

**ADDRESS:
Wales and America**

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Braint o'r mwyaf oedd cael gwahoddiad i'r achlysur nodedig hwn. Syniad ardderchog oedd y syniad o sefydlu yng Ngogledd America Cymdeithas Astudiaethau Cymreig a mater o falchder aruthrol i mi yw bod a chysylltiad a'r cyfarfod sefydlu. Ac mae cael dod i Ohio, i Gallia, un o froydd mwyaf arwyddocaol Cymry America, yn brofiad y byddaf yn trysori.

It is an enormous privilege to be invited to this auspicious occasion. The idea of establishing a North American Welsh studies association is a splendid one, and to be associated with its establishment is for me a matter of deep pride. And to visit Ohio, to come to Gallia County, a highly significant place in the history of the American Welsh, is an experience I shall always treasure.

The North Americans know of Wales. But perhaps they don't know it as we would like it to be known. Rumor has it that Anthony Hopkins was once in conversation with a New York taxi driver. "Where do you come from?" asked the driver. "Wales," said Hopkins. "What do you mean?" asked the driver. "Wales- which is it? Diana's feller, the big fish or them singing bastards?" I found the anecdote very reassuring. The "singing bastards" no doubt refers to memories of *How Green Was My Valley*, for surely no singer at one of your splendid *Cymanfa Ganu* festivals could be considered to be parentally challenged. The reassurance comes from the fact that the anecdote shows that in New York, 3,500 miles and more away from Wales, the word Wales has at least some resonance. If one goes east from Wales one doesn't get the same assurance.

Admittedly there are a few areas to the east where one gets a reaction- Bulgaria, for example. "What does it mean- Welsh?" asked the guide at the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Sofia. "Welsh," says I "is a word meaning influenced by the Roman Empire. You find it all along the imperial frontier- the Walloons of Belgium, the Valdenses of northern Italy, the Vlachs of Romania." And then I added helpfully, "Lloyd George was Welsh." The guide stood for a moment musing. "Ah," he said finally, "that explains it all. Bulgaria did very badly after the First World War because Lloyd George was a Vlach."

In Hungary, too, we are known. After the suppression of the Hungarian Rising of 1848, the Magyar poets were press-ganged into addressing the Emperor. The great poet

Arany offered a poem, "The Bards of Wales" - a reworking of the story that Edward I, following the conquest of Wales in 1282, massacred the Welsh bards- a suggestion that a people can survive anything except the destruction of their poetic tradition. I remember visiting Budapest, and within half an hour the charming lady running the tourist office at Keleti Pu offered to marry me. Not, as far as I could see, because I had any obvious charms, but because she wanted to come to Wales to see where Edward I had massacred the bards.

But in Western Europe's heartland we are hardly known at all. I have lost count of the number of conversations I have had on these lines: "*Je suis Gallois*" - "*Oh, Danois- de Copehnagen.*" "*Non- de Pays de Galles.*" "*Oh, Portugal- de Lisbon.*" "*No, Welsh.*" "*Oh, Belge- de Bruxelles.*" And that happens less than 500 miles from Wales. Therefore to travel 3,500 miles and to be known at least as singing bastards is, one feels, a start.

And there are other encouraging signs also. I spent years working on the history of Cardiff which, at the turn of the century, was in terms of the tonnage it exported the largest port in the world. I thought it was a matter of interest only to tedious people like me, writers of boring Ph.D. theses in economic history, until I visited Cape Cod last week and found out that vigorous indigenous drama in the United States began with Eugene O'Neill's Bound for Cardiff. But there are also earlier traditions in which it would be pleasant to believe. I think this week is the fortieth anniversary of the erection of a monument in Mobile, Alabama, by that estimable body, the Daughters of the American Revolution, to celebrate the landing there of Madog ab Owain Gwynedd in the year 1170. Spain has the grave of Amerigo Vespucci- ostensibly the man who gave his name to America. We know better, of course. America was named after a Glamorgan merchant, Richard ap Meurig, who waxed wealthy in Bristol and who financed Henry Cabot's second voyage. We also know that Thomas Jefferson's family came from Snowdonia, that a third of the signatories of your Declaration of Independence were of Welsh descent and that Harriet Beecher Stowe came from Llandewi Brefi. And, of course, your Ivy League colleges are ours- at least, Yale, Johns Hopkins, Brown, Brynmawr, and William and Mary. And I must add, as I am related to the Edwards family of Pontypridd, that we also own Manhattan Island.

But perhaps we should show a little reticence, for trawling through other forms of American evidence provides us with little in which to delight. In the early part of this century, among the most prominent Americans who stressed their Welsh identity was the motion picture pioneer and rabid racist D.W. Griffith. His character was summed up by Anita Loos in her autobiography: "D.W. seemed almost inhuman. He was of Welsh extraction, and the Welsh are a very peculiar breed..." I remember sitting in a restaurant at Ravello, south of Naples, and hearing a booming voice across the room asking me "What are you doing in Magna Graeca?" I turned and asked "What are you doing in Magna Graeca?" "I am being myself, being Gore Vidal." The conversation turned to Wales. "Ah," said Gore Vidal, "I remember summing up the Welsh in two words." "What words?" I asked. "Bad teeth," he answered. And there was the case in the Californian court regarding the use of the verb "to welsh," as a term for renegeing on betting debts. And, above all, there is the impression left by Dylan Thomas, Richard Burton and Anthony Hopkins of Welshmen as men of enormous talent, but no-good boyos all the same. It is hardly a flattering picture- singing bastards, peculiar people, tricksters, amoral charmers, dentally challenged.

Part of the reason for the inadequacy of the American perception of the Welsh is that they did not emigrate to America in sufficient numbers for a composite perception of them to emerge. It is salutary for us to bear in mind that for every person from Wales emigrating to the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century, there were at least twenty-five persons from Ireland. In the 1880s, when Ireland exported 13 percent of her population to the United States in one decade, Wales only exported 0.8 percent of hers. Further more, Welsh migration to the United States virtually came to an end in the twentieth century and thus Welsh American communities were not topped up with new arrivals from the old country. Irish American communities were topped up, decade after decade, causing the Irish presence to be a substantial and continuous factor in the history of the United States.

The disparity between the two migrations has academic implications. As there are far more students and researchers and professors of Irish than of Welsh descent in the United States, Irish studies loom much larger in your academic institutions. An examination of the proceedings of the North American Congress of Celtic Studies indicates that contributions upon Irish themes outnumber those on Welsh themes by at least two to one. It would be of course invidious to suggest that the impetus for the establishment of an association of Welsh studies stems from any feeling of resentment towards other fields within general Celtic studies. Associations for Celtic studies and Welsh studies can no doubt coexist happily and constructively. Nevertheless, to establish an association of Welsh studies suggests a confidence and a coming-of-age which is encouraging and invigorating. There is a Welsh precedent of a kind. The University College of Cardiff, established in 1883, had from the beginning departments of Greek, Latin, English, French and German. Welsh, it was argued, was not a big enough subject to have a department to itself, so the first of the college's appointees concerned with the teaching of Welsh- the admirable Thomas Powel- was designated Professor of Celtic. The chair passed to the irascible W.J. Gurffyd in 1919; he immediately relabelled himself Professor of Welsh, although the college itself did not recognize the change until 1929.

To establish an association of Welsh studies distinct from bodies concerned with Celtic studies also has the advantage of bringing to our forefront issues relating to the present and the recent past of Wales. Our primary links with our fellow Celts are linguistic and therefore- as long as Celtic languages continue to be spoken- they are concerned with modernity. But other links, mythology, the pattern of early Christianity, law and the organization of early society, were at their most significant over a thousand years ago. Your admirable program for this conference gives full weight to matters that are current in Wales today. Among them is the very distinguished work of Welsh writers writing in English, not perhaps the most obvious field to be discussed in a Celtic studies conference, but surely a central one in a conference dealing with Welsh studies. Among those matters also is the issue of devolution and Home Rule- an issue even more central in Scotland. It can be addressed more effectively in the context of Welsh rather than Celtic studies, partly because not all the Scots care to be described as Celts. Indeed, I recall being in the Institute of Advanced Studies in Edinburgh and making some remark about fellow Celts. It did not go down well. "This is Lothian," I was told; "We are not Celts here; this is Anglian country; we are Angles." "Just like the English," I said, rather unwisely. "'Not at all," I was told. "You

see, when the Angles sailed across the North Sea, the acute Angles went north and the obtuse Angles went south."

But while emphasizing that migration from Wales is hugely overshadowed by that from Ireland, it should be stressed that Welsh emigration to North America was by no means negligible. Indeed, one of the most memorable evenings I have had for along time took place just over a week ago in the Cellar Bar in Cambridge, when Eirug Davies regaled me with a mass of information about Welsh American communities; after the third glass of Boston Ale, I was convinced that the Irish contribution to North America was small beer compared with that of the Welsh. In the pre-independence era, the number of Welsh coming to the eastern seaboard colonies was probably only exceeded by the number of English and Scotch-Irish, and we should bear in mind that the publication of books in the Welsh language began in Philadelphia at much the same time as it began in Wales. In a later period, this county of Gallia, and other counties of Ohio, were part of the process of offering a haven to the distressed and oppressed migrants from mid and west Wales. My ancestors too were part of that migration- the urge to leave rural Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire and Montgomeryshire, not perhaps to seek El Dorado, but at least adequacy and dignity for themselves and their children. My ancestors, however, did not sail away from the shores of their country. Rather did they move to the south Wales coalfield. They were colonists too, but they happened to be colonizing their own country. By the turn of the century, movement to the coalfield had reached such proportions that Wales and the United States were the only parts within the ambit of the Atlantic Economy which were gaining rather than losing by migration. Indeed, by the first decade of this century, the ability of the south Wales coalfield to suck in population was such that it was dubbed "American Wales." Up to a point, therefore, my ancestors and yours had much the same experience. The people of the Rhondda, commented Gwyn Thomas, "were Americans who missed the boat." And the similarities between the experiences of the domestic and the transoceanic migrants are striking. In both cases most of them headed for extractive industries, almost as if there was a rule that if there were a hole in the ground, anywhere in the world, there had to be a Welshman at the bottom of it. And the fates of the communities in which they settled were uncannily similar. Scranton, the heart of Pennsylvania's coal industry, had 140,000 inhabitants in 1930 and 100,000 in 1960. The Rhondda, the heart of Wales' coal industry, had 141,000 inhabitants in 1930 and 99,000 in 1960.

And the experiences of the two migrating groups followed similar lines. To the first generation, the place they had left represented the warm and the natural, but to their children, the new place was the warm and the natural and the place of origin was remote and anachronistic. But there was one major difference. Second and third generation Americans, seeking to abandon the remote and the anachronistic, could, as Jean Paul Sartre put it, escape into the Universal. And that Universal, in Pennsylvania, Ohio or Wisconsin, was an American Universal. Many of the migrants to industrial Wales also wished to abandon the remote and the anachronistic and to escape into the Universal. But the Universal in Wales has a Welsh context, for, as Saunders Lewis put it, "Civilization is not an abstraction, it must have a habitation and a name. And in Wales its name is Wales."

In any migration there is a double image. The image of the destination of the migrants and the image the migrants then create of the place they have left. This emerges forcibly from Bill Jones' admirable study of Welsh migration to Pennsylvania. "Scranton," he writes, "was as much an imaginative construction in Wales as Wales was in Scranton. Mirrors were sited on both sides of the Atlantic" - then he adds rather sourly- "and both mirrors were cracked." Cracked mirrors are perhaps an abiding feature where there is large-scale emigration, but as migration from Wales to North America is no longer statistically significant, there is no need for the mirror to continue to be cracked. North America is as it is now, with all its virtues and faults; and Wales is as it is now- with all its virtues and faults.

But to understand Wales as it is now is no easy task. For a visitor from Wales to understand America as it is now is an even more daunting task. Much of what I've seen- specifically in New England- seems very familiar, but the familiarity is deceptive. I come from a country where it is axiomatic that Puritan, Nonconformist, Dissenting beliefs were the weapon with which to attack the High and Mighty. Wandering round Boston, I came to realize that there the Puritan, Nonconformist, Dissenting beliefs were the beliefs of the High and Mighty.

You live in a country in which the notion of a frontier rolling westwards is the central image of national expansion. I live in a country in which the notion of a frontier rolling westwards is the central image of national construction. You had a slogan- "Go West Young Man and Grow Up With Your Country." I remember a time when a few enthusiastic young Welsh people from south-east Wales moved to Cardiganshire to establish a Welsh-speaking commune. And from Merthyr came the withering comment of that splendid poet Harri Webb: "Go West Young Man, and Shrink With Your Country." You have a tradition in which the brave, the enlightened, the progressive fought to save the Union. We have a debased reactionary government, which in a last-ditch attempt to cling to power avows that it will fight to save the Union.

You see yourself as a young country and the nations of Europe as ancient countries. I'm not so sure. My impression is that in the union of the thirteen original states America emerged, with all its principles and prejudices intact. The concept of the Welsh as a people with a recognizable history and culture is of course far older, but the concept of Wales, I would argue, is far younger. By the concept of Wales I mean that our thirteen original counties in their totality are the homeland of a national community and that that fact has political and constitutional significance. Now that is a concept that found tentative expression in the 1880s and 1890s, but it lacked any real institutional basis until the 1960s. Thus, it could be argued that the United States, far from being a younger country than Wales, is in fact anything up to 200 years older. It is salutary to bear in mind that the earliest university here in the State of Ohio predates the University of Wales by almost ninety years.

In the international recognition of Wales, the United States played a significant role. The American Emigration Service recognized the Welsh as a distinct category in 1875. They had already recognized the Scots and the Irish, but until 1875 the Welsh were lumped in with the English. The British Emigration Service also recognized the Scots and Irish, but it did not distinguish between the English and Welsh until 1908. Thus, between 1875 and 1908, a migrating Welsh person was an English statistic on leaving Britain and did not become a

Welsh statistic until landing in America. Thus, it could be argued, it was the United States that invented the Welsh.

This whole concept of the invention of nations is a fascinating one. Malcolm Bradbury's remarkable recent offering, Dangerous Passage: Trans-Atlantic Mythologies and the Novel, argues that America was invented in Europe, because the Europeans wanted to believe "in a new world to the west where people might begin history all over again." And then Bradbury goes on to argue that Europe was invented in America, because it was only in America that Poles and Greeks, Irish and Italians, Scandinavians and Czechs met each other and became aware of a shared inheritance different from that of native-born Americans. And if that were true of the Europeans, how much more true was it of the Welsh. Welsh Nationalism was a concept born in Cincinnati, where Michael D. Jones was a Congregational minister in the 1840s. To be Welsh in Wales was to be from Carmarthenshire or Anglesey or Glamorgan or Denbighshire. To be Welsh in America was to be from Wales. Periodicals and newspapers in Wales were local- Y Gwladgarwr serving Aberdare and much of the south, Y Faner serving Denbigh and much of the north and so on. Welsh periodicals in America served the Welsh in their entirety. Indeed, Y Drych was by far the most nationalistic periodical published in the Welsh language in the nineteenth century, a point seized upon by R.T. Berthof in his admirable study of British migrants in America.

And not only were the Welsh as a nation invented in America. So also were almost all the causes that have been central to our endeavor over the last two centuries. As Gwyn Alf Williams has shown in his brilliant books on Madog and Beulah, late eighteenth century Welsh radicalism, religious as well as political, was largely borrowed from the American Enlightenment. In the early nineteenth century, the temperance and teetotal movements were directly inspired by the American example, and the leaders of the movement to disestablish the Anglican Church in Wales looked to the American separation of church and state as their model. The victory of the North in the Civil War was interpreted in Wales as the triumph of a democratic people over a decadent landed aristocracy, an inspiration to those who launched an attack upon Welsh landlordism in the 1870s and 1880s. The 1880s also saw the emergence of a republican movement, much to the distress of Queen Victoria. Thomas Gee, the editor of Baner ac Amerserau Cymru, described republican rallies with enthusiasm. American flags were carried, he noted, and the crowd shouted the names of American Presidents.

In the twentieth century, of course, Welsh Radicalism has been overwhelmingly labourist and socialist and thus it could be argued that it then parted with the American tradition. Yet, if one looks at the career of Aneurian Bevan, the most distinguished representative of Welsh Socialism, one finds that the writers who inspired him were almost all Americans. He noted in his volume of essays, In Place of Fear, his delight in the writings of Debs, de Leon, and Jack London. "What they said," he wrote "Had all the power of a divine revelation. Everything fell into place." And, if I may be permitted a personal anecdote, I am here today because of a certain strand of American radicalism. My mother happened to be in Paris on the occasion of the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti. She was with my aunt from Pontypridd, and the receptionist at the hotel, who had once worked in Cardiff, noticed their Welsh accents. "If you go out tonight," he said, "Be careful. Don't allow anybody to hear you speak English- they might think you are American. If you can

speak Welsh, do so." My mother and my aunt had never spoken Welsh together, although their chapel upbringing had given them a grounding in the language. They spent the rest of their time in Paris speaking Welsh to each other, with both of them realizing how inadequate was their grasp of their mother-tongue. On returning home, my mother was determined to improve her knowledge. She joined the literary classes of the Workers Educational Association, and it was on one of the courses that she met my father.

The other strand of Welsh twentieth-century radicalism- that of Plaid Cymru- also had American associations. While Saunders Lewis looked to France and Rome, that equally significant figure D.J. Davies looked to the Nordic countries and to America, in whose armed forces he served in the First World War, as a protest against the class bound attitudes of the officers of the British Army. His inspiration came above all from the New Deal, and year in year out the model he offered for the regeneration of depression-ridden Wales was the work of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

But in the context of establishing a North American conference of Welsh studies, we should be thinking not only of what we received from you, but of what we can offer you. First and foremost that means offering you material for study, welcoming you to Wales and to Wales' academic centers. Recently, Michael Lieven, a scholar whose family origins are in Latvia, wrote an admirable book on Senghennydd, the Universal Pit Village. In his introduction, he noted "My immense gratitude for the intelligence and patient support of the staff of that incomparable institution, the National Library of Wales." The primary advantage of being involved in Welsh studies is that your path will inevitably lead you to that incomparable institution. And there are also insights, inspired by the Welsh experience, which have relevance in North America. Several decades ago, Professor Brinley Thomas, whose book, Migration and Economic Growth, is the seminal work for students of migration, put forward the argument that industrialization was the salvation rather than the underminer of the Welsh language. I was delighted to find that a few years ago scholars in Canada gathered together to discuss "The French Language, the Industrialization of Quebec and the Brinley Thomas Thesis." It is fascinating too to find that the Welsh experience has been brought into play in discussions over the future status of America's native population. In Journey Down a Rainbow, the fascinating correspondence between the playwright J.B. Priestly and his archaeologist wife, Jacquetta Hawkes, Priestly muses in New Mexico in 1955:

Most people tell me that the Indians cannot hold out much longer. Another generation at most, they say. I am not so sure. There is in the world today some spirit moving against the huge forces of uniformity. Who, a century ago, would have imagined the revival of self-consciousness among the Welsh, the renewal of the language and their desire for self-determination.

And there are other advantages too for those American scholars who involve themselves in Welsh studies. Many American academics find their entry into European studies through English studies. It may not be the best entry, for whatever England is- and it has many virtues- it is not typically European. In much of Europe, the minorities are the majority, and it might be better to approach Europe through a minority culture such as that of the Welsh. And it could be argued that in any consideration of European minorities, the

Welsh have a pivotal role. That at least is the argument of the distinguished Scottish thinker Tom Nairn. He wrote:

My concern is to understand contemporary efforts by peoples defined by Engles as non-historic nations to cease to be ethnographic monuments and to join the modern world. In establishing a hierarchy of such peoples, I consider the Welsh to be dead center. Like the underdeveloped areas of Europe, they have known the traumas of non-recognition, but at the same time Wales was a great secondary center of the European industrial revolution. What happens in Scotland has some significance, but what happens in Wales is likely to be far more influential in the long run.

And Wales too offers that highly European phenomenon- intellectuals who are *engage*. I know of no English intellectual this century who has gone to prison in defense of his subject. The situation in Wales is best expressed by Saunders Lewis defending his action at Penyberth in 1936, an action which led to his imprisonment in Wormwood Scrubs. He told the judge: "In the University lecture room, I have not professed a dead literature of antiquarian interest. I have professed the living literature of this nation. So this literature has claims on me as a man as well as a teacher."

But what you can gain from us is as nothing compared with what we can gain from you. The North American Association for the Study of Welsh Culture and History will contain scholars and teachers working in the world's greatest universities, aware of the theories, the insights, the vision of people working in myriad fields. And through you, those insights can be brought to bear upon the study of Wales and the Welsh. One thinks of the way William James revolutionized the study of religious experience and how his analysis has yet to be used fully in the study of Welsh religious experience. One thinks of Michael Hechter and the way he adapted his notion of internal colonialism to the situation in Wales. Noam Chomsky was recently in Wales- I report with some pride that he actually quoted me- and his comments on language and on political action opened up whole vistas. Joshua Fishman's idea of language maintenance are only slowly percolating through to us and we need to know more about him. I am sure that in American scholarship there are many others whose work has enormous relevance for Welsh studies. You know about them. Tell us. Be the conduit whereby the ideas of the world's most acute minds are brought to the service of Wales. This, above all, I feel, would be the contribution that a North American association of Welsh studies could make.

And there is one other thing we want you to do. We want to be remembered. We want an assurance that there will be an awareness that the Welsh made a contribution to the making of North America. Isaac Bashevis Singer- probably the worthiest ever recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature, at least until R.S. Thomas wins it- wrote in his volume of stories, A Friend of Kafka, of his visit to a defunct Yiddish settlement in Argentina. He found that the Yiddish books that the community had once owned had been thrown into barrels. He wrote:

In the dusk, I read the titles of books that had enchanted me in my youth. I remembered the bindings, the paper, the print. There seemed something

Biblical in that abandoning of one's origins, forgetting the efforts of the fathers. I touched the covers and the pages of the books. I breathed in their mouldy smell. Sonia came out. "What are you doing?" she asked. And I answered, "I am visiting my grave."

I plead with you to ensure that that will not be the fate of the records of Welsh America.

And in conclusion, we remember the significant dates in the history of Welsh cultural studies. The date of the first Welsh printed book. The date of the publication of the Bible in Welsh. The date of the launching of Griffith Jones' literary campaign. The date of the founding of the Cymmrodorion. The date of the establishment of the National Eisteddfod. The date of the establishment of the University of Wales. The dates of the founding of Y Llenor, The Welsh History Review, Planet, and Llafur. In years to come, I'm sure that observers of the Welsh scene will add another date to that list. It will be 1995, the year of the establishment of the North American Association for the Study of Welsh Culture and History.