the four traditionally related tales at the heart of the group of medieval Welsh prose tales which were collected and translated in the nineteenth century by Charlotte Guest, who adopted the scribal neologism
‘Mabinogion’ as a collective term. The form *Mabinogi* generally refers to the Four Branches, while the form *Mabinogion* refers to all eleven tales collected and published by Guest.

**pryddest**
A long poem not written in full *cynghanedd*. In modern *eisteddfodau* the *pryddest* is the name of the poem which is normally required in the competition for the Crown.

**uchelwr, plu. uchelwyr**
Literally ‘high men’ (noblemen), this term was used to describe the medieval Welsh gentry, especially the class of landowners and administrators which emerged after the fall of the princes in 1282.
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