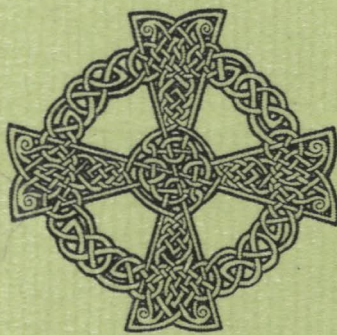


THE PEOPLE'S HISTORIAN
PROFESSOR GWYN A. WILLIAMS
(1925-1995)

by

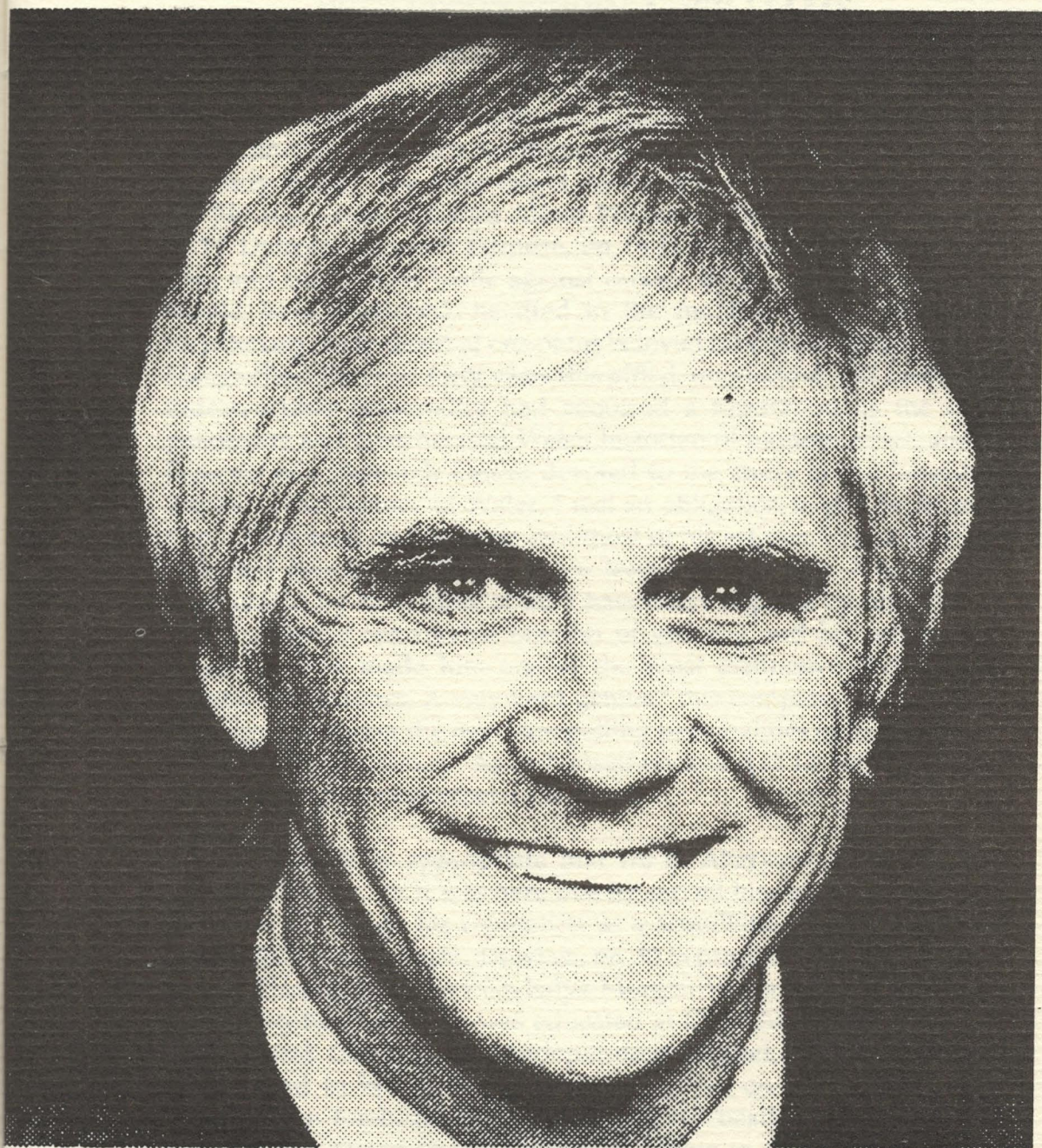
GERAINT H. JENKINS



RHAGAIR / FOREWORD

Fel y gwyddys yn dda, prif orchwyl cymrodyr ymchwil Canolfan Uwchefrydiau Cymreig a Cheltaidd Prifysgol Cymru yw paratoi cyfrolau sylweddol ar rai o themâu canolog llên a hanes Cymru. Ond y mae'r bwrlwm o weithgarwch a geir yn y Ganolfan hefyd yn cynhyrchu darnau llai o ymchwil sy'n dwyn perthynas uniongyrchol neu anuniongyrchol â'r themâu hynny. Nod y gyfres hon, felly, yw rhoi cyfle i'r cymrodyr ymchwil gyhoeddi peth o ffrwyth eu llafur ar ffurf darlithiau neu ysgrifau. Ein gobaith yw y bydd y papurau ymchwil hyn yn tynnu sylw at broblemau diddorol a pherthnasol ac yn cymhell y darlennydd i ailystyried hen ddehongliadau.

As is well known, the principal task of research fellows in the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies is to prepare substantial volumes on some central themes in the literature and history of Wales. But this vigorous activity also produces shorter pieces of research which are directly or indirectly associated with those themes. The aim of this series, therefore, is to encourage research fellows in the Centre to publish some of the fruits of their labours in the form of lectures or essays. Our hope is that these research papers will draw attention to interesting and relevant problems and also persuade the reader to reconsider old interpretations.



GWYN A. WILLIAMS
(1925-1995)

THE PEOPLE'S HISTORIAN
PROFESSOR GWYN A. WILLIAMS
(1925-1995)

When Mao Tse-tung was invited to comment on the consequences and significance of the French Revolution, he is alleged to have replied: 'It's too early to say.' The same might surely be said of the significance of the life and works of Gwyn Alfred Williams who died, aged seventy, at Tŷ Dyffryn, Dre-fach Felindre, on 16 November 1995, following a long and courageous battle against cancer. By a rich irony which he would have cherished, he died in the month which marked the bicentenary of the death of one of his beloved infidels, William Jones of Llangadfan.¹ For over forty years this gifted, pugnacious and seemingly indestructible personality had acquired a reputation as the most passionate and controversial Welsh historian of modern times, and as Director of a Research Centre devoted to the study of the language, literature and history of Wales, I feel an obligation to pay homage to him. I have read all his books and most of his articles. I have watched him and listened to him. I have learned from him. I have been exasperated by him. Most of all, I have been inspired by him. All his works reveal a remarkable breadth of learning and his unique and powerful style made him one of the most distinctive and original writers of our times. A wayward genius,² this complex, contradictory man figures among the most compelling personalities of the latter half of the twentieth century. As he himself once said of David Ivon Jones: 'It is necessary to remember such men.'³

It is entirely appropriate that we in Aberystwyth should pay tribute to Gwyn, for it was here that he served his apprenticeship as a historian and made his reputation as a scintillating lecturer. Born in Lower Row, Pen-y-wern, Dowlais, on 30 September 1925, he was the son of Thomas John and Gwladys Morgan Williams, both of whom were schoolteachers.⁴ He was educated at Cyfarthfa Castle Grammar School and Gwernllwyn Independent chapel, where members worshipped in Welsh and prided themselves on the fact that their Cromwellian forebears had chopped off the head of a king. In 1943 Gwyn won a David Davies Open Scholarship to study History at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, but the demands of war took him instead to the battlefields of Europe where he lost much of his Welsh but learnt a good deal about human suffering. Indeed, the experience of wartime service stayed with him for the rest of his days. Having witnessed the liberation of Paris and stood amid the ruins of Berlin, he was then persuaded that he should help to build a better world by spending a year in Yugoslavia, where he joined gangs of labourers who built a road linking Zagreb and Belgrade.⁵

Like A. J. P. Taylor, Gwyn was hugely impressed by Tito's receptiveness to new ideas, his openness to reason and his astonishing courage, and on his belated arrival in Aberystwyth he sought to persuade fellow students to rally to the banner of Titoism. By the late 1940s the Socialist Society was the largest student association in the College⁶ and Gwyn's pungent views and flashing wit featured prominently in the Debates Union. When Emanuel Shinwell, War Minister in the Labour Government and recently described as 'the military's favourite Labour politician', came to Aberystwyth in 1949 to recruit students for the Army, Gwyn took part in a noisy demonstration organized by a motley crowd of nationalists, republicans, Stalinists and Titoists, many of whom had seen active service. Incensed by Shinwell's insensitivity, they displayed banners bearing slogans such as 'Join Fred Karno's Army' and 'Shinwell—the Enemy of Peace and the Enemy of Wales'.⁷ The focus of academic activity at that time was the Old College by the Sea,⁸ and here Gwyn sat at the feet of Reginald Francis Treharne, Professor of History since 1930 and a fellow native of Merthyr.⁹ Wise, omniscient and as straight as a die, Treharne was a formative influence on Gwyn. He not only persuaded him to study Welsh history but also introduced him to the challenges and pleasures of medieval studies. His academic work prospered and he gained an outstanding first-class honours in 1950. He was showered with prizes, including the Alun Lewis Memorial Essay Prize and the Dr Joseph Hamwee Graduate Prize. Within two years of graduation he had completed a masters degree, a pioneering study of the social nature of the patriciate in thirteenth-century London, a massively documented work of 858 pages (and 191 pages of appendices) which, he confessed in the manner of Montaigne, was long because he had no time to make it short.¹⁰ The external examiner apparently balked at the inordinate length of the thesis (and fiercely objected to Gwyn's use of the adjective 'grisly'), but no one doubted the rich promise contained in the dissertation. Gwyn became a great admirer of the *Annales* school and his researches continued in the field of medieval history.¹¹

In 1954 Gwyn was appointed by Principal Goronwy Rees to teach Welsh History in the College. By the time of Rees's embarrassing departure in 1957, Gwyn's personal magnetism and dynamic energy had transformed the manner in which the history of Wales was taught. Much has been written about the remarkable upsurge of interest in Welsh historical studies since the early 1960s, but less has been said of the critical role played by historians at Aberystwyth in bringing about that resurgence. In their different ways, Gwyn's senior colleagues—Professors David Williams and T. Jones Pierce—had already set the agenda for future studies. David Williams's superb work on the Rebecca Riots, the French Revolution, Chartism, and emigration to America, as well as his masterly survey *Modern Wales*, had made him the undisputed

giant of Welsh historical studies (Gwyn subsequently referred to his mentor as Ysbaddaden),¹² while T. Jones Pierce, a historian who set the most exacting standards for himself and his students, greatly enriched our understanding of society and economy of medieval Wales.¹³ However, both Williams and Jones Pierce had the reputation of being rather staid, undemonstrative and solemn lecturers. Improvisation or lightness of touch were conspicuously absent from lectures dictated by David Williams, save for an annual joke delivered at the expense of Lady Huntingdon's Connexion! Similarly, the detached, dry-as-dust appraisals by Jones Pierce of land tenure and proprietary actions in medieval Wales were enlivened only by unintended puns on the procreative significance of the *gwely*. Students were not encouraged to think, and the traditional emphasis in the Department had always been on erudition, correctness and clarity, all perfectly respectable virtues in any historian's armoury but ones which nonetheless conveyed the impression that studying the history of Wales was a somewhat arid pursuit. It was all clearly too dull and complacent for the young ball of fire from Dowlais. In his classes, Gwyn was both erudite and entertaining, and his penchant for startling and irreverent statements meant that the classrooms where he delivered lectures to first-year students were always filled to the brim. Those who were privileged to sit at Gwyn's feet in the Old College vividly recall to this day the verve with which he presented the history of Wales from Old Stone Age Man to the 1950s.¹⁴ It was a joy to attend his lectures and his eloquence was all the more unusual and welcome given the unexceptional performance of his more distinguished senior colleagues in the classroom. Having become a celebrity, Gwyn began to style himself Gwyn A. Williams, because, as he later explained, 'I am always being confused with other Gwyn Williamses, even the great Gwyn Williams Cairo!!!'¹⁵ It was not until he became a television personality that he reluctantly adopted the middle name 'Alf'—he had been named Alfred after his grandfather Alf Williams, so named after General Alfred Gordon of Khartoum.¹⁶

There were other kindred spirits at Aberystwyth who influenced his approach to history and life in general. Richard Cobb and Gwynne Lewis were not only convivial and open-minded colleagues but also young men who delighted in stepping outside the bounds of academic decorum. The somewhat bohemian fringe to which Gwyn belonged was a counterweight to the intimidating influence of Calvinism which was rife in many parts of the town and which had helped to hasten the departure of Principal Goronwy Rees in 1957. In local pubs, Gwyn would hold court, dispensing sometimes wise but mostly irreverent opinions on matters great and small to a host of ardent young admirers. He also began to write poetry—some of his poems were published in Keidrych Rhys's *Wales*¹⁷—and his play 'The View from Poppa's Head', performed by the Dramatic Society of the College, was awarded a

prize at the NUS Drama Festival at Bristol in 1960.¹⁸ In the same year, Gwyn won the coveted Alexander Prize Essay of the Royal Historical Society for his paper on 'London and Edward I', thereby joining a list of illustrious former prize-winners like J. E. Neale, R. W. Southern, S. B. Chrimes and G. W. S. Barrow.¹⁹ In 1963 he published his doctoral study, *Medieval London: from Commune to Capital*, a work which charted the development of London into a capital city. Based on the rich and voluminous medieval archives of London, the book became a minor classic and was reprinted in paperback in 1970. Some would argue that it was Gwyn's finest piece of scholarship; it was certainly one of the most exhaustively researched and well received.

It should be emphasised that the research interests which preoccupied Gwyn for almost the whole of his academic career were mapped out for him during his days at Aberystwyth. His apprenticeship as a medieval historian had cultivated within him 'a taste for the small-scale and the particular and a hunger for detail',²⁰ and the writings of Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart influenced his thinking on society and culture. Thanks largely to David Williams and Richard Cobb, he became obsessively interested in the French Revolution and in the Atlantic world. Nor was the early history of Merthyr Tydfil, the cradle of the Industrial Revolution in Wales, ever far from his mind. Indeed, his first articles on Welsh history—published in 1959-61²¹—were devoted to the Merthyr Riots of 1831 (only later did this seminal event become a 'Rising') and the Jacobin tradition in the town between 1800 and 1836. Even at that stage it was clear that Gwyn was likely to prove a central figure among British social historians whose studies focused on 'the age of revolutions'. His Marxist interpretations of the past were also well advanced. Long before Gramscian studies became the rage, Gwyn had published in 1960 an article on the concept of hegemony in the thought of Antonio Gramsci, the most wide ranging and penetrating Marxist thinker of the twentieth century.²² Although Gwyn subsequently disowned the article (he called it naive and wrong-headed),²³ this early foray signalled the beginning of his tireless campaign to bring the writings of the Italian communist to the attention of the public. He had first discovered works by Gramsci in 1959 while translating the correspondence of Georges Sorel and Benedetto Croce during a three-month teaching post at the University of Turin.

Gwyn's fame as a lecturer and writer spread swiftly, and it came as no surprise when he was invited to become Reader in History at the newly established University of York in 1963. The appointment proved a major turning-point in his career. Within two years he had been awarded a Chair, together with the opportunity, in collaboration with Gerald Aylmer, to raise the profile of the Department. His special subject on 'The Age of Revolution, 1780-1800' was invariably

oversubscribed and he began to nurture a school of talented young postgraduates (including Clive Emsley, David Vincent and James Walvin), several of whom would subsequently write with considerable distinction on subjects such as artisan politics, literacy and communications, and rural and industrial crime. Gwyn also became a popular guru of the new socialist left. Anarchists at York were devoted to him and in the late 'sixties badges were sported bearing messages such as 'Viva Gwyn', 'Move over Marcuse', and 'We are all Welsh history professors'.²⁴ Gwyn's style was very much in keeping with the liberal and permissive ethos of the 'Swinging Sixties' and the ideals of Castro, Ché Guevara, Marx, Gramsci and Martin Luther King informed the dialectic in lectures and tutorials. In this lively and optimistic atmosphere, many young lives were influenced by the personality and ideas of Gwyn Williams.

Although Gwyn's record of publications at York was relatively modest, his research, facilitated by fellowships at the University of Pennsylvania, Brown University, and St. Antony's College, Oxford, continued to flourish, particularly into the ideologies which sustained supporters of the Parisian *sans-culottes* in the 1790s. He was also captivated by the sophisticated strategies of free-born artisans, tradesmen and journeymen (on both sides of the Atlantic), who spoke in the name of 'the people' and who appealed to reason. Gwyn's pamphlet on Rowland Detrosier, published in 1965, was a celebration of the career of a resolute working-class freethinker, and he also began to uncover in greater detail the Jacobin tradition in Wales.²⁵ In 1968 he published what was, in some ways, a *jeu d'esprit*. *Artisans and Sans-Culottes. Popular Movements in France and Britain during the French Revolution* was an exercise in 'parallel' as opposed to 'comparative' history, and in both content and texture it bore the influence of Richard Cobb's *Les armées révolutionnaires* (1961-3) and E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963). Indeed, in his critical and often amusing 'Selective Reading Guide' at the rear of the volume, Gwyn made no secret of his debt to Cobb ('staggering') and Thompson ('high adrenalin content').²⁶ Although the brevity of the book prevented Gwyn from developing his argument about the radical legacy and its links with the nineteenth-century Labour movement, the work was well received and heavily thumbed, especially at undergraduate level.

In 1974 the native returned—not to Dowlais, but to the Chair of History at the University College of Cardiff. He viewed this appointment as a new challenge and clearly expected to be greeted in the capital with a fanfare of trumpets. But there were several members of the Department of History who had long believed that the study of Welsh history belonged to a lesser plane. Deeply suspicious of Gwyn's left-wing values and reputation for unorthodoxy, such dons gave him a

chilly welcome. No longer would he be fêted as a free spirit, and he soon found the burdens of administration and the tedious and time-consuming round of service on College committees extremely irksome. Nevertheless, he resolved to develop what he called a crusading mentality on behalf of Welsh history. In a letter written to a member of the Welsh Books Council in 1977, he declared: 'after a virtual paralysis for many years Cardiff History will now begin to pull its proper weight'.²⁷ In collaboration with another passionate (and just as diminutive) historian, David B. Smith (later, under the glare of television lights, to become 'Dai'), Gwyn established the Gwyn Jones Annual Lecture devoted 'to writing of quality, creative and critical, by Welshmen or about Wales, in English or any other non-Welsh language of significance'. The first lecture, on 'The Welsh Industrial Novel', was delivered by Raymond Williams in 1978.²⁸ Gwyn also created a Cardiff Research Unit on the history of industrial south Wales. As Director of the outfit, he promised that south Wales would stretch as far as Amlwch whence his grandmother came!²⁹ Alas, the Research Unit promised more than it delivered, and the rich array of works which were commissioned never materialised.

Even so, Gwyn continued to write furiously and several publications which he had researched and prepared at York demonstrated convincingly the extensive range of his interests and his political commitment. In 1975—in his fiftieth year—he published his translation of Paolo Spriano's *L'occupazione delle fabbriche*, a chronicle of the bitter class struggle which accompanied the strikes and the occupation of factories throughout Italy in 1920.³⁰ In the same year, Pluto Press also published (in hardback and paperback) a substantial volume devoted chiefly to the contribution of Gramsci to the factory council movement in Turin during 1919-20 and the subsequent foundation of the Communist Party of Italy. An unashamedly committed work, *Proletarian Order* was radically different from the usual historical fare published by Welsh historians, and Gwyn hoped that it would prove of service 'to the British working-class and marxist movements'.³¹ This Gramscian hobby-horse would carry Gwyn for the rest of his days. Marxist precepts also informed Gwyn's memorable attempt in 1976 to relate the recurring crises in Francisco Goya's personal life to the trials and tribulations which afflicted Spain.³² Heavily influenced by F. D. Klingender's vigorously Marxist work, *Goya in the Democratic Tradition*, Gwyn's volume attracted considerable publicity. It was rewarded with a Welsh Arts Council Prize for Literature, translated into Spanish, Italian and German, and reprinted by Penguin Books in 1984. Some of his more aloof colleagues at Cardiff frowned disapprovingly on such a crop of politicized writings, but Gwyn resolutely believed that historians had a duty to fashion a past which could be used as a platform to build a future.

Increasingly, too, he argued that too much of Welsh history had been written with the Welsh left out.³³ By this he meant non-Welsh-speakers and working-class people. From his boyhood he had retained a deep and abiding pride in his roots and a passionate concern for the lot of working-class communities in his native Dowlais and in south Wales in general. Although his parents had not been poor, he was deeply affected by the social effects of widespread deprivation and crippling unemployment in the depression years. When he was fourteen (and already a Communist), the unemployment rate in Dowlais was a staggering 73 per cent, and his mouth, like that of Idris Davies, must have been 'full of curses'.³⁴ At that time he was a leading member of the 'Gwernllwyn Chapel Gang', an exceptionally voluble, well-read and active group of young iconoclasts, who were passionately interested in international issues (especially the Spanish Civil War) and who were united in their hatred of all kinds of privilege.³⁵ The presence of the Spanish community at Dowlais sharpened the edge of anti-fascist demonstrations and the Hunger March of 1936 left its imprint on Gwyn's mind.³⁶

Oral tradition within his own family had taught him a good deal about the central role of Merthyr in the development of working-class radicalism. He took great pride in the fact that Sarah Herbert, his great-grandmother, had worked tirelessly on behalf of Henry Richard during the seminal election of 1868,³⁷ and from an early age he had been intrigued by the wealth of oral tradition which surrounded the celebrated Rising outside the Castle Inn in Merthyr in June 1831.³⁸ A little-known poem by Gwyn, published in 1959, had turned the story into melodrama:³⁹

Here on the corner by the gimcrack faces,
This is where it was, the furniture store
And that little stifled sweetshop which the old Jew
Keeps, where the soldiers fired on the crowd
A hundred years ago; here their feet slipped,
Stained these streaming stones where writhing shoplights
Drown and muzzled buses endlessly sluice by; dark
turbulence of heads
Tossing, turning at the muzzles, red mouths roaring,
Spitting at the stone lips gun-grey by the windows,
Fanged heads of a crowd, giant black serrated
Python, coiling crashing through the town, back, miles
Black, thick and swollen in the twisted streets, curling out
Past Crawshay's castle where the school is now; cataract
Through the narrow streets, blind with new vision
And a froth of drunks, foaming off the frightened walls,
Spilling out across this tarmac, red against the inn,
Stained with sweat and the shrieks of women
Scuttling, crazy, round the corpses humped

Like sodden coalsacks on the streaming stones, here
It was, here, where the trim heels clip
Fastidious past puddles, past that sly nosing alley
At the cinema's blind flank, where on scarlet steps,
Diffident a dark boy waits, in his shining shoes,
And the frequent buses swirl, out to Dowlais,
Ten minutes and a jolting generation far away,
Where, close and clannish in their cramping hill,
Some remember the bodies still.

In many ways, therefore, his wonderful book, *The Merthyr Rising* (1978), was a work of catharsis. Although he had already written extensively on the pent-up frustrations and injured pride of disenfranchised working people in Merthyr, it was in this volume that he established the decisive importance of the awesome deeds of June 1831 in the history of working-class consciousness in south Wales and also the qualitative change in the nature and attitudes of the 'secret people' of Merthyr. With consummate skill, Gwyn unravelled the complex web of social, political and personal factors which lay behind the insurrection, and infused the story with subtle shades of light as well as robust humour. The book was further enlivened by anecdotal evidence and in some ways it tells the reader as much about Merthyr in 1978 as about Merthyr in 1831. It was none the worse for that. Like his former colleague, Richard Cobb, Gwyn believed that history was about the present as well as the past. The Merthyr Rising of 1831 will doubtless never cease to be a matter of intense interest, but it is hard to believe that any future historian will be able to displace this definitive account.

By 1977 Gwyn had also completed an enormous typescript of a work entitled 'America and the Welsh People in the Age of Revolution'. He offered it to a publishing house in America, but although the manuscript drew fulsome praise no commitment to publish was forthcoming. Negative responses were also received from Macmillan and Allen Lane. 'I could try the University of Wales Press', wrote Gwyn, 'but I think they will find it too "American"'. The book seems to fall between two stools; in fact in the middle of the Atlantic. Its fate depresses me no end!⁴⁰ Over a long period Gwyn had explored with passionate intensity the transatlantic world of Welsh Dissent in the period from 1770 to 1840, and many of his findings were based on hitherto unused manuscript material. Eventually he resolved the dilemma by publishing two books on a similar theme: *The Search for Beulah Land* (1980) was broadly constructed around the story of Morgan John Rhys's ill-starred attempt to establish a Welsh settlement in Pennsylvania.⁴¹ In this work Gwyn clearly established the importance of the 1790s as a watershed in the history of politics in modern Wales. He also hinted at (but without fully developing) the links between the blasphemous, seditious and immensely readable Jacobin literature in

Welsh in the revolutionary period and the radical, working-class tradition which resurfaced in the 1830s. In the second work, *Madoc: the making of a myth* (1979), Gwyn unravelled with the dogged persistence of a detective the twists and turns of the fascinating tale of Madoc and his alleged descendants. In particular, he showed how generations of writers had utilised the potent Madoc myth to suit their own historical and political needs. All in all, the work was a fascinating analysis of the way in which myths fulfil a significant function in the lives of common people by rendering the past intelligible, alleviating the miseries of the present, and offering reassurance about the future. Convinced that a myth is not a lie, Gwyn returned to this theme in his twilight years, focusing this time on the manner in which the experiences of King Arthur had been relived and reinvented over the centuries.⁴²

The writing and publication of these books helped Gwyn to focus on the daily trauma of being Welsh. 'How comfortable it must be', he wrote in his preface to *The Search for Beulah Land*, 'to belong to a people which does not have to shout at the top of its voice to convince itself that it exists.'⁴³ Those words were written in 1979—'blwyddyn y pla'⁴⁴ (the year of the plague), as he called it. The decisive rejection of devolution by the Welsh electorate, the new mood of Europhobia, and the blaze of rhetorical and ideological fervour which ushered in Thatcherism filled Gwyn with gloom and despair. For Gwyn, Conservatism represented intolerance, obscurantism and hedonism; it was certain to undermine whatever was left of the traditional bonds of communitarianism in the valleys of south Wales. His contempt for his own people for shrugging off their Welshness and their radicalism 'like a shabby old moleskin jacket'⁴⁵ was boundless and, enraged by the rhetoric of the new-style Tory right, he began to move beyond his academic role as a historian by becoming a passionate political polemicist. He was determined to show that even Welsh historians could be stirred to public moral outrage by the corrosive effects of Thatcherism. His political travail coincided with departmental strife and domestic troubles. When under pressure, Gwyn could prove extremely selfish, wilful and insensitive to the feelings of others. His life had always been full of turbulent scrapes and embarrassments, as well as triumphs, and the number of missed deadlines, cancelled lectures and unfulfilled commissions began to multiply alarmingly. He began to drink heavily, quarrel with colleagues and ill-use even his closest friends and admirers. Maria Fernandez, his wife of Spanish descent and childhood sweetheart at school, left him, and Gwyn convinced himself that he was living on borrowed time. In an essay published in *The Welsh in their History* (1982), he wrote: 'I was 54 yesterday: everything I do now is a race with the undertaker.'⁴⁶ Deeply at odds with himself, he lived on the brink of self-destruction. In 1983 he became a victim of the economic effects of Conservative cutbacks and the collapse of

'donnish dominion'. Persuaded to take premature retirement, he joined the flight of sprightly Welsh greybeards from academia. By that time he had come to despise his 'ridiculous job'⁴⁷ and to believe that his principal mission was to speak directly to his own people.

Two things saved Gwyn from oblivion. The first was the slow but steady recovery of his Welshness. For a variety of reasons, he had found it impossible to be Welsh in the Department of History at Cardiff and this had not helped him to resolve his political dilemmas. From 1979 onwards his own political standpoint, and even his historical stance, began to veer wildly, and some of the opinions he expressed in militant left-wing publications were not only contradictory but also shot through with bile.⁴⁸ Even with the benefit of hindsight, it is not easy for the reader to determine whether he was a socialist or a communist or a Marxist or a nationalist, or indeed all of these things. After all, here was a man who wrote for *Arcade* and *Marxism Today*, for *Radical Wales* and *Cof Cenedl*, for *Rebecca* and *Planet*. In the early 1980s he still believed that the considerable potential reserves of the Left could be mobilised and he campaigned energetically on behalf of a Welsh socialist republic as well as frequenting communist workshops devoted to the cause of trade unionism, feminism and peace. But when the Labour Party witnessed another historical defeat at the polls in 1983, Gwyn marched into the headquarters of Plaid Cymru in Cardiff, paid his subscription (on special terms for a self-styled 'redundant historian') and formed what he liked to call the National Left of the Party.⁴⁹ Having derided in 1982 the notion of a Welsh assembly ('Wales needs a parliament like a hole in the head')⁵⁰, he now became a convert to self-government. The people's remembrancer transformed himself into a popular demagogue and his barnstorming activism was a revelation to veterans within the nationalist cause. He learnt or re-learnt Welsh well enough to address Plaid Cymru meetings, to lecture at the National Eisteddfod in Newport in 1988, and to present television programmes. But Gwyn's mercurial temperament meant that he could never feel truly comfortable within the bounds of any political party, and whenever he was reproached for shifting his political viewpoint so frequently he used to quote the Marxist maxim that history itself advances through contradiction. But to the very last, his genuine attachment to the principles of Gramscianism never weakened.

The second means of Gwyn's recovery was his hugely successful foray into the world of broadcasting. He was, of course, no stranger to the media. As early as 1960-1, he had written radio scripts on the Dowlais Story, Welsh Chartism, Tonypany in 1910, and the Sandfields Estate in Port Talbot. In the early 1970s, his programmes on 'Freeborn Britons', in the splendid series 'The Long March of Everyman', celebrated the achievements of the likes of Tom Paine, Morgan John

Rhys and Iolo Morganwg. But it was not until 1979 that he burst on to the Welsh broadcasting scene with a vengeance. On 12 November 1979 he delivered the BBC Wales Annual Radio Lecture on the theme 'When was Wales?' The reception which greeted his talk was akin to that which had occurred in 1962, when Saunders Lewis had fanned the flames of rebellion among Welsh-language activists with his lecture *Tynged yr Iaith*. Gwyn's pamphlet sold out within a fortnight and the BBC, presumably discomfited by the inflammatory views expressed in the lecture, refused to print additional copies. Gwyn had argued that any worthwhile recipe for the future well-being of Wales needed to be based on a critical analysis of capitalism. He declared that capitalism had destroyed communities, robbed people of their dignity and humanity, and erased the nation's memory. Wielding his pen with devastating sharpness, he concluded:

It is apparent that Wales and the Welsh, as distinctive entities, cannot survive the capitalist mode of production in its present historic phase. A tiny Welsh nation may survive in a marginal and impotent bunker; a vivid Welsh-language culture should survive if only in aspic. But the continuous reproduction of Wales and the Welsh over generations requires the elimination and the transcendence of the capitalist mode of production. If capitalism in the British Isles lives, Wales will die. If Wales is to live, capitalism in the British Isles must die.⁵¹

The call to action was unequivocal and, spurred on by the success of his radio talk, Gwyn fleshed out the story and in 1985 published a major *tour de force*, *When was Wales? A History of the Welsh*.⁵² By any standards, this was a truly exhilarating work which maintained its surging momentum, drama and conviction from beginning to end. It is in this work, more than any other, that Gwyn's commitment to Wales shines through most clearly. The first single-volume history of Wales to be published in the twentieth century, it is in many ways a better read than John Davies's stately and even-handed tome.

Parts of the book were written at a time when Gwyn was recording a major television history—in thirteen episodes—covering two thousand years of the history of Wales. This was the innovative, original and highly watchable *The Dragon has Two Tongues* (HTV, 1985), one of the major success stories in the history of television broadcasting in Wales. Gwyn was fortunate to find in Colin Thomas a director of great sensitivity and technical brilliance, who ensured that the series was characterised by meticulous preparation and inspired improvisation. He was even more fortunate to be matched against the old-fashioned romantic liberal, Wynford Vaughan Thomas. Presented in true prize-fighter fashion, Welsh history became a dialogue, an

enquiry, a debate, an argument and a confrontation. In the event, however, the series proved less a titanic struggle than a no-contest. With eyes flashing and arms flailing, Gwyn delivered his lines with raw, urgent insistence, inviting the viewer to engage with the past with passion and commitment. Vaughan Thomas, however, proved intellectually incapable of matching Gwyn's trenchant analysis and mordant wit. Had it been a boxing contest, even a referee with a heart of stone would have intervened long before the final episode to spare Vaughan Thomas further punishment. Even Gwyn's stammer did not prevent him from outmanoeuvring his far more experienced adversary.

In many ways, the Whig-Marxist confrontation generated more heat than light, and one eminent Welsh historian declared disapprovingly: 'This is the end of history as we have known it'.⁵³ Others poked fun at the Welsh version of 'The Last of the Summer Wine'. Even so, the general public believed that the series had been a creative and entertaining piece of television. There is no doubt that it provoked people and forced them to think about the past *and* the present.⁵⁴ Many Welsh people would never have dreamed of learning Welsh, joining picket lines or championing feminist causes had it not been for *The Dragon has Two Tongues*. It is worth remembering that the programmes were discussed in depth by groups of WEA and extra-mural classes, local history societies, Merched y Wawr, and video workshop units. Suddenly, Gwyn had become famous. The 'people's professor' had become a media celebrity, and he went on to star in other successful television series like 'Cracking Up' and 'Writing on the Line'. In these he cast his quirky eye over the chequered careers of people like Mary Shelley, Sylvia Pankhurst, Mary Wollstonecroft, Alexander Pushkin, Francisco Goya, Iolo Morganwg, Saunders Lewis and T. E. Nicholas. As a presenter, therefore, Gwyn did more for the cause of Welsh history than most ordinary mortals would manage in a lifetime's writing, and the independent television company Teliesyn has especial cause to mourn his passing. His final, and most poignant programme—*Gwyn Alf, A People's Remembrancer* (S4C, 1995)—revealed that even to the very end Gwyn's intellectual powers, sardonic wit and appetite for history had remained undiminished. Both as historian and television presenter, Gwyn will be a hard act to follow.

* * * * *

I turn now to Gwyn's extraordinary qualities as a historian. He was, perhaps above all else, a remarkable lecturer and an enthralling communicator. At Aberystwyth and York—less so in Cardiff—registered and unregistered students, acolytes and hangers-on crowded into lecture rooms to witness his brilliance. Many of them still testify that they found themselves in the presence of a speaker the like of

whom they had never heard before or since. Charles Wesley once said of Howel Harris—'never man spake, in my hearing, as this man spake'⁵⁵—but he might just as easily have been referring to Gwyn. Although a tiny man, Gwyn had a considerable presence and an uncanny ability to stir an audience. Eloquent, fiery, witty and often outrageous, he was a master of improvisation and spontaneous asides. On occasions, when he ignored R. T. Jenkins's injunction ('preparation, preparation, preparation'), he had his bad days. He once came to Aberystwyth in the mid-80s to address a summer school, composed mainly of American students, whom he bored to tears by reading from page proofs of his essay on 'Imperial Wales'. But for the most part he was entertainment personified. He had a low opinion of austere, detached speakers largely because he believed that history was an exciting, living experience, a great drama peopled by colourful characters, many of whom had made considerable sacrifices on behalf of mankind. A. J. P. Taylor once observed laconically: 'We historians are dull creatures, and women sometimes notice this.'⁵⁶ Had Taylor heard Gwyn in full flow, he would have revised his judgement! In many respects, Gwyn epitomised the *cyfarwydd*, the story-teller or remembrancer of Celtic tradition,⁵⁷ and it was his ability to tell a story with such marvellous self-confidence which made him one of the most sought-after and effective public speakers in Wales. Although it is hard to believe that he deliberately cultivated his speech impediment for theatrical effect, his stammer certainly heightened the suspense before punch-lines were delivered. The power of his tongue will always be regarded as Gwyn's greatest asset.

Gwyn figured among a small, perhaps a very small, band of professional historians who combined the ability to communicate with wide-ranging historical interests. Historians, partly by nature and partly by choice, tend to be a rather conventional and even predictable body of men and women who take curious pride in specializing in certain narrow fields. But Gwyn was a man of remarkably extensive and catholic tastes. He could write about Karl Marx and Saunders Lewis, about Antonio Gramsci and Owain Glyndŵr, about Francisco Goya and T. E. Nicholas. He was extremely well versed in the history of Marxism in Europe and he wrote with consummate skill about Italian communists, French *sans-culottes*, London communards, American intellectuals, Spanish revolutionaries, free-born Englishmen and radical Welshmen. And in order to write critically about them, he added the Italian and Spanish languages to his English, French and Welsh. For range of scholarship and breadth of imagination, Gwyn had few peers in Wales.

Not the least of his strengths was his ability to shed new light on persons or periods which one presumed that other historians had made

their own. For instance, the pioneering researches of Professor Griffith John Williams had taught us that Iolo Morganwg was a remarkably accomplished literary scholar, poet and historian who could be counted among the finest literary forgers of all time, a view recently endorsed by Emeritus Professor Ceri Lewis.⁵⁸ But Gwyn took Iolo by the scruff of the neck and changed our view of him. He portrayed him as a flinty, resolute Jacobin who drank pure republican water, commended the guillotine as a handy instrument for all *sans-culottes*, utilised the Gorsedd of the Bards for the purpose of republican propaganda, and welcomed the gimcrack French invasion of 1797.⁵⁹ Among the key Gramscian concepts which Gwyn applied to Iolo was the notion that 'organic intellectuals', that is to say, 'workers by brains', were significant and often eloquent advocates on behalf of the small, non-historic, lost peoples of Europe. Like other quirky dissidents and romantics who stood up for the rights of Catalans, Czechs, Fins and Scots, Iolo was 'our most fecund, if maimed, genius, an "organic intellectual" from his seven-league slippers to his Merlin hair'.⁶⁰ Indeed, Gwyn often used to argue that it was entirely possible to write a history of Wales within the framework of 'organic intellectualism'.

No less striking was Gwyn's unique style of discourse. Writing critical, fast-moving narrative is a difficult art, but Gwyn mastered it as well as anyone. Has there ever been a Welsh historian (and I do not forget J. E. Lloyd, David Williams and Glanmor Williams) who combined intellectual grasp and brilliance in exposition to such a degree? Gwyn always wrote swiftly, often burning so much midnight oil that his wife was driven to distraction. In his introduction to *Artisans and Sans-Culottes*, for instance, he admitted that during the book's gestation his wife and son had tolerated behaviour on his part worthy of Didot, a young clerk who was expelled in 1793 by the *comité* of Section de la Réunion because of 'l'exaltation de son cerveau sur le despotisme et la tyrannie'.⁶¹ Like A. J. P. Taylor or E. P. Thompson, Gwyn was never afraid to chance his arm or offer broad generalizations unsustained by citations. In virtually all his works, there is a peculiar intensity and passion in the prose. The first sentence of his book on Goya is so irresistible that the reader cannot but read on to the very end:

The executioners we do not see. Their rifles thrust in from the right, sharp with bayonets, inhuman and implacable. The eye follows their thrust, from a twilit grey into a blackness. Who are these huddled people?⁶²

The imaginative flair which informs *The Merthyr Rising* renders the book as thrilling as any Booker-prize-winning novel, while the epilogue to *Madoc* is a minor masterpiece. It tells of Gwyn's encounter with

Ronald Little Owl, a Mandan dressed in Sioux garb, who rehearsed the old Mandan prophecies with such chilling effect that he was reminded of 'the kinship which exists between the historian and the grave-robber'.⁶³ The unrelenting pace of Gwyn's writing was often heightened by his fondness for meteorological metaphors—'flurries' of this and 'gales' of that abound in his works. Trenchant or witty adjectives catch the eye—Tories are always 'bilious', reactionaries always 'porcine', radicals always 'pungent'. Among his favourite words were 'seminal', 'grotesque', 'searing', 'quirky', 'debouch', 'unhinge', 'lurch' and 'travail'. Movements invariably 'thrust' and 'splinter', while groups of people 'inch' and 'edge' forward. He had a special penchant for the verbs 'shudder' and 'slither' and in one of his best articles—'The Merthyr Election of 1835'—he combined both: 'The Tories shuddered into an appalled response ... in a south Wales apparently slithering into the grip of unions...'.⁶⁴

Gwyn could always be relied upon to be fresh, challenging and provocative in his writings, and the manner in which he almost deliberately generated controversies unsettled many older Welsh historians. The most politically engaged Welsh historian since Ambrose Bebb, Gwyn was the first to challenge the bland Lib-Labism (or what he used to call 'Welsh Whiggery')⁶⁵ which characterized historical discourse and writing in Wales. To be even-handed was, in his view, to betray the very essence of the historian's 'sullen craft'.⁶⁶ He believed that although history was about the past, the fact that it was written in the present meant that it inevitably reflected current preoccupations and dilemmas. He made no secret of his commitment to Marxism and never aspired to detached objectivity. According to his interpretation of the past, the history of Wales had been a chronicle of discontinuity, splits, schisms, ruptures (stammer the consonants!), breaks and crises. *When was Wales?* was written 'in the conviction that the history of Wales had developed in a permanent state of emergency'.⁶⁷ The Welsh had survived each crisis simply by reinventing themselves. The history of Wales was thus an endless saga of aspiration and reversal, of extinction and renewal. Few Welsh historians agreed with Gwyn's interpretation, but the great merit of his work was that it made them think seriously about their craft. Some of his most sweeping statements were deliberately designed to provoke a reaction. In a talk broadcast on the Welsh Home Service of the BBC during the winter of 1958-9 and subsequently published in the first volume of *Wales through the Ages*, Gwyn declared, with a magnificent flourish: 'Modern Wales, in short, really begins in 1410.'⁶⁸ Similarly, he wrote of the eighteenth century—'Politics in Wales begin with the American Revolution'⁶⁹—as though political animals like Walter Cradock, Morgan Llwyd and Vavasor Powell had never existed. In one of his pungent articles in *Marxism Today* in 1981, he posed this intriguing question: 'If the Welsh language

had gone the way of Gaelic, Welsh nationalism would probably be stronger and more leftwing.⁷⁰ It must also be said, however, that many of his statements were dense, enigmatic and confusing. 'We are living', he wrote in 1985, 'through the morning after a night before which lasted over four generations.'⁷¹ Some of his reviews of Marxist publications which appeared in *The Guardian* in the 1970s were incomprehensible.⁷² In so many ways, therefore, Gwyn's partisan, irreverent, perhaps even seditious, writings placed him outside the mainstream of Welsh historiography, and may account for the fact that his colleagues in Wales never presented him with the *festschrift* his achievements so richly deserved or persuaded the University of Wales to confer an honorary Doctor of Letters upon him.⁷³ On the other hand, it is probable that to have been elected Vice-President of *Llafur* and invited ('for Iolo's sake') to join the Gorsedd of the Bards of the Island of Britain meant more to Gwyn than awards bestowed by the establishment.

No appreciation of Gwyn as a historian would be complete without reference to his humour. In private, he was a deeply pessimistic man, given to moods of black despair. But he could also be outrageously funny, both in private and in public. His wickedly irreverent humour appealed especially to students and it also endeared him to television audiences. Even in his serious books and essays, cheerfulness constantly breaks through. In *When was Wales?*, he related how the ironmaster Richard Crawshay brought no less a figure than Lord Nelson to Cyfarthfa. "'Here's Nelson, boys! [cried Crawshay] Cheer, you buggers!" Cheer they certainly did and the buggers have gone on cheering ever since.'⁷⁴ Gwyn could bring the house down simply by combining family history with a mordant reference to public morality: 'Lloyd George did not know my father; I'm rather glad he did not know my mother; but he was a living presence in my grandfather.'⁷⁵ Even his throwaway remarks often contained a kernel of truth: writing in *Radical Wales*, he observed: 'It's very easy to love Wales, it's the bloody Welsh who are the problem!'⁷⁶ Like Gibbon, he believed that footnotes should be entertaining as well as scholarly, and some of his bibliographies and references hover tantalizingly on that thin dividing line between wit and flippancy.

Most important of all, Gwyn was the people's historian (*hanesydd y werin*), the people's remembrancer (*cofiadur y werin*).⁷⁷ Determined to break down barriers between intellectuals and lay people, he sought to make the study of history, together with the abstract arguments which underpinned it, accessible and relevant to everyone. *When was Wales?*, for instance, was clearly an attempt to reach people who inhabited the world outside academic cloisters, and it was thanks to Gwyn's writings that, in the early 1980s, Welsh history became a subject of intense and

often polemical debate in the columns of *Arcade*, *Y Faner*, *Planet* and *Radical Wales*. Gwyn was also chiefly responsible for the 'Eye-Witness' column in *Rebecca*, in which he drew the attention of readers, in a popular style, to key events in the history of modern Wales. As a television historian, too, his principal concern was to make the results of his researches available to interested lay people as well as the *cognoscenti*. Small wonder that he became the only Welsh historian of modern times whose name was a household word. He was deeply affronted when one reviewer referred to him as 'a Welsh Edward Thompson',⁷⁸ for Gwyn's ambition was to go down in history as 'Gwyn A. Williams, The Remembrancer of the Welsh People'.

Gwyn was less interested in the very poor than in the small man who had some modest stake in property. These were usually artisans, *sans-culottes*, journeymen and small tradesmen, people who normally survived in 'official' histories only in marginal references or footnotes. He nursed an inbred antipathy towards propertied oligarchies and cosy elites, and it is inconceivable that he could ever have written books on, say, *The Unreformed Constitution*, or Metternich, or even Gladstone. His interest was in men with prickly, inquiring minds, who aspired to be revolutionaries and who (like Gwyn himself) epitomised the striking motto of the French writer Romain Rolland—'pessimism of the intelligence, optimism of the will'.⁷⁹ One of the most remarkable features of his work was his ability to pluck from the shadows a host of little-known characters who, in their modest way, had helped to provide the dynamic of social and political change. These might be an intransigent Deist like Rowland Detrosier or an illegitimate haulier-turned-demagogue like Lewis Lewis, *Lewsyn yr Heliwr*. Gwyn's sympathy was always with the plucky underdog—John Evans, William Jones, Abednego Jones, George Shell, David Ivon Jones—the disenfranchised people who battled against what late-eighteenth century democrats used to call 'THE THING'. Gwyn believed passionately in the capacity of the Welsh people to make their own history, and his own writing was of necessity a call to action. His affection for his own people (as well as his loathing for Thatcherism) gleams out from the concluding pages of *When was Wales?*

I write these words in a blistering summer in one urban corner, congenially cosmopolitan, ringed appropriately by a hospital under threat, a Conservative Club and a funeral parlour ... Some kind of human society, though God knows what kind, will no doubt go on occupying these two western peninsulas of Britain, but that people, who are my people and no mean people, who have for a millennium and a half lived in them as a Welsh people, are now nothing but a naked people under an acid rain.⁸⁰

Yet Gwyn's celebration of *y werin* is intelligible only in an international context. Small though he was in stature, Gwyn's horizons were broad and he empathised with common people in all lands. His television programme on 'Niclas y Glais' was called 'Llais y Werin', and he liked to quote Nicholas's famous piece of doggerel:

Mae'r byd yn fwy na Chymru,
Rwy'n gwybod hynny nawr;
Ond diolch fod hen Gymru fach
Yn rhan o fyd mor fawr.⁸¹

He celebrated the career of David Ivon Jones, the Aberystwyth-born Unitarian, because he broke free from the shackles of his upbringing, championed the cause of the black trade union movement in South Africa, worshipped Lenin, and was buried alongside other Communist heroes in the Nova-Dyevitchi Monastery in Moscow.⁸² Although Gwyn believed that Saunders Lewis's interpretation of the history of Wales was bunk, he deeply admired his Europeanism. Indeed, he was convinced that the best Welsh writers cast their eyes over the history and culture of their own land from an European perspective.⁸³ It was entirely fitting, therefore, that 'The Internationale' (punctuated by cries of 'Viva Gwyn') was sung with gusto at Gwyn's funeral.

All these qualities helped Gwyn to illuminate the past in a brilliantly original and inventive way. Yet it would be wrong to convey the impression that his work was unsullied by warts. There are many instances in his books where rhetorical and resonant prose masks suspect logic and factual blemishes, and one suspects that when future critics subject his work to close scrutiny they will discover weak links in the chain of his arguments and unconvincing judgements on individuals and movements. In a perceptive review of *Madoc*, Keith Robbins (a former colleague of Gwyn at York), wrote: 'It is not easy to keep our feet on the ground and there may be times when we feel Professor Williams is leaping over chasms, both physical and mental, with more daring than ought to be encouraged in a five-foot-five marginal man.'⁸⁴ Those who believe that historical truth is attainable will doubtless also claim that Gwyn was too prone to select material which fitted the Marxist straitjacket and that he was too heavily influenced by contemporary political needs. What can be said with certainty is that his sheer exuberance made him overstate his case on many occasions. There can be no doubt that he exaggerated the numerical strength and unity of late-eighteenth-century Welsh Jacobins and their success in appealing to the mass of the populace. At times he was so deeply impressed by their moral courage and self-sacrifice in the teeth of fierce government repression that his analysis of their deeds bordered on sentimental idealization. It simply cannot be claimed,

as Gwyn did, that thousands of Welsh people packed their bags and crossed the Atlantic in the 1790s, that the works of Tom Paine 'convulsed' literate Wales, and that the Madoc myth reduced the Welsh to a state of febrile excitement.⁸⁵ He did not understand (perhaps he did not try to understand) the essence of Methodism and the powerful influence of 'the Papal government of Bala', and he often poured vitriol over nineteenth-century Nonconformists and Liberals, even though they were central features of the radical tradition which he cherished so fondly.⁸⁶ It must also be said that Gwyn was prone to borrow freely, perhaps too freely, from the works of other historians and to rework his old material so often that the same paragraphs might figure in four or five different books. Conscious of this failing, he was intrigued by the theological and ideological implications of plagiarizing his own work.⁸⁷ Gwyn never believed that his principal task was to combat error and bias and, as he used to say about Iolo Morganwg, when he was wrong he was often wrong for the right reasons.⁸⁸

* * * * *

On 16 November 1995 decades of chain-smoking finally took their toll and Gwyn A. Williams lost his race with the undertaker. On 22 November the veritable Gideon's Army of mourners—historians, writers, broadcasters, socialists, communists, nationalists, ex-miners and bemedalled war veterans—which assembled at Parc Gwyn crematorium, Narberth,⁸⁹ bore witness to the rich diversity of Gwyn's interests and the extent to which he had touched the lives of people across a wide spectrum. The Welsh historical profession has lost a humane, creative spirit who suffused both the past and the present with a warm and glowing light. Let his words inspire us to build a better future for our own sons and daughters:

It is going to be a long march, a hard march, a rocky march.
But take courage. Our forefathers have trod this road before
us. They won in the end. So will we.⁹⁰

- ¹ See Gwyn A. Williams, *Madoc. The Making of a Myth* (London, 1979), pp.92-5, 142-9. For a full account of this Welsh Voltaire (who was buried on 30 November 1795), see Geraint H. Jenkins, "'A Rank Republican [and] a Leveller": William Jones, Llangadfan', *Welsh History Review*, 17, no.3 (1995), 365-86.
- ² In many ways, Gwyn himself epitomised his description of Saunders Lewis as 'a maimed genius'. Gwyn A. Williams, *Writing on the Line* (Channel 4 Television, London, 1992), p.16.
- ³ Gwyn A. Williams, 'A Welsh Pioneer of African Freedom', *Radical Wales*, no.9, Winter 1985, 5.
- ⁴ For brief accounts of Gwyn's background, see appreciations by Dai Smith, 'The People's Remembrancer', *The Guardian*, 17 November 1995; by Meic Stephens in *The Independent*, 18 November 1995; by Gwyn Griffiths in *Y Cymro*, 22 November 1995; by Dylan Iorwerth in *Golwg*, 8, no.12, 23 November 1995; and by John Davies in *Barn*, nos.395-6 (1996), 67-8.
- ⁵ Gwyn A. Williams, 'Memories of a Model European, Mark One', *Radical Wales*, no.3, Summer 1984, 12-13; *idem*, 'Are Welsh Historians putting on the Style?', *Planet*, 68, 1988, 23-31.
- ⁶ *The Dragon*, Summer Term, 1948, 15.
- ⁷ *Radical Wales*, no.3 (1984), 12-13; *The Dragon*, Summer Term, 1949, 25. The description of Shinwell as 'the military's favourite Labour politician' is in Julian Critchley, *A Bag of Boiled Sweets* (London, 1995), p.87.
- ⁸ E. L. Ellis, *The University College of Wales, Aberystwyth 1872-1972* (Cardiff, 1972), p.289.
- ⁹ Glanmor Williams, 'Reginald Francis Treharne (1901-1967): An Appreciation', in R. F. Treharne, *Essays on Thirteenth Century England* (The Historical Association, 1971), pp.1-8.
- ¹⁰ Gwyn A. Williams, 'Social and constitutional developments in thirteenth-century London. A study in social tendency' (unpubl. University of Wales M.A. thesis, 1952), p.iv.
- ¹¹ *Planet*, 68 (1988), 25-6.
- ¹² See Richard Cobb, 'David Williams (1900-78)', *Welsh History Review*, 9, no. 2 (1978), 205-6; Gwyn A. Williams, 'David Williams', *Llafur*, vol.2, no.3 (1978), 7-9. The reference to 'Ysbaddaden' (Chief Giant) is in *Madoc*, Acknowledgements.
- ¹³ *Medieval Welsh Society. Selected Essays by T. Jones Pierce*, ed. J. Beverley Smith (Cardiff, 1972).
- ¹⁴ *The Independent*, 18 November 1995.
- ¹⁵ Welsh Books Council, Publicity Department Files, letter dated 16 November 1977.
- ¹⁶ Gwyn A. Williams, 'A Pistol Shot in a Concert?', *Planet*, 84 (1991), 59.
- ¹⁷ *Wales*, ed. Keidrych Rhys, no.40, May 1959, 30, 58.
- ¹⁸ Throughout the 1950s Aberystwyth students maintained a full programme of plays, soirées, concerts, eisteddfodau and dances.

- ¹⁹ Gwyn A. Williams, 'London and Edward I', *Trans. Royal Historical Society*, XI (1961), 81-100.
- ²⁰ *Planet*, 68 (1988), 25.
- ²¹ Gwyn A. Williams, 'The Merthyr Riots: Settling the Account', *National Library of Wales Journal*, XI, no.1 (1959), 124-41; *idem*, 'The Making of Radical Merthyr 1800-36', *Welsh History Review*, I, no.2 (1961), 161-92.
- ²² Gwyn A. Williams, 'Gramsci's Concept of Egeponia', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XXI, no.4 (1960), 586-99.
- ²³ Gwyn A. Williams, *Proletarian Order, Antonio Gramsci, Factory Councils and the Origins of Italian Communism 1911-1921* (Pluto Press, 1975), p.335.
- ²⁴ See the interview with Gwyn in *Gwyn Alf. The People's Remembrancer* (Teliesyn, S4C, 1995).
- ²⁵ Gwyn A. Williams, *Rowland Detrosier. A Working-Class Infidel 1800-34* (Borthwick Papers no.28, York, 1965); *idem*, 'South Wales Radicalism: The First Phase', *Glamorgan Historian*, ed. Stewart Williams (vol.2, Cowbridge, 1965), pp.30-9; *idem*, 'The Merthyr of Dic Penderyn', *Merthyr Politics: The Making of a Working Class Tradition*, ed. Glanmor Williams (Cardiff, 1966), pp.9-27.
- ²⁶ Gwyn A. Williams, *Artisans and Sans-Culottes* (London, 1968), pp.117-18.
- ²⁷ Welsh Books Council, Publicity Department Files, letter dated 30 December 1977.
- ²⁸ In the third annual lecture, delivered by Gwyn in 1980, he declared: 'Welsh historiography, like Welsh history and the Welsh landscape itself has been grotesquely mutilated. Welsh historiography is almost as hallucinatory as Spanish historiography has been until recently... A great deal of Welsh history has been Welsh history with the Welsh left out.' *Welsh Wizard and the British Empire. Dr John Dee and a Welsh Identity* (University College Cardiff, 1980), p.21.
- ²⁹ Welsh Books Council, letter dated 30 December 1977; Interview with Gwyn A. Williams, *Radical Wales*, no.1, Winter 1983, 6.
- ³⁰ Paolo Spriano, *The Occupation of the Factories: Italy 1920*. Translated and introduced by Gwyn A. Williams (Pluto Press, 1975).
- ³¹ Williams, *Proletarian Order*, p.8.
- ³² Gwyn A. Williams, *Goya and the Impossible Revolution* (London, 1976). Also in 1976 Gwyn wrote on 'The Early Socialists' in Clive Emsley, Christopher Harvie and Gwyn A. Williams, *Europe on the eve of 1848* (The Open University, 1976), pp.66-72.
- ³³ Gwyn first made this point in *Merthyr Politics*, pp.26-7, and repeated it in several publications between 1979 and 1985.
- ³⁴ *The Complete Poems of Idris Davies*, ed. Dafydd Johnston (Cardiff, 1994), p.13.
- ³⁵ *Gwyn Alf. The People's Remembrancer* (Teliesyn, S4C, 1995).
- ³⁶ Hywel Francis, *Miners against Fascism. Wales and the Spanish Civil War* (London, 1984), p.90.

- ³⁷ Gwyn A. Williams, 'Locating a Welsh Working Class: the Frontier Years', *A People and a Proletariat. Essays in the History of Wales 1780-1980*, ed. David Smith (Pluto Press, 1980), pp.41-2.
- ³⁸ Gwyn A. Williams, *The Merthyr Rising* (London, 1978), p.14.
- ³⁹ *Wales*, no.40 (1959), 30.
- ⁴⁰ Welsh Books Council, letter dated 16 November 1977.
- ⁴¹ See also the first essay by Gwyn on this theme, 'Morgan John Rhees and his Beula', *Welsh History Review*, 3, no.4 (1967), 441-72.
- ⁴² Gwyn A. Williams, *Excalibur, The Search for Arthur* (BBC Books, 1994).
- ⁴³ Gwyn A. Williams, *The Search for Beulah Land* (London, 1980), p.2.
- ⁴⁴ Gwyn A. Williams, *A Distant Mirror. Five Faces of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (Aberystwyth, 1985), pp.3-4.
- ⁴⁵ Gwyn A. Williams, 'Mother Wales—get off me back?', *Marxism Today*, December 1981, 14-20. By 1988 he believed that the brains of the Welsh had been 'pulverised into jelly'. *idem*, *Towards the Commonwealth of Wales* (Plaid Cymru, 1988), p.1.
- ⁴⁶ Gwyn A. Williams, *The Welsh in their History* (London, 1982), p.10.
- ⁴⁷ Gwyn A. Williams, 'Marcsydd o Sardiniwr ac Argyfwng Cymru', *Efrydiau Athronyddol*, XLVII (1984), 26.
- ⁴⁸ Williams, 'Mother Wales—get off me back?', *Marxism Today*, December 1981, 14-20; *idem*, 'Land of our Fathers', *ibid.*, August 1982, 22-30.
- ⁴⁹ *Radical Wales*, no.1, Winter 1983, 6.
- ⁵⁰ *Marxism Today*, August 1982, 30.
- ⁵¹ Gwyn A. Williams, *When was Wales?* (BBC Wales Annual Radio Lecture, 1979), p.21.
- ⁵² Published by Black Raven Press, London.
- ⁵³ Williams, *Writing on the Line*, p.23.
- ⁵⁴ Geraint H. Jenkins, 'The Dragon has many Tongues', *Planet*, 51 (1985), 124-7.
- ⁵⁵ G. F. Nuttall, *Howel Harris 1714-1773: The Last Enthusiast* (Cardiff, 1965), p.54.
- ⁵⁶ Adam Sisman, *A. J. P. Taylor. A Biography* (Mandarin Paperbacks, London, 1995), p.349.
- ⁵⁷ This point is made by Professor Hywel Teifi Edwards in *Golwg*, 8, no.12, 23 November 1995, 11.
- ⁵⁸ G. J. Williams, *Iolo Morganwg—Y Gyfrol Gyntaf* (Caerdydd, 1956); Ceri W. Lewis, *Iolo Morganwg* (Caernarfon, 1995).
- ⁵⁹ See, for instance, Williams, *The Welsh in their History*, pp.48-52; *idem*, 'Romanticism in Wales', *Romanticism in National Context*, ed. Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich

- (Cambridge, 1988), pp.9-36; *idem*, 'Iolo Morganwg: Bardd Rhamantaidd ar gyfer Cenedl nad oedd yn Cyfrif', *Cof Cenedl V*, ed. Geraint H. Jenkins (Llandysul, 1990), pp.58-84.
- ⁶⁰ Gwyn A. Williams, 'People's Remembrancers to a Welsh Republic', *Radical Wales*, no.12, Autumn 1986, 18.
- ⁶¹ Williams, *Artisans and Sans-Culottes*, pp.1-2.
- ⁶² Williams, *Goya and the Impossible Revolution*, p.1.
- ⁶³ Williams, *Madoc*, pp.204-06.
- ⁶⁴ Gwyn A. Williams, 'The Merthyr Election of 1835', *Welsh History Review*, 10, no.3 (1981), 377.
- ⁶⁵ Gwyn A. Williams, Introduction to 'Michael Foot on Aneurin Bevan', *Llafur*, vol.1, no.3 (1974), 17.
- ⁶⁶ Williams, *The Welsh in their History*, Introduction. In 1975 he had referred to History as 'that battered old whore'. *Proletarian Order*, p.307.
- ⁶⁷ See the publicity on the dustjacket of *When was Wales? A History of the Welsh*.
- ⁶⁸ *Wales through the Ages Volume 1*, ed. A. J. Roderick (Llandybie, 1959), p.183.
- ⁶⁹ Williams, *When was Wales? A History of the Welsh*, p.167.
- ⁷⁰ *Marxism Today*, December 1981, 19.
- ⁷¹ Williams, *When was Wales? A History of the Welsh*, p.181.
- ⁷² See, for instance, his review, entitled 'Three Brass Monkeys', of three Marxist works in *The Guardian*, 12 February 1970.
- ⁷³ It was left to two English historians, Clive Emsley and James Walvin (both former pupils at York), to mark his retirement by editing and publishing a collection of essays entitled *Artisans, Peasants and Proletarians 1760-1860* (London, 1985).
- ⁷⁴ Williams, *When was Wales? A History of the Welsh*, p. 142.
- ⁷⁵ *Llafur*, vol.1, no.3 (1974), 17.
- ⁷⁶ *Radical Wales*, no.1, Winter 1983, 7.
- ⁷⁷ In 1980, he wrote: 'And the people whom we try to serve as people's remembrancers are a people without a memory.' *A People and a Proletariat*, p.18.
- ⁷⁸ Williams, *Writing on the Line*, p.1.
- ⁷⁹ Gwyn A. Williams, *Sardinian Marxist and Welsh Predicament* (National Left Paper no.3, 1983), p.9.
- ⁸⁰ Williams, *When was Wales? A History of the Welsh*, pp.304-5.
- ⁸¹ Gwyn A. Williams, *Peace and Power. Henry Richard. A Radical for our Time* (CND Cymru, 1988), p.7.

- ⁸² Gwyn A. Williams and Baruch Hirson, *The Delegate for Africa. David Ivon Jones 1883-1924* (London, 1995).
- ⁸³ Williams, *Writing on the Line*, p.15; *idem*, 'With the History Left In', *Planet*, 82 (1990), 3-8.
- ⁸⁴ *History*, vol.66, no.216 (1981), 105.
- ⁸⁵ See my review of *Madoc* and *The Search for Beulah Land* in *Welsh History Review*, 10, no.3 (1981), 433-5.
- ⁸⁶ This point is made by Peter Stead in *Welsh History Review*, 12, no.1 (1984), 127-8.
- ⁸⁷ Williams, *The Search for Beulah Land*, p.2.
- ⁸⁸ Williams, 'Iolo Morganwg', *Cof Cenedl V*, p.80.
- ⁸⁹ It is reassuring to note that Gwyn's mentor, David Williams, whom he described in *Madoc* as 'historian of Wales, France and America magister', hailed from Narberth.
- ⁹⁰ Gwyn A. Williams, *Gweriniaeth y Silwriaid / The Silurian Republic* (Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Casnewydd, 1988), p.12.

PAPURAU YMCHWIL
CANOLFAN UWCHEFRYDIAU CYMREIG A CHELTAIDD

RESEARCH PAPERS OF THE
CENTRE FOR ADVANCED WELSH AND CELTIC STUDIES

- Rhif 1/ No.1 *'Where is Mrs. Jones Going?': Women and the Second World War in South Wales*, by Mari A. Williams. 1995.
- Rhif 2/ No.2 *The Coming of the Railways and Language Change in North Wales, 1850-1900*, by Dot Jones. 1995.
- Rhif 3/ No.3 *'Iaith Nas Arferir, Iaith I Farw Yw': Ymgyrchu dros yr Iaith Gymraeg rhwng y Ddau Ryfel Byd*, gan Marion Löffler. 1995.
- Rhif 4/ No.4 *'Y Papur a Afaelodd yn Serchiadau'r Bobl': John Roberts Williams a'r Cymro 1945-62*, gan Robert Smith. 1996.
- Rhif 5/ No.5 *Memorializing History: Public Sculpture in Industrial South Wales*, by John R. Wilson. 1996.
- Rhif 6/ No.6 *'Goganwr am Gig Ynyd': The Poet as Satirist in Medieval Wales*, by Dylan Foster Evans. 1996.