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EDITORIAL

In a recent polemic on the current condition of the media in Wales, Kevin Williams bemoaned the lack of attention paid to the history of the media in Wales on our television screens. He points out that while historians 'have done endless pieces to camera reclaiming a variety of aspects of our past', the history of broadcasting and the part it has 'played in the process by which we have come to know about ourselves', has been conspicuous by its absence (*Shadows and Substances*, 1997).

Several points can be made about this observation. Welsh historians have, indeed, found an important niche in television which has permitted a dissemination of debates about Welsh history to a wider audience. Probably the seminal moments in this development were the screening of two controversial series in the 1980s, HTV's 'The Dragon Has Two Tongues', written and presented by Gwyn A. Williams and Wynford Vaughan Thomas, and the BBC's 'Wales! Wales?' presented by Dai Smith. By contrast, broadcasters have tended to commemorate milestones in the history of their industry with cosy celebratory pieces composed of little more than the nostalgic recollections of veterans about 'the good old days', or cheap-to-produce repeats, displaying little appetite for a more thorough-going assessment of their record and the relationship of their product to the wider culture over time. In this respect, the commissioned volume on the history of the BBC in Wales is significant. Written by distinguished historian (and teledon) John Davies, *Broadcasting in Wales* is a weighty volume. Curiously, however, there has been no attempt to commission a comparable television series on the history of the BBC that might open up an informed debate about its role in Welsh life.

In fairness, it should be said that as history on television has relied heavily on academic research to give it substance, so any initiative about the history of broadcasting will be equally reliant on the labour of professional historians. Historians of modern Wales have been well aware of the impact of print on cultural life and politics, not only utilising newspapers and periodicals as a source for information about society but also studying the production of these publications, their financing and management, editorial policies and the personnel who wrote for them. Important research on media history has been undertaken by a number of historians closely associated with Llafur, such as Aled Jones, Peter Stead, Deian Hopkin and Joanne Cayford. But often there is a time lag between the publication of research and its percolation into the world of broadcasting.

This issue of *Llafur* contributes to the debate by publishing a number of articles on the theme of the media in history. Most are concerned primarily with institutions. In his appraisal of the role of miners' cinemas in south Wales in the 1930s Stephen Ridgwell reminds us that even left-leaning audiences demanded films that would excite and entertain; Peter Miskell untangles the film distribution networks in Wales between the wars; and Ifan Gwynfil Evans illumines the fraught relationship between commercialism and cultural imperatives in his analysis of the reasons for the failure of Wales (West & North) Television Ltd. between 1959 and 1963. On a somewhat different tack, James Thomas provides a judicious evaluation of the campaign of vilification waged against Neil Kinnock as leader of the Labour Party during the general election of 1992. We look forward to

further discussion of the ways in which modern Wales has shaped, and been shaped by, its media.

Our other contributors cover a wide range of interests. We are very pleased to be able to print Professor Glanmor Williams' address at a Llafur dayschool to commemorate the lives of the late Gwyn A. Williams and David Jones. Those who were present found it an extremely moving and perceptive view and it supplements the obituaries we have already published of these lamented historians. Ken Lloyd Gruffydd uncovers the history of a mariners' strike in north Wales in 1336, making this one of the earliest (if not the earliest) strikes in Welsh history. Hayley Walstow's essay on evacuation to Aberdare during the Second World War uses oral history to sketch the varied experiences of evacuees and the host community. In his study of the attempts to form a workers' co-operative at Cwmllynfell colliery in the 1950s, Peter Harries addresses recent debates in *Llafur* about nationalisation of the industry after the Second World War. John Graham Jones provides valuable evidence from the collections of the National Library of Wales on Nye Bevan's place in the factionalism in the Labour Party in the 1950s which we are pleased to be able to publish in our issue for Bevan's centenary year.

Neil Evans

Paul O'Leary

GWYN ALFRED WILLIAMS (1925-1995) and DAVID JOHN VICTOR JONES (1941-1994) [1]

Glanmor Williams

'And left the vivid air signed with their honour'

Here, at Cyfarthfa Castle, in April 1997, nothing can prevent my mind from going back sixty years to April 1937, when Gwyn and I were both here in this building as pupils of the boys' secondary school - he in Form II and I in Form VI. Each of us, in the opening words of the familiar old rhyme, was a 'bachgen bach o Ddowlais' ('a little boy from Dowlais'). Both of us were born and bred in the town. Neither of us could have got it out of his system, or ever wanted to. Back here, in our native district, I am reminded of that inheritance more forcibly than usual.

At once I think of Gwyn's family. They were all short and dark; brimful of energy and vitality, crackling with human electricity. Though they all had a flair for words and an inborn gift for conveying them, Gwyn was supreme among them. His father, Tom John, was steeped in the town's radical political tradition and markedly left-wing in sympathy. His uncle, Leyshon, had a notable penchant for dramatic presentation as author and producer; and I can tell you from personal experience that to take part in one of Leyshon's productions was a liberal education in itself!

The chapel they attended was Independent by persuasion - what else? Gwernllwyn Chapel was, intellectually speaking, much the liveliest and most intellectually active in the town, having among its members the highest proportion of thinkers and teachers. Like all the Nonconformist chapels of that era, Gwernllwyn was keen to foster its young talent. It may have done more for Gwyn than he always realized, even though he abandoned its teachings at an early age. I'm not sure that it wasn't Gwernllwyn that first bred in him that love of eloquence and oratory, that flair for imagery, and the ear for a telling phrase. He may also, without being aware of it, later have undergone a transference of a sense of mission - that desire to win adherents for a nobler cause - that was crystallized in the title given to his autobiographical sketch, *Fishers of Men* (1996).

The town in which he grew up was one where it was difficult - I would say impossible - for some one with so delicate a sense of perception and so outgoing a sympathy for others as Gwyn, not to be keenly aware of its startling contrasts. One of the oldest townships in industrial south Wales, Dowlais was nevertheless perched on the fringes of the most beautiful and accessible countryside, set at the foot of dramatic moorland and mountain country. Basically, its population was Welsh, many of them Welsh- speaking; but it had embraced a sizeable admixture of incomers - English, Irish, Italian, Spanish, and others. Gwyn's wife, before they were married, was Maria Fernandez, daughter of a Spanish immigrant family. Once a hive of industry and home of the biggest iron works in the world,

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[1] This article is the text of the keynote address at a dayschool to commemorate Gwyn Williams and David Jones, at Cyfarthfa Castle in April 1997. The Chairman was Llafur's President, Professor Ieuan Gwynedd Jones.

by the 1930s Dowlais had become one of the most crippled unemployment black spots in the country. Was it any wonder that that former stronghold of Liberalism now resounded with furious left-wing protests, especially among the young, against the grinding poverty, hardship and injustice. And no one voiced them more volubly than the youthful and ardent Gwyn. Stirred in every fibre of his being by the legendary radical tradition from the Merthyr Rising through Keir Hardie to the contemporary volunteers for Republican Spain, Gwyn became and remained all his life an out-and-out left-wing radical, insatiably thirsting for justice for the people. 'A people's remembrancer' was how he liked to describe himself. The phrase came late in his life, but the instinct was there from the outset.

Ironically enough, in 1936 Gwyn went to school in, of all places, a former ironmaster's household - Cyfarthfa Castle, home to the Crawshays. He went there five years after I did. It was a good grammar school of its type, but not, I would say, exceptional. Gwyn, of course, had that streak of genius which would have set him apart anywhere. From school he went straight to the Army in 1943. He later landed in Normandy, eventually making his way across Europe. Although those years in the Army could be regarded as a serious interruption, they may have served him well. History needs maturity; and by the time Gwyn went to Aberystwyth as a student he was in all ways infinitely more mature than he would have been if he'd gone directly from school.

Everyone who knew him as a student in Aberystwyth - lecturers and fellow-students alike - commented on his surpassing brilliance. Hywel Teifi Edwards said that for ages he thought Gwyn Alf stood for Gwyn Alpha, because he got an alpha for every essay he wrote. Everything he touched in the general as well as the academic life of the college turned to gold. After taking a First of exceptional merit, he went on to pursue research for his Ph.D. degree in London. His thesis subsequently saw the light of day as a book, *Medieval London: From Commune to Capital* (1963) a brilliant study, which is in some danger of getting overshadowed by Gwyn's better-known later works. The critical milestone was reached in 1954. In that year, David Williams, who had an Argus eye for historical talent, picked him out for a lectureship in Welsh history. So began his long and fabulously influential career as a university teacher, in the course of which he would mesmerize audiences in Aberystwyth, Manchester, York, Cardiff - and all stations between!

Yet I've sometimes thought that David Williams didn't perhaps use him as effectively as he might have done and didn't give him sufficient scope for more advanced teaching. Gwyn was always intensely loyal, and invariably referred to David in deservedly reverential tones as 'the Master of us all'. By the early 1960s, all the same, he could tell me when he went to York that he was 'fed up with Wales and Welsh History'. It was certainly true that about that time he withdrew the application he'd put in for a major job in Wales, which I'm sure he would have got if he'd remained in contention for it. I know because I was one of his referees.

Those years in York, however, were a Roman *triumphus*. It was a new university; radicalism was running riot among students there and elsewhere; and Gwyn was exercising an almost hypnotic influence not only among his pupils but his colleagues also. His

writings in journals and his *Guardian* reviews were received with the kind of reverence usually reserved for holy writ. He'd become one of the best-known left-wing historians in the land, ranking alongside people like E.P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm. Then, in the 1970s things began to unravel. I once spoke to his fellow-professor, Gerald Aylmer, about this. Although almost a diametrically different type from Gwyn, Gerald had an enormous admiration for him. But he told me that he believed that Gwyn was at this time becoming growingly ill-at-ease with England and the English. Certainly, his heart was turning back more and more to Wales. So it wasn't an overwhelming surprise that in 1974 he should have taken a chair in Cardiff in succession to some one very unlike himself, Professor Stanley Chrimes.

The next ten years ought to have been an unparalleled *succès d'estime*. In many respects they were. Gwyn was, if possible, more prodigal of effort and energy than before. Projects, schemes, words, images, wisecracks, aphorisms tumbled out from him in a ceaseless flow. His teaching, lecturing and public utterances were more persuasive than ever. A stream of books, coruscating with ideas and effervescing with verbal brilliance, appeared in bewilderingly rapid succession: the book on Gramsci, *Goya and the Impossible Revolution* (1976); *The Merthyr Rising* (1978); *Madoc and the Making of a Myth* (1979). *The Search for Beulah Land* (1980); *The Welsh in their History* (1982) and *When was Wales* (1985). He was also at work planning the sixth volume of the *Glamorgan County History*: the one on Social History from 1780-1960. Above all, perhaps, his monumental scheme for a stupendous History of Recent Industrial Wales began to take shape.

Much as Gwyn accomplished, he didn't really pull off what he'd had in mind. These were difficult years in his personal life. Possibly he didn't carry all his colleagues in Cardiff with him. I also sometimes wonder whether or not we as Welsh historians elsewhere gave him all the support we might have done. Certainly, the failure of the Referendum of 1979 and the return of a Tory government were crushing blows for him. The subsequent cutback in university finances and the withering of ambitious plans for the future plunged him into despondency. It was about this time he gave up his plans for the History of Industrial Wales and the volume on Glamorgan Social History. He often got to look profoundly melancholic and heart-sick, though it has to be said that he could bounce back with astonishing resilience and suddenness. He'd always been subject to these alternating moods; but I think the downswings now became noticeably more frequent and lasted longer.

His decision to take early retirement, and it was early - he was only 58 when he went - and concentrate on his own projects, disappointing as it may have been to those of us who knew him well, could all the same have been a sensible one. It gave him freedom to do his own thing; particularly in broadcasting, where he had such unique gifts. This was a medium which, even more than print, lent itself to that vivid, irresistible instinct for presentation which he had right to the very end. I was also deeply impressed by the strenuous exertions to which he now devoted himself in order to try to attain the same fluency in Welsh that he'd always so effortlessly enjoyed in English.

What was it that was so appealing about his approach to his material? The first thing that always struck me was his exceptional compassion for the people. He was a man who was convinced that he was destined to elucidate and record the fate of ordinary people; particularly the struggles of the protesters, the rebels, those who gave tongue to the cry of the oppressed against the oppressors. Not just the outburst of one social group being ground down by another: *sans culottes* against *aristos*; workers in opposition to bosses; slaves against slaveowners. His indignation could be kindled just as blazingly by the sight of one nation or people holding down another: French subduing Spaniards in Goya's age; North Americans suppressing Red Indians; and English restricting Welsh; an alien people, alien rulers, an alien class of employers.

For all that, when Gwyn returned to Wales I don't think it was because he was anti-English so much as because he was pro-Welsh. The book, *When was Wales*, reveals just how widely his sympathies ranged and just how percipient into such a diversity of periods and subjects his insights were. Perhaps, indeed, there was some danger of his being attracted by too many subjects; his antennae were so sensitive that they were all too ready to respond to the slightest stimulus. Is that part of the price you necessarily pay for such quickness of mind and such versatility of interest and understanding?

Turning to Gwyn the presenter, what we can't fail to remember was that rollicking sense of fun that could range from the mildly mischievous across all shades of the humour spectrum to the sardonically devastating. His extempore whizzbang could be as barbed as the carefully prepared witticism. But writing, talking, or appearing on television, Gwyn did want an audience. He had to have some one he could spark into life. He let himself go in a series of volcanic outbursts like some elemental force of nature, with vivid and unforgettable phrases and sentences, or pithy aphoristic paradoxes; all depicted from a spectacularly colourful verbal palette. He had even learnt, like Aneurin Bevan, to master his impediment and use it to accentuate his points.

Was I the only one who had derived the impression that in his latest he preferred television to books? A stuffed-shirt historian - me for instance - might be tempted to argue that television has its deficiencies and limitations. It's difficult to sustain long and detailed argument on the box; you can't very well include references; entertainment tends to take priority over information; it's not something you can put down for a few minutes while you think through the argument. But, on the other hand, it does make a profound impression. If you want to carry the non-specialist, the ordinary man and woman in the street, with you, this is the way to do it. If you believe that history is something more than dry-as-dust study; if you want something that is the contemporary equivalent of the popular theatre, the political pamphlet, the woodcut or the cartoon, or even the mass public speech or demonstration, then television is it. Let's be frank: very few of us can do it well. Many more of us are more at home writing a book or an article. It behoves those of us who can't to encourage those who really can. And Gwyn could - supremely well. At his best he wasn't far off the class of an A.J.P. Taylor or a David Attenborough.

Another of his characteristics which used to intrigue me was Gwyn's love affair with the Welsh language. He had some early foundations on which to build; but his Welsh at one time, as he would readily have admitted, was pretty scrappy. What was impressive was his struggle to master it. He didn't wholly succeed, but he did astonishingly well. He did so because he brought to Welsh an extraordinary mastery of language in general; a sense of drama, linguistic colour, insight into people and events, unusual empathy and talent for evoking the past. These were some of the rare and highly developed qualities that he brought to his use of the Welsh language. Just before he retired to Carmarthenshire to live, he told me - and a number of other people - that he was going back to find his roots. I took that to mean that he was returning to immerse himself in a Welsh-speaking community from which he could draw sustenance for his growing consciousness of being a Cymro Cymraeg. Sadly, I saw almost nothing of him after he'd plunged into the depths of *pura Wallia*, as our old friend Professor Jones Pierce might have said, and so I never got the chance to quiz him about the way he was making out.

I can readily believe, though, that his rural retirement eased that tension which at times threatened to become unbearable between his devotion to left-wing sympathies and his commitment to nationalism. I used on occasions to fear that he was in danger of splitting up the middle. He always reminded me of one of those Cossack horsemen riding two mettlesome steeds pulling in different directions, with one foot on the back of each. Were there times when he felt it necessary to lift one foot precariously ?

However hazardous the mental and emotional balancing act may from time to time have been, he certainly cherished a consuming love for his country and his people. It appeared to me to be a kind of messianic idealism, in which he could envisage Wales as a possible 'Beulah land', to quote one of his own books, of the twentieth century. At his most enthusiastic he could see it 'uwchlaw cymylau amser' ('above the clouds of time') as a genuinely democratic, classless society, emancipated from the thrall of England and capitalism. He'd always been drawn to earlier visionaries - Madoc, Owain Glyndŵr, John Dee, Iolo Morganwg, Dic Penderyn, Goya, Gramsci, David Ivon Jones, They were the kind of idealists who'd always excited him; the inspirationalists who never doubted the capacity of men and women to free themselves from the shackles that the privileged loaded upon them. That's why the events of 1979 were so shattering a disenchantment for him. It really seemed to him as if the Welsh had wantonly turned their backs on the prospect of freedom. That awful haunted look, the deep black circles under the eyes, which had tended to dog him in his earlier pessimistic phases, now got worse and were shaken off with much more difficulty thereafter. The adjectives he used to describe the 'black dog' were characteristically self-mocking: 'extinct', 'burnt-out', 'terminal', 'menopausal'.

It wasn't that he was an unworldly and impractical optimist. He didn't expect Utopia overnight; he was far too good an historian not to be aware that the path forward would be long and painful. But he was convinced that the will must be in place and the sinews braced to take the decision. To draw back from it with a nervous shudder was disastrous. Was that the reason why he was subsequently drawn to outline with such bold and masterly strokes the whole Welsh past? Did he hope to infuse into his countrymen the pride and the fire to

endorse their country's future? Was that why he struggled so desperately, even though a cruel and protracted death had plunged its claws deep and unrelenting into him, to establish his point that what the legendary Arthur had done before could be achieved again ?

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If, when thinking about Gwyn Alfred, my mind went back sixty years or so, it goes back some thirty years to the summer of 1966, when I recall how I first met David Jones. We had a vacancy in the Department of History at Swansea for some one to teach eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British history, and I confess that I was very keen to find somebody who had a research interest in Welsh history. I had been very taken by what David Williams had written to me about one of his students who, a year earlier, had completed his Ph.D. thesis. David was an excellent judge of quality and a man normally very sparing in his compliments. So praise from him was praise indeed. As soon as we encountered David J. V. Jones we couldn't but be strongly attracted to this tall, handsome, thoughtful young man, who spoke with such measured care and deliberation. Not surprisingly, we appointed him. He turned out to be one of the best appointments I was ever involved in.

David was one of the younger members of a family of seven children born to a farming family in rural Montgomeryshire on 12 June 1941. He owed much to his early nurture and surroundings, which ingrained in him an abiding sense of family and community. It endowed him with an instinctive awareness of the virtues - and the limitations - of rural life. He never lost those sources of inner strength and sturdy values which his country upbringing conferred upon him. He always retained that dependability and capacity for hard work, allied to an appealing modesty and reserve. It was characteristic of him that, to the end, he should have preserved the quiet speech and attractive inflexions of the Montgomeryshire borderland.

He was educated at the local elementary school and, later, at Welshpool High School. Tall, well-built and good-looking, he pursued an interesting and versatile career at school. Predictably, he was very bright at academic subjects. But he also played football very well: well enough to be offered a chance of turning professional. He was also sufficiently accomplished an artist to have proceeded to the Slade School of Art had he so chosen. This all-round ability gave him a sense of proportion, an awareness of the fitness of things, and reinforced his instinct for seeing things through and getting them completed with precision and style.

From Welshpool he went on to the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, to study History. There, he came in contact with two people who made a powerful and lasting impact on him: David Williams and Gwyn A. Williams. In David Williams he was to admire those virtues which he himself would display: attention to detail; thoroughness, exactitude, restraint and clarity. He once described David Williams as the 'most thorough and elegant of historians'. It was a compliment which might, with equal justice, have been applied to D.J.V., except that there lay within him a fiery streak of what he himself described as his

'Celtic enthusiasm'. It was this self-same trait which responded so readily to that combustible enthusiasm, passion and yearning for justice that he found so abundantly in Gwyn's ebullient temperament. However, Gwyn was soon to leave Aber., and it was under David Williams that D.J.V. went on to pursue research. The latter spoke of him to me in conversation as 'one of the most gifted and industrious pupils I ever had'. That was saying a great deal.

In 1966 David came to Swansea. Within a few years he had more than confirmed our good opinion of him. From the outset he proved to be an excellent teacher, greatly liked and admired by his students. One couldn't fail to notice that his courses, especially his special subject class on Chartism, were always over-subscribed by students. Deservedly so, because he was always at his best in the conversational give-and-take intimacy of the small group. He proved to be an inspiring and conscientious research supervisor for those fortunate enough to go on to postgraduate work under his direction. He was also an endearing colleague; a loyal, retiring, essentially private man with whom few could claim to be intimate, as his great friend David Howell, said of him. But a man of genuine integrity, for whom all his colleagues had an unbounded esteem and liking.

His most impressive feature, however, was the exceptionally demanding and immaculately organized programme of research and writing that he set himself. During his twenty-eight years in Academia he blossomed prodigiously as an historical author. Between 1973 and 1992 he published six substantial books and a wealth of papers and reviews. The books came in a steady stream: he blazed the trail with *Before Rebecca* (1973); then followed *Chartism and the Chartists* (1975); *Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth-century Britain* (1982); *The Last Rising* (1985); *Rebecca's Children* (1989); and *Crime in Nineteenth-century Wales* (1992). His final book appeared posthumously in 1996: *Crime and Policing in the Twentieth Century*. David was always irresistibly drawn to the barely explored conditions of the poor and down-trodden. Beneath that calm and unflurried exterior that he invariably offered to the world about him, there burned a glowing desire for decency and justice and a warm generosity of spirit, which were nevertheless not allowed to bend or distort that untarnishable regard he maintained for historical truth. Secretly, he cherished an aspiration to write a novel one day. With his gifts of insight and fellow-feeling he might well have written a memorable one. I'm not sure that he hadn't got it in him to write a novel along the lines of those written by Raymond Williams.

As it was, he drove himself intensely hard with his historical writing; and his publications became increasingly comprehensive and masterly. A country-man who had migrated to the industrial south, he was peculiarly well fitted to interpret that transitional mentality that pervaded so much of the political protest of nineteenth-century Wales in town and country. His chosen field of study from his time as a research student until his death was recent social history; more particularly, popular protest, the causes and nature of crime, and the methods of policing. He was tremendously hard-working and well-organized in his studies, meticulously tracking down his sources in a whole range of repositories, probable and improbable, rigorously testing and analysing his material, and presenting his conclusions in smooth, lucid prose. He always put me in mind of those old-style country

craftsmen, consummate artists for whom Montgomeryshire was famous - those superb clock-makers, or the men who fashioned those magnificent oak dressers or *cypyrddau tridarn* (three-piece cupboards). Like them, David was a man who had an innate respect for his materials, knew the dignity of patient and sustained work, had learnt his craft through and through, modelled his pieces with admirable proportions and scrupulous finish, and presented them to the world only when he was wholly satisfied they were as perfect as he could make them.

His achievement as teacher and scholar had brought him thoroughly merited recognition. He was promoted Senior Lecturer in 1976, Reader in 1986 and Professor in 1990. During the last year of his life he held a prestigious British Academy Research Fellowship, which he'd won in the teeth of intense nationwide competition. Throughout 1993-4 he had been working with his customary unsparing diligence on south Wales and crime in the twentieth century. During that time, he was deeply upset by the death (in 1992) of his friend and fellow-worker, Dr Jane Morgan, at a tragically early age. It was typical of him that, when invited, he should without hesitation write an excellent essay for the volume published as a memorial to her. I remember talking to him at the launch of the book in March 1994 and being struck by how dreadfully churned up he was by Jane's untimely death. I confess that I didn't think of it at the time, but after his death I more than once wondered whether he had had some uneasy premonition of the cruel fate that was soon to cut him down in October 1994, aged fifty-three, at the very height of his intellectual powers. Every time I think of it an awful stab of *hiraeth* goes through me. I cannot forget the extraordinary courage and equanimity with which he drew on his inner reserves of fortitude and resilience to confront those final dreadful weeks. It was entirely in keeping with the rest of his life that he should never have flinched in the face of an inexorable fate. His wife, Gwenda, and his son, Ceri, supported him valiantly throughout.

It was immensely reassuring that the book he had virtually completed should, thanks in no small measure to Gwenda's determination and Jeremy Glenn's support, have been published by the University of Wales press at the end of 1996. It is a lasting monument to a fine man and a dedicated historian.

Perhaps you'll allow me to round off these few remarks by saying something about Gwyn and David in tandem. At first sight, they might seem poles apart. David was tall, reserved, quite untheatrical; a countryman at heart and a very private individual. An excellent teacher, but in an essentially quiet, undemonstrative way; though effective with a big class, always preferring the small group. David always gave me the impression of steady, uninterrupted transmission of high intellectual voltage.

Gwyn, on the contrary, was short, fiery and dramatic; even at times melodramatic. He never lost that quicksilver magic of the valley boy at his best. He was a superb exponent of his subject to classes large or small, but you felt that he needed an audience, and the bigger the better. There was a touch of explosive, volcanic genius about him. He reminded me of the way in which Williams Pantycelyn tried to describe another of Wales's supreme orators, Daniel Rowlands:

Llais yr utgorn, a llif geiriau,
Tarth a thymestl, mwg a thân.
('Voice of the trumpet, and torrent of words; mist and tempest, smoke and fire')

Gwyn had that all-subduing eloquence, no question; except that whereas Daniel Rowland was chillingly serious, Gwyn was incorrigibly mischievous. There was a downside to him, though. He could sometimes lose faith in himself; there were occasions when he looked the incarnation of despair. Those schizophrenic ups and downs may be the price a genius has to pay for his exceptional endowment. David, by contrast, whatever may have been now and again seething beneath his imperturbable surface, always conveyed the impression of calm, level-headed control.

Yet, when the surface differences between the two had been pared away and the core values of each revealed, they had much in common. To begin with, both had a tremendous admiration for their mentor, David Williams. Each regarded him as a very great and seminal figure in modern Welsh historiography. Odd that he should have been such a hero to both and that they unhesitatingly acknowledged the enormous debt they owed him, because David Williams, superlative a scholar as he was, was not what you would describe as a charismatic figure. What, however, I think they both responded to in him was his almost clinical efficiency as a teacher and, above all, his insistence as an historian upon the central importance of social history, especially his emphasis on the 'condition of the people', his attention to the disinherited. It was he taught them to underpin their work by the unresting and rigorous search for evidence. He who inspired them to seek out those who were not prepared to accept a state of society imposed upon them by the privileged - revolutionaries in Europe and in America, as well as Britain and Wales. He first set them off in pursuit of *sans culottes*, Italian workers, Russian revolutionaries, Merthyr rioters, Chartist agitators, and children of Rebecca.

Both David and Gwyn had fire in their bellies. Gwyn's was more readily ignited and more likely to set all around him ablaze perhaps; but David's, if deeper down and less obvious, was genuine enough. Both had a burning indignation against injustice and a passion for decency and fair dealing. Neither had the slightest doubt that history was much more than a milk-and-water academic exercise. They were convinced that after the middle of the eighteenth century human communities had been passing through one of the two or three basic revolutions in the history of humankind; that to find anything on a comparable scale to what had been happening in the last two or three centuries one needed to go back to the Neolithic Revolution, when humans had passed from being hunters and food-gatherers to becoming farmers and urban dwellers. Both believed it was imperative to grapple with the problems of understanding modern revolutions which had overtaken society if it was ever to be radically improved. That meant tackling the nature and implications of the economic changes, the political revolutions, the intellectual transformations, and above all, the upheavals in social conditions and social relations which had convulsed communities of every kind. Looking back now, I must admit I find it ironic that in the late 1950s and 1960s I should have been importuning all those who could be bothered to listen about the

importance of studying the history of Wales after 1815 and especially after *c.* 1860. Then, there were hardly any students in the field; now it is inundated. Not that such a transformation came about as the result of anything I had to say. One of the main reasons for it is the glittering contributions made by historians of the calibre of Gwyn and D.J.V., or yourself, Mr Chairman. Another is the energizing activity of *Llafur*. It would be otiose to remind this audience of what the Welsh Labour History Society has done, or to emphasize the profound concern which both Gwyn and David had for its success.

Each of these gifted men was struck down with much of his work left uncompleted. Each faced death with dignity, restraint and courage. David was cut off at the early age of fifty-three after a short illness; Gwyn at seventy, following a protracted period of suffering, bravely borne. The strikingly large number of friends and colleagues who came to pay their last respects at Three Crosses and Narberth, within about a year, showed how poignantly the loss was felt in both instances. Respect for splendid historians and accomplished teachers had brought people there. But there was more to it than that acknowledgment that there had gone from us, untimely and too soon, two fine men and cherished friends. Gwyn wrote near the end of his incomparable *When Was Wales* that he was proud to be one of a goodly company of Welsh historians who had changed the face of their country's history. I believe D.J.V. thought exactly the same. I would only comment that I think the rest of us historians would tend to believe that the boot was on the other foot. If Gwyn and David were proud to belong to us, we more ordinary mortals were even more inspired to be numbered with them. Stephen Spender's lines keep coming urgently back to my mind:

> Near the snow, near the sun, in the highest fields,
> See how their names are feted by the waving grass,
> And by the streamers of white cloud
> And whispers of wind in the listening sky.
> The names of those who in their lives fought for life,
> Who wore at their hearts the fire's centre,
> Born of the sun they travelled a short while towards the sun
> And left the vivid air signed with their honour.