A response (04/12/2004) by the author to the review by Graham R. Isaac (2004 *JCeltL* 8:163–70) of Iwan Wmffre *Language and Place-names in Wales: The Evidence of Toponymy in Cardiganshire*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press. 2003.

I heartily welcome reviews of my work since there is no worse snub to a piece of work than for it to be passed over in silence. I am also eager to read criticisms which my work may provoke since this forms part of the necessary cut and thrust, the necessary dialogue which nourishes erudition. Even if a number of praiseworthy points about my book are actually expressed by Isaac, they comprise barely over a page in a review that reaches almost to seven pages. As accommodating as I wish to be of criticisms of any of my published works, the review in question does constitute a tendentious portrayal of what I wrote which, with unsubstantiated allegations and inaccuracies, adds up to a rather misrepresentative appraisal of what was written. Clarification is in order.

In the first place, there is the allegation that my work is ideologically- and politically-oriented. Obviously, no one is exempt from possessing some ideology or other in the strict dictionary definition, but the reviewer knows English too well to be unaware of the negative connotation of 'ideological', which equates here with being blinded through the pursuit of some agenda or the other. Likewise, the strict dictionary definition of 'political' is clearly not adhered to by the reviewer, its meaning equates here with the colloquial negative connotation – commonly found in Britain – of being involved in questionable manipulation of facts. I must reject the description of my work as political in any sense and would have had no objection had the reviewer used the perfectly serviceable 'theoretical' rather than 'ideological' when he referred to the orientation of my work.

It is disconcerting to find that the reviewer paints me into a corner to which I emphatically do not belong, by means of the tendentious paraphrasing of certain adjectives with the intent of making my 'bias' known. In reference to the traditional spoken language, the deliberate emphasis and repetition ad nauseam in the review of the adjective 'true' and 'pure' insinuates that I have both an absolute and naïve view of the relationship between traditional colloquial Welsh and literary forms of the language. This is misleading. A comprehensive trawl of the terms used in my book reveals that these adjectives occur in my book in contexts with which the reviewer takes exception in the following fashion: 'true' (41, 244, 365), 'pure' (74, 218, 239, 370) as does another similar adjective 'genuine' (59, 60, 61, 316). It is understandable that the use of such adjectives might be seen as contentious, and in some cases I am open to the suggestion that a more neutral word would have been better employed – indeed, each of these terms at some point was put between hyphens by me (244; 370; 59) which suggests that I was aware of their limitations. However, the two adjectives that occur most commonly in my book – in contexts with which the reviewer takes exception – are the following: 'natural' (51, 58, 60, 61, 62, 63, 110, 126, 190, 196, 212, 223, 294, 317, 319, 354) and 'traditional' (2, 3, 5, 10, 14, 34, 35, 36, 39, 42, 45, 48, 50, 51, 52, 53, 61, 64, 84, 134, 161, 172, 175, 180, 186, 196, 207, 219, 228, 236, 239, 246, 256, 262, 288, 294, 308, 316, 319, 322, 338). I make no excuses for the terms 'traditional', 'natural' – nor in general for the more contentious 'true', 'pure' and 'genuine': they are used by me to refer to the common colloquial Welsh spoken by everyone in the traditional Welsh-speaking society. It is clear that this register is more representative of the Welsh language than the composed written register, as well as being more spontaneous, i.e. more natural. It is apparent that this was always so, for since speech precedes literacy in human society it can hardly be construed as linguistic unorthodoxy to state that the colloquial register of a language is the most basic as well as the most representative form of language (even if more research happens to be carried

out on the written aspect of language and even if only written testimony exists before 1900). Perhaps Isaac's problem with the point of view that colloquial speech is the basic register of language is that he is a medievalist-cum-classical scholar and he is constrained through his chosen specialism to deal only with linguistic corpora. Contemporary descriptive linguists like myself, on the other hand, can and need to address this issue, and investigations into the varied sources of Welsh in past ages legitimises – within reason – some inferences as to what may have constituted colloquial and literary registers in those times. That my view of the contrast between the colloquial and literary registers in Welsh is painted by the reviewer as "a quasi-Rousseauan idealization of the 'pure dialect speaker, the child of linguistic 'nature' unsullied by the corruption of a literate civilization," is just as he admits a parody, and a facile and misleading one at that. In at least two cases (269, 350) I used the adjective 'traditional' to refer to spelling.

The reviewer does not like the fact that I used 'warped', 'multiplication' and 'mayhem' to describe the effect of the adoption of the standards of literary Welsh by speakers. I did not mean 'warped' in a pejorative way, what I was referring to specifically with such adjectives was the way in which the adoption of the phonological patterns associated with literary Welsh have intruded into, interfered with, disturbed and perturbed the already established phonological patterns of the Welsh of Ceredigion and of other areas. This has resulted in an even more confusing 'mish-mash' of – sometimes competing – linguistic systems. Contrary to naïve expectations that the spread of education establishes linguistic uniformity, it is in fact linguistic confusion which has increased in the case of Welsh with the spread of education (at least over the three generations leading to today, with yet no sign of a simpler outcome). A clear example relating to the vocabulary is the introduction since the 1920s of a new decimal numbering system, imperfectly learnt by Welsh speakers but which nevertheless played a part in leading them to abandon, though not completely, the traditional vigesimal numbering system, so that today we have both *dai-ddeg* and *igen* where originally there was just *igen*. The lack of interference in this matter by the indifferent authorities in Brittany meant that Breton speakers in the same period managed to keep a better control over their traditional vigesimal numbering system than did contemporary Welsh speakers. The lexical demonstration of a doublet due to the interference of literary Welsh is matched by similar doublets of phonological nature which affect a high proportion of words used in speech and this confusion brought about by a high literacy rate was commented upon by such knowledgeable researchers as the Norwegian linguists Alf Sommerfelt in 1926 and Magne Oftedal in 1972, who were already familiar with Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Breton (51–52). From reading the review, one might be excused for believing that I view the literary language's influence as 'pernicious' – this word never appears in my book. I have already been parodied, now I am being misquoted. This is not a scholarly approach.

The reviewer takes exception to my criticism of the scholarship of John Morris-Jones. The defence of Morris-Jones by the reviewer and the accusation that I "misrepresent his achievement in formulating a standard Welsh orthography" is a non-sequitur, since it should be clear to all, even from a casual perusal of the review, that I am not involved in judging the achievements of that scholar, but rather a specific linguistic point which he neglected. The reviewer then devotes a paragraph to the question as to why the conventions of a norm need not reflect the colloquial register at which point he has entered into an imaginary debate with me. The reviewer implies that Morris-Jones, as the establisher of a norm, need not have been concerned with "an accurate descriptive representation" which is at odds with Morris-Jones's professed intention to write a "descriptive grammar" in his magisterial 1913 *A Welsh Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon) iii. The current Welsh standard was established in 1928, but

though this was largely based on Morris-Jones's *Welsh Grammar*, the 1913 opus, to which I refer, was not published as an authoritative primer establishing a norm but as an historical description of Welsh. And in fact it is sprinkled with references to colloquial Welsh whenever this suited Morris-Jones's purpose. *A Welsh Grammar* should be judged by the standards applicable to any attempt to describe the language and, indeed, was so criticised at the time by the eminent Celticist Joseph Loth for the very same reasons (81). It is sophistry to argue, as the reviewer does, that Morris-Jones should be subtracted from linguistic scrutiny and be beyond reproach because of his undoubted achievements. We are involved in scholarship not in idol-worship. A remark is in order here: if, as the reviewer maintains that "a literary standard language is … not a part of a search for a 'true picture' of language", how are we to explain the phenomenon of the concerted and fairly successful efforts by Welsh scholars and others to adapt literary Welsh to colloquial Welsh in the movement known as Cymraeg Byw in the 1960s and the 1970s?

The reviewer takes violent exception at what he deems my 'political turn' (?!) and 'extraordinary' suggestion that Welsh literature was stronger in northern Wales than in southern Wales in the early Modern period. From my use of the word "stronger" the reviewer took the liberty of supposing that I believe the literary language of the *cynghanedd* poets to have been "a *specifically* northern phenomenon" (my emphasis). Such misrepresentation cannot be allowed to stand. The reviewer, a medievalist, also fails to digest that what was clearly written in the book was "in the early Modern period". Subsequent recourse by him to the analysis of the geographical provenance of the fifty-six or so poets in the twenty-five published volumes of the series *Beirdd yr Uchelwyr* ('Poets of the Nobility') is therefore wide of the mark for that series covers the period 1282–1527. Now, it is a universally accepted historical convention that the early Modern period extends from 1492 (the discovery of America) to 1789 (the French Revolution), or more mathematically from 1500 to 1750. Does the reviewer really believe that temporal considerations have no significance? For Wales, there is a good case to include the period preceding 1536 (the Act of Incorporation of Wales into England) in the late Medieval period rather than the early Modern period and I will keep this in consideration. Of the fifty-two or so locatable poets, only five date to the early sixteenth century: four from the North (Huw ap Dafydd ap Llywelyn Madog, Siôn ap Hywel, Mathau Brwmffild, Siôn Ceri) and one from the South (Dafydd Epynt). In quoting Eurys Rowlands, my reviewer simply confirms that he is determined at all costs to understand my "early Modern" as meaning Medieval, since Rowlands's essay is in volume two of the series *A Guide to Welsh Literature* which also covers *c*.1280–*c*.1550, rather than in the relevant volume three of the series which covers 1530–1700. Now, even were we to accept the reviewer's analysis of the provenance of poets of the period 1282–1527 as relevant – which of course we cannot – it seems significant that he creates ex-nihilo a 'midlands' category which subtracts nine poets from the northern total of thirty-one and thus provides an apparent balance of twenty-two northern poets to the twenty-one poets from Ceredigion and the South. Unlike the difference between northern and southern medieval Welsh, there is no diagnostic phonological form that distinguishes the late medieval language of the midlands – basically Montgomeryshire – from the rest of northern Wales. Furthermore, whilst my suggestion that Welsh literature was stronger in the north than in the south is treated as 'extraordinary' by the reviewer – who obviously has the late Medieval situation in mind – it is interesting to note that the official website blurb that accompanies M. Paul Bryant-Quinn's 2003 *Gwaith Ieuan ap Llywelyn Fychan, Ieuan Llwyd Brydydd a Lewys Aled* (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies) manages to say, for the fifteenth century, that "the vale of Conwy and the vale of Clwyd and their environs [in the North] were amongst the most literary-conscious areas in Wales" (*Yn y bymthegfed ganrif yr oedd Dyffryn Conwy a*

Dyffryn Clwyd a'u cyffiniau ymhlith ardaloedd mwyaf llenyddol effro Cymru) [**www.aber.ac.uk/~awcwww/s/p3_gillf.html**]. I am afraid that the reviewer's case against my statement concerning the relative strengths of Welsh literature in northern and southern Wales in the early Modern era only impresses by its chronological sloppiness as well as by its gross manipulation of statistics.

On to the debate between phonemic and phonetic: the reviewer takes exception to my sentence "It is hoped that … neither the *phonetic* nor the *phonemic* poles of notation will be neglected, but will be synthesized as much as is practically possible" (5). Here I accept that the formulation was open to misinterpretation, I should have written "neither the phonetic nor the phonemic approaches to notation will be neglected, but will be synthesized as much as is practically possible". It is true that phonetics and phonemics are conceptually quite different, but all who venture on the practical task of noting a sound in IPA characters must tread carefully between being guided by phonetic or phonemic considerations – and it is in the sense of the varying balance of these considerations in the notation of various scholars that there does exist a sliding-scale which proceeds between a phonetically-based 'pole' and a phonemically-based 'pole'. As to the use of the word "synthesising" in the context of phonetic and phonemic considerations, I make no excuse. My research covered a much larger area than allowed for a purely phonemic analysis of the speakers interviewed. Phonetic considerations had the highest priority although there can be no doubt that my perception was also governed by my phonemic background as a native speaker of Welsh. That I have refused to commit myself either to a phonetic or a phonemic notation is not true. I committed myself – that much should have been obvious – to noting phonemic distinctions, but I did not stop there, I also noted allophonic and even purely phonetic distinctions. I may have missed some finer phonetic distinctions in my notation but I do not think I missed any phonemic distinctions. But now we are restricting ourselves to one particular approach to the notation of speech and whilst I have always accepted the usefulness of classifying sounds through opposing minimal pairs, I have a number of misgivings concerning phonemic theory as a panacea that will solve all problems concerning speech sounds. Phonemic theory tends to be restricted to semantic distinctions; it is not particularly interested in actual realisational differences of the same words in different areas, thus the opposing of **fɪnɔn** of one area against **fənɔn** of another area (both meaning 'well, fountain') is of no interest to phonemic theory. Yet it is often of interest to native speakers and generally so to dialectologists. Phonemic theory also tends to elevate economy of notation to the status of an overwhelming consideration, thus one school of Welsh phonemicists prefers to oppose /**e**/ vs. /**e:**/, whereas another school prefers to oppose /**ɛ**/ vs. /**e**/. For these same sounds I note /**ɛ**/ vs. /**e:**/ which, whilst not being as economical as the previous examples, give a more detailed description of the nature of the realisations involved. The field researcher will always come across realisations that are difficult if not impossible to ascribe neatly to one phoneme rather than to another (see a practical example in p.145) and in such circumstances phonetic rather than phonemic considerations are more useful. The theoretician is welcome to use my data to construct a phonemic classification, but I suspect that blind adherence to common phonemic dogmas will lead them to attempt to codify what is in actual fact a variable and evolving set of sounds in speech. More needs to be said on this subject, but I will conclude by stating that my notation was generally *phonological* (by which I mean phonetic, without neglecting phonemic distinctions). A further explanation I would like to add is that I used brackets for phonetic notation only when dealing with a sound sequence rather than a meaningful word or name.

I cannot say much in response to examples of my "startling formulations". What is objected to here? Style or facts?

Of course, not all the reviewer's criticisms are to be deplored. It is in the paragraphs devoted to discussing the grapheme <*oe*> that I found the most constructive criticism of my work. From the useful interim survey which the reviewer gives, I accept that the <*oy, ay*> and <*oe, ae*> graphemes were not respectively associated with northern and southern Welsh texts, but that the former represent a more archaic spelling. This means that the view I advanced only as "a wholly tentative hypothesis" (149) is overturned. And I agree wholeheartedly with the reviewer when he says a more rigorous survey would clarify the relationship between these graphemes in Middle Welsh. I should point out to the reader that a survey of the medieval Welsh texts was not as 'simple' a task in 1998, when my own book was finalised, as it has subsequently become with the publication in 2002 on CD-ROM of the thirteenth-century Welsh prose texts. Having accepted the reviewer's view on the relationship of the above graphemes to each other, I find that we still disagree on what the <*e*> in <*oe, ae*> stands for. The origins of these graphemes lie in two sets which I note here as /**oɟ**, **aɟ**/ and /**oe**, **ae**/ (the symbol [ɟ] here representing a centralised semivowel for which the IPA has no symbol rather than the palatalised voiced velar stop). For the reviewer, the merging of these two sets unquestioningly led /**oe**, **ae**/ to become /**oɟ**, **aɟ**/ whilst preserving their spelling <*oe, ae*>. This is a possibility, but so also is my hypothesis that the merging of the two sets led /**oɟ**, **aɟ**/ to become /**oe**, **ae**/ and thus become spelt <*oe, ae*>. That /**oe**, **ae**/ is undoubtedly found later as /**oɟ**, **aɟ**/ in northern Welsh could have been due to paradigmatic pressures exerted by derivatives in penultimate syllables where disyllabicity did not develop or remain. (And whatever we may think of the lessons of medieval Welsh metrical syllabification, the difference between a diphthong and a disyllable in a particular speech can sometimes prove very difficult to discern, see contemporary Cardiganshire Welsh examples in pp.145, 157–58.) My hypothesis concerning the development of <*oe, ae*> – from (mainly) diphthong to disyllable and back to diphthong in northern Wales – may then appear complicated at first, but at least it does attempt to account for *all* the facts whereas Isaac simply ignores the undoubted development of disyllabic <*oe, ae*> in Welsh because, for him, it is a post-medieval development and so, with the wave of a wand, can be dismissed as requiring no explanation. This just may prove be so, but the argumentation of the reviewer shows that he prefers certainties based on assumptions to uncertainties based on facts. And however difficult it proves itself to be, a holistic explanation of this problem cannot ignore when (and how and why) did <*oe, ae*> develop disyllabic realisations. The main point of contention between me and the reviewer would seem to lie in when did this disyllabisation take place: in medieval or in early Modern Welsh? My hypothesis that it took place in medieval Welsh takes comfort from the fact that it is the graphemes <*oe, ae*>, rather than the graphemes <*oy, ay*>, which prevailed in Middle Welsh – despite the fact that the latter had originally represented a more numerous original set than the former.