



When is a Knight a Knight? — Attributive Adjectives and the Use of *urdaſl/urddol* in the Middle Welsh *Ystoryaeu Seint Greal*¹

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The Middle Welsh *Ystoryaeu Seint Greal*, the ‘Stories of the Holy Grail’, are a late fourteenth-century translation of two thirteenth-century Old French Arthurian texts—*La Queste del Saint Graal* and *Le Haut Livre du Graal* (*Perlesvaus*). Statistical analysis shows evidence of a sophisticated and so far unique system for the use of the adjective *urdaſl* (Mod. Welsh *urddol*) ‘ordained’ in qualifying the status of otherwise unknown knights.

Keywords: *Ystoryaeu Seint Greal*, *Queste del Saint Graal*, *Perlesvaus*, Middle Welsh, translation, attributive adjectives, adjectival agreement, use of adjective *urdaſl/urddol*, quantitative analysis

A large proportion of the extant medieval Welsh prose texts are translations from other languages e.g. Latin or French. Since the thirteenth century there appears to have been a growing interest in foreign literature amongst the Welsh gentry. At the same time native Welsh prose continued to be copied in manuscripts but no new texts were produced (Poppe 2007: 46). Despite their obvious popularity with medieval audiences, translations have often been considered as inferior to native literature by some twentieth-century scholars (Luft 2016: 170). Among other things, adjectival number agreement with a governing plural noun was identified as a marker for—or fault of, as it was seen—a supposed translation style (Luft 2016: 170–172). Recent studies (Meelen & Nurmio 2020; Nurmio 2019; Parina & Poppe, in preparation) have put those assumptions to the test. In this paper another translation, *Ystoryaeu Seint Greal*, the ‘Stories of the Holy Grail’, is examined with a special focus on adjectival agreement in plural noun phrases. The *Ystoryaeu* present several advantages for statistical analysis: they provide substantial data due to their length. Having been translated in the late fourteenth century, they are an example for an already well-established translation tradition in medieval Wales. And, last but not least, they have been preserved in their original form without alterations by later copyists (see section 1 below). Therefore, *Ystoryaeu Seint Greal* offer a large text sample for statistical analysis that depicts linguistic features of late fourteenth-century medieval Welsh without traces of later editing.

1 This paper is based on my studies of *Ystoryaeu Seint Greal* for my PhD thesis (Zimmermann 2021).

After an introduction on sources and manuscript tradition (section 1), this paper focuses on attributive adjectives and their relation to their governing nouns with regard to position and number (section 2). Quantitative analyses test the assumption of a higher frequency of adjectival agreement in Middle Welsh translation texts. In addition, a particular pattern of use of the *Ystoryaeu*'s most frequent adjective *urda6l/urddol* 'ordained' is examined in section 3.

It might come as a surprise to find this adjective on top of the list. One would expect a common adjective like 'big' or 'small' to be more dominant. But why *urddol*? Apart from general statements of status and reputation it is used to express a certain rank in secular as well as in ecclesiastical environments, as the following entry from *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* (GPC), the main dictionary of the Welsh language, shows:

urddol:

dignified, honourable, noble, fine; honoured, dubbed (of knight); graduated; (eccl.) ordained, relating to ordination. (GPC)

The translator of *Ystoryaeu Seint Greal* uses a very specific function that *urddol* can have in Middle Welsh: it differentiates a rider from an ordained knight. The English language uses two terms to distinguish those, as does the French (*chevalier* 'knight' vs. *cavalier* 'rider'). In Middle Welsh the term *marcha6c* (Mod. Welsh *marchog*) can mean both:

*marchog*¹:

horseman, rider, jockey, mounted warrior, also fig.; nobleman in the (military) service of the king or of a lord; knight, military follower, usually of noble birth, bound by the rules of chivalry in the Middle Ages; a squire raised to honourable military rank; one who is similarly honoured in recognition of outstanding service to king or country; baronet; knight of the shire; member of the Roman order of 'equites'. (GPC)

When is a knight a knight, then? This question is answered unmistakably by adding the adjective *urddol* 'ordained' to the ambiguous *marchog*. The translator of the *Ystoryaeu* uses *urddol* exclusively to specify *marchog* or its plural. And he does so systematically. The resulting pattern, which is so far unique, is examined in this paper.

1. *Ystoryaeu Seint Greal*—The Stories of the Holy Grail

The Middle Welsh prose text *Ystoryaeu Seint Greal*, the 'Stories of the Holy Grail',² is a late fourteenth-century translation of two thirteenth-century Old

2 Luft, Thomas & Smith (2013): diplomatic online edition/transcript; Jones (1992): edition of the Middle Welsh text of the first part with modernised punctuation and capitalisation, extensive notes and background information in Modern Welsh;

French Arthurian romances—*La Queste del Saint Graal* (Pauphilet 1923)³ and *Le Haut Livre du Graal*, or *Perlesvaus* (Nitze & Jenkins 1932–37)⁴ as it is often called after one of its main protagonists.⁵ In the Welsh translation the two French sources are treated as two parts of a whole. They are referred to as *y ran gyntaf o'r Greal*, *nyt amgen no'r Keis* (Peniarth 11, fol. 109v24–109v25)⁶ ‘the first part of the Grail, that is the Quest’, *rann Walchmei* (Peniarth 11, fol. 109v26) ‘Gwalchmei’s part’⁷ and *Ystoriaeiu Seint Greal* (Peniarth 11, fol. 208v14–208v16) ‘Stories of the Holy Grail’. The *Ystoriaeiu* or parts of them are preserved in Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth MS 11 and five other manuscripts. Peniarth 11 (c. 1380) is the oldest and most complete. It is highly probable that it is also the first copy ever made of this text, as some minor uncorrected errors suggest (Lloyd-Morgan 2019b: 158). All other extant manuscripts are either copies or excerpts of Peniarth 11, apart from a fragment in Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth MS 15, which is a free rendering of a short episode in Peniarth 11 with added information from elsewhere in the text of YSG (Lloyd-Morgan 1978). YSG therefore present the advantage of being preserved untouched by later copyists.

In the French literary tradition, *Queste* and *Perlesvaus* seldom appear together in one manuscript. While the *Queste* mostly occurs with several other Arthurian romances as part of the so-called Vulgate or Lancelot-Grail cycle, *Perlesvaus* is much rarer and not integrated into any cycle. In the few instances where both *Queste* and *Perlesvaus* are combined in one book, usually one of them is much abbreviated and they are joined in a different order than in YSG. There is no extant manuscript preserving a French version that might have been the source for

Williams (1876; reprinted 1987): edition of both parts of the Middle Welsh text with an English translation. See also Lloyd-Morgan (2019b) for further information on manuscript transmission and cultural background.

- 3 See also Bogdanow & Berrie (2006) with a translation into modern French. For a summary and an introduction into the complex textual tradition of the *Queste* see Kennedy et al. (2006) and Bogdanow & Trachsler (2006).
- 4 See also Strubel (2007) with a translation into modern French, though less extensive than Nitze & Jenkins (1932–37) concerning variants. For a summary and introduction into *Perlesvaus* among other continuations of Chrétien de Troyes’s *Perceval* see Pickens, Busby & Williams (2006).
- 5 *Ystoriaeiu Seint Greal* is abbreviated as YSG henceforth. The first part, the translation of the *Queste*, will be referred to as YSG1 and the second part, the translation of the *Perlesvaus*, as YSG2.
- 6 All references to YSG following the diplomatic edition of MS Peniarth 11, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth by Luft, Thomas & Smith (2013). Additionally, for YSG1 references to Jones (1992) will be given in the footnotes: Jones 1992: 162, l. 5700.
- 7 YSG2/*Perlesvaus* begins with an account of Gwalchmei’s/Gauvain’s adventures. *Perlesvaus/Peredur* first appears after approximately the first half of the romance. Before that he is only mentioned briefly by other protagonists.

the Welsh translator. The title *Ystoryaeu Seint Greal* appears at the end of the text in a classical Middle Welsh closing formula: *ac uelly y teruyna ystoryaeu seint greal* (Peniarth 11, fol. 280v14–280v16) ‘And thus end the Stories of the Holy Grail’,⁸ while at the end of the first part a shorter title *y greal* ‘the grail’ is used (Peniarth 11, fol. 109v25).⁹ Since Peniarth 11 is a very early, if not the first, copy of YSG (Lloyd-Morgan 2019b: 158) the bipartite composition of the text seems to have been intended from the beginning. It cannot be proven with absolute certainty whether the extensive task of translating two quite long texts¹⁰ into Middle Welsh was undertaken by a single redactor or several redactors (Zimmermann 2021: 492–495).

2. Attributive Adjectives in YSG

Quite a few scholars have stated that adjectival agreement in plural noun phrases as well as a higher frequency of pre-posed adjectives was, amongst other things, a typical feature of Middle Welsh translations from other languages. A distinct ‘translation style’ was detected and—quite often—seen as inferior to a ‘native’ style (see Luft (2016) for full discussion and criticism). In Middle Welsh noun phrases, attributive adjectives regularly follow the noun with only a few exceptions. Number agreement is optional, but noun phrases where the adjective does not agree in number are frequent, i.e. a plural noun is more often than not followed by the singular of an adjective.

Post-posing without agreement

ysprydyoed *dr6c*
spirit.PL evil.SG
‘evil spirits’

(Peniarth 11, fol. 253r10)

Post-posing with agreement

marchogyon *duon*
knight.PL black.PL
‘black knights’

(Peniarth 11, fol. 254r20)

Pre-posing without agreement

eglur *wyrtheu*
evident.SG miracle.PL
‘evident miracles’

(Peniarth 11, fol. 50av23)¹¹

Pre-posing with agreement

estronyon *fforestyd*
alien.PL forest.PL
‘alien forests’

(Peniarth 11, fol. 196r13)

8 All translations in this article are by me unless otherwise stated.

9 Jones 1992: 162, l. 5700.

10 The two parts of YSG, and their French sources, are of very different length. With 111,416 words YSG2 is by almost a third longer than YSG1 with 71,210 words.

11 Jones 1992: 72, l. 2544.

Several recent quantitative analyses (Meelen & Nurmio 2020; Nurmio 2019; Parina & Poppe, in preparation), however, have shown that such a simple separation of native prose and translations is not possible. Even though there is considerable variance between the studied texts, there is no clear distinction between native prose and translations (Nurmio 2019: 180, 188–189; Meelen & Nurmio 2020: 22). While these recent analyses are mostly based on translations from Latin into Middle Welsh, YSG—being translated from French sources—add another language facet. Like the translations from Latin they do not fully agree with a presumed distinct ‘translation style’.

In figure 1 the distribution of agreeing and non-agreeing adjectives in different positions (pre-posed vs. post-posed) in plural noun phrases is investigated. Red bars (pink for *urddol*) show the numbers of adjectives that agree with their governing plural nouns i.e. plural forms of adjectives, blue bars (light blue for *urddol*) those that do not agree, i.e. those adjectives that are governed by a plural noun but are themselves singular. As noted above, *urddol* ‘ordained’ is of particular interest as it is the most frequent adjective in YSG. It is therefore treated separately from the other adjectives (‘other agree’ and ‘other non-agree’).

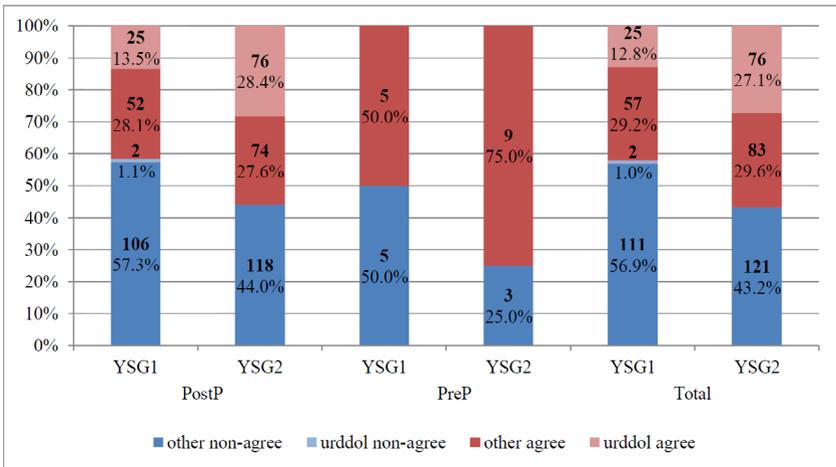


Figure 1: Distribution of agreeing (‘agree’) and non-agreeing (‘non-agree’) attributive adjectives in plural noun phrases in different positions with special focus on *urddol*¹²

12 PostP = adjective follows the noun (post-posed), PreP = adjective precedes the noun (pre-posed), ‘total’ = all attributive adjectives in plural noun phrases (post-posed + pre-posed); ‘other’ = all other adjectives apart from *urddol*.

The number of pre-posed adjectives in plural noun phrases is not significantly high. On the contrary, what catches the eye is the—expected—dominance of post-posed attributive adjectives. In YSG1, in only 10 (5.1%) of the total amount of 195 plural noun phrases with attributive adjectives does the adjective precede the noun, in YSG2 this only occurs in 12 (4.3%) of the total amount of 280 cases. These percentages are far below the 18% Poppe & Parina (in preparation) have observed for the Welsh translations from Latin in the Book of the Anchorite and still below those Meelen & Nurmio (2020: 12) found in other Arthurian texts such as *Owein* (12.5%) and *Gereint* (7.1%).¹³

In both parts of YSG post-posed attributive adjectives very often agree with their governing nouns (41.6% in YSG1 and 56.0% in YSG2). A closer look into figure 1, however, shows that this is to no small amount due to the dominance of *urddol* (see below). In YSG1 about a third of the post-posed attributive adjectives are occurrences of *urddol* and in YSG2 half of them are; it is never pre-posed.

Even though the number of pre-posed adjectives is much smaller (ten in total in YSG1 and twelve in YSG2), there seems to be a tendency of agreement between adjective and governing noun, too (50% agreement in YSG1, 75% in YSG2, 63.3% agreement in total). This differs from Meelen & Nurmio's (2020: 12) results where pre-posing correlated with low agreement. In YSG the difference in agreement vs. non-agreement between post-posed vs. pre-posed adjectives in plural noun phrases is not statistically significant (Chi-square $\chi^2=1.5357$, $df=1$, $p=0.215252$ and Fisher's exact test $p=0.2760$ for a total number of 453 post-posed vs. 22 pre-posed adjectives modifying plural nouns). While not fully meeting any expectations concerning a higher frequency in pre-posing that has been argued to be a feature of 'translation style' (Luft 2016: 171), YSG fit the pattern of a high percentage of agreement between attributive adjectives and their governing nouns in translation prose texts.

3. *UrdaGI/urddol* as an attributive adjective in YSG

As already explained above, in YSG the only function of *urddol* is to differentiate a knight, *marchog urddol*, from a simple rider, *marchog*, though it is not found in every mention of a knight. The French source texts use the unambiguous *chevalier* 'knight'. Where and when *urddol* appears is therefore the Welsh translator's free decision without any influence by his sources. That poses the question of why he uses it in some places and why not in others. This will be investigated in the final section of this study, beginning with a set of occurrences of *urddol* that are clearly motivated by content, before a pattern is examined that the Welsh translator appears to have used in other, less content-related, occasions.

13 Private correspondence with Dr S. Nurmio.

UrdaGI/urddol is by far the most frequent adjective in both parts of YSG (see figure 1). With 139 occurrences (singular and plural) in YSG1 and 258 occurrences in YSG2, it appears more often than common adjectives such as *da* ('good'; 107 occurrences in singular and plural in YSG1 and 139 in YSG2) and *ma6r/mawr* ('big'; 64 occurrences in singular and plural in YSG1 and 173 in YSG2). While it would be perfectly understandable to find such everyday adjectives as 'good' or 'big' quite often in a text, this is not the case with a word like *urddol*. So where does this come from? Because in YSG it is *urddol* that makes the knight.

In YSG *urddol* is always post-posed and agrees almost always with the governing noun—in YSG, without exception, *marchog* or its plural *marchogion*. In YSG1 in only two cases (7.4%) of a total of twenty-seven plural noun-adjective phrases *urddol* is not in agreement with its governing noun, while in YSG2 there is 100% agreement (76 out of 76 cases). While, when referring to a knight, both *marchog* and *marchog urddol* at first appear to be interchangeable in terms of meaning, I hope to demonstrate in this article, that although this is true for a knight whose status is known to the protagonists and/or the audience of the story, at least in the case of YSG this does not apply to an unknown knight. The translator of YSG uses both *marchog* and *marchog urddol* mainly as translations for the French *chevalier*, which is the most frequent term in both the *Queste* as well as in *Perlesvaus*, but also for other more specific French terms such as *serjanz* 'liegeman, soldier, armed follower' or *soudoier* 'soldier'.

The term *marchog urddol* 'ordained knight' is traceable as early as the thirteenth century according to GPC. It occurs in several Middle Welsh translations from French as well as from Latin sources like *Ystorya Bown o Hamtwn* (from the Anglo-Norman *Beuve de Hampton*), *Rhamant Otuel* (from the Anglo-Norman *Otinel*), *Cronicl Turpin* (from the Latin *Pseudo-Turpin*), *Ystorya Dared* (from the Latin *Dares Phrygius*), *Brut y Brenhinedd* (from the Latin *Historia Regum Britanniae*), *Brut y Tywysogion* (from a lost Latin source) as well as *Peredur fab Efwrawg*, *Owein/Chwedyl Iarllles y Fynnawn* and *Gereint fab Erbin*, the three Middle Welsh Arthurian prose texts that are closely related—some of them more than others—to Chrétien de Troye's *Perceval* (Lloyd-Morgan 2019a: 145, 147–150), *Yvain* (Reck 2019: 119–120) and *Erec* (Poppe 2019: 133). The lack of occurrences in 'native' Middle Welsh prose may be due to content. The 'classical' examples of 'native' Welsh prose, the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi* as well as the oldest surviving Welsh Arthurian tale *Culhwch ac Olwen*, are not located in a chivalric world.

YSG, being a translation of Arthurian matter, are packed with accounts of valorous deeds, fights and dangerous adventures that knights of the Round Table have to face on their search for fame and the Holy Grail. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the terms *marchog* and *marchog urddol* frequently whenever the name of the respective knight is not mentioned. A close investigation of all

occurrences of *marchog* and *marchog urddol* including their plural forms in YSG reveals a rather efficient system of the use of *urddol* by the Middle Welsh translator.

3.1 *Urda6l/urddol* in prototypical knightly environments

A first examination shows a few environments in which *marchog* is almost always paired with *urddol*. First and foremost, those are passages concerning a knighting ceremony and the social rank of a knight, as can be seen in the following example:

*Lors li conte Melyanz coment Galaad l'ot fet **chevalier** [...]. 'Quant vos deustes estre **chevaliers**, vos alastes a confesse, si que vos montastes en l'ordre de **chevalerie** nez et espurgiez de toutes ordures et de toz pechiez dont vos vos sentiez entechiez'.* (Pauphilet 1923: 44, ll. 32–33; 45, ll. 1–2)¹⁴

Then Melyanz told him how Galaad had made him a knight [...]. 'When you were to become a knight, you went to confession, so that you rose into the order of chivalry clean and purged of all filth and all sins you felt stained with.'

*Ac yna y managa6d ef pa del6 y doeth Galaath y'r vanachla6c, a pha del6 y g6naethp6yt ynteu yn **uarcha6c urda6l** [...]. 'Kany's pan y'rh wnaethp6yt ti yn **varcha6c urda6l**, ti a aethyost yng kyffes megys y neb a dylyei **gymryt urdas marcha6c urda6l**, ac a ymlanheeist o bop pecha6t o'r a oed arnat.'*¹⁵ (Peniarth 11, fol. 19v4–19v6, 19v11–19v14)¹⁶

And then he related how Galaath came to the monastery and how he (himself) was made a knight [...]. 'Because when you were made a knight, you went to confession as someone should do who is to become a knight, and you have cleansed yourself from any sin that was on you.'

Apparently the adjective was required here in connection with the ceremony of making a knight. This becomes very clear in the phrase [*k*]ymryt *urdas marcha6c urda6l* 'to receive the rank of an ordained knight' (*l'ordre de chevalerie* 'the order of chivalry' in the French source) where *urdas* 'rank' and *urddol* are combined. One might expect *marcha6c* to be sufficiently defined by *urdas* 'rank', but an additional *urddol* appears to have been necessary. In this quote as well as in seventeen other scenes concerned with knighting or knighthood¹⁷ *urddol* can be

14 Here and in all following quotations bolding is by me.

15 Punctuation and capitalisation in quotations of YSG1 follow Jones (1992). Quotations of YSG2 have been adapted accordingly with Jones (1992) as a model.

16 Jones 1992: 27, ll. 950–951, 956–959.

17 Peniarth 11, fol. 15r17–15r18; Jones 1992: 20, ll. 732–733; Peniarth 11, fol. 16r12–16r15; Jones 1992: 22, ll. 779–781; Peniarth 11, fol. 17r18–17r20; Jones 1992: 23, ll. 835–837; Peniarth 11, fol. 17v1–17v4; Jones 1992: 23, ll. 843–846; Peniarth 11, fol. 19r12–19r14; Jones 1992: 26, ll. 932–934; Peniarth 11, fols. 31r22–31r23, 120v19–

found with only two exceptions (Peniarth 11, fols. 4v4–4v6, 15r7–15r9)¹⁸, while the French source always has *chevalier*.¹⁹

Other environments in YSG where *marchog* is always combined with *urddol* are connected with typical knightly activities like tournaments, as the following examples show:

‘Dame, s’avra une grant assanblee de chevaliers es vax qui furent vostre.’
(Nitze & Jenkins 1932–37: 68, ll. 1106–1107)

‘Lady, there will be a great assembly of knights in the valleys that were yours.’

‘Arglwydes’, heb ynteu, ‘avory y byd kynnulleitua o varchogyon urdolyon yng glynn Camalot.’ (Peniarth 11, fol. 132v7–132v9)

‘Lady’, he said, ‘tomorrow there will be an assembly of knights in the valley of Camalot.’

In YSG, the established term *kynnulleitua o varchogyon urdolyon* ‘assembly of knights’ occurs several times (Peniarth 11, fols. 132v7–132v8, 184r17, 185r2–185r3, 224r7–224r8). A less frequent variant is *dyrua o varchogyon urdolyon* ‘crowd/company of knights’ (Peniarth 11, fols. 206v22–206v23, 228v11–228v12). In both terms *marchogion* occurs combined with the adjective without exception. Both Welsh terms translate the French *assanblee de chevaliers* ‘assembly of knights’ (Nitze & Jenkins 1932–37: 68, ll. 1106–1107; 190, l. 4256; 287, l. 6742; 299, l. 7084) or just *assanblee* ‘assembly’ (Nitze & Jenkins 1932–37: 191, l. 4296; 245, l. 5654).

In the *Queste* the term *chevaliers erranz* occurs several times (Pauphilet 1923: 142, l. 31; 155, ll. 1–2; 162, l. 9; 175, ll. 20–21; 183, l. 8; 261, ll. 24–25), the knight errant, or—in one case—*chevaliers aventureus* ‘adventurous knight’ (Pauphilet 1923: 46, l. 28), a knight seeking fights and adventures while being on his own, preferably in some strange wilderness. While in *Perlesvaus* the image of a knight in search of adventures is quite common—it is, in fact, fundamental to the structure of the plot—the term *chevaliers erranz* does not occur. The translator of YSG uses different paraphrases: *marcha6c urda6l anturyus* ‘adventurous knight’ (Peniarth 11, fols. 54v15–54v16,²⁰ 62r26,²¹ 67r10,²² 102v3–102v5²³) and *marchawc urda6l ar gerdet* ‘travelling knight’ (Peniarth 11,

120v20, 129r10, 170r6–170r9, 170r25–170r26, 170v2–170v3, 170v5, 217r20–217r21, 223r2–223r4, 233v9–233v10, 233v11–233v12, 248r4–248r5.

18 Jones 1992: 6, 20, ll. 195–197, 722–723.

19 Pauphilet 1923: 35, ll. 21–22; 37, ll. 16–17; 40, ll. 3–5, 17–21; Nitze & Jenkins 1932–37: 43, ll. 505–506; 62, l. 940; 143, ll. 3049–3050; 144, ll. 3064–3067; 309, ll. 7346–7349; 334, l. 8060.

20 Jones 1992: 79, l. 2796.

21 Jones 1992: 91, l. 3190.

22 Jones 1992: 97, l. 3431.

23 Jones 1992: 151, ll. 5305–5306.

fol. 71r2)²⁴. A case of *marcha6c ar y antur* ‘knight on his adventure’ (Peniarth 11, fol. 185v2–185v3) is closely related, but the corresponding passage in *Perlesvaus* (Nitze & Jenkins 1932–37: 192, l. 4322) has *i. chevalier* ‘one/a knight’. The adjective *urddol* is used in most of these cases (six out of a total of eight). There seems to be a preference for the construction with *urddol* but not without exceptions (Peniarth 11, fols. 59r9,²⁵ 185v2–185v3). *Anturyus*, Mod. Welsh *anturus*, *anturius*, ‘adventurous, venturesome, enterprising, daring, bold; reckless, rash, dangerous’ (GPC), is first attested in YSG according to GPC. While the idea of a knight seeking adventures on his own appears in earlier texts like *Owein*, *Peredur* or *Gereint*, there seems not to have been a fixed terminology.

In both *Queste* and *Perlesvaus*, and hence in YSG, passages concerned with rules of conduct for knights occur rather frequently. They explicitly state what an ideal knight should and should not do:

‘Donques vos pri je que vos soiez mes chevaliers au tornoiement.’ – ‘Damoisele, ce ne vos doi je mie refuser. J’esteroie mout liez en mon cuer se je pooie faire chose qui vos pleüst, car por les dames e por les damoiseles se doivent pener li chevalier.’ (Nitze & Jenkins 1932–37: 288, ll. 6782–6786)

‘Then I ask you that you will be my knight in the tournament.’ – ‘Mistress, I may not refuse you in this. I would be very happy in my heart if I could do something that would please you, because knights should labour for the ladies and damsels.’

‘Grth hynny’, heb hi, ‘ti a vydy uarcha6c urda6l ymi yn y t6rneimant avory?’ – ‘A vnbennes’, heb y brenhin, ‘ny wrthodaf i hynny o’th garyat ti. A llawen y6 gennyf i pei gall6n wneuthur peth a rangei vot ytt y wneuthur; kanyys yr y morynyon y dily y marchogyon urdolyon llauurya6.’ (Peniarth 11, fols. 224v22–225r1)

‘Therefore’, she said, ‘will you be my knight at the tournament tomorrow?’ – ‘My lady’, the king said, ‘I will not refuse this for the sake of your love. And I am happy if I can do something that pleases you, because knights should labour for the sakes of young ladies.’

The Old French source texts for YSG differ very much in what they consider as ideal behaviour for a perfect knight. The *Queste*, the source for YSG1, promotes a strong religious ideal of a chaste knight in the service of God, whereas *Perlesvaus* and in consequence YSG2—albeit with a strong Christian undercurrent—feature a more worldly and courtly ideal of a knight, as can be seen in the quoted passage above. Even though the two parts of YSG differ in their didactic foci, they share the use of *urddol* in those passages. Whenever *marchog* occurs in connection with rules of conduct for a knight, it does so in combination with *urddol*, without any exception.

24 Jones 1992: 103, l. 3630.

25 Jones 1992: 85, l. 3020

3.2 *UrdaGl/urddol* in descriptions of nameless knights

In all aforementioned circumstances the use of *urddol* is quite clearly connected to content. But what about the others? In YSG there is a fairly large number of nameless knights who appear in situations not as clearly definable as those above. What about them? Is there another, less content-related pattern or does the Welsh translator use *urddol* at will?

Under the assumption that in the Welsh language it is *urddol* that makes a knight, i.e. the adjective clarifies the social status, one would expect it to occur more frequently where the social status of a man is unknown. And, indeed, the distribution of *urddol* seems to confirm this suspicion as can be shown in the following figure (see figure 2). To exclude any content-based variation, only cases of *marchog(ion)* and *marchog(ion) urddol(ion)* were considered for the following analysis where the Welsh terms translate the French *chevalier*. This resulted in a total amount of 1077 (200 in YSG1 and 877 in YSG2) references to nameless knights as the basis of the following discussion.²⁶

In both parts of YSG the same clear pattern of the distribution of *urddol* can be noticed. In more than two thirds (78.8% in YSG1; 68.8% in YSG2) of the cases where identity and social status of knights are previously unknown the adjective *urddol* occurs. It is missing, however, in the vast majority of cases (76.4% in YSG1 and 87.7% in YSG2) where the knights are known to the protagonists and/or the audience of the story. The difference in the use of *urddol* for previously unknown vs. known knights is statistically highly significant (Chi-square $\chi^2=315.4033$, $df=1$, $p<0.00001$ and Fisher's exact test $p<0.0001$ for a total number of 270 unknown and 807 known knights [both parts of YSG]).

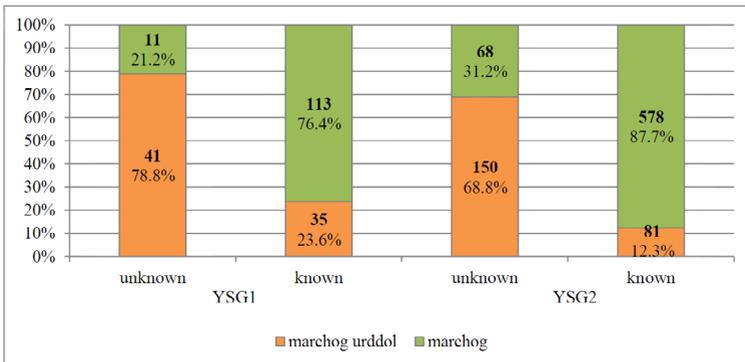


Figure 2: The adjective *urddol* in descriptions of formerly known and unknown knights in YSG

26 Not counting the already mentioned special occurrences in connection with typical knightly values or behaviour, e.g. the knight errant or the knighting ceremony.

One could then expect that if a knight is previously unknown, he would be introduced as *marchog urddol* with omission of *urddol* in any further references. We should, therefore, focus on those knights who are at first unknown to the protagonists and/or the audience and then mentioned again after their introduction. And indeed, there are examples for the expected pattern, e.g. the following combat scene from YSGI where Galaath fights seven nameless opponents:

*Ac ny bu hir y trigya6d Galaath yny weles yn dyuot atta6 seith **marcha6c urda6l** yn arua6c allan, y rei a dywedassant ac a archassant y Galaath ymogelut racdunt. 'Paham', heb y Galaath, 'ae y gyt ar vntu yr ymledwch chwi a myui?' – 'Je', heb y **marchogyon**, 'kanys uelly y6 yr aruer yma'. [...] A chynn torri paladyr Galaath, ef a v6rya6d tri o'r **marchogyon** y'r lla6r. [...] A'r seith **marcha6c** yna a oedynt gyn vlinet ac na ellynt amdifffyn eu heneidyeu oblegyt ymlad. (Peniarth 11, fol. 21r5–21r24)²⁷*

And Galaath did not wait long until he saw seven armoured knights coming forth towards him, who spoke and challenged Galaath to defend himself against them. 'Why', said Galaath, 'will you be fighting with me all together?' – 'Yes', said the knights, 'because such is the custom here.' [...] And before the shaft of Galaath's lance broke, he threw three of the knights to the ground. [...] And the seven knights were then so tired that they could not defend their lives in combat.

At the beginning of the following chapter there is a reference back to this fight:

*A'r dyd h6nn6 y goruuissei Galaath ar y seith **marcha6c**. (Peniarth 11, fol. 23v6–23v7)²⁸*

And on that day Galaath had defeated the seven knights.

When the seven knights are introduced, they are unknown both to Galaath and to the reader. To avoid any misconception concerning their status they are referred to as *urddol*, as can be seen in the first sentence. Later on, their rank is known, the adjective becomes superfluous and is no longer used. Even after a break in the narrative in the transition between the third and fourth chapter, when the focus shifts from Galaath to Gwalchmei as the main protagonist who also meets Galaath's seven opponents, *urddol* is left out in referring back to the events of the previous chapter. Although they have not met Gwalchmei before, their status is known to the reader.

This pattern of *urddol* in the first introduction of a previously unknown knight and its omission in subsequent references to the same person can be observed in 61.1% of 18 previously unknown knights with 72 subsequent references in YSGI

27 Jones 1992: 29, ll. 1022–1040.

28 Jones 1992: 33, ll. 1150–1151.

and 62.6% of 99 previously unknown knights with 465 subsequent references in YSG2 (figure 3). The numbers show that while a clear pattern can be discerned, it cannot be considered a rule as there are quite a few exceptions (see also figure 2).

YSG1				YSG2			
knight unknown				knight unknown			
1 st reference		subsequent reference		1 st reference		subsequent reference	
		-urddol	+urddol			-urddol	+urddol
-urddol	3	2	2	-urddol	25	126	2
+urddol	13	44	6	+urddol	73	291	44
other	2	14	4	other	1	2	-
knight known				knight known			
1 st reference		subsequent reference		1 st reference		subsequent reference	
		-urddol	+urddol			-urddol	+urddol
-urddol	5	22	-	-urddol	8	57	5
+urddol	3	4	1	+urddol	4	16	2
other	-	-	-	other	9	39	4

Figure 3: *Urddol* in first and subsequent references to knights previously known and unknown in YSG²⁹

In some cases, other traits of newly introduced persons are more important for the story than their status as a knight and so those are used to introduce them (cf. bottom row ‘other’ in figure 3), rather than *marchog* (*urddol*), e.g. *g6r cl6yfus* ‘sick man’, *g6r g6yry o’e gorff* ‘a man, chaste/virgin of his body’ or *g6r bioed y castell* ‘the man who owned the castle’. Even though those men are not identified as knights in their first introduction, the translator of YSG nevertheless mainly follows his pattern and addresses them in subsequent references as *marchog* without the addition of *urddol*.

Sometimes a knight is already known to the reader but not to the protagonists of the story like in the following passage:

*Gwedy kychwyn o Galaath o Gastell y Morynyon ef a uarchockaawd hyt pan doeth y fforest diffeith. Ac yno ef a gyfaruu ac ef Lawnslot a Pheredur yn marchogaeth. Ac nyt adnabuant wy efo, o achaws na welsynt y daryan eiryoet. [...] Ac yna kyn dristet vuant am diangk y **marchawc** y ganthunt ac y mynnynt eu marw yn y lle yr oedynt.* (Peniarth 11, fol. 25r10–25r14, 25v4–25v6)³⁰

After leaving the Castle of the Maidens Galaath rode until he came to a wild forest. And there Lawnslot and Peredur met with him riding. And they did not recognise him, because they had never seen his shield. [...] And then they were

29 Highlighted in green are the occurrences of *urddol* in first and subsequent references that follow the expected pattern.

30 Jones 1992: 36, ll. 1230–1233, 1248–1250.

so sad that the knight (i.e. Galaath) had escaped them that they wanted to die where they were.

Here the knight in question is well-known to the reader—it is Galaath, the main hero of the *Queste*/YSG1. Lawnslot and Peredur have met him before, too, since he is Lawnslot's son. They are unable to identify him, though, because they have not seen his newly acquired shield before. The narrator of YSG1 expresses this by referring to him as *y marchog* 'the knight' in subsequent references as if he did not know his name either. He does not use *urddol*, however, because Galaath, the knight with the unknown shield, is now known to Lawnslot and Peredur, even though they still do not know his name.

One of the exceptions to the pattern concerns armour. His armour and/or his shield are the most obvious features that identify a knight from afar. They are iconic items that may not be left out in representations of knights even today. In YSG armour is mentioned quite frequently in introductions of otherwise unidentified knights or groups of knights, as the following example shows:

Ac ual y bydant Gy yn hynny, Gynt a welynt uarchaGc ar vrys yn dyuot ar draGc y fforest a tharyan idaG a'r neill hanner idi yn wenn a'r llall yn du. (Peniarth 11, fol. 138r14–138r17)

And while they were doing this, they saw a knight coming hastily across the forest with a shield with one half in white and the other in black.

This knight is mentioned ten times in total. The colours of his shield are described three times out of these ten, but the adjective *urddol* is never used. In *Perlesvaus*—the French source—the same knight is mostly referred to as *chevalier* or once as *li Partiz Chevaliers* 'the divided knight' i.e. the knight whose shield is divided into a white and a black half.

The example of the seven knights defeated by Galaath (see above) shows that a mention of armour does not inevitably make *urddol* superfluous, but in three out of three cases in YSG1 and ten out of twenty-three in YSG2 where nameless knights are mentioned for the first time without *urddol* there are references to their shields and/or armour. So, whenever there is a mention of armour in the introduction of a previously unknown knight, it is highly likely that the Welsh translator of YSG will leave out the adjective.

Occasionally, the translator appears to leave out *urddol* for narrative purposes as can be seen in the following example where Gwalchmei has a rather strange encounter:

Il chevauche pensis e enbrons parmi la forest, e voit venir un chevalier la voie que il aloit, en molt sauvage maniere: car il chevauchoit ce devant derriere, e avoit les resnes de son fraïn tres parmi son piz, e portoit le pié de son escu desue e le chief desoz, e son claive ce devant derriere, e son hauberc e ses chaucés de fer trossées a son col. Il ot Monseigneur Gavain venir, qui molt se

merveille de lui quant il le voit. Mais cil no voit pas, mes il li crie molt hautement: 'Gentils chevaliers qui la venez, por Dieu ne me fetes nul mal, car ge sui li Coarz Chevaliers.' (Nitzé & Jenkins 1932–37: 78, ll. 1352–1360)

He rode deep in thought and deeply sad through the forest and saw a knight coming in a very wild way along the road he himself was travelling because he rode with his face backwards, and had his reins at the middle of his chest, and carried the foot of his shield pointing upwards and the head pointing down, and his lance pointing the wrong way, and his hauberk and his greaves of iron in a bundle on his back. He heard Sir Gavain coming, who was very puzzled when he saw him. But the other did not see him, but called loudly to him: 'Noble knight who comes there, for the sake of God, don't cause me any harm, because I am the Coward Knight.'

*Ac ual y byd uelly ef a welei yn dyuot ar hyt y fford tu ac atta6 **marcha6c** ac aruer ryued gantha6 Grth uarchogaeth, kanys y wyneb a oed ar bedrein y varch a'e arueu g6edy eu tr6ssya6 yn tr6ssa ar y gevyn. Ac ynteu pan weles ef Walchmei yn dyuot g6eidia6 a oruc a dywedut: 'Oi a varcha6c bonhedic yr hwnn yssyd yn dyuot y'm herbyn. Yr Du6 yr archaf ytt na wnelych ym chweith dr6c, kanys myui a elwir y marcha6c cachyat.'* (Peniarth 11, fol. 137v16–137v23)

And while he was doing this,³¹ he saw a rider/knight coming on the street in his direction who had a strange way of riding, because his face was towards the hindquarters of his horse and his armour was made into a bundle on his back. And when he saw Gwalchmei coming he screamed loudly and said: 'Oh noble knight who is coming towards me. I implore you for the sake of God, that you do not do any harm to me, because they call me the Coward Knight.'

This kind of encounter is rather common in YSG: the respective protagonist, Gwalchmei in this case, meets a stranger and in the ensuing conversation the newcomer is introduced. If the stranger is a knight, the Welsh translator usually disambiguates *marchog* by using *urddol* or by mentioning armour or a shield. Not so in the case of the Coward Knight. This particular knight is one of the most hilarious figures in YSG and it is highly likely that the translator omits *urddol* on purpose, so that his audience is even more baffled concerning the stranger. Even though armour is mentioned, the rather unorthodox way of carrying it in a bundle on his back raises at least some doubts as to whether or not he is a knight. This confusion is heightened by leaving out *urddol* as a means of qualifying status. I have translated *marchawc* as 'rider/knight' to stress this ambiguity.

Cases where a knight is already known at the moment of his introduction are less frequent than those of unknown knights (see figure 3). In YSG1 there are 8 such knights who are mentioned 27 times in the subsequent text and 21 in YSG2 with 123 subsequent references. In YSG1 *urddol* is omitted in the introduction of a majority of these knights (5 out of a total of 8), whereas the situation is not as clear in YSG2 (8 out of a total of 21). It has to be mentioned, though, that in YSG2

31 i.e. riding through the forest.

there are quite a few knights (9 out of a total of 21) who are addressed with another term ('other' in figure 3) than *marchog*, e.g. their names or *gGr*, Mod. Welsh *gŵr* 'man'. If those cases are not considered, *urddol* is omitted in the descriptions of 8 out of a total of 12 previously known knights. Thus, in both parts of YSG a majority of cases support the assumption that the adjective is omitted if the knight in question is already known at the moment of his introduction.

The abovementioned analyses leads to the conclusion that the Welsh translator of YSG had a rather efficient system for his use of the adjective *urddol* which can be summarised like this:

Knight previously unknown

marchog urddol → *marchog* [→ *marchog* → *marchog* → ...]
marchog + armour/shield → *marchog* [→ *marchog* → *marchog* → ...]

Knight previously known

marchog → *marchog* [→ *marchog* → *marchog* → ...]

If a knight is previously unknown to the protagonists and/or the reader he is introduced with either the addition of *urddol* or a reference to his armour or shield. After that his social status is considered as clarified and *urddol* is left out in all subsequent mentions. For a knight whose identity is known from the beginning, an introduction with *urddol* is not necessary. While this system is clearly identifiable in the majority of cases, it cannot be considered a fixed rule. The translator departs from it whenever he finds it stylistically opportune, e.g. when he intends to obscure a person's identity or when he feels that further clarification of a man's status is necessary. In some places he purposefully plays with *urddol* by providing his audience with additional information and thereby giving them an advantage over the protagonists of his story or by leaving the reader in the dark about the identity of a newcomer, thus heightening tension.

In the *Rhyddiaith ganoloesol* corpus (Luft, Thomas & Smith 2013), of 138 Middle Welsh Prose texts in 57 manuscripts from between c. 1275 to c. 1450, there is not one example with a similar system to YSG. Most nameless knights—if there are any—appear only once. Other Middle Welsh romances like *Peredur fab Efwraig*, *Gereint uab Erbin*, *Owein/Chwedyl Iarllles y Fynnawn*, *Bown o Hamtwn* or *Rhamant Otuel* offer a few sequential appearances of nameless knights but show a different use of *urddol*. Here the adjective is not used to define the status of a man in his introduction. Instead *marchog* is used without any specification. The only parallel with YSG is the occurrence of *urddol* in connection with the knighting ceremony and the explicit mention of knighthood. In *Brut y Brenhinedd*, the Middle Welsh translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, the term *marchog urddol* mostly subdivides Latin terms like *principes* ('lords', 'princes', 'noblemen'; HRB vi.xv) into different Welsh ranks, e.g. *ieirll a barGneit*

a marchogyon urdaGl ('earls and barons and knights'; Oxford, Jesus College, MS 111, fol. 28v.111.2). Therefore, the system of use in YSG with *urddol* as a means to clarify the status of a newly introduced knight, with the adjective to be omitted in subsequent references to the same man, must be considered unique for now. This might be due to transmission, personal preferences of the translator of YSG or the fact that YSG are the youngest of the Welsh romances listed above and perhaps show a more developed style.

Ystoryaeu Seint Greal, the only Welsh members of the family of the Grail texts that were so popular on the European continent, have mostly been neglected so far by scholars of Celtic Studies. I hope to have shown in my discussion that despite being rather late in the game of Welsh narrative prose texts, YSG can offer some interesting insights into aspects of language use in Wales in the late fourteenth century and should therefore not be ignored any further. The length of YSG, which may be one reason why scholars have been deterred, offers a substantial basis for quantitative analyses such as the one presented in the article at hand. A closer look at attributive adjectives and the use of *urddol* in particular has shown similarities with the findings of other studies, but also differences. YSG add to the picture of considerable stylistic variance in Middle Welsh prose texts and agree with previous studies insofar as once again a distinct Middle Welsh 'translation style' cannot be confirmed.

Abbreviations

GPC	<i>Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru</i> —Dictionary of the Welsh Language. Thomas, Bevan & Donovan (eds.) 1967–2002.
HRB	<i>Historia Regum Britanniae</i> . M. D. Reeve (ed.) & N. Wright (trans.) 2007.
Pl	plural
Pred	adjective used predicatively
PreP	pre-posed adjective
PostP	post-posed adjective
Sg	singular
YSG	<i>Ystoryaeu Seint Greal</i> . Luft, Thomas & Smith (eds.) 2013; Jones (ed.) 1992.
YSG1	<i>Ystoryaeu Seint Greal</i> , pt 1; translation of <i>La Queste du Saint Graal</i> . Luft, Thomas & Smith (eds.) 2013; Jones (ed.) 1992.
YSG2	<i>Ystoryaeu Seint Greal</i> , pt 2; translation of <i>Le Haut Livre du Graal (Perlesvaus)</i> . Luft, Thomas & Smith (eds.) 2013.

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