



- 1 John Williams 2.24
- 2 Such a noise as if all about was going to pieces 3.00
- 3 Geographical: fiery stones 1.40
- 4 Geographical: The crucifixion (Skirrid) 3.19
- 5 Such a noise as if all the hedges about were tore to pieces 3.55
- 6 Incomparable singing 5.13
- 7 Geographical: The swallows' tale 3.34
- 8 Seen in the air 4.02
- 9 So great a noise that the man of the house, on a sudden,
thought the house was going away 2.59
- 10 Sound expressive of something 3.59
- 11 John ab John 3.28
- 12 Like children in bright clothing 3.17
- 13 Standing by a holly tree 2.12
- 14 This sweet bell ringing 2.00
- 15 Tafl gerrig o'r afon [Throw stones out of the river] 1.19
- 16 What is here 1.55
- 17 Geographical: Like waves perfectly immovable 1.22

Ffaiidd Ysbrydion

Gweinidog gyda'r Annibynwyr oedd Edmund Jones (1702-93), a aned ym Mhenllwyn ym mhlwyf Aberystroth, Sir Fynwy. Roedd tîrweidd yr ardal yn fynyddig gyda choedwigoedd, a'r gred gyffredinol oedd bod grymoedd tywyll yma. Ysgrifennodd ddau lyfr ar y grymoedd hyn. Cyhoeddwyd y gwreiddiol yn 1767, a chafodd y gyfrol ddilynol, *A Relation of Apparitions of Spirits*, ei chyhoeddi yn 1780. Ynddynt ceir casgliadau o dystiolaethau sy'n disgrifio profiadau dilys, yn ôl y sôn, o ddod wyneb yn wyneb ag endidau ysbrydol, megis tylwyth teg, ysbrydion, y diafol a gwrachod. Mae gwaith Jones yn perthyn i draddodiad o hanesion ysbrydion, a ysgrifennwyd gan weinidogion Anghydfurfiol a chlerigwyr

Protestannaidd a Catholig, a arferai ddehongli hanesion uwch-naturiol i gefnogi crefydd ddatguddiedig, profi bod bywyd ar ôl marwolaeth, fel anecdot yn erbyn anffyddiaeth a chredoau sadwceiaid. Yn ôl Jones, roedd ysbrydion naill ai'n weladwy neu'n anweledig, yn ddrwg neu'n dda, a gellid eu gweld neu eu clywed. Casglwyd yr hanesion wrth iddo deithio o amgylch plwyfi a siroedd Cymru. Hanesion ar lafar oedd y rhain ar y cyfan.

Yn 2003, cyhoeddais gyfrol a oedd yn cynnwys dystiolaeth o ddau lyfr Jones, yn ogystal â'r rhai y cyfeirir atynt yn *A Geographical, Historical, and Religious Account of the Parish of Aberystroth* (1779). Mae hanesion Jones yn trafod sut yr oedd

dosbarthiadau is cymdeithas, yn benodol, yn synio am y byd ysbrydol. Mae'r naratifau hefyd yn cyfeirio at hynodrwydd synau'r ysbrydion, ymateb y rhai a'u clywodd, a'r berthynas rhwng y synau a'r cyd-destun. Dyma'r Gymru wledig cyn yr oes ddiwydiannol, pan arferai pobl deithio ar goetsis, ar droed ac ar gefn ceffyl. Disgrifia ei choedwigoedd, mynyddoedd, caeau, llynnoedd, afonydd, llwybrau'r coetsis, a'i lonydd fel llefydd lle clywid synau, a amrywiai, o fod yn rhai aflan, nefolaidd, ysbrydol, mileinig, ffyrnig a gwyllt.

Clywodd tystion synau a oedd yn adleisio digwyddiadau'r gorffennol ac yn rhagdychmygu digwyddiadau yn y dyfodol;

Edmund Jones (1702-93) was a Calvinistic Congregationalist minister, born in Penllwyn in the parish of Aberystroth, Monmouthshire. This was a mountainous and forested landscape, popularly believed to be the abode of dark forces. He wrote two books dedicated to these agencies. The original was published in 1767, and a sequel, entitled *A Relation of Apparitions of Spirits*, in 1780. They are collections of testimonies describing allegedly genuine encounters with spiritual entities, such as fairies, ghosts, devils, and witches. Jones' works belong to a tradition of so-called spirit histories, written by Nonconformist ministers and Protestant and Roman Catholic clergymen, which marshalled accounts of the supernatural to vindicate revealed religion, prove post-mortem life, and administer

Noisome Spirits

an antidote against atheism and sadducism. He classified apparitions as those that were either visible or invisible, perceptual or auditory, and evil or good. The accounts were collected during his itinerancy around the parishes and counties of Wales, by word of mouth for the most part.

In 2003, I published an edition that incorporated the testimonies from Jones' two books, as well as those referred to in his *A Geographical, Historical, and Religious Account of the Parish of Aberystroth* (1779). Jones's accounts deal with how the lower orders of society in particular conceived the spiritual world. The narratives also preserve the peculiarities of the spirits' noises, the

hearers' response to such, and the relationship of the sounds to the context. This was rural Wales prior to the industrial age, through which people habitually travelled by coach and on foot and horseback. He described its forests, woods, mountainsides, fields, lakes, rivers, coach-paths, and lanes as being inhabited with the noises of, variously, the hellish, heavenly, revenant, malevolent, fierce, and wild.

Witnesses heard sounds that echoed past events and prefigured future ones; sounds where there ought to be none; silence where there ought to be sound; sounds at odds with the nature of their cause; and sounds that travelled through the landscape in peculiar ways. The auditory apparitions were manifest in

synau lle na ddylid eu clywed; distawrwydd lle dylai fod sŵn; synau anghyffredin; a synau a deithiai drwy'r dirwedd mewn ffyrdd hynod. Roedd yr ysbrydion a glywid ar ffurf lleferydd anghyffredin, ysbrydion a ddynwardai leisiau'r ymadawedig, salmau cân, corau angyllion, coetsis a cheffylau, griddfan truenus, ocheneidiau'r meirw, lleisiau tawel, synau tebyg i anifeiliaid, coed yn cwmpo, chwibanu hynod, a synau byddarol a oedd yn ddigon uchel i darfu ar y dirwedd lle'r oeddent i'w clywed. Addaswyd llawer o nodweddion y synau a glywid o'r byd naturiol a phrofiadau bob dydd. Pwysleisiwyd eu harwyddocâd goruwchnaturiol gan elfennau brawychus y ffenomena, megis tywyllwch (digwyddai llawer ohonynt yn y nos), yr olygfa a oedd yn aml yn ddieithr a dychrynlyd, a

ffurf frawychus ffynhonnell y sŵn. Roedd synau acwstig yr ysbrydion weithiau'n fwy brawychus na'r hyn a welid, gan achosi i'r sawl a'u clywai naill ai fynd yn ddifrifol wael neu'n analluog.

Ychydig o sylw a roddwyd gan ysgolheigion i enghreifftiau hanesyddol o synau ysbrydion. Mae'r rheswm am hyn yn rhannol, am fod synau ysbrydion, fel pob math arall o ffenomena a glywid ar y pryd, yn anghyffyrddadwy a byrhoedlog; nid oeddent yn gadael unrhyw olion. I'r gwrthwyneb, roedd modd i ysbrydion gweledol, er eu bod ar ffurf a oedd yr un mor ddiiflanedig, gael eu cynrychioli a'u creu'n symbolau parhaol mewn ysgythriadau a lluniadau yn seiliedig ar dystiolaeth y tystion. Roedd y rhain (ar wahân i ysbrydion a edrychai

fel pobl neu anifeiliaid (nes eu bod yn diflannu)) yn gyfuniadau o ddelweddau syml ond effeithiol, yn siapiau a meintiau wedi'u hystumio, symudiadau afreolaidd, delweddau anghyflawn o bobl, pethau, elfennau naturiol a ffurfiau haniaethol bob dydd – megis pyramid, sfêr a chylch.

Cyn dyfeisio technoleg recordio a thechnoleg chwarae'n ôl, yr unig ffordd o gofnodi synau ysbrydion, oedd fel cofnod ysgrifenedig neu yn y cof, a'r unig ffordd o'u dwyn i gof oedd trwy dystiolaeth lafar neu ysgrifenedig (fel y gwna casgliad Jones.) Fel yn achos hanesion am weld ysbrydion, disgriffiai tystion synau ysbrydion ar ffurf nodweddion oedd yn gysylltiedig â ffenomena acwstig hysbys a naturiol. Roedd y nodweddion hyn

the forms of strange speech, spirits imitating the voices of the deceased, psalm-singing, angelic choirs, coach and horses, woeful moans, the groans of the dying in extremis, quiet voices, animal-like sounds, tree-fall, strange whistling, and deafening sounds loud enough to disturb the fabric of the landscape in which they were heard. Many of the auditory attributes of spirit noises were adapted from the natural world and everyday experience. Their supernatural signification was summoned by the fearful concomitants of the phenomena, such as darkness (many of the auditions took place at night), the often strange and frightening visible aspect, and the unnerving modulations, exaggerations, and deformations of the auditory source. The acoustic emanation of spirits was

sometimes more terrifying than their visual expression, rendering the hearer either seriously ill or incapacitated.

Little scholarly attention has been given to historical examples of auditory apparitions. In part, this is because spirit sounds, like all other types of auditory phenomena at this time, were intangible and impermanent; they left no scrutable residue. In contrast, visual manifestations of spirits, while equally evanescent, could be represented and made tokenly permanent in engravings and drawings based upon the witnesses' testimony. Their envisionings (when not encountering spirits that looked like living human beings or animals (until they disappeared)) deployed simple but nonetheless effective collagings and hybridisations, distortions

of shape, proportion, and size, anomalous movements, incomplete renderings of everyday people, things, natural elements, and abstract forms – such as a pyramid, sphere, and bowl.

Prior to the invention of sound recording and playback technology, spirit sounds could neither be captured, other than as a memory or textual account, nor recalled other than through verbal or written testimony (which functions Jones' collection fulfils.) As in the case of the visual accounts of spirits, witnesses described auditory manifestations in terms of attributes associated with known and natural acoustic phenomena. Similarly, these attributes are variously combined, amplified, disrupted, recontextualized, and re-interpreted in such a way as to evoke a sense

yn aml yn cael eu cyfuno a'u haddasu, eu rhoi mewn cyddestun gwahanol, a'u hailddechongli mewn modd oedd yn creu ymdeimlad bygythiol ac annaeorol. Er enghraifft, mae sawl achos lle'r oedd y profiad a'r sain yn wahanol i'r disgwyl. Roedd y sŵn a wnâi nifer o ysbrydion yn swnio'n uchel o bell ond distawai wrth i'r ysbryd agosáu. Cynhyrchai Poltergeistiaid synau naill ai drwy daflu neu daro pethau yn erbyn ei gilydd. Yn aml, byddai ysbrydion anwladwy yn dynwared synau anifeiliaid a phobl, gan ymddangos naill ai'n gwbl naturiol, neu'n wahanol mewn rhyw ffordd, neu naill ai'n llawer uwch neu'n ddistawach na'u sŵn arferol. Er enghraifft, dywedid bod llais un ysbryd benywaidd 'fel sŵn drwm'. Ceir hanesion hefyd am angyllion yn canu, yn ogystal â thylwyth teg yn chwarae

cerddoriaeth. Roedd synau eraill yn gysylltiedig â natur a phethau fel coed yn cwympo, ffyn yn cracio, to'n chwalu, a chadwyni haearn yn ratlo.

Mewn rhai hanesion, roedd yr hyn a glywai'r tyst mor hynod fel nad oedd modd ei ddisgrifio ond fel sŵn a ymdebygai i rywbeth yn y byd cyffredin. Wrth i un tyst deithio yn y nos dros Fynydd Illtyd yn Sir Frycheiniog, 'yn sydyn iawn ... clywodd ar ei law dde sŵn mor uchel ag y byddai pump neu chwech o goetsys ei wneud yr un pryd.' Yn ôl hanes arall dywedir bod: menyw wedi clywed ysbryd mastiff yn sgrechian 'mor uchel a chryf fel bod y ddaear wedi symud oddi tani'. Yng Nghymru, fel mewn mannau eraill cyn y Chwyldro Diwydiannol, y synau uchaf y byddai pobl wedi'u clywed fyddai cleciau

taranau, ffrwydrad powdr gwn, ergydion gwn, morthwyl gofaint ar yr engan, ac olwynion coetsys ar gobls. Felly, byddai pa bynnaig sŵn a glywai'r tystion yn llawer uwch na lefelau arferol.

Mae'r gyfres o gyfansoddiadau sain o'r enw *Ffiaiidd Ysbrydion* yn creu profiad sonig o'r naratifau hyn. Wrth wneud hynny, mae'n ceisio gwneud synnwyr o'r hyn a glywodd y tystion, drwy gynhyrchu'r synau – yn unol â bwriad Jones ei hun – i ddarparu 'cofnod realistig' o ysbrydion ... boed hynny drwy gyfrwng acwstig yn yr achos hwn. Fodd bynnaig, nid efelychu'r synau gwreiddiol yw'r diben, yn hytrach cyfleu eu sain a'r arswyd a deimlai'r tystion a'u gwelodd, mewn modd dychmygus a haniaethol.

John Harvey, *Rhagfyr 2020*

of the unworldly and threatening. For example, there are several instances in which the customary experience and operation of sound was inverted. The noise that several spirits made was loud afar-off but grew progressively quieter as the spirit approached. Poltergeists produced noises, in the manner of the living, by either throwing or beating things against other things. Disembodied or invisible spirits frequently imitated humans and animal noises, so as to appear either entirely natural, or in some manner distorted, or either far louder or softer than their customary volume. For instance, the voice of one female spirit was said to be 'as if it were a drum'. There are accounts, too, of angels singing, as well as fairies playing music. Other sounds were like those

associated with nature and material culture, such as trees falling, sticks cracking, a roof collapsing, and iron chains rattling.

In some accounts, what the witness perceived was so peculiar that it could only be described in terms of an approximation to something in the ordinary world. One witness, on travelling at night across Illtyd Mountain in Breconshire, 'all of a sudden ... heard on his right hand a sound as strong and loud as five or six coaches could make at once.' In another account it is said: a woman heard a spirit mastiff scream 'so loud and strong that the earth moved under her'. In Wales, as elsewhere before the Industrial Revolution, the loudest noises anyone heard were thunderclap, a gunpowder explosion, gunshot, an ironmonger's hammer upon

the anvil, and coach wheels on cobblestone. So, whatever the witnesses thought they had heard was far in excess of customary volume levels.

The suite of sound compositions entitled *Noisome Spirits* returns some of these narratives to a sonic experience. In so doing, it seeks to make the witnesses' audition sensible, by presenting the sounds and – following Jones' own determination – providing a 'vivid account' of apparitions ... albeit acoustically in this case. The objective, however, is not to present a simulacrum of the original sounds but, rather, to summon their sonic essence and the witnesses' sense of the dread and otherness associated with them, imaginatively and abstractly.

John Harvey, *December 2020*

Cydnyddiaethau:

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Ffynhonnell:

Edmund Jones, *A Geographical, Historical, and Religious Account of the Parish of Aberystroth*, Trefeca, 1779; *The Appearance of Evil: Apparitions of Spirits in Wales*, golygwyd gyda Chyflwyniad gan John Harvey, Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 2003.

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Further information:

A more extensive explanation of the conceptual, methodological, and technical rationale for the album's compositions is available at the following dedicated website: noisomespirits.weebly.com



