devoted to it. The magazine—in Welsh, of course—is the second best selling poetry magazine throughout the Island of Britain.

Cerdd Dafod doesn't have a regular metre like most metrical European poetry. The length of a line is counted in syllables rather than feet, so that it resembles the spoken word rather than the written. And it uses throughout a sound-system called *CYNGHANEDD* ("chiming"), a combination of rhyme and alliteration. This can be applied to any language under the sun, even to Tolkien's made-up ones.

Something like it existed long ago in Scandinavian poetry. It was standard in its simplest form in mediaeval Breton poetry. Gerard Manley Hopkins came across it while in the Jesuit College in Tremeirchion in Flintshire, and it became the basis for his "sprung-rhythm," the style which revolutionised English poetry. But it belongs properly—not only through long, long association, but also for morphological reasons—to Welsh. *Cynghanedd* is like the sparks thrown up by the wheels of Welsh, a fast language, fond of showing off.

Each line is divided into two or more parts, according to stress. The caesuras should represent the natural pauses of the voice in saying the sentence. Because of this, it's best the poet compose aloud.

Sain (“sound”), in which there are two caesuras, the word before the first caesura rhyming with the word before the second, and the word before the second alliterating as well with the last word in the line:

Bé/ a búdgie/ or bádger
E/ *b - j E*/ *b - j*

Traws (“bridge”), in which all the consonants under stress this side of the caesura are repeated on the other side, leaving an unstressed “hole” in the middle, like a bridge.

Or a físh/ if you prefér
r f- / ( )*r f-*

Croes (“cross”), in which *all* the syllables on this side of the caesura are stressed, and are *all* repeated on the other side

All útterlý/ótterlíke
l t rl- / *t rl-*

CYWYDD* and *ENGLYN

There are, in theory, twenty-four strict metres, as there are twenty-four of many things in the Welsh tradition: the twenty-four knights of Arthur’s court; the twenty-four names for a salmon in its progress from fry to adult; the twenty-four feats of skill expected of a man, of which strict-metre poetry, incidentally, is one. Of the twenty-four strict metres, the most popular today are *cywydd* and *englyn.* The exact meaning of the names is lost in the mist of time.

Cywydd is a poem of any length made up of rh

as well have been lecturing on the very rare bespectacled bear of the Brazilian jungle, or the herbal preparations of Mongolian horsemen for the treating of split hooves. I decided to try and compose some examples in English. Here is one.

MY FIRST LOVE WAS A PLOVER

A *cywydd* for Canadians

My first love was a plover;
Beautiful things her wings were.
Tiny eyes shining at night –
Though mainly in the moonlight.
We ate leeks at a lakeside,
I caressed her crest, and cried
All night. Then the kite called,
Unshaven and dishevelled.
He saw from the bristling sedge
My playmate's handsome plumage.
She made a tryst, kissed the kite
So dearly in the starlight.
I thought of only one thing:
My plover lover leaving.

Now, as I was the author of it, I happened to know at the time that this *cywydd*, though absolutely correct according to the rules of strict metre, was also a load of nonsense. But it had an immediate, sometimes very emotional, effect on audiences. I now realise that it is the most profound poem I've ever written. And here is an analysis of the first eight lines. Spelling is neither hear nor their, of course. It's the *sound* that counts:

My first lòve/ was a plòver;
uv / *uv* (Drag)

Beautiful things/ her wings/ were.
ings/ *Wings*/ *W-* (Sound)

Tiny éyes/ shining at níght –
t n - / *t n* - (Bridge)

Though máinly/ in the móonlight.
th *m- nl* / *th* *m - nl* (Bridge)

We ate cákes/ by a lákeside,
akes/ *akes* (Drag)

I caréssed/ her crést/ and críed
est / *CRest*/ *CR-* (Sound)

All níght/. Then the kíte/ cálled,
ite / *Kite*/ *K-* (Sound)

Unsháven/ and dishévelled.
sh-v / *sh-v* (Bridge)

There are variations of the second metre, *englyn.* The commonest is a four-line verse, 30 syllables, one rhyme throughout. Though a series of *englynion* is not uncommon, they are usually a single verse; an epitaph, maybe, or a greeting; often epigrammatic, but often like a strict-metre limerick.

The first half is called *paladr* (“shaft”). Line 1 is 10 syllables; that is 7, 8 or 9 syllables ending inngle 7

AN UNDISSECTED *ENGLYN* IN ENGLISH

I travelled to a river – and I found
A fish all of silver.
I watched him growing dimmer;
Maybe love made him a blur.