

## The Responsive in Irish and Welsh

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Irish and Welsh of all periods possess “echoing” answers, sometimes called “responsive” forms, to polar questions. While responsive forms are occasionally distinct in both morphology and syntax from the corresponding statement forms, they more generally differ only in syntax. This differing syntax consists of the deletion in response forms of all verbal arguments and complements, save adverbials:

*‘in=áigther éc, a=Brenaind?’ ar epscop Moínenn.*  
Q=fear.2SG death VOC=PN.VOC.SG says bishop PN  
‘Do you fear death, O Brendan?’ says Bishop Moínenn.

*‘águr ēm’ ar Brenaind.*  
fear.1SG indeed says PN  
‘I do indeed’, says Brendan [lit. ‘I fear indeed’]  
Old Irish from *LL* vi.51780–51781

This talk outlines the systems in Irish and Welsh from the Early Medieval period to the present, focusing on the changes of the systems and looking at whether they could serve as drivers of innovation in the languages or whether they are rather indeed, as more generally assumed in the literature, reservoirs of archaisms (Greene 1972: 71).

### Bibliography

- Greene, David. 1972. ‘The responsive in Irish and Welsh’. In: *Indo-Celtica: Gedächtnisschrift für Alf Sommerfelt*, Herbert Pilch & Joachin Thurow (eds.), 59–72. Munich.
- LL* = Best, Richard Irvine, et al. (eds.), *The Book of Leinster, formerly Leabar na Núachongbála*, 6 vols., Dublin, 1954–1983.