

3. *From a Death to a View: The Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period*

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MERRIE WALES AND ITS PASSING

When one looks at the cultural life of Wales in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries one is struck by a paradox; on the one hand the decay or demise of an ancient way of life, and on the other an unprecedented outburst of interest in things Welsh and highly self-conscious activity to preserve or develop them. The Welsh historian Peter Roberts¹ wrote a survey of the old way of life in 1815, in which he observed

When, from political or other causes, the manners and customs of a nation have, in general, undergone a great change, an inquiry into what they have been in former ages becomes interesting.² Nearly all Welsh picturesque customs were 'now wholly laid aside', and some druidic beliefs had never been held at all. The Hon. John Byng visited Bala in 1784 and again in 1793 and complained that 'Within ten years there seem'd an alteration in the manners of the people.' Signs of Welsh merriment were gone, the Welsh were becoming like the English, and all the curiosity of travel was undone.³ Decay and revival are curiously intermixed, because very often those who bewailed the decay were the very ones who brought about the revival. R. T. Jenkins said that the eighteenth century was not so much the century of the Methodist Revival as the century of revivals: educational, agrarian, industrial and cultural; the Welsh Renaissance or antiquarian revival being if not the most massive certainly the most original.⁴ In this period Welsh scholars and patriots rediscovered the

¹ Most of the people mentioned in this chapter are described in *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography down to 1940* (London, 1959), but Peter Roberts is found in the Welsh supplement to the dictionary (London, 1970).

² Peter Roberts, *Cambrian Popular Antiquities* (London, 1815), introd.

³ C. Bruyn Andrews (ed.), *The Torrington Diaries* (London, 1936), iii, pp. 254-5.

⁴ R. T. Jenkins, *Hanes Cymru yn y Ddeunawfed Ganrif* (History of Wales in the Eighteenth Century) (Cardiff, 1928), pp. 2, 104-34. Cf. E. D. Evans, *A History of Wales 1660-1815* (Cardiff, 1976), pp. 231-50.

past, historical, linguistic and literary traditions, and where those traditions were inadequate, they created a past which had never existed. Romantic mythologizing went to quite extraordinary lengths in Wales, leaving a permanent mark on its later history.

The fact that the scholars who noted the decay were the ones who recreated the past presents no serious difficulty. Edward Jones (1752–1824), the harpist to George IV as prince and king, lamented in his book on Welsh music, *The Bardic Museum*,

The sudden decline of the national Minstrelsy, and Customs of Wales, is in a great degree to be attributed to the fanatic impostors, or illiterate plebeian preachers, who have too often been suffered to over-run the country, misleading the greater part of the common people from their lawful Church; and dissuading them from their innocent amusements, such as Singing, Dancing, and other rural Sports, and Games, which heretofore they had been accustomed to delight in, from the earliest time... the consequence is, Wales, which was formerly one of the merriest, and happiest countries in the World, is now become one of the dullest.⁵ By his various books on Welsh music published between 1784 and 1820 Edward Jones was one of those who turned Welsh culture from being one of decaying but unselfconscious survival into self-aware revival, and the result, though often bogus, was never dull.

A very small number of Welsh scholars had long been aware of the disappearance of a distinctive Welsh way of life. In the sixteenth century the native culture bound up with Catholicism largely disappeared without an especially Welsh Protestant culture coming fully to replace it, the native legal system was abolished, the bardic system atrophied, the old language was outlawed from administration, and, although the official classes still spoke Welsh, their attitudes became anglicized or they approximated to western European norms of behaviour. The decay continued through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but the critical stage was not reached until the eighteenth century because up until then scholars might always comfort themselves with the thought that much of the old culture remained among the common people. The critical stage was marked at first by a loss of self-confidence. The Welsh almanacker and lexicographer Thomas Jones said in 1688

To Languages as well as Dominions... there is an appointed time; they have had their infancy, foundations and beginning, their

⁵ Edward Jones, *The Bardic Museum* (London, 1802), introd., p. xvi.

growth and increase in purity and perfection; as also in spreading, and propagation: their state of consistency; and their old age, declinings and decayes.

And thus it hath pleased the Almighty to deal with us the Britains; for these many ages hath eclipsed our Power, and corrupted our Language, and almost blotted us out of the Books of Records.⁶

The last phrase was crucial, for central to the loss of self-confidence was the loss of a sense of history. Sir John Vanbrugh in *Aesop* (about 1697) brings Aesop into contact with an aptly named Welsh herald called Quaint, who explains his trade by saying that of course his mother was a 'Welch Woman'

Aesop A Welch Woman? Prithee of what Country's that?

Quaint That, Sir, is a Country in the World's back-side, where every Man is born a Gentleman, and a Genealogist.⁷

The image of Wales was of a quaint back-of-beyond where gentlemen with hardly a shirt to their backs reeled off endless family trees going back to Aeneas from Troy, a land of unchanging backwardness, whose people had plenty of ancestry but no national history.

This had not been the case in earlier centuries. To put a complicated matter briefly, the older Welsh vision of history had been threefold: it concerned their origins as a nation, their conversion to Christianity and the lives of native princes. The oldest part was a set of myths or fables proving the Welsh to be the earliest and prime people of the British Isles (hence Thomas Jones's 'Brittains'). The Welsh memorized the facts concerning their early heroes, and how they had fought off waves of invaders and then been defeated and fought back again, in sets of three linked sentences 'The Triads of the Isle of Britain'.⁸ The second part of the vision concerned British Christianity, introduced in Roman times, and defended by the Welsh against the pagan Saxons with heroes like Ambrosius Aurelianus and Arthur. In each locality the church or the holy well would be connected to this central theme by saints such as David or the other Celtic saints. The third part of the vision was more conventional and it concerned lines of native princes descending from tribal leaders, or Roman

⁶ Thomas Jones, *The British Language in its Lustre* (London, 1688), preface.

⁷ B. Dobrée and G. Webb (eds.), *The Works of Sir John Vanbrugh* (London, 1927), ii, p. 33.

⁸ Rachel Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein, the Triads of the Isle of Britain* (Cardiff, 1961), and *Trioedd Ynys Prydein in Welsh Literature and Scholarship* (Cardiff, 1969).

foederati like Cunedda, or from Cadwaladr the Blessed, last Welsh king to claim over-lordship of Britain, in the seventh century, right down to the death of Llywelyn II in 1282. In the mid-eighteenth century the people of Builth were unjustly known as 'the traitors of Builth' because Llywelyn was slain nearby.

During the later Middle Ages the different parts had become jumbled and transformed. In the twelfth century Geoffrey of Monmouth adapted the old myths and invented a Welsh tradition; he emphasized the Trojan origins of the British, Britain taking its name from Brutus, and Wales (Cymru) from Camber; he also emphasized the heroic role of King Arthur. The Galfridian version of Welsh history was still stubbornly retained by the Welsh historians in the mid-eighteenth century, and one of the main aims of the patriots was to find and publish the Welsh original they thought must lie behind Geoffrey's history. Welsh scholars of the period were also aware of the other dimension of the Welsh tradition, the prophetic or messianic dimension, which projected the Welsh past into the future. Evan Evans, for example, makes something of this in his discussion of the Welsh bardic tradition in 1764.⁹ In early Celtic society the *vates* or seers foretold the future, a function taken over by the bards, and after the loss of independence in 1282 the literature of *brud* or prophecy took on great importance.¹⁰

The threefold native historical tradition was gradually transformed in the sixteenth century. The prophetic element decayed, though the tradition was manipulated cleverly by Henry Tudor to drum up Welsh support by posing as the messianic figure of the 'Second Owain', and his descent from Cadwaladr was used to legitimize Tudor claims to the overlordship of Britain. For others, Henry seemed to symbolize the long-awaited return of Arthur. A little later, the Anglican Church took to itself the Welsh myths of the founding of the British Church by Joseph of Arimathea, and blame for the loss of its independence could be easily laid not at the door of the English but the Normans and the Pope.¹¹ The rest of the Welsh

⁹ Evan Evans, *Some Specimens of Early Welsh Poetry* (London, 1764), especially his 'Dissertatio de bardis'.

¹⁰ M. M. Griffiths, *Early Vaticination in Welsh with English Parallels* (Cardiff, 1937); and Glanmor Williams, 'Prophecy, Poetry and Politics in Medieval and Tudor Wales', in H. Hearder and H. R. Loyn (eds.), *British Government and Administration* (Cardiff, 1974), pp. 104-16.

¹¹ Sydney Anglo, 'The British History in early Tudor propaganda', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, xlv (1961), pp. 17-48. Glanmor Williams, 'Some Protestant Views of Early British Church History', *History*, xxxviii (1953), reprinted in his *Welsh Reformation Essays* (Cardiff, 1967), pp. 207-19.

tradition was not so much absorbed as discredited as baseless myth because Polydore Vergil exploded so much of Geoffrey of Monmouth's history as fabulous. What remained, then, after these attacks or adaptations, was taken over by English scholars as early English-British history for they wished to identify England with British antiquity.¹² It is clear that as late as the end of the seventeenth century separate bits and pieces of very early tradition were memorized as fireside tales by the common folk, tales of Emrys (Ambrosius), Merlin, Arthur, Taliesin, and others, on the evidence of the correspondents of Edward Lhuys in the 1690s.¹³ They did not form part of a coherent whole, but were like the pearls which have rolled off a broken necklace string. In some cases early bits of Welsh history were memorized in ballads as in Matthew Owen's 'Hanes y Cymru' (History of the Welsh) wherein the Welsh went over their ancient defeats passively.¹⁴

The loss of Welsh history had a debilitating effect on other aspects of culture. It is true that the bulk of literary texts of Welsh lore and learning surviving today date from about 1550 to 1700; G. J. Williams has observed that this is because scribes and antiquaries realized their familiar world was coming to an end, and a heroic act of salvage was needed as the world became more and more bleak.¹⁵ G. J. Williams also observed a gradual decline in the grasp that Welsh literati had of the traditional culture, its symbols, language, grammar, and many of the owners of manuscripts confessed that, although Welsh-speaking, they understood nothing about their property save that it might be valuable. Thomas Hearne found it impossible to persuade Welshmen to put old Welsh manuscript chronicles into print: 'they are all averse, and are utterly for the discouraging of their own history'.¹⁶ English lyrical forms (albeit with consonantal alliteration or *cynghanedd*) came to dominate poetry, and Protestant theology took the place of traditional symbolism and allusion in what remained of traditional verse. In the early eighteenth century a good Welsh scholar, John Morgan of Matchin, wrote to Edward Lhuys's

¹² T. D. Kendrick, *British Antiquity* (London, 1950), pp. 34-134.

¹³ F. V. Emery, 'A New Account of Snowdonia 1693 Written for Edward Lhuys', *National Library of Wales Journal*, xviii (1974), pp. 405-17.

¹⁴ Dafydd Jones, *Blodeugerdd Cymry* (Shrewsbury, 1759), p. 150; and T. H. Parry-Williams (ed.), *Llawysgrif Richard Morris o Gerddi* (Cardiff, 1931), p. 125.

¹⁵ For all aspects of Welsh scholarship I have depended heavily upon G. J. Williams (ed. A. Lewis), *Agweddu ar Hanes Dysg Gymraeg* (Aspects of the History of Welsh Scholarship) (Cardiff, 1969), *passim*, but here esp. pp. 83-4.

¹⁶ Quoted in J. Davies, *Bywyd a Gwaith Moses Williams* (Life and Work of Moses Williams) (Cardiff, 1937), pp. 24-5.

assistant Moses Williams (for a time secretary of the Royal Society) to say that just as one could not read Greek and Roman classics without a dictionary to classical allusion, so a dictionary to Welsh lore was now needed, otherwise Welsh history and literature would remain a lock without a key.

Thomas Jones – and he was not alone – mentioned in 1688 that the Almighty had ‘corrupted our Language’, and more and more Welshmen were beginning to refer to Welsh as *heniaith*, the ‘old language’, as though it were in a geriatric home. The poet and drover Edward Morus praised Bishop Lloyd of St Asaph (one of the Seven Bishops of 1688) for learning Welsh, and made the Welsh language say that it was ‘an old battered language that was once top’, and was ‘a delicate peacock now in his old age’.¹⁷ English satirists such as W.R. in his *Wallography* (London, 1681) hoped the language would soon be dead; it was the ‘gibberish’ of ‘Taphydom’, spoken now only by the lower orders. Henry Rowlands of Llanidan in his history of Anglesey complained

And of late when the neighbouring *English* hath so much encroach’d upon it, by becoming the genteel and fashionable Tongue among us, many more words lye by us obsolete and useless, which were before perhaps the Flowers and Ornaments of our Language.¹⁸

As with everything else Welsh, the language had no status, it was ‘regardless’ (Thomas Jones’s word in 1688). About 1730 the poet and squireen Huw Hughes wrote to the great scholar Lewis Morris that all the defenders of the old language had gone to sleep.¹⁹ Welsh survived and was prevented from dissolution into dialects by the Anglican liturgy, and the Welsh Bible and Protestant apologetic literature. But it had little mechanism for modernization or development, and seemed to have no real dynamic behind it. It appeared, as it is shown on the graphic titlepage of James Howell’s dictionary of 1659, as a scared wild woodland warrior maiden, in comparison with the richly clad court ladies of England or France.²⁰

The great work of the Elizabethan Welsh Protestant leaders was not fully matched by a modern Welsh secular culture, for example

¹⁷ O. M. Edwards (ed.), *Gwaith Edward Morus* (Llanuwchllyn, 1904), pp. 21–4.

¹⁸ Henry Rowlands, *Mona Antiqua Restaurata* (Dublin, 1723), p. 38.

¹⁹ Hugh Owen (ed.), *Additional Letters of the Morrisises of Anglesey*, 2 vols. (London, 1947–9), i, p. 13.

²⁰ James Howell, *Lexicon Tetraglotton* (London, 1659) contains a section on Welsh proverbs.

a modern secular literature. Welsh letters were still dominated by the backward looking bards (who had fulfilled the functions of historians, copyists, librarians, heralds, musicians, and so on), and bardistry gradually died away as their culture appeared to be less and less relevant to the times. Bardistry seemed to decay in neighbourhoods that were half Welsh and fully Welsh more or less at the same time; there were few professional bards in Glamorgan after 1660, few in Montgomeryshire after 1640, and even in the remote Lleyne peninsula, if we follow Myrddin Fardd’s *Cynfeirdd Lleyne*, there is a gap between the last bard in 1640 and the next one who is an amateur aboard a man-o’-war in 1800.²¹ In Merioneth the last household bard retained in the old manner was Sion Dafydd Las at Nannau (1690), but it must be remembered that the gentry of Nannau and the neighbourhood were still writing Welsh poetry (for themselves and for publication) as late as the early nineteenth century, as amateurs. The bards who were no longer able to find employment, or who were now unwelcome, in the early years of the eighteenth century complained bitterly at the recent change, some such as Sion Prichard Prys in his *Difyrrwch Crefyddol* giving vent to impotent rage at the way the ‘columns had been felled’.²² The Welsh grandees no longer supported the native culture so that ‘the Art weakened, the Language grew aged, and all of this was because of their weakness, and are led astray on errant paths to the brink of their own destruction’.²³ That amateurs among the lesser gentry or common folk still practised, that poetry was being published in books did not count. The bards looked back to a recent past when they had sung for the whole society from grandee down to peasant, when all had taken part in a merry joyous life, when the whole way of life had been harmonious. The savage satirist Ellis Wynne, a cleric from the lesser gentry, had no love for bards, but hated the modern elements in society too, and like Sion Prichard Prys felt some sort of vacuum in society: he describes the ‘huge gaping manor house’ whose owners had gone to England or to France ‘to seek there what would have been easier found at home’,

²¹ G. J. Williams, *Traddodiad Llennyddol Morgannwg* (Literary Tradition of Glamorgan) (Cardiff, 1948); Enid Pierce Roberts, *Brashun o Hanes Llên Powys* (Sketch of Powys Literary History) (Denbigh, 1965); and Myrddin Fardd, *Cynfeirdd Lleyne* (Early Poets of Lleyne) (Pwllheli, 1905).

²² Gwyn Thomas, ‘A Study of the Change in Tradition in Welsh Poetry in North Wales in the Seventeenth Century’ (Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1966).

²³ Sion Prichard Prys, *Difyrrwch Crefyddol* (Religious Entertainment) (Shrewsbury, 1721), preface.

so that the old family had abandoned the house to the owl and the crows and magpies:

There was a mass of such abandoned manor houses, which could have been, but for Pride, as of yore the haunt of the best of men, the shelter of the weak, a very school of peace and all goodness, and a blessing to a thousand lesser houses around them.²⁴

Even if they had stayed at home it is unlikely that the greater nobles and gentry would have seen themselves as part of a small unified harmonious local community. The traditional Welsh hall house was now coming to an end, the gentry no longer living in a great hall with servants, tenants, friends and bards.²⁵ They were living their lives in private, and as they redesigned their houses they adopted London fashions, and vernacular regional styles came to an end. By 1700 the Welsh were perhaps catching up with styles of living fashionable in England a century or two earlier.²⁶

The cultural break was seen very clearly in the world of music. In the late eighteenth century the collector of Welsh folk dances, William Jones of Llangadfan, was amazed that in a short space of time the tradition of so many centuries should have disappeared. Lewis Morris sent a poem, together with some harpstrings, to the diarist William Bulkeley, the squire of Brynddu in Anglesey in 1726, and we might render his little stanza thus:

There is in Wales, one must lament,
No music and no merriment,
And yet there was, in days of old,
A harp in every household.²⁷

John Roderick the almanacker and grammarian wrote in his embittered old age to Lewis Morris in 1729 to bewail the fact that he could find no one to understand old Welsh music, the lists of tunes and directions for tuning and playing old instruments to be found in many Welsh manuscripts. Some years later, the Morris brothers and their circle came across a huge album of ancient Welsh music written in a strange notation. It was written by Robert ap Huw, King James I's harpist, in 1613. He came from the same area of the island of Anglesey as the Morris brothers, and he died in 1665 only a

²⁴ Ellis Wynne, *Gweledigaethu y Bardd Cwsc* (Visions of the Sleeping Bard) (London, 1703), p. 13. Cf. Gwyn Thomas, *Y Bardd Cwsg a'i Gefndir* (The Sleeping Bard and its Background) (Cardiff, 1971).

²⁵ Peter Smith, *Houses of the Welsh Countryside* (London, 1975).

²⁶ Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (London, 1978), pp. 10, 138.

²⁷ Hugh Owen (ed.), *Life and Works of Lewis Morris* (Anglesey Antiquarian Soc. and Field Club, 1951), p. 162.

generation before the Morris brothers were born. The Morris family were very musical, they gathered around the harp for sing-songs, they knew how to tune a *crwth* or crowd, they had farm servants who went out to call the cattle while playing old airs on the *pihgorn* (a primitive shawm), they delighted in the music of Vivaldi and Corelli, and they claimed to be authorities on Welsh music. But a closer examination of young Richard Morris's notebook, with large numbers of tunes for playing on the fiddle, shows that four-fifths of the tunes had English names.²⁸ The great album of Robert ap Huw (which represented a selection of medieval music) was utterly incomprehensible to them and to every other Welsh musician of the eighteenth century. In most parts of Wales the old music had been associated with the rites and rituals of the customary life, and as they went so the music went too. In the late seventeenth century one of Edward Lhuyd's correspondents wrote to him at the Ashmolean in Oxford to describe the old life at Llandrillo, a remote village near Bala:

Dafydd Rowland the old crowder used every Easter Sunday in the afternoon to go with the parish youngsters to the top of Craig Dhinan to share out the white oxen. Then he would play the tune called *Ychen Bannog* and all the other old tunes, which died with him.²⁹

If those white oxen were like those of Glamorgan, then they were garlanded with flowers, and surrounded by colourful dancers, it must have been a sight worthy to have been put on Keats's Grecian Urn. The *Ychen Bannog* were the great long-horned oxen of primitive Europe. When the old crowder died, the tradition that was broken was a long one indeed. The crowd was barely known at all in South Wales, and Daines Barrington reported to the Society of Antiquaries in 1770 that the last of the Welsh crowders was still alive in Anglesey, but he had no successors. Even the old simple Welsh harp had been replaced in the seventeenth century by a larger triple harp. Lyric songs and ballads on the English pattern had flooded in after 1660, and with them came a host of English melodies. The Morris circle were aware that the singing of verses to harp music was a dying tradition, virtually confined by 1738 to remote parts such as Caer-narfonshire and Merioneth.³⁰

²⁸ Parry-Williams, *op. cit.*

²⁹ Edward Lhuyd (ed. R. H. Morris), *Parochialia* (Archaeologia Cambrensis, ii, 1909-11), p. 59.

³⁰ For the Morris and their circle J. H. Davies (ed.), *The Morris Letters*, 2 vols. (Aberystwyth, 1906-7), *The Letters of Goronwy Owen* (Aberystwyth, 1924); and Owen, *Additional Letters*.

Edward Lhuyd and his correspondents in the 1690s were already aware that a dull uniformity was beginning to creep over Welsh life. For example they lovingly noted the rare surviving native baptismal names such as Llywarch, Goleubryd, Tegwared, Tangwystl and so on, which had been ousted by the stereotyped names like John or William. The fixed surname, in place of a string of patronymics connected by the particle *ap* (son of), had become the norm in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries amongst the upper classes, and the ancient system, which emphasized a man's genealogy and his connection with others in his community descended from a common ancestor, survived only in remoter areas and amongst the poor. There was everywhere a move towards polite and genteel behaviour, which tended to take its standards not from Wales but from England or France. The Society of Sea Serjeants, often accused of Jacobitism, was a gentry dining club in West Wales which had women members and had rules against swearing and bad behaviour. A surprising number of squires were concerned with antiquarian studies or with translating pious works into Welsh, and some of the major gentry were extremely devout, Sir John Philipps of Picton being among the founders of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. William Bulkeley of Brynddu, who, as we have seen, owned a harp and was fond of collecting Welsh verse, was sober, methodical and devout, a total contrast with the feckless and drunken seventeenth-century squire Bulkeley of Dronwy, whose account book survives.³¹ Thomas Pennant, one of the leading figures in the eighteenth-century historical revival, used to take afternoon tea in the summer house used by his ancestors for drunken orgies. Like other observers of Welsh society he noted that the old habit of 'termining', that is, going on periodic violent pub-crawls, was disappearing. Pennant's pen-portrait of the mountain squire Lloyd of Cwm Bychan in Merioneth, untouched by modern fashions, embedded in mountain fastnesses, living an almost medieval life, eating oat-meal and hung goat, drinking draughts of home brew from a bull's scrotum, and rehearsing his genealogy going back to the Welsh princes, was the portrait of a quaint survivor.³² Lloyd's kinsman Henry Lloyd of Cwm Bychan was at that time wandering about Europe as a military expert, writing books on strategy which were to influence Napoleon.

³¹ Hugh Owen (ed.), *The Diary of William Bulkeley of Brynddu* (Anglesey Antiquarian Society and Field Club Publications, 1931), pp. 22–102.

³² Thomas Pennant, *Tours in Wales, Journey to Snowdon* (London, 1781), ii, pp. 114–16. For Henry Lloyd see *D.N.B.*, s.n.

The Morris brothers, Lewis, Richard and William, were friends of Thomas Pennant and their extensive correspondence gives a good picture of a world which was becoming increasingly more sober and earnest. The Morrises were unpuritanical, and their editors have always had to make excisions from their letters for the sake of decency, but they knew that things were changing. Their friend Thomas Ellis, parson of Holyhead, conducted a campaign of moral reform in Anglesey, transforming old rituals, driving all the fortune tellers out of the island, stopping the wakes, preventing the common people going to interludes. He seems to have achieved this with little difficulty, as if the old life was already dying. William Bulkeley of Brynddu noted in his diary for 31 October 1741: 'I saw but few Coelcerths or Bonefires this night, so it seems that old superstitious pageantry is upon the decay.' This change is confirmed by two peasant autobiographies from eighteenth-century Anglesey which have survived, that of Rhys Cox,³³ and of Matthew Owen, the nephew of the drunken feckless poetic genius Goronwy Owen,³⁴ which show an island obsessed with sports often of a violent kind, with terrible football matches which would put today's terraces to shame, but it was an island which became sober, earnest and reformed by the early nineteenth century. This is the picture we have from Edmund Hyde Hall in his description of Caernarfonshire in about 1810, where the life of the common people was being transformed partly by fanatics, and partly by the 'rapacious spirit of the age' which allowed men little leisure any more. The happy life of the Welsh people had now come to an end; he felt

Of these folleries and pastimes the greater part now lie buried in the grave dug for them partly perhaps by the growing intelligence of the people, but certainly with a more immediate effect by the sour spirit of Methodism.³⁵

Methodism was itself (although it did not admit it) the child of a complicated movement to moralize and evangelize the Welsh people, organized by dissenters and evangelical Anglicans from about 1660 to 1730, as has recently been shown beyond doubt by the massive work of G. H. Jenkins.³⁶ Methodism was certainly a movement of self-conscious individuals concerned to save souls, but

³³ Printed in *Lleuad yr Oes* (Swansea, 1827), pp. 316–18, 374–6.

³⁴ Printed in *Cymru* (Caernarfon, 1908), xxxiv, pp. 253–7.

³⁵ Edmund Hyde Hall (ed. E. G. Jones), *A Description of Caernarvonshire in 1809–11* (Caernarfon, 1952), pp. 313–14.

³⁶ Geraint H. Jenkins, *Literature, Religion and Society in Wales 1660–1730* (Cardiff, 1978).

it inherited many of the concerns of the older moralistic movement to advance literacy, to preach and publish, and to transform the old ways of life. Methodist culture was extremely lively and vigorous and helped to fill a vacuum in the life of the common people that had already appeared. Robert Jones of Rhos-lan in his highly popular chronicle of the pioneer days of Methodism in North Wales always criticizes the old way of life as 'heedless' and 'empty',³⁷ but in destroying the old culture the Methodists and other dissenters devised a new Welsh way of life which cut the people away from the past. Welsh almanacks (of which there were a very large number) mention fewer and fewer saints' days, patronal festivals and fairs, as the century advanced. Rituals and customs gradually died away, Maypole dancing, for example, disappeared from Capel Hendre (Carmarthenshire) in 1725, lingered at Aberdare (Glamorgan) until 1798, and lingered until the mid-nineteenth century at Penderyn in the moors above Aberdare.

In the early eighteenth century there was a considerable literature in Wales against the Welsh addiction to magicians, fortune-tellers and witchcraft, long after such things were dying away in England.³⁸ Even so, by 1767 Edmund Jones, 'the Old Prophet', a veteran dissenting preacher from Pontypool, was attacking the growing disbelief in magic in Wales and the creeping Sadduceism it represented.³⁹ Funeral wakes were being turned into prayer meetings, patronal festivals were becoming preaching meetings, a famous football match between two Cardiganshire villages called *Y Bêl Ddu* (The Black Ball) was turned by a canny vicar into a catechizing festival, because of growing revulsion at the deaths caused by the football match. Elias Owen the great folklorist in his fascinating book on the old stone crosses of the Vale of Clwyd⁴⁰ shows how Victorian church restoration removed stairways connecting the chancels to local taverns, removed niches kept in the churches for the prize ale given by the parson to winners in the Sunday sports, removed ball courts from the churchyards, and placed huge marble graves in

³⁷ Robert Jones (ed. G. Ashton), *Drych yr Amseroedd* (Mirror of the Times) (Cardiff, 1958), p. 46. The original ed. is 1820.

³⁸ Geraint H. Jenkins, 'Popular Beliefs in Wales from the Restoration to Methodism', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, xxvii (1977), pp. 440-62.

³⁹ Edmund Jones, *A Relation of Apparitions of Spirits... in Wales* (London, 1767). Cf. Edgar Phillips, *Edmund Jones, the Old Prophet* (London, 1959).

⁴⁰ Elias Owen, *Old Stone Crosses of the Vale of Clwyd* (London, 1886). Owen was a cleric and leading Welsh Victorian folklorist.

churchyards formerly laid out for dances and sports meetings. All this would be of interest to folklorists only if it were not for the fact that the common people whose lives were now totally transformed were also the last repositories of Welsh lore, music, historical learning, poetry and language. The changes in folk life had a fundamental importance in the eyes of scholars and patriots, who saw that if Wales were to survive at all, it would have to find some new artificial supports.

The Methodist leaders were not uncultured philistines. Thomas Jones of Denbigh was an excellent poet in the traditional Welsh metres; his friend Thomas Charles of Bala was familiar with Welsh manuscripts, was friendly with the romantic mythologist William Owen (Pughe), and interested in the legend of Madoc. He was vehemently opposed to the old communal culture. He wrote to a friend from Bala in 1791:

No harps but the *golden* harps of which St John speaks, have been played in this neighbourhood for several months past. The craft is not only in danger but entirely destroyed and abolished.⁴¹

And in the same year he wrote to another friend:

This revival of religion has put an end to all the merry meetings for dancing, singing with the harp, and every kind of sinful mirth, which used to be so prevalent amongst young people here.⁴²

The fair recently held was the most decent and sober he ever remembered. Camden in the sixteenth century had reported Llanrwst in Denbighshire as a centre of harp manufacture. Samuel Lewis in his *Topographical Dictionary of Wales* noted: 'Llanrwst was formerly noted for the making of harps; at present the spinning of woollen yarn, and the knitting of stockings, constitute the principal branches of trade.'⁴³

Early-nineteenth-century writers such as Peter Roberts or William Howells describe a Welsh way of life which is on its last legs.⁴⁴ Even comparatively recent innovations (probably of seventeenth-century origins) such as the popular play, the interlude (*anterliwt*) or the lyric ballad, were dying away quickly. The witty and licentious popular plays - 'filthy interludes' for Thomas Ellis of Holyhead - gave way

⁴¹ W. Hughes, *Life and Letters of Thomas Charles of Bala* (Rhyl, 1881), p. 182.

⁴² D. E. Jenkins, *Life of Thomas Charles of Bala*, 3 vols. (Denbigh, 1908), ii, pp. 88-91.

⁴³ Samuel Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary of Wales* (London, 1833), s.n. 'Llanrwst'.

⁴⁴ William Howells, *Cambrian Superstitions* (Tipton, 1831).

more and more to interludes of moral and social comment as the century advanced during the lifetime of the greatest of the actors and playwrights Thomas Edwards 'Twm o'r Nant'. Even before Twm died in 1810 the plays had become unfashionable. The lyrical ballads, even if on moralistic themes, were being attacked as immoral rubbish in the 1820s, and they soon disappeared.⁴⁵

In the eyes of scholars and patriots the new earnest way of life seemed alien, an English importation, that grew neither from the Welsh gentry nor from the Welsh *gwerin* or folk. William Jones of Llangadfan was an Anglican country doctor, much influenced by Voltaire, and had little in common with the royalist, loyalist politics of Edward Jones the great harpist. William was convinced that Edward was collecting his music and folklore at the eleventh hour, and Edward felt the same about William's collecting and describing old folk dances.⁴⁶ People like Edward Jones belonged to the ranks of the lesser gentry and the yeomanry, a few, like Pennant, to the major gentry; they were all self-aware, standing a little apart from the common herd, and they realized that the Welsh past must be hunted out, must be found and preserved, and recreated for the Welsh people under new circumstances, taking account of the culture of printed books, of sober moralism, of improved transport and communications, of the desire for clubs and societies to take the place of the old comprehensive neighbourhood. There were, however, so many common-sense rational factors telling the Welsh people that they should no longer support such a decayed and threadbare society, that extra-special efforts would have to be made to gain their support. Hence the importance in Wales of the deliberate invention of tradition.

THE EISTEDDFOD

The eisteddfod was not in any way a deliberate invention, the first recorded meeting having been held at Cardigan by the Lord Rhys (one of the last princes of South Wales) in 1176. The word means

⁴⁵ Thomas Parry, *Baledi'r Ddeunawfed Ganrif* (Ballads of the Eighteenth Century) (Cardiff, 1935), pp. 148-9. A. Watkin-Jones, 'Popular Literature of Wales in the Eighteenth Century', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, iii (1926), pp. 178-95, and 'The Interludes of Wales in the Eighteenth Century', *ibid.*, iv (1928), pp. 103-11.

⁴⁶ Tecwyn Ellis, *Edward Jones, Bardd y Brenin 1752-1824* (Cardiff, 1957) is the standard biography of Edward Jones.

simply a 'session', and it described a set of musical and poetic competitions, of which notice had been given a year beforehand, and at which adjudications and prizes were given. An eisteddfod would also be the occasion in the Middle Ages for the bards (organized in an order or gild) to set their house in order, to examine and license the reputable performers, and to cut out the bad. Just as Welsh lawyers claimed that their native law codes went back to the ancient (but genuine) King Hywel the Good, so the Welsh bards claimed their meetings were held according to 'The Statute of Gruffydd ap Cynan', who was supposed to have brought the bardic order into its state of good government about 1100. In the Carmarthen eisteddfod of 1450, the bardic tests were made more elaborate and difficult, the bards having to write, for example, in a combination of twenty-four elaborate metrical forms, all in complex controlled alliteration. Two important eisteddfodau were held in the sixteenth century, both at Caerwys in Flintshire (1523 and 1567), but these were a sunset glow before nightfall, and efforts to recall past glory came to nothing when an eisteddfod was again planned in the 1590s. The bardic order was soon at death's door, for a variety of reasons, but fundamentally because the bards were tied up with an ancient way of life which was itself disappearing.⁴⁷

Even while the decay and decline of the old way of life was going on we observe the first signs of revival. The bardic meetings called 'eisteddfodau' were revived about 1700, the moving spirit being the grammarian and almanacker John Roderick, and since he publicized the meetings in the almanacks, they are called the 'Almanack Eisteddfodau'. There had been an enormous increase in the reading public since 1660, and at least a small number here and there of bookish amateurs wishing for a culture that was something other than high-minded moral tracts and wishing to enjoy the beauties and the glories of their own native arts. There is, after all, a difference between the best of sanatoria and one's own home. The last of the professional bards had virtually ceased activity in the 1690s, so the poets who attended the new eisteddfodau were amateurs, and the meetings can hardly have been much more than lesser squires and yeomen meeting to swap poems or just to hurl doggerel at one

⁴⁷ Gwyn Thomas, *Eisteddfodau Caerwys* (Cardiff, 1967) is bilingual, and a survey of the eisteddfod from the 1450s to the 1700s. Helen Ramage, 'Eisteddfodau'r Ddeunawfed Ganrif' (Eighteenth-Century Eisteddfodau), in Idris Foster (ed.), *Twf yr Eisteddfod* (Eisteddfod Court, 1968), pp. 9-29. H. Teifi Edwards, *Yr Eisteddfod* (Eisteddfod Court, 1976) is a general survey, in Welsh.

another in a kind of *rhyfel tafod* (verbal warfare) over cheese and ale in smoke-filled taverns. Sometimes they would be organized into county teams – Lewis Morris came to the fore in a contest between poets of Anglesey and Caernarfonshire. All the same, there was an element of traditionalism: the poets tried to stick to the elaborate poetic rules of the Middle Ages, and they knew about the Tudor eisteddfodau and even about the Statute of Gruffydd ap Cynan. John Roderick's grammar book of 1728 was much more than a simple grammar.⁴⁸ It was meant for the tavern bards and contained a good deal of bardic lore; it was meant to help them write better compositions for the little eisteddfodau, to correct *camgyghanedd* (incorrect alliteration), and self-consciously referred to the Caerwys Eisteddfod of 1567, and Gruffydd ap Cynan. An acquaintance of Edward Lhuyd's, Dafydd Lewys, the rector of Cadoxton near Neath (Glamorgan), had published in 1710 an older anthology of choice epigrams from medieval Welsh verse, and at 4d. a copy it must have been meant for the common folk. A neighbour of Dafydd Lewys's, though a dissenter, Rhys Morgan of the farm of Pencraig-Nedd, had come into contact with John Roderick either through the almanacks or the early eisteddfodau, and Roderick chose to print in 1728 an *awdl* (ode) by this Rhys Morgan as a specimen of how to write the twenty-four metres laid down for bards in 1450. Morgan was a man of the new age, one of a band of literary dissenters who would be the backbone of early political radicalism in the uplands of Glamorgan in the 1770s.

The so-called almanack eisteddfodau continued with some amount of success, but never with any great public impact, until the 1780s, and there then took place a great change in the nature of the revived institution because it became linked with that other new force of the eighteenth century, the 'Welsh society'. Societies specifically devoted to things Welsh would have been unthinkable in an earlier century, but they appeared in the eighteenth, and proliferated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The first of these were set up amongst London Welshmen. They helped Welshmen visiting London, they organized celebrations for Saint David's Day (1 March) and organized charity for Welshmen in difficulties. The earliest was the Society of Ancient Britons set up in 1715. It spawned in 1751 the more famous Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion (the word means Aborigines, and refers to the Welsh as the primary people of Britain), which had

⁴⁸ Sion Rhydderch (John Roderick), *Grammadeg Cymraeg* (Welsh Grammar) (Shrewsbury, 1728).

the convivial and charitable purposes of the Ancient Britons, but added to them all kinds of literary gatherings, concerning itself with history and antiquities and present-day questions. The Cymmrodorion attracted so many members, many of them grandes, and the common folk wanted something more informal, and so they founded in 1770 the Gwyneddigion (meaning the men of North Wales), which was highly convivial, and whose members delighted in poetry and literary criticism and a great deal of singing and harp music. These societies and clubs meeting in London alehouses had corresponding members in Wales, and the Welsh at home took considerable interest in their metropolitan activities.⁴⁹ In the late 1780s men of letters from North Wales asked the London Gwyneddigion if they could use their money and organization to set up eisteddfodau on a grand scale at home. The organizing ability in fact came from some professional Welshmen at home, men like Thomas Jones, the exciseman of Corwen and Bala, followed by a number of others. It was these which really set the pattern and created the tradition, for it was now that there developed plenty of advance notice, inns and boarding houses prepared to take visitors, printed public notice of the competitions, large crowds present to watch the proceedings over many days, interludes by Twm o'r Nant as evening entertainments, booksellers' stalls all around to sell Welsh books, substantial prizes for poetry, prose and music, finely engraved medals, adjudications and prize entries printed. It was a triumph of professional organization, and a perfect adaptation of a very ancient institution to modern circumstances. Clearly the amateur men of letters and musicians wished for a large audience. There was now a body of professional men who could organize things. Tourism had opened up a number of fairly tolerable roads through North Wales, and there was a body of rich London Welshmen (such as Owen Jones, 'Owain Myfyr', the hard-working London currier, and father of the Victorian designer Owen Jones) who longed to use their money to do something for Wales.

The pattern set in 1789 was followed until 1798 when holding large gatherings became difficult. After the war was over in 1815 the pattern was resumed and, with few changes, has been followed since. The musical competitions were an innovation compared with the almanack eisteddfodau, and these came more and more to dominate

⁴⁹ R. T. Jenkins and Helen Ramage, *A History of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion 1751-1951* (London, 1951).

the proceedings. In 1791 at St Asaph the *penillion* singing competition went on for thirteen hours without apparently exhausting the audience. The superb medals were designed by Dupré, who became at that time the chief official sculptor of the infant French Republic, and the Gwyneddigion (who had some interest in political radicalism) tried to get the homespun bards to write about political freedoms, without much success. Monsieur Dupré is as near as the *eisteddfodau* came to the Revolution. *Eisteddfod* prizes were sometimes given for poems or prose works on loyalist themes such as George III's recovery of health, or the defeat of the French invasion of Wales in 1797 (the atmosphere in Wales became very anti-revolutionary), but more interestingly they were often given for historical themes, Wales from Cadwaladr the Blessed to Llywelyn the Last, Edward I's massacre of the Welsh Bards in 1282, and so on, which had a profound effect in creating interest in Welsh traditions (sometimes quite bogus ones) amongst the people.

After 1815 the new *eisteddfodau* which were held were under the auspices of Cambrian societies in Wales, the initiative having passed from the old convivial London dining clubs to groups of patriots, often gentry and clerics, at home. Another great turning point came in the provincial *eisteddfod* held in 1819 at Carmarthen under the auspices of Bishop Burgess of St David's. It was at this *eisteddfod* that the *Gorsedd* of Bards of the Island of Britain was first introduced into what had hitherto been purely a set of musical and literary competitions. The *Gorsedd* (meaning 'throne') was the invention of one of the most astonishing Welshmen of the period, Edward Williams (1747–1826), a stonemason from Glamorgan, who took the bardic pseudonym Iolo Morganwg (Neddy of Glamorgan). We shall have cause to mention him often, because he was not only an able man of letters and antiquary, but also a romantic mythologist who rolled into one many eighteenth-century dreams and fashions, fads and fancies. Iolo was obsessively concerned with myth and history, and out of the eighteenth-century interest in Druidism he created the notion that the Welsh bards had been the heirs of the ancient Druids, and had inherited their rites and rituals, their religion and mythology (the religion being a mixture of Iolo's own Unitarianism and eighteenth-century Nature worship). He seems to have invented his neo-Druidism in London in 1790 or 1791, and, convinced that he and his friend Edward Evan (Unitarian minister, harpist and poet from Aberdare) were the last remaining bards who came from

this druidic apostolic succession, he held a Bardic-Druidic moot in London, on Primrose Hill on 21 June 1792. This amusing confidence trick caught the imagination of many of the London Welsh (such as his friend Dr David Samwell, Captain Cook's doctor) and many Welshmen of letters at home. On his return to Wales, Iolo set up various cells of bards called '*Gorseddau*' all over Wales, gave them a set of rituals, liturgy, ceremonial, and set about creating a druidic corpus of lore for them until his death in 1826. To be fair to Iolo he did not merely think of the fancy-dress side of the *Gorsedd*: it was to be the revival of the bardic order, to be a national cultural institution for Wales, a kind of supporters' club for the language, literature and history of the Welsh.

After 1815 the time was ripe for Iolo's heady inventions to take effect, in an atmosphere much more attuned to the romantic imagination, and Iolo did not have great difficulty in convincing his hearers (including his friend Dr Thomas Bowdler, who had invented 'bowdlerization') of his authenticity. From 1819 onwards the *eisteddfodau* called upon the help of the *Gorsedd* of Bards, and the *Gorsedd* ceremonials were incorporated into the proclamation and holding of *eisteddfodau*. Some provincial *Gorseddau* of Bards, such as those of Anglesey and Powys, still exist to this day, connected with provincial *eisteddfodau*. Other *Gorseddau*, such as the one conducted at Pontypridd in industrial Glamorgan in the nineteenth century, were active quite apart from holding *eisteddfodau*. During the nineteenth century some five hundred important ceremonial *eisteddfodau* were held in Wales, and there must have been thousands of lesser ones in chapels or workmen's halls which have never been counted. The intrusion of the *Gorsedd* in 1819 tended to increase the *eisteddfod*'s concern for myth and legend, sometimes to the virtual exclusion of literature concerning modern life. The national *eisteddfodau* (which became more and more highly organized as the nineteenth century advanced) on the one hand created a tremendous interest in history (genuine and mythical) amongst the Welsh, and on the other hand owed much of their popular success to the myth of the *Gorsedd*, its colourful ceremonial and its grandiose mumbo-jumbo. It was Iolo who first envisaged the *Gorsedd* as something which would incorporate the *eisteddfod* competitions, and turn them into something far more permanent than mere ad hoc competitions, part of a larger whole, a national institution. Iolo of course was a wild dreamer, a lifelong addict to laudanum, a drug which caused

hallucinations, but he was driven by historical myths, and in turn he used historical myths to create new traditions which had profound, far-reaching effects. The modern eisteddfod, then, appeared when the last of the professional bards had finished, and it became its colourful self at the time when the old manners and customs had died and when life had become (according to Edward Jones) insufferably dull.

DRUIDS ANCIENT AND MODERN

Once Renaissance schoolboys in England and France had been given a diet of Caesar's *Gallic Wars* and Tacitus's *Agricola*, the ancient Druids were sure to be rediscovered, for the Druids stood behind the resistance of the native peoples of Britain and Gaul to the Roman invaders. The English antiquaries Leland and Bale suggested in the sixteenth century that the Welsh bards might be successors to the Druids, partly because the holy of holies of the Druids had been on the island of Anglesey, partly because the bards, like the Druids, were figures of authority and, like the Druids again, had a vaticinatory function.⁵⁰ Milton in *Lycidas* identified the ancient Druids with Welsh bards, and the professor of history at Leyden, M. Z. Boxhorn, when he published a book on Gaulish origins in 1654, included not only a copy of Davies of Mallwyd's Welsh dictionary but also his collection of Welsh proverbs translated into Latin as the 'Wisdom of the Ancient Druids'.⁵¹ The Druids were supposed to have built mysterious monuments such as Stonehenge, and so their rediscovery created a new interest in the monuments and in forwarding the science of archaeology. Edward Lhuyd, the great Welsh scientist and antiquary, was on occasion suspicious of the Druids because they were arcane and obscurantist, and practised human sacrifice; on other occasions he was fascinated by them, and was delighted to find snake stone amulets (*glain y neidr* or *maen magl*) in the Scottish Highlands, Cornwall and Wales, because they seemed to resemble the *ova anguina* attributed by Pliny to the Druids. Indeed in 1698 Lhuyd called them 'Druid stones'.⁵² It was in Lhuyd's time around 1700 that

⁵⁰ T. D. Kendrick, *The Druids* (London, 1927); Stuart Piggott, *The Druids* (Harmondsworth, 1974), pp. 112-57; and Aneurin Lloyd Owen, *The Famous Druids* (Oxford, 1962).

⁵¹ Prys Morgan, 'Boxhorn, Leibniz and the Celts', *Studia Celtica*, viii/ix (1973-4), pp. 270-8.

⁵² R. T. Gunther (ed.), *The Life and Letters of Edward Lhwyd [sic]* (Oxford, 1945), p. 376.

scholars began more closely to identify the Druids with the Welsh, as one finds from the work of the erratic Deist from Ireland, John Toland, or in the history of Anglesey by Lhuyd's friend Henry Rowlands, who went so far as to identify prehistoric remains in Anglesey with druidic shrines, sacrificial altars and the like. The Druid underwent a sea-change in the early years of the eighteenth century from the arcane obscurantist, who indulged in human sacrifice, to the sage or intellectual defending his people's faith and honour, and the Welsh began to see that they had a special relationship with him that was different from Druidism in England. Druidism was in the air; when his neighbour Mr Meredith wished to congratulate William Gambold of Puncteston (Pembrokeshire) on publishing his book on Welsh grammar in 1727 he felt it appropriate to see Gambold in a succession from the ancient Druids. The Morris circle were fascinated by the Druids, though in a vague and imprecise way, and when Lewis Morris designed a banner for the Cymmrodorion in 1751, an Ancient Druid appeared as a supporter of the arms. The most exact and learned scholar of the Morris circle, Evan Evans, 'Ieuan Fardd', often referred to Druids and obviously identified them with Welsh bards - early Welsh poetry, he said, was difficult to understand because it was probably written in the 'Druids' Cabala'. In a long poem *The Love of Our Country* in 1772 he saw the Druids as the first in a long line of defenders of the Welsh nation, before Caradog, Hywel the Good and the others. He even saw the scholars of the sixteenth-century Renaissance Gruffydd Robert and Sion Dafydd Rhys (who were recusants, and had worked in Italy) as the Druids' successors:

Great was your Country's love, ye studious few,
Who brought to light what Bards initiate knew,
Roberts and learned Rhys, who taught the rules
Of ancient verse, first plann'd in Druid schools...⁵³

If such a careful and cautious scholar as Evan Evans (who was much exercised by the need to show that Welsh tradition was genuine and unlike the confidence trickery of Macpherson and his Ossian) could delight in Druidism, then it is not surprising that less scrupulous minds turned it into a fashionable and uncritical cult. It is often said

⁵³ D. Silvan Evans (ed.), *Gwaith y Parchedig Evan Evans* (Caernarfon, 1876), pp. 129ff. prints Evan Evans's booklet *in extenso*. For Evans's long correspondence with Thomas Percy see A. Lewis (ed.), *The Correspondence of Thomas Percy and Evan Evans* (Louisiana, 1957).

that Edward Williams, 'Iolo Morganwg' created this cult in Wales, and it is undeniable that it was he who carried it to its greatest height in the Gorsedd of Bards, but he was only putting his own personal stamp on what was quite generally believed and commonly accepted in Wales.⁵⁴

Iolo Morganwg was deeply interested in Stukeley and the early English archaeologists and loved megalithic remains. He came across in his visits to London the English 'Ancient Order of Druids', was influenced by the Deistic religion of his friend David Williams of Caerphilly (whose *Theophilanthropia* had impressed Voltaire and Frederick the Great) and was delighted by the idyllic picture given him of peaceful native life in Polynesia by David Samwell, 'Dafydd Ddu Feddyg', a Welsh bard who was also Captain Cook's doctor and witness of his death.⁵⁵ Iolo believed that he and his friend Edward Evan⁵⁶ were the last surviving members of the order of bards, and that the time had come to open the arcane secrets, received by apostolic succession from the Druids, to the general public. Much of Iolo's druidic lore and invention was circulated in magazines and in manuscript during his lifetime, and then after his death in 1826 his son Taliesin ab Iolo (a decent upright schoolmaster at the industrial town of Merthyr Tydfil) published some of his father's works, for example his *Cyfrinach y Beirdd* (Secret of the Bards), and his marvellous *Coelbren y Beirdd* (Alphabet of the Bards), which he claimed had been recorded by sixteenth-century Glamorgan druid-bards. The *Coelbren* was an Ogam-like alphabet suitable to be scored on stone or wood, and since the English conquerors forbade the Welsh bards pen and ink, they had to communicate with one another by scoring messages in the strange Ogam-like characters on mysterious tally-sticks which one twiddled about in a wooden frame like an abacus, which was called a 'peithylen'. After Taliesin ab Iolo's death more of Iolo's papers on bardism were published by one of his most zealous disciples, a clergyman from North Wales called John Williams, 'Ab Ithel'. Iolo's druidic theology bore a strong resemblance to his

⁵⁴ Elijah Waring, *Recollections and Anecdotes of Edward Williams* (London, 1850). G. J. Williams, *Iolo Morganwg: y Gyfrol Gyntaf* (Cardiff, 1956) is a great but incomplete biography in Welsh. For a short study of Iolo in English see Prys Morgan, *Iolo Morganwg* (Cardiff, 1975).

⁵⁵ E. G. Bowen, *David Samwell, Dafydd Du Feddyg 1751-98* (Cardiff, 1974) is a bilingual study.

⁵⁶ R. T. Jenkins, *Bardd a'i Gefndir* (A Bard and his Background) (Cardiff, 1949) is a study in Welsh of Edward Evan of Aberdare.

own Unitarianism, and with it was mixed a good deal of pacifism. Iolo's druidic ceremonies were elaborate but they were shorn of human sacrifice. Iolo told the bards who were assembled at his Gorsedd on top of the Garth mountain near Cardiff in 1797 that his purposes were to make the common people support their language (Iolo himself had been brought up English-speaking, it should be added, and preached with the zeal of a convert), to make them know their own history through songs, and to achieve a moral religion without denominational squabbles. The Glamorgan yeomanry suppressed this druidic moot for fear it might attract the attention of a French Revolutionary fleet in the Bristol Channel.

The soldiers were not Iolo's only enemies: a number of Welsh scholars, especially those antiquaries and historians who were quietly recovering the Welsh past in a scholarly way, were deeply suspicious of him, as indeed were some of the bards he had received into his order. Edward Davies of Bishopston - 'Celtic Davies' to his friends - was a clerical critic of Iolo, but it should be remembered that Davies published a number of works which showed a profound faith in Druidism. It was merely that he disagreed with Iolo's version of it. None of Iolo's contemporaries was able to disprove his inventions or his forgeries, and so general was the national delight in myth and legend at this period that few seem to have shown a desire to explode Ioloism. The Unitarians thought that Druidism was eminently sensible as a religion, the dissenters worked out a version which suited them, the Anglican clerics adapted it to their purposes. The Morris circle in the mid-eighteenth century had adopted bardic pseudonyms in a light-hearted rib-poking fashion - William Morris collected shells for his great friend Thomas Pennant, and so was called 'Gwilym Gregynnwr' (William Shell-Man). Iolo took such bardic names with intense seriousness, and his bards had to take bardic names equally seriously. William Owen (Pughe) became 'Idrison' to associate him with Cader Idris, for example. It was at this time when baptismal names in Wales had reached their very dullest, with thousands upon thousands of John Jones and the like, that there arose the fashion among a very large number of Welsh literary figures for bardic names of charm and fantasy, such as Eryron Gwyllt Walia (Eagleman of Wild Wales). Iolo was familiar with eighteenth-century gardens with their Druidic grottoes (at Piercefield Park near Chepstow, or the garden of his friend Richard Colt Hoare at Stourhead). Iolo adapted this garden conceit with his sublime

intensity, and made the Gorsedd, and later on the eisteddfod, construct miniature Stonehenges all over Wales for holding open-air druidic ceremonies. There is a fine one standing in the Gorsedd Gardens in front of the National Museum in Cardiff, for instance. The point is that what had been a joke earlier in the eighteenth century was transformed into something sublimely serious by the romantic vision. The bards and neo-druids with strong stomachs were interested in sacrificial altars, and cromlechs were, they supposed, used for sacrifice. Indeed, some supposed that this was proof that the ancients had always cremated the bodies of the dead. One of Iolo's followers who took this conceit seriously was William Price of Llantrisant (1800–93), a doctor and radical freethinker who rejected marriage, had many of Iolo's health fads, and who was so convinced of his Druidism and of the evil of burying diseased bodies, that he cremated the corpse of his infant son. His action was vindicated at the end of a most celebrated court case, as a result of which the modern practice of cremation began. The myth of druidic sacrifice, then, influenced our modern way of life (or, more exactly, our way of death).

The extensive neo-druidic literature published by Welshmen in the romantic period in Welsh and English has never been properly studied, but has been dismissed with a patronizing smile in the way historians used to treat early modern beliefs in magic and witchcraft. Responsible antiquaries and historians of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries took it seriously, men such as Samuel Rush Meyrick or Richard Colt Hoare, and many others. Jonathan Williams wrote, about 1818, a most interesting history of Radnorshire, careful and detailed although highly critical of the people for abandoning the Welsh tongue. Five years later he published a short book on druidic education called *Druopaedia* which is quite unable to distinguish between the Druids of the ancient world and those of Iolo's dreams.⁵⁷ The revival of Druidism was a movement of considerable significance, all in all, because it involved myths which showed the cultural tradition of Wales to be older than any other in western Europe, and it made the scholar or poet or teacher central to that culture. To some extent it restored the bard to his primary place in Welsh life.

⁵⁷ For Dr Price of Llantrisant see Roy Denning, 'Druidism at Pontypridd', in Stuart Williams (ed.), *Glamorgan Historian* (Barry, 1963), i, pp. 136–45. Jonathan Williams's *Druopaedia* was published at Leominster in 1823. For some aspects of Welsh Druidism see D. Moore, 'Cambrian Antiquity', in G. C. Boon and J. M. Lewis (eds.), *Welsh Antiquity* (Cardiff, 1976), pp. 193–222.

THE REDISCOVERY OF THE CELTS

The Welsh had in the Middle Ages been dimly aware that they were connected with the Cornish and the Bretons, and some scholars such as Buchanan in the sixteenth century even suggested links between modern Welsh and ancient Gaulish. The predominant idea during the seventeenth century was that Welsh was somehow linked with Hebrew, and this corresponded with the myth that the Welsh could be traced back to one of the grandsons of Noah. In the 1680s and 1690s, however, a number of scholars were looking for fresh light on the matter. In Oxford Edward Lhuyd, who first gained fame as a fossilist and geologist, turned his attention to his native Welsh language, and began to compare it carefully and rationally with Cornish (now at death's door) and Breton, and, what was more original, to Irish and Scottish Gaelic. Lhuyd longed to contact a Breton abbé, Paul-Yves Pezron, best known in France as a chronologist, because Pezron was thought to be writing a book on the common origins of the Welsh and the Bretons. Lhuyd failed to meet Pezron when he visited Brittany, and Pezron's book appeared in 1703.⁵⁸ Lhuyd hoped it would soon be translated into Welsh for it would make the gentry take more interest in their language and antiquities. In the event it was translated into English in 1706 by a Welsh hack historian called David Jones. Pezron compared Welsh and Breton, tracing their origins through classical sources to the *Celtae* or *Keltoi* of ancient writers, a barbarian people whose sway in antiquity stretched from Gaul to Galatia (Asia Minor), and who had been the scourge of the Greeks and Romans. Pezron went even further and traced the Celts from earlier eponymous heroes back to patriarchal times. Pezron's method was fairly unscientific, but he wrote a gripping story, which caught the imagination, and his book launched a fashion for the Celts which amounted at times to a mania. Pezron in his English translation was still being reprinted in the early nineteenth century. Henry Rowlands of Llanidan observed nicely that while Edward Lhuyd tentatively suggested that the Welsh language came from a hypothetical mother tongue called *Celtick*, Pezron was sure of it.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Prys Morgan, 'The Abbé Pezron and the Celts', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1965), pp. 286–95.

⁵⁹ Victor Tourneur, *Esquisse d'une Histoire des Etudes Celtiques* (Liège, 1905), pp. 171–206; A. Rivoallan, *Présence des Celtes* (Paris, 1957), pp. 178–211; and Stuart Piggott, *Celts, Saxons and the Early Antiquaries* (Edinburgh, 1967).

Edward Lhuyd's tentative empirical examination of the languages he thought were related to Welsh (the great *Archaeologia Britannica*) appeared in 1707. It was a seminal work, which used, however, a detailed comparative method of reasoning that was most difficult for people to understand, asking them as it did to believe in gradual changes taking several thousand years. One great mind which immediately grasped Lhuyd's point was that of Leibniz. Leibniz was already interested in Welsh before he came across Lhuyd's work, and through his etymological writings helped to lay down lines of inquiry into Celtic studies in Germany which were far deeper than any inquiries in Britain, and which were eventually to have profound repercussions in Wales. The Welsh may have found the comparative part of Lhuyd's work impossible, but they could at least appreciate one simple conclusion which was that the Welsh stemmed from the British, who stemmed from the Celts, and that the ancient Celts had had a glorious history. Monoglot Welsh readers were given some inkling of Lhuyd's vision in the *Drych y Prif Oesoedd* (Mirror of Primitive Ages), a history of early Wales by Theophilus Evans, written in 1716. Evans tried to subordinate his information to Anglican aims and purposes, as befitted a young patriotic clergyman, but the more far-seeing Welshmen quickly realized that they had been given for the first time in two hundred years a vision of their own history which was autonomous and separate from England. Lhuyd himself was a most fiery Welsh patriot, despite the careful rationality and caution of his academic method, and Welsh scholars of the early eighteenth century, while not coming near his undoubted genius, seemed to catch sparks from its fire. Such were his friends William Gambold or Moses Williams, such were the Morris circle. Lewis Morris laboured all his life at a catalogue of ancient Celtic names in Britain and the continent, called *Celtic Remains*, to amplify some of the points of Edward Lhuyd. Thomas Pennant and most of the stately historians of the later eighteenth century read or copied Lhuyd's writings on topography. The great English scholar Thomas Percy tried to stop the chevalier Mallet, the historiographer royal of Denmark, from persisting in his belief (common up to that time) that the ancient Teutons were the same as the ancient Celts, and sent Mallet a copy of Edward Lhuyd to prove his case. Mallet simply could not understand it and repeated his old mistakes in his history of Switzerland published in 1803.⁶⁰

The Celts in fact had never by name been associated with the

⁶⁰ Lewis, *Correspondence of Thomas Percy and Evan Evans*, p. 106n.

British Isles, but that did not really matter, for they were a magnificent race of conquerors who had thundered across Europe in their chariots. Celtic myth had a profound effect in making the French interested in their early history and archaeology. The Celts reflected the fantasies of the age, and in Wales they provided the constricted, pathetically small nation, which had little to commend it in its present state, with an unimaginably grandiose past, by way of consolation. The antiquarian revival in the eighteenth century took more from Lhuyd's delight in the ancient Celts than it did from his exact methods. Eisteddfodic essays of the early nineteenth century, written by craftsmen or clerics, teachers or tailors, seem to bubble over with ill-informed enthusiasm for what the French textbooks call 'nos ancêtres les Gaulois' and the Welsh, their forefathers the Celts. Linguistic arguments lay at the centre of the rediscovery of the Celts, and Celticism had important consequences for language. To language one must turn next.

FROM THE 'GIBBERISH OF TAPHYDOM' TO THE 'LANGUAGE OF HEAVEN'

For the English humorists and satirists who were, in the main, the only people writing about the Welsh in the seventeenth century, Welsh was a grotesquely ugly guttural tongue, still spoken everywhere as a patois, but lacking any kind of status – and probably soon to disappear. We have already seen how Welsh scholars and patriots bewailed this lack of regard for what was becoming 'the old language'. Eighteenth-century scholars could be virulently anti-English, but they tended to write to one another in English because all their polite and intellectual education was in that language. Even the Morris brothers tended to turn to English in their voluminous correspondence when they wished to discuss academic or intellectual affairs, even though they wrote most racy and lively Welsh for all other purposes. Welsh itself reflected the paradox of Welsh culture in this period, for although it lacked any status (save what was given it by the Anglican liturgy) the period from 1660 to 1730 saw an enormous increase in the number of books published in Welsh, publishers of Welsh books moved closer to Wales, and by 1718 books were being printed inside Wales.⁶¹ During the eighteenth century this

⁶¹ W. Rowlands (ed. D. S. Evans), *Cambrian Bibliography/Llyfryddiaeth y Cymry* (Llanidloes, 1869); Jenkins, *Literature, Religion and Society in Wales*.

trend was maintained, and the range of subjects covered in Welsh by printed books was enormously increased. Lewis Morris even published a book in Welsh to explain to craftsmen how to do elaborate polishing and *verre eglomisé* and other sophisticated crafts and skills. In the late seventeenth century the intelligent Welsh speaker, at least in South Wales (as can be seen from the Welsh of the indefatigable translator and publisher of Puritan books Stephen Hughes of Meidrim and Swansea), found it hard to grasp his own grammar and rules of style. As Mr Meredith told William Gambold in 1727, before reading the grammar book he had simply learned by rote 'as country fiddlers play'. By the second quarter of the eighteenth century there was not only a huge printed literature of moral and religious tracts in Welsh, but a small number of literary texts, a few historical works (which were enormously popular), and a few grammar books and dictionaries. The role of Welsh in the life of the Anglican Church seems to have diminished after 1714, but this was more than outweighed by the great vigour of dissenting and Methodist literature in the language. By the later eighteenth century the number of grammar books and dictionaries increased, and they showed a greater self-confidence and pride, and less of the snivelling defeatism of the earlier age. The squire Rice Jones of Blaenau near Dolgellau published a magnificent edition of medieval Welsh poetry in 1773, *Gorchestion Beirdd Cymru* (Triumphs of the Welsh bards). As one would expect of a squire his own poetry is full of wit and bonhomie, and his Welsh has about it a kind of swagger and panache. His preface is full of optimism that the language has at last reached a hopeful period, after so many disappointments, losses and defeats in the past. He liked to think that 'Parnassus is unshifting', that 'Helicon is inexhaustible' as far as Welsh is concerned, and drew his preface to a close thus (we translate):

For now I see the great love that gentry and commonalty have for the British tongue, and for the works of the old bards too; and thus we shall soon see the Muse (in a very short time one hopes) bursting forth from the graves of the skilled bards in unalloyed splendour.⁶²

Squire Jones certainly did not speak the 'Gibberish of Taphydom'. He was driven by the belief that his native tongue was the oldest language in Europe, perhaps in the world, that it was not a mongrel

⁶² Rice Jones, *Gorchestion Beirdd Cymru* (Shrewsbury, 1773), preface. Jones's own verse was published by Rice Jones Owen in 1818.

tongue such as the English language, that it was infinitely copious, and that it could be defended against all its enemies. One sign of the gradual change which had come over the language was the growing size of the dictionaries: to take a few examples, that of Thomas Jones in 1688 is neat and compact, that of Thomas Richards of Coychurch in 1753 is quite solid, that of John Walters of Llandough (published in parts from 1770 to 1795) is hefty, and the astounding dictionary of William Owen (Pughe) (published from 1795 to 1803) is immense. In the meantime the scholars had come to see Welsh as a national asset, even a national monument. The writers on Welsh were much moved by the idea that Welsh was directly connected with very early history and somehow was pure and undefiled. Thomas Richards called his dictionary a *Thesaurus* and in his preface he preens himself:

Yet our Name hath not been quite blotted out from under Heaven: We hitherto not only enjoy the true Name of our Ancestors, but have preserved entire and uncorrupted for the most Part (without any notable Change or Mixture with any other Tongue) that PRIMITIVE LANGUAGE, spoken as well by the ancient *Gauls* as *Britans* some Thousands of years ago.⁶³

John Walters, another Glamorgan cleric, was a neighbour of Thomas Richards, and he not only started his great dictionary in 1770 but also published at Cowbridge in the same year a manifesto of the Welsh scholars, *A Dissertation on the Welsh Language*, which believes in the same myths and legends as does Richards, and turns all the necessities of poor Welsh into virtues. It was a sign of excellence in this pure and undefiled language that it was not used for fleshly novelettes or bawdy plays, and its harsh sound was masculine and unaffected, unlike the simpering lisping English tongue.

Welsh was subjected to much wilder and more fantastic mythologizing than this. The Morris circle, Lewis as a royal official, William as a customs official at Holyhead and Richard at the Navy Office in Whitehall, were envious of one of their friends the barrister Rowland Jones because he had married the heiress of Broom Hall in Lley, and with his income could afford to publish whatever poured from his pen. His *Origin of Language and Nations* appeared in 1764, followed a few years later with such effusions as *The Circles of Gomer*

⁶³ Thomas Richards, *Antiquae Linguae Britannicae Thesaurus* (Bristol, 1753), preface. Cf. T. J. Morgan, 'Geiriadurwyr y Ddeunawfed Ganrif' (Lexicographers of the Eighteenth Century), in *Llên Cymru*, xi (1966), pp. 3-18.

and *The Ten Triads*, Gomer being the eponymous founder of Cymru (Wales). These books went beyond Pezron and the Celtomaniacs, and dissected Welsh words indiscriminately and unscientifically so as to show that Welsh was the root of all languages. In one sense it was very important to understand how languages should be analysed: it was through a knowledge of how languages were constructed and how they developed that men like John Walters (assisted by his neighbour the young Iolo Morganwg) extended Welsh vocabulary to invent Welsh words for new things or actions, and it was thus they invented the word *geiriadur* for dictionary and *tanysgrifio* for to subscribe, two words still in common use. Rowland Jones used the same methods wildly and madly, and there were a number of others like him. One was the pornographer John Cleland, who turned from the adventures of Fanny Hill to the murkier depths of Celtic lexicography and wrote some pamphlets relating the particles of Welsh to many other languages. Cleland as an Englishman belonged to the non-Celtic fringe, but the same could not be said of the greatest and most effective of the language mythologists William Owen (Pughe).

Pughe was born William Owen in North Wales in 1759 but from 1776 onwards he was a schoolmaster in London, returning to Wales in 1806 when he inherited a country estate, where he lived until his death in 1835. He took the name Pughe on inheriting his estate, but his son, the editor of Welsh manuscripts, Aneurin Owen, retained the older name. Pughe was at the centre of London Welsh life and was a friend of many English men of letters such as William Blake and Robert Southey. A man of many gifts, immensely learned and hard-working, he was very kindhearted and gullible, erratic and eccentric in his religious beliefs, and ended in 1802 as an elder of the prophetess Joanna Southcott. Pughe was the organizing genius behind the publications of the London Welsh, but in 1789 when he brought out the superb edition of the poems of the fourteenth-century poet Dafydd ap Gwilym, he was gulled by Iolo Morganwg into publishing a number of Iolo's pastiche poems as the genuine works of the master. In 1792, when he published an edition of the early Welsh poems associated with Llywarch the Old, he was again gulled by Iolo into publishing Iolo's bardic fantasies in a long introduction to the poems. In 1800 he collaborated with Iolo in bringing out a vast edition of all sorts of works from Welsh medieval literature, the *Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*, into the latter parts of which again

Iolo introduced quantities of his own fabrications. Pughe was unable to resist the charms of the mythologists like Rowland Jones, so consuming was the fire of his passion for things Welsh, and he was sure that if one analysed Welsh it would yield the secrets of mankind's primeval language. Further, if one dissected or dismantled Welsh words one could then reconstruct the language on rational lines, and extend its scope and use infinitely. Pughe attacked Welsh (a knobby angular language full of irregularities and syntactical oddities) with the extreme rational zeal of an enlightened despot such as Joseph II. He took the language to bits and reassembled it in an orderly whole in his great dictionary and his grammar books and in his various literary compositions. In this way he found a Welsh word for every possible nuance in any language: he invented *gogoelgrevyddusedd* for 'some degree of superstition', *cyngabad* for 'general plenty', *cyngbron* for 'conglobateous', so that the dictionary published from 1795 to 1803 is quite conglobateous with a general plenty, at least one hundred thousand words, that is forty thousand more than Dr Johnson's English dictionary. He wished to recreate modern Welsh as if it were the unchanged language of the patriarchs, and he made a language which was as solid and sublime as a neo-classical mausoleum. Among Pughe's friends was the Methodist leader Thomas Charles, and Charles distributed Pughe's Welsh grammar as a set book for his Sunday schools all over Wales in 1808. It is notable, however, that the edition published at Bala was written in a normal Welsh orthography, while the edition published in London was in Pughe's own orthography, for Pughe (like so many of the language enthusiasts of the eighteenth century) tinkered with the orthography to make it more logical, with one letter for every single sound. Iolo Morganwg had by this time quarrelled with Pughe and although Iolo was circulating his nonsensical *Coelbren y Beirdd* he had the audacity to criticize Pughe's ideas as mere 'hobbyhorsesisms'. Pughe's new grammar had considerable (and lamentable) effects on most Welsh writers in the nineteenth century, and it should be remembered that he was one among many who played around with the orthography of the small European languages. Even the great Edward Lhuyd, whom we have hitherto presented as a model of rationality and intellectual probity, so messed about with the orthography of Welsh as to make his Welsh preface to the *Archaeologia Britannica* almost unreadable. The Anglican clerics fortunately put up a spirited resistance to any departure from the Welsh of the

Bible of 1588, and Pughisms were limited to grammar and style. Pughe in other ways of course created tremendous interest amongst Welshmen in their own language, for they warmed to his notion of its purity, patriarchal tradition, and 'infinite copiousness'. He showed them it was 'The Language of Heaven' handed down from the patriarchs, and this is a cliché still heard to this day. Without mythologists such as Pughe few men would have bothered their minds about the status-less gibberish of Wales at all. In a way Pughe and the others were like Victorian church restorers through whom so many ugly churches were built, but without whom the old buildings would have crumbled to dust.

'LAND OF SONG'

In the early eighteenth century Welsh scholars were much perplexed by their not being able to read the great Robert ap Huw musical codex, although its author had died as recently as 1665.⁶⁴ When anthologies of Welsh verse appeared in the mid-eighteenth century the editors printed above the lyrics the tunes to which they were usually sung by the common folk. Welsh patriots were embarrassed because so many of the tunes were English, and the English would mock the Welsh for their lack of initiative. In some cases the tunes were changed by the Welsh beyond recognition, and their titles Welshified to the same extent. Some scholars suggested the titles of English tunes should all be translated, but William Wynne, a poet and squarson, considered this sheer dishonesty. William Williams of Pantycelyn, the great Methodist leader and creator of modern Welsh hymnology, virtually launched the second Methodist revival in 1762 with his hymnbook, yet he complained that he could not bring out more hymns until he had obtained fresh tunes from England. His tunes were often versions of the popular hits of the day and one is very typically entitled 'Lovely Peggy - Moraliz'd'.

A century later the position was totally altered, for Wales was considered to be above all else a 'Land of Song', where the sound of music had rung out from the harps and throats of the people for centuries. There were song books, choirs, consorts of Welsh harps, prizes and medals for music, and a network of societies to further

⁶⁴ Brit. Mus. Add. MS. 14905 published in facsimile by the University of Wales Press (Cardiff, 1936).

national music.⁶⁵ Erasmus Saunders, in his view of the Diocese of Saint David's in 1721, had observed that Welshmen were naturally addicted to poetry, but writing later in the century Iolo Morganwg observed that Welshmen were addicted to music as well as poetry, and he was expressing a widely held view.

Early-eighteenth-century scholars had admired the simple stanzas sung by the common folk in remote areas to the music of the harp. Often these stanzas (*penillion telyn*) were pithy epigrams of sixteenth- or seventeenth-century origins. Some peasants knew hundreds of these verses and could adapt them to any well-known harp melody. The Morris brothers suspected that the stanzas were proverbial and might even contain scraps of druidic lore. This custom of singer after singer offering various stanzas impromptu to the playing of a harpist was known to be peculiarly Welsh, but it was not so much singing as harpistry which led to the revival of Welsh music in the eighteenth century. The first Welsh airs to be published appeared around 1726 as part of a collection called *Aria di Camera*, but the epoch-making collection was that of Blind John Parry in 1742 called *Ancient British Music*. Parry was the harpist of Frederick Prince of Wales, a friend of Handel's and a composer of Handelian harp music himself, and it was he who largely inspired Thomas Gray to complete his poem *The Bard* in 1757 when he played to the people of Cambridge tunes he claimed were a thousand years old with, as Gray said, 'names enough to choak you'.⁶⁶ Blind Parry traced the Welsh musical tradition through the musical competitions of the bards back to the Druids. The melodies as written seem to be fairly recent, however. The Morris circle were friendly with Parry and with his amanuensis Evan William, and Evan wrote out in 1745 a large manuscript volume (meant for publication) on the singing of *penillion* (harp stanzas). Professor Osian Ellis has studied this manuscript and finds that the music described by Evan William is of a fairly conventional operatic

⁶⁵ For harpistry I have relied on Robert Griffith, *Llyfr Cerdd Damau* (Book on Harpistry) (Caernarfon, 1913); for religious music of the period on R. D. Griffith, *Hanes Canu Cynulleidfaoel Cymru* (History of Congregational Singing in Wales) (Cardiff, 1948); for details of the individual folk songs on *Journal of the Welsh Folk Song Society*; and, for some controversial criticism, on Osian Ellis, 'Welsh Music: History and Fancy', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* 1972-3 (1974), pp. 73-94.

⁶⁶ Arthur Johnston, *Thomas Gray and the Bard* (Cardiff, 1966); F. I. McCarthy, 'The Bard of Thoms Gray and its Importance and Use by Painters', *National Library of Wales Journal*, xiv (1965), pp. 105-13.

type of the period, the singer sings any stanza of his choice (and goes on as long as he can think of words), accompanied fairly decoratively by the harp. No mention at all is made of what would have been regarded as the uniquely Welsh art of *penillion* singing, or *canu gyda'r tannau* as it would have been recognized by Welsh musicians from the 1830s to the present day. The unique art which Welsh people find so thrilling today is extremely peculiar; the harp plays the melody over and over, the singer chimes in as he can with a false-burden or descant of his own composition, as an accompanist to the musical instrument, and if possible the words are chosen from highly elaborate alliterative metres of medieval origin. If Parry and Wiliam were trying to give a picture of all that was most Welsh in music they surely could not have failed to describe what is today called *penillion* singing. Even more mystifying are the views of Edward Jones (1752–1824), the royal harpist and great propagandist of Welsh native music and customs in works between 1784 and 1820. Edward Jones came from Merioneth, from an area where native customs were still well kept in the eighteenth century and where there are numerous soloists and groups performing *penillion* singing today. He pays much attention to the pithy stanzas as literature, and he gives a vague description of the peasantry gathering around the harpist, each with his stock of verses to sing to the harp music. Thomas Pennant in his *Tours* also gives a similar description of the Welsh peasantry gathering on the hills around a harpist with a vast repertoire of stanzas, competing one with another as to who could sing the largest number of stanzas, until the mountains were loud with music. Edwards Jones never described the art as having any great peculiarity as music; it was merely the extempore stanzas which called for comment.

Professor Osian Ellis concluded from this lack of a good eighteenth-century description of the art as we know it today that it probably did not exist, except in a most elementary form. He concluded that since the art as we know it did exist by the mid-nineteenth century then it had somehow been evolved by Welsh musicians in the early nineteenth century, probably by John Parry, 'Bardd Alaw', (1775–1851) director of music at Vauxhall Gardens, a composer and great organizer of Welsh musicians at concerts and eisteddfodau. Not long before 1809 George Thomson, the Edinburgh music publisher, came to Wales to collect authentic Welsh tunes for Haydn to arrange (which were published in 1809) and he says that he failed to find the

improvisatori he had been led to expect from Thomas Pennant. The 1791 eisteddfod had had a most successful *penillion* competition, so the early eisteddfod organizers were aware of the art; what we do not know, however, is the exact musical nature of the competition. Certainly by the time Owain Alaw published his *Gems of Welsh Melody* in 1860 the art was fully-fledged (though much simpler in form than the art as practised in the twentieth century), and he had collected his specimens of false-burden from the singing of John Jones, 'Talhaearn', Paxton's assistant in building the great Rothschild *châteaux* in England and France, and from a Manchester cobbler called Idris Vychan, a brilliant performer who could out-sing and out-word everybody in the great mid-nineteenth-century eisteddfodau. By this time it was certainly believed that the art was of the hoariest antiquity.

By the time Edward Jones was publishing his influential books the triple harp was regarded as the Welsh national instrument *par excellence*, the other old Welsh instruments such as the *pibgorn* or *crwth* (crowd) having recently disappeared. Thomas Price, 'Carnhuanawc', a patriotic cleric and scholar, claimed that he had been taught in the late eighteenth century in Breconshire to play a small harp with one row of strings. Iolo Morganwg claimed that the triple harp was first made in Wales by Queen Anne's harpist Elis Sion Siamas. By 1800, however, patriots were certain that the triple harp (so called because it had three rows of strings, the middle row providing the sharps and flats) was the ancient national instrument, and national honour demanded that it should be defended against the newer pedal harps of Sebastien Erard of Paris. The triple harp had become fashionable in England in the seventeenth century, and was a version of the Italian baroque harp. It seems to have become immensely popular in North Wales around the 1690s or 1700s, and it was only gradually brought to South Wales. Its popularity in the south was only established by the brilliant playing of Thomas Blayney, and by the encouragement of an eccentric squire of Glanbrân (Carmarthen) Sackville Gwynne. In the early nineteenth century the triple harp was protected by the money and patronage of gentry like Lady Llanover who set up harp societies and gave prizes for harp playing, and even distributed triple harps as presents. Lady Llanover would never have done this had she thought it an Italian baroque instrument. Despite all this encouragement the triple harp became more and more the instrument of the gypsies, many of

the finest performers being descended from the Romany-speaking family or tribe of Abram Wood.

By the 1780s another important change had also taken place, and the Welsh now supposed that they as a people possessed an inexhaustible wealth of native melody, often of the greatest antiquity. English song titles were now adapted or translated without apology – a seventeenth-century 'Cebell' became 'Yr Hen Sibyl' and was said to refer to an ancient witch, 'General Monck's March' became 'Ymdaith y Mwngc' and was thought to refer to the flight of an early medieval monk, Martin Parker's ballad of 1643 'When the King enjoys his own again' became 'Difyrrwch y Brenin' and was said to refer to the court of a medieval Welsh prince. The quite recent 'delight' of the composer D'Urfey became 'Difyrrwch Gwyr Dyfi' and was thought to refer to the men of the vale of Dovey. Airs with genuine Welsh titles were said to come from far distant historical events: the obviously Purcellian air 'Morfa Rhuddlan' was said to be the lament of the Welsh at their defeat at Rhuddlan by King Offa about 750 A.D. The Welsh were egged on by romantic tourists and English publishers to this kind of invention. George Thomson and Haydn were almost the first to fit English words to old Welsh airs, and with the help of Mrs Hemans, Sir Walter Scott and others they often turned to historical themes. The romantic Anglo-Welsh poet was a feature first found in literary life in the 1800s and one of the earliest was Richard Llwyd, 'Bard of Snowdon', who found the song books an excellent field of activity. Welsh-language poets in turn were forced to produce Welsh historical ballads to match the English inventions. One of the most prolific of these writers of Welsh historical ballads to fit Welsh airs was John Hughes, 'Ceiriog'. The songs whether sung to English or Welsh words were enormously popular and were one of the chief means by which historical mythologizing reached the Welsh public at large. They did not always take them seriously – the early-nineteenth-century theatre in Cardiff used to burlesque 'Ar Hyd y Nos' (the ever popular 'All Through the Night') as 'Ah! Hide your Nose!'⁶⁷ The change which took place as a result of the work of men like Blind Parry and Edward Jones was that the Welsh had gained self-confidence. A number of most able musicians had appeared in Wales in the eighteenth century, and they

⁶⁷ Cecil Price, *The English Theatre in Wales* (Cardiff, 1948), p. 114. *Passim* it has much on the spread of English culture through Wales in the later eighteenth century.

produced a large number of native melodies for concerts and revues and eisteddfodau, as well as producing excellent hymn tunes for the teeming hymnbooks of the period. This was all achieved before Wales became the land of choral singing in the mid-nineteenth century. The myth of the great antiquity of Welsh native music had a great deal to do with this outburst of activity and sense of national pride involved in it.

Thomas Jones, 'Glan Alun', a bard and journalist, complained in the magazine *Y Traethodydd* in 1848 that Wales, however musical as a country, lacked a national anthem, a stirring song which would unify the nation as did the anthems of France or Prussia.⁶⁸ This was a fairly general desire, and it was soon answered, for in 1856 at Pontypridd in Glamorgan the tune and words of 'Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau' ('Land of My Fathers') were composed by Evan and James James, father and son. The song was deeply patriotic, and it had become popular by 1858 when it was entered in a collection of patriotic songs at the great national eisteddfod of Llangollen, and after 1860 it was accepted very widely as a national anthem. The princely anthem 'Tywysog Gwlad y Bryniau' ('God Bless the Prince of Wales') appeared in 1863 on the occasion of the marriage of Edward Prince of Wales, but although popular it never at any time succeeded in matching 'Land of my Fathers'.⁶⁹ It is most striking with what speed the tradition grew up that 'Land of my Fathers' should be sung on all public occasions.

DAME WALES

The host of tourists coming into Wales in the late eighteenth century, sometimes with their pet artists like John 'Warwick' Smith or J. C. Ibbetson in train, noted that the Welsh peasantry were about sixty years behind the times in their dress, and that they had many distinctive fabrics, patterns and materials. They never mention a national dress, nothing like the kilts in the Scottish Highlands.⁷⁰ As one would expect of tourists, they tried to find poverty colourful, and

⁶⁸ *Traethodydd*, iv (1848), pp. 387–92. This was the leading Welsh intellectual review, edited by Dr Lewis Edwards.

⁶⁹ Percy Scholes, 'Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau', *National Library of Wales Journal*, iii (1943), pp. 1–10.

⁷⁰ F. Payne, *Welsh Peasant Costume* (Cardiff, 1964); M. Ellis, *Welsh Costumes and Customs* (Aberystwyth, 1951); K. Etheridge, *Welsh Costume* (Llandybie, 1958 and reissued since).

they noted that the women often wore large blue or red tweed cloaks and mannish black hats. The tall hat and the great cloak bore a resemblance to the image of a witch, for the simple reason that they were the characteristic dress of an English country woman of the 1620s, the time of witchcraft persecutions. What had been fashionable in lowland England in the 1620s still lingered amongst the poor of some Welsh mountain areas in the 1790s, or even longer. It was an entirely unselfconscious survival. It was not in any sense a national costume, but it was turned deliberately into a national costume for women in the 1830s as a result of the efforts of a number of people, the chief of whom was Augusta Waddington (1802–96),⁷¹ wife of Benjamin Hall, a great Monmouthshire landowner and industrialist, and the minister in Palmerston's government responsible for completing the Palace of Westminster, after whom Big Ben is named. Benjamin was ennobled and his wife is usually known as Lady Llanover. She was one of the leaders of the picturesque romantic side of the Welsh revival in the early and mid-nineteenth century and a patron of innumerable Welsh causes. She studied and sketched female costumes of the Welsh and in 1834 at the Cardiff Royal Eisteddfod won the competition for an essay on the desirability of speaking Welsh and wearing Welsh costumes. Her original intent was to persuade Welshwomen to support home products, to stick to local tweeds instead of going over to cottons and calicoes, and she and her friends later gave prizes for collections of native tweed designs and patterns. In 1834 she was not even clear as to what a national costume was, but she was sure there ought to be a costume which would be distinctive and picturesque for artists and tourists to look at. Within a very short time she and her friends had evolved a homogenized national costume from the various Welsh peasant dresses, the most distinctive features of which were an enormous red cloak worn over an elegant petticoat and bedgown (*pais a betgwn*) and a very tall black beaver hat, in the style of Mother Goose. It was to be worn on 'national occasions' on Saint David's Day, at concerts of native music, especially by the female singers and harpists, or at the processions which opened and closed Lady Llanover's colourful eisteddfodau at Abergavenny. She invented a costume for her male servants at Llanover Court, the harpist being in a weird raiment, half-minstrel, half-Scottish Highlander. Lord

⁷¹ Lady Llanover is in the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, s.n. 'Benjamin Hall'; for many biographical details of Lord and Lady Llanover see various articles on them by Maxwell Fraser in the *National Library of Wales Journal*, xii-xiv (1962-6).

Llanover was not interested in wearing fancy dress, and so the menfolk of Wales were spared. Lady Llanover presented a portrait of herself in national costume in 1862 to the public school which she helped to found to foster Welsh among the upper classes at Llandoverly College, in which she wears a jewelled leek in the brim of her tall hat and holds a sprig of mistletoe in her hand to show her connection with the Druids (she was a bard with the name of Gwenynen Gwent, the Bee of Monmouthshire). The costume was soon adopted, for example in newspaper cartoons, as a caricature of Wales; it was reproduced on Victorian post-cards; thousands of pottery models of the Welshwoman in her costume were sold each year; schoolchildren all over Wales still don it on 1 March. It was a symbol of all that was good and homely. It appeared, for example, on 'Dame Wales' flour packets and on many other Welsh products. Meanwhile, the old native costumes in all their local varieties (even including here and there a tall beaver hat and a large cloak) died away as Wales became one of the most industrialized countries in the world.

THE NEW CAMBRIAN VALHALLA

One of the most interesting features of the period is the appearance of national heroes, and of these none is more truly characteristic than Owain Glyndŵr, Shakespeare's Glendower, who had risen against Henry IV and ruled Wales from 1400 until his mysterious disappearance in 1415.⁷² Glyndŵr appeared usually as a usurper or misguided rebel in literature, and although Ben Jonson said in 1618 that he was informed by Welsh friends that Glyndŵr was not regarded as a rebel in Wales but as a great hero, there seems little corroborative evidence for this. In the early eighteenth century the Morris circle seem to have been barely aware of him, since they mention him only once, and that as a traitor. Glyndŵr seems to burst forth in splendour in the 1770s as a national hero. He appears in 1772 as part of the pageant of the defenders of Wales in Evan Evans's *The Love of Our Country*, and in 1775 he is given much attention by the *History of the Island of Anglesey*, attributed to John Thomas of Beaumaris, based apparently on a manuscript life of Glyndŵr composed in the mid-seventeenth century. In 1778 Glyndŵr was given a most favourable treatment by Thomas Pennant in his *Tours in Wales*.

Gilbert White sent his famous letters on the natural history of

⁷² J. E. Lloyd, *Owain Glyndŵr* (Oxford, 1931); D. Rhys Phillips, *A Select Bibliography of Owain Glyndŵr* (Swansea, 1915).

Selborne to Thomas Pennant and Daines Barrington, both leaders of the Welsh historical revival in the 1770s. Pennant, from Downing in Flintshire, was an anglicized aristocrat with a passionate love for things Welsh. He described Caernarfon Castle as 'that most magnificent badge of our servitude' and his portrait of Glyndŵr is most favourable with a very keen sense of the tragedy of his decline and disappearance, which led to a second conquest of the Welsh by the English. It is possible that Pennant was reflecting the views of his travelling companion John Lloyd of Caerwys, who was the son of the squire of Bodidris, which stands very close to Glyndŵr's home base. It was probably Pennant who launched Glyndŵr as a national hero, and the books on him become a trickle, then a stream and then a flood, portraying him first as a tragic figure, then as the man who foresaw the need for Welsh national institutions (such as a national church and university) and then as the pioneer of modern nationalism.⁷³

Daines Barrington in 1770 published the early-seventeenth-century manuscript of the history of the Gwedir family by Sir John Wynne. This manuscript had been used some years earlier by Carte in his history of England, from which he took the story that Edward I had slaughtered the Welsh bards in 1282. Thoms Gray took the story from Carte and then was inspired by the playing of Blind Parry to complete his famous poem *The Bard* in 1757.⁷⁴ Gray did not believe the story literally – did not Welsh poets still exist, proving that the bards of 1282 had successors? Carte's story had some foundation in Welsh fables that all old Welsh books had been burned in London, and that the bards somehow were proscribed. Soon after 1757 the Welsh themselves began to believe Gray's picture, as one can see from such an exact scholar as Evan Evans who quoted extensively from Gray in the 1760s. The Morris circle earlier on had seen the Welsh bard primarily as an entertainer. For them poetry was an amusing social pastime, and this had led to a rupture with Goronwy Owen, who saw poetry as the sublime or epic literature. Evan Evans belonged to the generation which saw the bard as a heroic creature,

⁷³ Silvan Evans, *Gwaith y Parchedig Evan Evans*, p. 142; Davies, *Morris Letters*, i, p. 432; Thomas Pennant, *Tours*, i (1778), pp. 302–69.

⁷⁴ P. Toynbee and L. Whibley, *Correspondence of Thomas Gray* (Oxford, 1935), ii, pp. 501–2. For the interaction of Welsh and English men of letters in this period see Saunders Lewis, *A School of Welsh Augustans* (London, 1924); W. J. Hughes, *Wales and the Welsh in English Literature from Shakespeare to Scott* (London and Wrexham, 1924); and E. D. Snyder, *The Celtic Revival in English Literature 1760–1800* (Harvard, 1923).

often driven into great hostility to his environment. He deeply admired the earlier Welsh poets who had been real warriors. Iolo Morganwg carried this idolizing of the figure of the bard to its greatest heights, partly because of the influence of Goronwy Owen and Evan Evans, partly because he suffered from a terrible persecution complex and wished to turn the tables on everybody who scorned or slighted poets or scholars. Iolo made the bard the central figure in the Welsh historical pageant, though in some ages the bard was a Druid and in another a historian or scholar, and his imagination was never fired more heatedly than when he talked of the bard under persecution.

Gray's bard was a famous figure by the 1770s and 1780s, and had by then become a well-known subject in painting. One of the earliest versions was by Paul Sandby, and there were others by Philip De Louthembourg, Fuseli and John Martin. One of the best is by Richard Wilson's pupil, Thomas Jones of Pencerrig.⁷⁵ This was exhibited in 1774 and shows the last surviving bard holding his harp, fleeing from the encroaching troops, who draw near his fane, a kind of miniature Stonehenge, the sun is setting in the west on Snowdon's slopes, a bitter wind blows from the east, from England. The dramatic scene, the confrontation of the poet with the power of the state, was to be repeated many times. It was soon set as a subject for poems and essays in eisteddfodau, retold in many English and Welsh books, and it found its way into the famous Magyar poem *The Welsh Bards* by Janos Árány, where Edward I is like a ferocious Habsburg emperor entering the Balkans. Needless to say, the whole story is a fable or myth. At best one might say it is a gross exaggeration of the fact that from time to time medieval English kings licensed and controlled Welsh bards because they caused discord through their prophecies.

One of the most extraordinary of the new heroes was Madoc, the son of Prince Owain Gwynedd, who, disheartened by quarrels at home in North Wales, left on his ship *Gwennan Gorn* for uncharted western seas about the year 1170, and discovered America. He returned to Wales, gathered some companions, set sail again with them, and never returned. His descendants were assumed to have intermarried with the Indians and to be still alive in the Wild West.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ McCarthy, 'The Bard of Thomas Gray'; and Ralph Edwards's introduction to the catalogue of the exhibition of Thomas Jones's works: *Thomas Jones* (London, 1970).

⁷⁶ David Williams, *John Evans and the Legend of Madoc* (Cardiff, 1963).

The legend was not of eighteenth-century origin, but had first been used by the Tudors to undermine Spanish claims to rule North America. It remained known, but dormant, for some two hundred years in Wales and only came to life in the 1770s when Welsh interest in America was kindled by the American Revolution. Not only was there interest in the Revolution for its own sake, but also there was a strong movement for Welsh emigration to America, to set up a Welsh-speaking colony in the new republic. The Madoc myth only caught the imagination of the public in 1790 when Dr John Williams, London minister and historian, and librarian of Dr Williams's library, published an account of the Madoc story. The London Welsh were all agog. Iolo Morganwg (in London at the time) forged all sorts of documents to prove that Madoc's descendants were alive and Welsh-speaking, somewhere in the Mid-West, so that Dr Williams had to bring out a second volume. William Owen (Pughe) started a 'Madogeion' society to organize an expedition, which Iolo offered to lead. He was abashed when a serious young man, John Evans of Waun Fawr (1770-99), presented himself and was ready to go. Iolo made excuses and stayed at home, but John Evans left for America, eventually reaching the Wild West. He became an explorer in the service of the king of Spain. He found his way eventually by a series of hair-raising adventures to the lands of the Mandan Indians (whom he considered might be the Madogians), but found they were not Welsh-speaking. After experiencing other adventures he died in the palace of the Spanish governor in New Orleans in 1799. The map of his journey to the Mandans became the basis for the explorations of Meriwether Lewis and Clark. The fact that no Welsh Indians were found did not destroy the faith of Iolo Morganwg or his London Welsh friends. Iolo indeed persuaded Robert Southey to write a book-length poem called *Madoc*. The Madogian movement caused considerable Welsh emigration to America, and one of its great leaders was the Welsh radical journalist Morgan John Rhys, who previously had been working in Paris attempting to sell Protestant Bibles to evangelize the French revolutionaries. Gwyn A. Williams has studied the work of Morgan John Rhys and the Madogian movement and stresses that Madoc fever was part of a crisis of modernization of much of Welsh society in this period, and that the dream of rediscovering the lost Welsh Indians had much in common with the desire to recreate Druidism or the Patriarchal Language.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Gwyn A. Williams, 'John Evans's Mission to the Madogwys, 1792-1799', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, xxvii (1978), pp. 569-601. For Morgan

It was the dream of a more pure and free society, and had something in common with the myths of the Freeborn Saxons and the Norman Yoke amongst contemporary English workmen.

Iolo Morganwg was responsible for turning many obscure figures into national heroes. One example will suffice here. Iolo was farming in the 1780s in the marshland between Cardiff and Newport, where he came into contact with Evan Evans, then a drunken, threadbare curate at Bassaleg, and they both visited the ruins of the fourteenth-century hall of Ifor Hael (Ivor the Generous), who, tradition stated in a vague and uncertain way, had been the patron of the great fourteenth-century poet Dafydd ap Gwilym. Evans wrote a fine romantic poem about the ivy-clad ruins, and Iolo set about his first important forgeries, the imitation of the love poems of Dafydd ap Gwilym, which contained subtle little references to Glamorgan and to Ifor Hael. Iolo in his subsequent writings did much to make out Ifor as the greatest patron of Welsh literature.⁷⁸ Ivor became a popular name in Wales, a household word for generosity. The most Welsh of the workmen's benefit societies, the Order of Ivorites, took their name from him; the inns where many of their lodges met were called Ivor Arms, and many of these still survive to this day. By the 1820s and 1830s there were many of these myth-makers to be found in Wales besides Iolo. One such figure writing popular histories for the Welsh-speakers was a Caernarfon printer William Owen, 'Sefnyn', who was also known as 'Pab' (Pope) for his Roman Catholic sympathies. He wrote on Glyndŵr, Edward I and the Welsh bards, the Treason of the Long Knives, and many other dramatic events of Welsh history. A rather similar figure writing in English was T. J. Llewelyn Pritchard, an actor and journalist concerned with creating an illusion of Welshness for the gentry and middle classes who no longer spoke Welsh, and with the tourist market.⁷⁹ He did not originate, but was the chief begetter of another curious Welsh hero, Twm Sion Catti, about whom he wrote a novel in 1828. The real Twm Sion Catti was one Thomas Jones, a respectable squire and genealogist from Fountain Gate near Tregaron in Cardiganshire in

John Rhys and emigration see Gwyn A. Williams, 'Morgan John Rhys and his Beula', *Welsh History Review*, iii (1967), pp. 441-72; also Gwyn A. Williams's two recent books, *Madoc: The Making of a Myth* (London, 1979) and *In Search of Beulah Land* (London, 1980).

⁷⁸ David Greene, *Makers and Forgers* (Cardiff, 1975); and Morgan, *Iolo Morganwg*, pp. 75-91 for the forgeries.

⁷⁹ T. J. L. Pritchard, *Welsh Minstrelsy* (London and Aberystwyth, 1825), and *The Adventures and Vagaries of Twm Sion Catti* (Aberystwyth, 1828).

the late sixteenth century, but over the years various local tales had arisen which mixed him up with other obscure raiders and highwaymen in the district. Pritchard turned this obscure figure into a Till Eulenspiegel of pranks and jokes, and into a Robin-Hood figure of folk justice, robbing the rich to pay the poor. Pritchard's work became popular, was translated into Welsh and soon enough the Welsh began to believe the fables were true. By the present century (when his popularity as a hero or anti-hero shows no signs of diminishing) it seems as if he steps out of genuine folk legend. It is a very good example of the way story-book heroes came to take the place of the decayed and enfeebled tradition of story-telling around the fireside.

SPIRITS OF THE PLACE – LANDSCAPE AND MYTH

T. J. Ll. Pritchard was in fact part of a wide movement which tried to make the Welsh understand that their landscape must be cherished, and in order to make this clear to common folk gave each stick and stone historical and human interest.⁸⁰ One of Pritchard's poems was *The Land beneath the Sea*, about Cantre'r Gwaelod, the Lowland Hundred which lay under Cardigan Bay, a kind of Welsh Lyonesse drowned early in the Dark Ages through the negligence of the servants of the carousing loose-living King Seithennyn. Legends which were genuinely ancient connected the story of the Lowland Hundred with the saga of the poet and prophet Taliesin. Writers like Pritchard made the folk legend known all over Wales, and the song 'The Bells of Aberdovey' was adapted to prove that it was the *Cathédrale Engloutie* music of the bells of the drowned spires lying off Aberdovey, although the song was in reality a recent one by Dibdin. The story was a most useful one, which could be turned into a tract against drunkenness or irresponsible monarchs. Thomas Love Peacock knew of the efforts of William Maddox to recover large areas of land from the sea near his town of Portmadoc. In his novel *Headlong Hall* he satirized the Welsh squires and their English visitors for romanticizing the Welsh landscape and for their schemes of 'improvement', and in his later novel *The Misfortunes of Elphin* he wrote a most spirited prose version of the legend of Taliesin and the Lowland Hundred's destruction. Some of the landscape legends were unashamedly invented for the tourists, an excellent example

⁸⁰ F. J. North, *Sunken Cities* (Cardiff, 1957), esp. pp. 147ff.

being that of the grave of Gelert at Beddgelert in Caernarfonshire. It was one of the spots most visited by tourists in the late eighteenth century, and some time between 1784 and 1794 a South Walian hotelier of the Royal Goat Hotel, Beddgelert, invented the legend that the village took its name from a burial cairn (which the enterprising hotelier stealthily constructed) put up by Prince Llywelyn the Great in memory of his having most unjustly killed his favourite hound Gelert. The Prince had gone hunting, leaving Gelert as baby-sitter with his heir, and on his return found Gelert covered with blood, and the baby gone. Having killed the dog he then found the baby in a dark corner, and it was clear that Gelert had killed a wolf which had attacked the royal cradle. The cairn was a token of his remorse.⁸¹ The hearts of pet-loving tourists were touched, the Hon. W. Spencer wrote a famous poem about the incident, which Joseph Haydn set to the tune of Eryri Wen, and within a few years the story returned in Welsh versions to the monoglot Welsh inhabitants of Snowdonia. It is of course all moonshine, or more exactly, a clever adaptation of a well-known international folk tale. It is a good instance of the kind of complex myth-making which went on in a thousand places, helping very gradually to make the Welsh appreciate the harsh landscape from which they had to scratch a living.

By the end of the eighteenth century tourists considered Wales to be a country of great beauty of landscape. By the middle decades of the nineteenth century the Welsh themselves came to appreciate its charms. The second verse of the national anthem runs (we translate):

Old mountainous Wales, paradise of bards,
Each cliff and each valley to my sight is fair,
With patriotic sentiment, magic is the sound
Of her rivers and brooks to me...

Such sentiments were unthinkable in the eighteenth century. We have few if any descriptions of landscape in the period, and those which survive, for example the verses by Dafydd Thomas about 1750 on each county in Wales, mention human activity, produce and skills, and never boast about the beauty of the land.⁸² The patriotic circle of the Morris brothers thought mountains horrid, dreary and hostile;

⁸¹ D. E. Jenkins, *Bedd Gelert, its Facts, Fairies and Folklore* (Portmadoc, 1899), pp. 56-73.

⁸² Dafydd Thomas's verses were printed by S. Williams at Aberystwyth in 1816, but I have relied on a version printed in *Trysorfa'r Plant* (Children's Treasury) for 1893-4.

if anything they were seen as a punishment meted out by the Almighty to the Welsh for past sins. The native Welsh were very slow to learn from the hordes of English tourists who came to admire the wild landscape; the Reverend William Bingley said that they asked him had he no rocks or waterfalls in his own country? William Gambold's grammar book of 1727 was reprinted more than once in the early nineteenth century and the 1833 edition took account of the needs of tourists in the 'romantic hills of the Principality', by augmenting such useful phrases as 'Is not there a waterfall in this neighbourhood?' and 'I long to see the Monastery. I will take a gig to go there.' The appetite of the tourists had been whetted by the engravings of Welsh scenery sold in shops. John Byng complained when he was at Crogen that the engravers should sell sketch-maps as well, to help one get to the place of the picture. But the fashion for the Welsh view stemmed in the first place not from a tourist but from a Welshman, Richard Wilson.

Richard Wilson (1714–82) was a kinsman of Thomas Pennant, and although much of his work was done in Italy and England, he seems to have made an original and independent discovery of the Welsh landscape in the 1750s and 1760s. Before this time the Welsh view had been purely a topographical record.⁸³ The Welsh scene forced Wilson (a native of Penegoes near Machynlleth) to adopt two unfashionable styles, one an open air style where nature seems to dominate mankind, another a more romantic style where Welsh hills or castle ruins are turned into something sublimely grand. He could sell few of his landscapes to the fashionable public, and died a near-failure near Mold in 1782. Very soon after this his views were reproduced and imitated by the thousand. When Cornelius Varley visited Cader Idris in 1803 he actually noted down Llyn y Cau as 'Wilson's Pool' so famous had Wilson's picture of it become. The shift of the imagination towards appreciating wild mountain scenery of course took place all over Europe, but it particularly affected small mountain peoples such as the Welsh or the Swiss. The Welsh very gradually came to see their hills not as a punishment from the

⁸³ Iolo A. Williams, 'Notes on Paul Sandby and his Predecessors in Wales', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1961), pp. 16–33; A. D. Fraser Jenkins, 'The Romantic Traveller in Wales', *Amgueddfa*, vi (1970), pp. 29–37; D. Moore, 'The Discovery of the Welsh Landscape', in D. Moore (ed.), *Wales in the Eighteenth Century* (Swansea, 1976), pp. 127–51. The standard work on Wilson is W. G. Constable, *Richard Wilson* (London, 1953).

Almighty who had driven them from the lush lowlands of England, but as a fastness or fortress for the nation. *Gwlad y Bryniau* (Mountain Land) soon became a Welsh cliché, even for those living in lowland Wales. The image had become fixed even when in reality the road improvements of Telford and the like had penetrated wildest Snowdonia, when tourists like William Wordsworth could scale the top of Snowdon without too much discomfort, and the native population was flowing away from the moors and hills to the valleys and industrial areas. As the Welsh became more and more industrialized, so they came to cherish the image of the Welshman as a sturdy tough hillman, free as mountain air.

A HERALDRY OF CULTURE

Merrie Wales with its colourful rites and customs was dying or dead, yet there emerged in this period an elaborate set of patriotic insignia which not only gave colour to life, but also helped the people of separate valleys or religious sects to see that they were part of a nation. They appeared most often amongst Welshmen abroad, in London, America or in the colonies, but not always. These insignia of nationhood first appeared in the elaborate Saint David's Day ceremonies held by London Welshmen after 1714.⁸⁴ The Welshmen processed through London to a church, wearing leeks in their hats, listened to Welsh sermons, then gathered for huge dinners (set for hundreds of guests), drank numerous toasts of loyalty to Wales and to the reigning dynasty, made collections to Welsh charities, and then dispersed for private carousals.

In the eighteenth century, in fact, the commonest symbol for Wales was not the leek but the three ostrich plumes of the Princes of Wales, which had originally belonged (together with the motto *Ich Dien*) to Ostrevant in Hainault, and were taken by the Black Prince because his mother was Queen Philippa of Hainault. They are the perfect specimen of borrowed plumage. London Welshmen made a display of them, as at the ceremonies of the Ancient Britons, to show the Hanoverians that the Welsh were loyal, unlike the dangerous Irish or Scots. The plumes and motto were adopted in 1751 by the Cymmrodorion as the crest of their arms, and throughout the period

⁸⁴ A description of the junketings of the Society of Ancient Britons in 1728 by Richard Morris is in Davies, *Morris Letters*, i, p. 3.

they are by far the most common ideogram or *logo* for Wales. They remain to this day a very common symbol and form the badge, for example, of the Welsh Rugby Union.⁸⁵

By contrast the now well-known red dragon was hardly used at all. It had been considered a Welsh symbol during the Middle Ages, and was given wide currency between 1485 and 1603 by the Tudor dynasty as part of their arms, where it probably symbolized their descent from Cadwaladr the Blessed and represented their claim to the overlordship of all Britain. It was not considered to be a national symbol as much as the administrative symbol of the Council of Wales, but it did make its reappearance as the royal badge for Wales in 1807, and thereafter was used increasingly in the banners and badges of the *eisteddfodau* or Welsh clubs and societies in the early nineteenth century. It only replaced the three plumes in Welsh esteem in the twentieth century, the three plumes with their subservient motto being considered too deferential for radicals, liberals and socialists.

The leek had for centuries been used by the Welsh themselves as a badge, the colours of green and white being associated with the Welsh princes, and used as a primitive military uniform in the fourteenth century. Shakespeare imagined Henry V (Harry of Monmouth) and Fluellen wearing it on Saint David's Day for the memorable honour of Wales. The leek was worn also in England, for example by the court in London, as late as the eighteenth century, and it is possible that it was one of the subtle ways in which the Anglican Church wished to graft itself on to the memory of the early British Church. The leek was certainly worn much more self-consciously by Welshmen outside Wales. Although it could never be called an invented tradition, it did become a common part of the elaborate symbolic décor which draped the *eisteddfod* pavilions or concert halls for native music in the early nineteenth century. The substitution of the daffodil for the leek as a national symbol appeared as recently as 1907, and was based on a misunderstanding of the Welsh word for 'bulb'. The rather feminine delicacy of the daffodil appealed to Lloyd George, who used it in preference to the leek in the immense stage-managed Investiture ceremonial in Caernarfon in 1911, and on such things as government literature of the period.

⁸⁵ The only treatment of the subject is Francis Jones, *The Princes and Principality of Wales* (Cardiff, 1969), esp. pp. 86-7, and 158-204. Edwards, *Yr Eisteddfod*, illustrates medals and pavilion decorations.

One of the symbols most frequently used for Wales in the eighteenth century was the Druid, especially the druidic high priest hooded and mantled, with his sickle and golden bough of mistletoe. He was with Saint David a supporter of the Cymmrodorion arms in 1751, and after that he was used with increasing frequency as a title for societies, clubs, inns. He appeared on the title pages of books on Wales, added to which we find the *cromlech* (which was imagined to be a Druid altar) used to accompany him, perhaps as a vignette or tailpiece. The *Cambrian Register* (an excellent journal for Welsh history and literature) chose the *cromlech* as its titlepage decoration in 1795, as also did William Owen (Pughe) in a number of his books. The Druid was a symbol for the lodges of workmen's benefit societies a little later, and it was probably the onward march of nonconformity which gradually drove out the pagan priest from Welsh national heraldry, though he long remained, together with swags of oakleaves and mistletoe, as a decorative element on *eisteddfod* crowns, chairs and medals.

The harp, to be precise the triple harp, was used frequently as a symbol of Wales. The triple harps themselves were sometimes decorated with national symbols, leeks entwined about the foot, and princely plumes sprouting from the top. Harps were used on banners and in books, on scrolls and medals, often with fitting mottoes in Welsh that 'Wales is the land of the harp', 'the language of the soul is upon its strings' and so on. The Welsh mountain goat, still a most impressive sight in Snowdonia, was adopted by some as a Welsh symbol. Pennant used a goatherd with his hornpipe or *pibgorn* and his goats as a frontispiece to his *Tours*, Lady Llanover adopted a wild goat as one of her heraldic supporters, and some of the Welsh regiments adopted the goat as a regimental mascot. Not unnaturally the goat was also a useful symbolic caricature for Wales in lampoons and cartoons.

The *eisteddfod*, provincial and national, was the occasion in this period for a riotous display of insignia, and the national symbols we have mentioned were all mixed up with the special insignia of the Gorsedd of Bards. Thousands of *eisteddfod* crowns and chairs were produced, and a language of decoration was needed for these objects. Iolo Morganwg (a good journeyman mason and amateur artist) was a prolific manufacturer of symbols, the most famous being his *nod cyfrin* (mystic sign) of three bars, each bar representing past, present and future, and representing the name of God in the druidic

theology, which is still used as a most impressive ideogram for the National Eisteddfod. The high point of eisteddfod rites and rituals was not reached until the late nineteenth century when elaborate costumes and regalia, replete with all the symbols we have mentioned above, were designed for the Gorsedd of Bards by Sir Hubert von Herkomer and Sir Goscombe John.

The new ceremonials and the symbols and insignia all served to help Welshmen visualize their own country, and they had an exceptional importance in a national community that was not a political state. They were a substitute for the lost customs and rites of the old society of patronal festivals, merry nights and calendar feasts.

A TURNING POINT: 'THE TREASON OF THE BLUE BOOKS'

In 1847 the royal commission into the state of education in Wales reported its findings to the government in its Blue Books. The inquiry was instigated for many reasons; the concern for the growing hold of dissent or nonconformity over the common people, the lack of provision of education in Wales and the growth of unrest over the past few decades culminating in the Merthyr Rising of 1831, the Chartist risings of 1839 and the Rebecca Riots from 1839 to 1843. The commissioners (all Englishmen) reported on much in Wales besides education, attributing the backwardness and immorality of the people (especially the women) to the influence of dissent and the Welsh language. The storm of protest which resulted in Wales at what many considered a gross libel of a nation, based upon the biased evidence given by an unrepresentative minority of Welshmen to the English commissioners, was called 'The Treason of the Blue Books' (*Brad y Llyfrau Gleision*). This was an elaborate historical pun on the words 'Treason of the Long Knives' which had been a favourite subject of the romantic mythologists. The leader of the Welsh (or British) in the late fifth century was Vortigern (Gwrtheyrn) who invited the Saxons under Hengist and Horsa to come to Britain to aid him against his enemies. The Saxons invited Vortigern to a banquet, according to the story, at which he fell in love with Hengist's daughter Alys Rhonwen or Rowena and asked to marry her. The Saxons, some time later in another banquet, at a special signal leapt upon the carousing Welsh chieftains who were at the table, and slaughtered them with their long knives, forcing Vortigern to hand

over a large area of England to them. This Welsh Saint Bartholomew's Eve had been known as a fable by the Welsh in past centuries. It was taken in the seventeenth century by the balladist Matthew Owen as a punishment for sins, to be accepted humbly and passively. In the eighteenth century, the mythologists had seen its dramatic interest and it was illustrated by romantic artists such as Henry Fuseli and Angelica Kauffmann in the 1770s. After 1847, however, it was turned into a form of political propaganda to goad the Welsh into action.⁸⁶

The action taken as a result of the brouhaha over the Blue Books was paradoxical and contradictory. On the one hand it made the Welsh more nationalistic and Anglophobe than they had ever been before, on the other it made the Welsh concerned to answer the criticisms of the commissioners by becoming more like the English, by turning themselves into practical, hard-headed, business-like English-speaking Britons. The brouhaha also caused new alliances and new divisions in Welsh society. The historical revival of the eighteenth century, of which we have been discussing the mythological part, had stayed aloof from the great forces of religious debate, political reform and the industrial revolution. The great antiquarians and scholars were in general hostile to the tremendous force of Methodism, which not only destroyed the old merry way of life but also filled most effectively any vacuum which might have been left. Iolo Morganwg, for instance, wrote to his patron Owain Myfyr in 1799 that the Gwyneddigion and other London Welsh patriots were being maligned as Painites at the Methodist Association at Bala by one of Iolo's enemies whom he always called Ginshop Jones. Ginshop Jones was a life-guard of George III who left to become an innkeeper and Methodist elder. 'North Wales', complained Iolo, 'is now as Methodistical as South Wales, and South Wales as Hell.'⁸⁷

William Roberts, 'Nefydd', Baptist minister and organizer of schools wrote a collection of essays in 1852 *Crefydd yr Oesoedd Tywyll* (Religion of the Dark Ages) where he contrasts the semi-pagan folk culture of Wales with the new respectable Welsh culture of his day, that of the eisteddfod, the literary society, the debating club and the journals, and noted that until recently the harsh spirit of Geneva had kept the Methodists from enjoying this blossoming culture. The

⁸⁶ David Williams, *A History of Modern Wales* (London, 1950), pp. 246-68 on nonconformity, and pp. 269-85 on the growth of national consciousness, is excellent for the 1840s.

⁸⁷ G. J. Williams, 'Llythyrau Llenorion' (Letters of Authors), *Y Llenor*, vi (1927), p. 39.

old guard of the Methodists were dying off rapidly in the 1840s. The young could see to what extent Welsh culture had changed, and the Blue Books controversy finally drove them into the arms of the other dissenters and the Welsh patriots, because the commissioners lumped them all together and attacked Methodists, dissenters and the Welsh language as one.

The closing of the gap between Welsh patriots and the dissenters and Methodists unfortunately meant the opening of a gap between the patriots and the Anglicans, who had in various ways dominated the cultural revival since the eighteenth century, and had certainly been its most brilliant promoters from 1815 to 1847. The new wave of interest in things Welsh after 1815 was much encouraged by the movement known in Welsh as *Yr Hen Bersoniaid Llengar* (Old Literary Parsons), but which in fact involved many laymen and laywomen as well.⁸⁸ They were somewhat reactionary in politics and harked back to the less disturbed peaceful Wales of the eighteenth century. They wished to preserve what was left of Merrie Wales, and through dominating literature and history they hoped to prevent any further encroachments by dissent or Methodism upon Welsh life. They included the historian Angharad Llwyd (the daughter of John Lloyd, Pennant's companion); Lady Llanover; Lady Charlotte Guest, the editor of the famous edition of Welsh medieval tales which she called *The Mabinogion* (1849); John Jones, 'Tegid', precentor of Christ Church, Oxford; the folk song collector Maria Jane Williams of Aberpergwm; Thomas Price, 'Carnhuanawc', cleric, historian and Celticist; John Jenkins, 'Ifor Ceri', cleric, eisteddfod organizer and folk song collector; and the cleric John Williams, 'Ab Ithel', the unscrupulous editor of Iolo Morganwg's druidic papers, and one of the founders of the Cambrian Archaeological Association.

The Welsh Manuscripts Society and the Cambrian Archaeological Association, the public school at Llandovery and the Saint David's University College at Lampeter were all means by which this brilliant circle of people tried to affect Welsh life, but they reached the common people mainly through the eisteddfod. In 1819 the Swansea radical journal *Seren Gomer* approved of the Carmarthen eisteddfod,

⁸⁸ Bedwyr Lewis Jones, *Yr Hen Bersoniaid Llengar* (Old Literary Parsons) (Denbigh, 1963); R. T. Jenkins, *Hanes Cymru yn y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Bymtheg* (History of Wales in the Nineteenth Century) i. 1789-1843 (Cardiff, 1933) has much *passim* on the clerical patriots. For the general position of Celtic studies in the 1830s to the 1860s see Rachel Bromwich, *Matthew Arnold and Celtic Literature: a Retrospect 1865-1965* (Oxford, 1965).

but by 1832 the editor David Evans was deeply suspicious of the Beaumaris eisteddfod on the grounds that it would deflect the Welsh from political reforms. Angharad Llwyd in an appendix to her history of Anglesey, which won the prize at the eisteddfod, printed a speech by another of the patriot clerics, the poet John Blackwell, 'Alun', in which he said that the Welsh peasant was cultured and literate, his books unsullied by immorality, and he did not bother with politics or government.⁸⁹ But things were changing even in the romantic world of the eisteddfod, for already in 1831 Arthur James Johnes (later a judge) won the prize for an essay 'The Causes of Dissent in Wales', a work of what would now be termed sociology. It was only some years later that attempts were made to turn the eisteddfod into a Welsh version of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. The patriot clerics with their concern for the remote and mythological past still dominated the eisteddfod until the late 1840s, but the controversy over the Blue Books placed them in an impossible position, and gradually the dissenters and Methodists turned on their fields of endeavour and took them over, claiming to stand for the Welsh nation and branding the Anglicans as foreign intruders. When the great leader of radical Wales, Henry Richard, published his *Letters and Essays on Wales* in 1866 he virtually equated being Welsh with being a nonconformist, and he brushed the Anglicans aside. The nonconformist take over of Welsh culture created a new image. It weakened Welsh interest in the far-distant national past, replacing it with an interest in the past of the Old Testament and with the early history of dissenting causes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and emphasized the new puritanical Sunday as 'The Welsh Sunday', the new 'Welsh way of life' being that of the chapel, the singing school (for hymns not ballads), the temperance assemblies, the *Cymanfa Ganu* (hymnsinging assemblies), the quarterly meetings and associations, the mutual improvement societies, and much else which is familiar to the twentieth century as the typical Wales. It is no wonder then that the historian Sir John Lloyd remarked that the Wales of Victoria differed from that of Queen Anne as much as that of Queen Anne had differed from that of Boadicea. John Thomas, 'Ieuan Ddu', published his

⁸⁹ Angharad Llwyd, *A History of the Island of Anglesey* (Ruthin, 1832), p. 39 of appendix. Cf. Mary Ellis, 'Angharad Llwyd', *Flintshire Historical Society Publications*, xxvi (1976), pp. 52-95, and xvii (1978), pp. 43-87.

lost touch with the songs of the past; young men even in remote Cardiganshire were forced to sing hymns at wedding banquets because they knew nothing else.⁹⁰

The great forces of politics and industrialism which had been kept at bay by the scholars and patriots closed in on the charmed circle of the romantic mythologists in the 1840s and 1850s. Not that the eighteenth-century patriots were ignorant of either world; the Morris circle, for example, dabbled in industry and politics, as was inevitable since Lewis Morris was the controversial head of the royal mines in Cardiganshire and Richard Morris was at the Navy Office. Thomas Pennant came from the Greenfield valley of Flintshire where there was much early industry, and as a leading squire concerned himself with the government reforms in the 1780s. Patriots such as Iolo Morganwg or Morgan John Rhys and their friends were involved in radical politics in the 1780s and 1790s, when there was a considerable literature on political matters in Welsh.⁹¹ Owain Myfyr considered that the Gwyneddigion society should be a debating society for radical discussion of reform in church and state, and the same was true of some of the other London Welsh societies. Men like Iolo and Morgan John Rhys belonged to a tradition of political discussion amongst the dissenting craftsmen of the hill country of Glamorgan, but they were a small minority, and the repression of the long years of war deadened the reform movement, while strengthening the anti-revolutionary feeling in Wales.

Henry Richard writing in 1866 referred back to the culture of his childhood and he recalled the large number of Welsh journals read by his father, observing that they were concerned with poetry and religion, with barely a mention of politics or commerce, save in a small appendix in the back.⁹² This would have gained the approval of Lady Llanover and the clerical patriots, for their zestful cultural renaissance took place against a background of grinding poverty and seething discontent. Angharad Llwyd bought the stock of books of William Owen, 'Sefnyn', to destroy them, because he supported

⁹⁰ John Thomas, 'Ieuan Ddu', *The Cambrian Minstrel* (Merthyr, 1845), p. 29n. The tradition of hymn singing at football matches is a late nineteenth-century phenomenon, arising from the same causes.

⁹¹ David Davies, *The Influence of the French Revolution on Welsh Life and Literature* (Carmarthen, 1926); J. J. Evans, *Dylanwad y Chwyldro Ffrengig ar Lenyddiaeth Cymru* (Influence of the French Revolution on Welsh Literature) (Liverpool, 1928), and *Morgan John Rhys a'i Amserau* (M. J. Rhys and his Times) (Cardiff, 1935).

⁹² Henry Richard, *Letters and Essays on Wales*, 2nd edn (London, 1884), p. 93.

Catholic emancipation, and Lady Llanover would have nothing to do with Llywelyn Williams (1822–72), a brilliant triple harpist, because his father Sephaniah Williams was the leader of the Chartist rising of 1839. Just as the controversy of the Blue Books brought the Methodists to the point of involving themselves in Welsh politics and culture, so it strengthened the hand of the Welshmen who wished their countrymen to involve themselves in business and politics. Even without the Blue Books controversy, the general circumstances of Welsh society were forcing men to play a more and more active part in controlling their own affairs. Edwin Chadwick observed that the extraordinary rites and rituals associated with the Rebecca Riots from 1839 to 1843 had grown out of the custom of *Ceffyl Pren* (Horseplay).⁹³ The customary society had long punished sexual misdemeanours with nocturnal processions of men in female garb and effigy-burning and mock trials. But in 1839 they were transformed for a violent social and political purpose. Thomas Jones, 'Glan Alun', who appealed for a national anthem in 1848, also appealed in the same number of the *Traethodydd* against the current Welsh concern for dry factual rational English practicality. The turning point had been reached, and from 1848 onwards the invention of tradition, which had been so long dominant in Welsh culture, began to decay.

The poets and mythologists and dreamers found themselves subjected to harsher criticism, sometimes of a general nature, from those who believed that Wales must now progress from a lower stage of human evolution where poetry and history were important to a higher stage of evolution where practical things must dominate; at other times the harsh criticism was particular. John Williams, 'Ab Ithel', hoped to make the Llangollen Eisteddfod in 1858 a revival of the great days of the patriot clerics of the 1820s and 1830s. He himself hoped to win the prize for the history essay by proving the truth of the Madoc story. He won the prize but the real victor was Thomas Stephens, from Merthyr Tydfil who had already published a history of Welsh literature, and who exploded Madoc as a baseless myth. The change was observable right through the proceedings at Llangollen; for example William Roos of Amlwch gained one of the painting prizes, one painting being of the death of Owain Glyndŵr,

⁹³ David Williams, *The Rebecca Riots* (Cardiff, 1955), pp. 53–6, 104, 128, 185, 191, 241, 290. For unrest from the 1790s to 1835 see D. J. V. Jones, *Before Rebecca* (London, 1973).

but another being of the recent death of Captain Wynn at the Alma. Within a few years the Welsh began to learn through their periodicals of the great advances of German philology, and of the work of Bopp and Zeuss setting Welsh scientifically in its true philological context, making it more and more difficult for the Welsh to believe in the irrational historical myth-making of the eighteenth century.⁹⁴ The chickens of Lhuyd and Leibniz long before had at last come home to roost. The sprites and phantoms of remote centuries of Welsh history and literature which had so entertained and inspired the previous generations were dispelled as they were brought out into the light of common day.

Just as this was happening, and the survivors of the older world such as the clerics 'Ab Ithel' and 'Glasynys', or Lady Llanover, were withdrawing into disgruntled isolation or silence, the new world of radical and nonconformist Wales began to turn itself into a myth, the fogs and mists descended upon recent history, and people were entertained by a host of fresh legends about themselves, about the persecution of the early Methodists (which they read in Robert Jones of Rhos-Lan's *Drych yr Amseroedd*, a book which R. T. Jenkins called 'The apocrypha of the Revival'), or about Dic Penderyn and the Merthyr Rising of 1831, or the fight against the oppressive landlords and captains of industry.

CONCLUSION: THE ELUSIVE QUARRY

What, in conclusion, had been achieved by this extraordinary movement? The Wales we have been describing was not a political state, and for want of such a state the people were driven to give a disproportionate amount of their energies to cultural matters, to the recovery of the past and, where the past was found wanting, to its invention. The old way of life decayed and disappeared, the past was very often tattered and threadbare, and so a great deal of invention was needed. The romantic mythologists had succeeded so well, in some ways, that they made things Welsh appear charmingly and appealingly quaint. While things antique had authority this was good, but when an age of progress arrived it was bad. Welshness, then, was preserved and handed on to the future by the crucial efforts

⁹⁴ Bromwich, *Matthew Arnold and Celtic Literature*; Francis Shaw, 'The Background to the *Grammatica Celtica*', *Celtica*, iii (1953), pp. 1-17 on the work of Bopp in 1839 and of Zeuss in 1853.

of the patriots we have been describing. But Welshness was rejected by a large number because it was associated with quaintness and with a rather discredited mythology. The Welshness of Victoria's reign could be very fierce and passionate, but this is because it had to contend with so many enemies. To survive, Welshness had, in the 1860s and 1870s, to transfer itself subtly to the new world of radicalism and nonconformity.

The historical revival and the invention of tradition had an effect in Wales more far-reaching than anything comparable in England, though it did resemble what was happening in small European countries. Wales in the eighteenth century did not have an unbroken or a fortunate historical tradition; it did not have a glorious or heroic recent past. Hence the rediscovery of the remote past, the Druids and the Celts and the others, had an astounding effect on the Welsh. Wales did not have a network of learned or academic institutions to check and balance myths and inventions with criticism. The reader and the writer could not hunt for the past systematically together. The manuscripts for instance were nearly all locked up in private libraries, and few texts were published; hence it was easy for a forger of genius like Iolo Morganwg to bamboozle the Welsh (and English) public. It was precisely this lack of scholarly institutions and criticism which made it possible for Macpherson to defend his Ossian poems in Scotland, Baron Hersart de la Villemarqué (Kervarker) to compose his bogus ancient Breton poetry in *Barzaz Breiz*, or Vaclav Hanka to publish his bogus medieval Czech manuscript the *Kralodvorsky Rukopis*. Hanka wrote this only two years after Ossian was translated into Czech, and it was only revealed as a forgery a half century or more later by Thomas Masaryk. The English, on the other hand, were not slow to detect the forgeries of Chatterton.

In Wales the movement of revival and myth-making grew out of a crisis in Welsh life, when the very lifeblood of the nation seemed to be ebbing away. Common sense and reason dictated that Welshmen should regard the past as closed and finished, and that since they were 'blotted out of the books of records' they should be happy with their lot. It required a superhuman effort by a small number of patriots to force their fellow-countrymen to appreciate their heritage, to value what was their own. They felt that the only way to bring this about was to ransack the past and transform it with imagination, to create a new Welshness which would instruct, entertain, amuse and educate the people. The mythical and romantic Wales which they created

allowed the Welsh to lose their immediate past, and to gain a version of it in the arts and literature; they could, as it were, have their cake and eat it. The art and artifice which we have described here had a great healing function at this difficult juncture in Welsh history. Welsh life went on changing, and as it changed so the process we have described recurred. As soon as the romantics fell from their steeds, their place was taken by fresh myth-makers and creators of traditions, those of radical and nonconformist Wales. The huntsmen had changed, but the hunt went on.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ For an extended treatment of the subject of this chapter, see Prys Morgan, *The Eighteenth-Century Renaissance* (Llandybie, 1981).

4. *The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition', c. 1820-1977*¹

DAVID CANNADINE

In 1820, *The Black Book*, a radical critique of the corruption and power of the English Establishment, made this comment on royal ritual:

Pageantry and show, the parade of crowns and coronets, of gold keys, sticks, white wands and black rods; of ermine and lawn, maces and wigs, are ridiculous when men become enlightened, when they have learned that the real object of government is to confer the greatest happiness on the people at the least expense.²

Forty years later, Lord Robert Cecil, the future third marquess of Salisbury, having watched Queen Victoria open parliament, wrote with scarcely more approval:

Some nations have a gift for ceremonial. No poverty of means or absence of splendour inhibits them from making any pageant in which they take part both real and impressive. Everybody falls naturally into his proper place, throws himself without effort into the spirit of the little drama he is enacting, and instinctively represses all appearance of constraint or distracted attention.

But, he went on to explain:

This aptitude is generally confined to the people of a southern climate and of non-Teutonic parentage. In England the case is exactly the reverse. We can afford to be more splendid than most nations; but some malignant spell broods over all our most solemn

¹ An earlier draft of this paper was presented to the Social History Seminar at Cambridge University and to a joint student-faculty seminar at Princeton University. I am most grateful to the participants for their comments and criticisms, to Dr S. D. Banfield and Mr C. J. Babbs for help with two particular problems, and to Mr J. Whaley for sharing with me his incomparable knowledge of ritual and ceremony in early modern Europe. Some preliminary thoughts on this subject were outlined in my article, 'The Not-So-Ancient Traditions of Monarchy', *New Society* (2 June 1977), pp. 438-40. This final version was completed in 1979.

² Quoted in D. Sutherland, *The Landowners* (London, 1968), p. 158.