

THE LLANOVER PROJECT: THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION

Geoffrey Powell

The more we consider Lady Llanofor's achievements for Wales, the more substantial they appear. She was the centre of a group affirming the importance of maintaining Welsh language and culture at a time when other European countries were experiencing a similar awakening of national consciousness. How could this have come about?

The trail which will lead us to what we might call the 'Llanofor strategy' for affirming and defending Welsh language and culture must begin with her mother, Georgina Mary Ann Port. Before her arranged marriage to Benjamin Waddington, over twenty years her senior, when she was only eighteen, she had an upbringing which was as privileged as it was unusual. Her great aunt, Mrs Delany, took control of her upbringing when she was seven years old and set about producing 'a young lady of the Queen-Anne pattern'.¹ This was not an inappropriate ambition since Mrs Delany was a close friend of George III, who, when her friend and companion the Duchess of Portland died, became even closer to the court by living conveniently near to the Royal residences, either in London or at Windsor. Little Mary Ann, in effect, became incorporated into the Royal household, since she played with the Royal children and, when older, helped to entertain the King and Queen on their informal visits to Mrs Delany.

Mrs Delany was an enthusiastic supporter of the novelist Fanny Burney and, through her influence, secured for Fanny an appointment in the Royal household. Mary Ann thus became a close friend of the novelist in her youth. Through their social visits to the Lockes of Norbury Park in Surrey, they became friends of Madame de Staël who was, at that time, a member of a group of French exiles living nearby. Mary Ann was therefore trained at court and familiar with two leading creative women intellectuals. A third intellectual woman she knew even better was her own great aunt.

Mrs Delany was Mary Granville, a member of a distinguished family. She was gifted intellectually and artistically and, when her first, arranged, marriage to the drunken squire Pendarves was brought to an early end by his death, she married Patrick Delany, who was a close friend and fellow cleric of Dean Swift. She became a member of Swift's circle and, as we can see from the letters she received from him, made a great impression on him. Her experience of the most exacting conversational standards of Swift later made her a natural addition to the Blue Stocking circle. It was after Delany's death, with a wealth of experience behind her, that she took up her place close to the Crown.

One further detail of Mrs Delany's background is worth noting since it may help explain Mrs Waddington's romantic pedigree and how she managed to create the beliefs and commitments of her youngest daughter, Augusta. Her brother was Bernard Granville who, as a friend of Jean Jacques Rousseau, secured for him Wootton Hall in Staffordshire during his short stay in England. While the local gentry may have been alarmed by Rousseau's political views, his educational ideas could appeal without disturbing their enduring verities of social position and order. More than one of them tried to bring up their children by the standards of *Emile* and it may not be too speculative to see these ideas finding their way to the educational regime that Mrs Waddington created for her daughters, especially for her favourite, Augusta. After all, Welsh-speaking Llanofor would have appeared close to Rousseau's ideal in being protected, through its language, from the influences of a corrupting English-speaking world.

While life with Mrs Delany gave Mary Ann a training in literary, artistic and social refinement second to none, it was also a dangerous environment for a strikingly beautiful and, according to Burney, flirtatious teenager. She fell hopelessly in love with an equerry who, it seems, had no intention of marrying her. The whole business so impressed Fanny Burney, who, as a novelist, was always gathering material from the life around her, that she based some of the plot of her novel

Camilla on Mary Ann's experience. This episode of thwarted love was tragic enough but, at the same time, the aged Mrs Delany died. Something had to be done with poor Mary Ann. As Joyce Hemlow explains,

In February, 1789, Miss Port's family arranged that she should marry Mr Benjamin Waddington, a good-hearted gentleman of means. After this, however, she still made tearful visits to Windsor, and long after, even after the births of her children, she wrote to Fanny for news of the faithless courtier she could not forget, and Fanny scolded her roundly: 'Your unwearied solicitude of inquiry after old favourites grieves - and amazes me. My poor Marianne - I would to God the affections of your heart were placed more around you!'²

By 'around you' Fanny probably had in mind her immediate family, but Mrs Waddington's salvation was secured, not simply by her family, but by her new country, Wales, which gave her life direction and substance. Fanny would surely have been amazed by what came of this 'poor sweet, unfortunate girl',³ and of the daughters she cultivated so carefully.

She came to Llanofor deeply scarred by her thwarted love and the effects seem to have been long-lasting. On her visit to Edinburgh in 1810, when her beauty made such an impression, it was also her sadness which made her seem to Walter Scott as the Goddess of Tragedy.⁴ Princess Elizabeth, one of the Royal children with whom Mary Ann had played, said in a letter that she was married off 'to a man who took her off to Wales where she was, in a manner buried alive ...'.⁵ This was probably the general opinion in her socially exalted London and Windsor circle. Coming to Wales, as far as they were concerned, was a kind of banishment, or worse. From their viewpoint, this burial lasted for some eleven years before she emerged to make contact with them again. However, in this period, her Welsh home provided her with the opportunity to make a new and very different life. Her close friendship with Elizabeth Greenly provided a vital link between the feminine intellectualism of her earlier life and the world of Welsh language and culture.⁶ Also, during these years, Archdeacon Coxe, while researching and writing his *Tour in Monmouthshire*, was a constant visitor to the Waddingtons.⁷ There would have been no better way of absorbing both the historical culture of her part of Wales and an awareness of the challenges of its industrial present.

In 1816 the Waddingtons wintered in Rome. This visit was of great importance since it resulted in the marriages of Augusta's sisters, Frances and Emilia, creating what Fanny Burney called Mrs Waddington's 'Roman Colony'.⁸ In particular, as the husband of Frances, the Prussian, Christian Bunsen, was brought into the Llanofor family. Perhaps this was not a purely chance firing of one of Cupid's darts since the Waddingtons already had high expectations of Germans and their culture. (Bunsen told his sister that 'an English family with three daughters take an interest in me ...').⁹ Madame de Staël's works were favourites, especially her recent *L'Allemagne*,¹⁰ and from that work they would have learned of the limitations of English thought and, in particular, of the way that enthusiasm, condemned by Locke as resulting from 'the conceits of a warmed or overweening brain',¹¹ had become, for de Staël, 'the quality which really distinguishes the German nation.'¹² This enthusiasm or zeal was to characterise the life of Lady Llanofor and her friends.

On returning to Wales, Augusta, at fifteen, was now her mother's only remaining daughter, left to cultivate her Welsh interests in those crucial formative years when she was becoming a young adult, but Christian Bunsen was to contribute in a major way to what became her Welsh cause. (Already, by 1819, we know that he had been discussing the nature of language with Mrs Waddington).¹³ As he said to Augusta at the end of his life, 'I have always felt for you, and with you, more than you ever knew'.¹⁴

In his formative years, Bunsen had contact with major figures in German philosophical and religious thought. These included Friedrich Schleiermacher, who contributed so much to Germany's supremacy in theology, and Arthur Schopenhauer, with whom he toured parts of Germany and in whose home he stayed for a while. It was the historian Barthold Niebuhr, however, who had the greatest influence on his life, since it was he who took him to Rome and created his diplomatic career for him. Sadly, as he was all too aware himself, following this career severely limited his intellectual output and prevented him from becoming a major German thinker but, through great industry, which made him multilingual and polymathic, he kept his thought alive and spread its influence. He produced a hymnal which was part of a campaign to bring unity to German protestantism and his Biblical and theological work was well enough known for Rowland Williams of Lampeter to be able to base his contribution to the radical *Essays and Reviews* of 1860 on Bunsen's Biblical researches.

His correspondence gives us many indications of the nature of the influence he had on his friends, and the range of the contacts he had with the makers of German intellectual and musical life was impressive. As a linguistic scholar he had much to do with the deciphering of Egyptian hieroglyphics and supported the leading Egyptologist of the period, Richard Lepsius. He knew that, as an evangelist for the German intelligence, his role was to extend its influence, for 'From us something may be learnt, by every spirit of this age'.¹⁵ From his days in Rome, he had a deep influence on some significant figures in English society. Though Dr. Arnold had absorbed something of the spirit of German thought through Coleridge, it was Bunsen who gave him support in his broad church strategy for national unity. Having first met him in Rome before he became head of Rugby school, Arnold totally revered Bunsen and even gave a daughter the unlikely name Bunsen in his honour. Connop Thirlwall, Bishop of St. David's, who played his part in the language battles of the Welsh church, was also influenced by Bunsen, again on a Roman visit, in his decision to become a priest.

As an ardent nationalist, confident in the value of his own culture, Bunsen was primarily concerned with German identity and with what would make a German nation. Though, in a letter of 1815, telling of a visit to Holland, these concerns were uppermost in his mind, he also showed an understanding of what makes any national culture.

All that this remarkable people possess - land, language, manners, art - is so entirely of one character, and, as it were, out of one mould, that nowhere, perhaps, could the connection of these appearances with one another be more clearly perceived ... In all, the German, or, if you will, the Teutonic character, is worked out into form in a manner more decidedly national than anywhere else.¹⁶

The interrelationship between language and all aspects of a culture was something that interested him, not just in the Germanic case, but throughout human history. His intellectual inheritance came from the *Sturm und Drang* movement. One of its initiators was Johann Hamann. Isaiah Berlin said his greatest discovery was to realise that 'language and thought are not two processes but one: that language ... conveys directly the innermost soul of individuals and societies':¹⁷ 'Reason is language, Logos'.¹⁸ Whereas the main stream of British empiricist thought saw language as a superficial, secondary phenomenon, a convenience for communicating ideas,¹⁹ Hamann made it the generator of thought. Johann Herder took up Hamann's insight and developed it in exciting ways so that it was possible to conceive of cultural nationhood in which each culture has its own integrity, valid in its own terms. Furthermore, while territorial states were artificial, cultural nations were genuine. 'Each nation speaks in the manner it thinks and thinks in the manner it

speaks',²⁰ he observed, and 'every distinct community is a nation, having its own national culture as it has its own language'.²¹

Bunsen followed this way of thinking in recognising that a central concern of his intellectual life was 'language, especially in so far as its inner structure appears to me the clearest mirror, reflecting all the national peculiarities scattered through art and science'.²² He formed a picture of civilization in which different language communities contributed in their distinctive ways to the whole human achievement. What this German Enlightenment thought showed was that keeping alive a language was not just a matter of concern to the people who lived by it, but to civilization as a whole, for a particular language had a distinctive intellectual voice which could not be removed without universal loss. Also, just as Bunsen gained conviction from his rather Hegelian belief that 'the power of thought belongs to us, the Germans, in this day of the world's history'²³ so, adopting his view, a zeal for Welsh language and culture could be built on their place in the design.

The next piece of good fortune for what became the Llanofor strategy was the entry of Benjamin Hall into the family. In marrying him in 1823, Augusta became a member of the industrial elite of the area. Fanny Burney said he had 2,000 per annum and was 'heir to *Eleven*'. She added, in the same letter, that Augusta 'turns out very lovely and very clever'.²⁴ Benjamin's father was one of the most powerful industrialists and Benjamin himself was owner of the estate in Abercarn, with valuable coal resources. His mother, as a Crawshay, linked him to the Merthyr ironmasters. In common with other industrialists in the region, he was to follow a political career. As Chief Commissioner of Works he was responsible for the completion of the new Gothic Parliament building and Big Ben has become his best known memorial.

In 1826 Lady Llanofor attended the Brecon Eisteddfod and was impressed by the presence and message of the Rev. Thomas Price, a Welsh scholar of the first rank, as versatile as he was gifted. She could have found no better ally. Their friendship was consolidated through their membership of the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion, founded in 1833. John Davies refers to Price's ideas as being close to Herder's,²⁵ which meant that Bunsen would have found even readier acceptance for his ideas at Llanofor. Further valuable friends to Llanofor were John and Charlotte Guest. He was one of the leading industrialists in the world at that time and his cultivated wife found engrossing the Welsh culture around her. If we, finally, add friendships with the wealthy industrialist Charles Morgan of Tredegar Park, the cultured and industrial Williams family of Aberpergwm, and, of course, Elizabeth Greenly, we have a group as capable as any of supporting a cultural revival of European stature. A circle, an association of the scholarly and the rich and influential, had been formed, aware of European ideas tailor-made for Welsh circumstances.

The most important part of the strategy of the circle was involvement in, some would say, taking possession of, the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion and its eisteddfodau. Christian Bunsen's role in the Cymreigyddion needs careful consideration. The Bunsens were giving support to what became its aims even before it was founded. In 1832 they gave Monsieur Rio of Vannes a letter of introduction to travel to Llanofor to study the Celtic source of the Breton language.²⁶ He became a founding member in 1833 and was made so much at home that he married Apollonia Jones, a Herbert of Llanarth, in the same year.

By 1838 Bunsen had leave of absence, from his diplomatic work, until July 1839, when he became Prussian Minister in Switzerland, but even then there was the expectation that he would be politically dormant. Max Muller called it his 'Swiss retirement'²⁷ when he could continue his thought and writing. He was at Llanofor in good time for the Cymreigyddion in 1838 and it remained his base while he visited other parts of the country during this period. In 1841 he

returned to Britain on a special mission to arrange an Anglo-Prussian bishopric in Jerusalem and afterwards remained as ambassador in London. He resigned from this post in 1854 and left for Heidelberg. It seems fitting that his leaving Britain should have coincided with the ending of the Cymreigyddion, for he seems to have had an active influence on it at least from 1838.

During this period he introduced a number of German linguists to Llanofor. These included Richard Lepsius, the Egyptologist and Carl Meyer who, in order to absorb Welsh language and culture, lived at Felindre and Cwmdru for several years, and it was a Prussian civil servant who won the essay prize in 1840 for his study of the influence of Welsh tradition on European literature. Llanofor must have functioned as a kind of study centre for them, and the surrounding countryside, including Llanfoist churchyard, where Bunsen and Lepsius would 'sit in deep converse',²⁸ provided facilities for those walks which so often encourage the cross-fertilisation of minds. Conversations with Bunsen, Lepsius and Meyer impressed on Mrs Waddington that Welsh had serious significance as a language and that Welsh history and literature were of more than local importance.²⁹ The impact of this Germanic recognition must have been just as great on her daughter.

Bunsen's letter to Lady Llanofor, in which he gave his judgement on the result of a competition for the eisteddfod prize they had initiated in 1838, tells us much about the role he played in relation to the Cymreigyddion. He said the 1840 prize essay by Albert Schulz on the influence of Welsh tradition on European literature was of a standard to grace any academy (which showed, of course, that there was the expectation that the Cymreigyddion's efforts should have European stature). It brought to bear

upon that intricate question all the weight of German research and learning, and settling it for ever, in favour of the Welsh claims, in spite of the prevalent opinion of Europe. Not only is it proved in this essay that the heroes and tales of Arthurian Romance came from the Cymri into the fictions of France and Germany, but also it is shown in what manner this great fact is connected with the whole history of literature in Europe.³⁰

In securing the importance of Welsh literature through German scholarship in this way, no better stamp of approval could have been given at that time. Here was support and encouragement coming from that country then most respected and admired for its intellectual achievements.

Bunsen would have noticed that German problems had things in common with the Welsh. The language of status in Prussia was French and the identity of the Germans was threatened by French cultural imperialism. While he was engaged in the cause of German cultural survival, therefore, it would have been easy for him to develop fellow-feeling for Lady Llanofor and her Wales, for her little country, under threat from English cultural imperialism, might have appeared to him as a Germany in microcosm. If the culture exercising its hegemony over Wales had real benefits to offer, the process might have been endurable but we know, from one of his letters, that his assessment of England was less than flattering.

In England everything, except the moral principle in the form of the fear of God, is deathlike. Thought itself is crudely rationalistic; public worship in general lifeless; the vivifying spirit startles like a spectre. The fall may be terrific, like that of ancient Rome.³¹

Even if the Llanofor circle had not come to the same conclusion about the condition of England, it would not have seen the way forward in Wales as involving a submission to English hegemony. Rather, such difficulties as existed in Welsh society were due to its alien influences. Its members

would have found support in Herder for the view that Welsh institutions were not responsive to native needs because their practices were controlled by an artificially created and unresponsive state. In the words of Herder,

Such states are but patched-up contraptions, fragile machines, appropriately called state-machines ... they are bereft of national character, it would only be the curse of Fate which would condemn to immortality these forced unions, these lifeless monstrosities.³²

Notice here how Bunsen's depiction of England as lifeless and startled by an enlivening spirit is close to Herder's view of a politically convenient but culturally artificial state as a lifeless monstrosity. If Wales was to escape the same lifeless fate, it would need to affirm Welshness throughout its institutions. The Llanofor strategy, therefore, would have to be active on a wide cultural front if Welsh linguistic nationhood was to be protected. In religion, for example, the Anglican church was failing Wales (as one Anglican historian put it, 'English treatment of Wales was generally scurvy'),³³ a means of affirming the special importance of religion in the making of Wales needed to be found. In requiring the church to have bishops and priests who could speak Welsh, Lady Llanofor was only asking for what should always have been the case. She remained steadfast in her defence of Welsh in the church so that, when her Anglican church in Abercarn was found to be using English, she transferred the building and endowment to the Calvinistic Methodists, on condition that they used the Book of Common Prayer for public worship.³⁴ A similar problem arose in her own parish at Llanofor and a similar solution found. Even later in life she petitioned Gladstone to appoint a Welsh-speaking Bishop of St. Asaph and attacked the choice of the Archdeacon of St. David's for Llandaff because she understood his Welsh wasn't up to it.

It must have seemed to Anglican observers that, in the Llanofor strategy, considerations of language were taking precedence over strictly religious criteria. It may be more than a coincidence that a similar apparent indifference to the niceties of Anglican doctrine was shown by Bunsen when he secured cooperation between the Lutherans and the Anglicans in establishing a joint Bishopric in Jerusalem, forming an alliance which showed such disregard for apostolic succession that it proved the last straw which made Newman leave the Anglican church for Rome. Perhaps Bunsen's concern for a unifying religion in Germany encouraged Lady Llanofor to think that an inclusive, broad Welsh church was possible too, one built on historical continuity from its early distinctive beginnings. In this, she would have given further support to the conviction, already in place, that the Anglican church in Wales could maintain the continuity of the Celtic church.³⁵

The other major institution of state, the legal system, was also a challenge for the Llanofor strategy since, if the people were to remain Welsh-speaking, then the courts should be conducted in their language. At one of its earliest meetings, the circle decided to petition Parliament for the appointment of Welsh-speaking judges.³⁶

The Welsh way of life itself needed attention. In supporting Evan Jones's periodical *Y Gymraes*, she not only pursued an ideal of wholesomeness but recognised the crucial role of mothers in the continuing transmission of the language. She also realised that the culture required continuity in its customs, though this did not rule out some judicious tinkering. For example, even though she encouraged the Mari Lwyd in her territory, she was ruthless over alcohol. Inns in her area she bought, either to convert them to temperance, or else to close them. In her own village the Post Office, with its painting of the Mari Lwyd still on its front, was once a pub.

Education was also important to the strategy, though to support the language in the community rather than to 'improve' the population. When Thomas Price tried to justify the fact that the

children in his Cwmdru school could not give explanations of religious concepts to the Commissioner, whose information formed part of the 1847 *Report on the State of Education in Wales* (popularly known as the infamous 'Blue Books'), he said 'it was not his province to enlighten, that is, to enlarge their minds.'³⁷ Though this remark might have alarmed a Commissioner imbued with the Kay-Shuttleworth ethos, Price was simply affirming the organic view that children were to grow up to maintain their own communities. Similarly, Lady Llanofor deplored an education which alienated children from their parents, which taught farmers 'to drive the quill instead of the Plough' and girls 'the names of places in Kamchatka' rather than 'how to dress their Parents' dinners'.³⁸ What mattered was maintaining the language and its culture. Children at Llanofor school were taught bilingually, with the aid of a Welsh-English duoglot Bible, a copy of which is now in Abergavenny Museum. We also learn from the Blue Books something of what was attempted in the other Llanofor circle schools. At Cwmdru, English was taught in the morning and Welsh in the afternoon. We are also told that Thomas Price, as an enthusiastic member of the Cymreigyddion, insisted on having the Welsh Bible read in the evening in his parish school. At Abercarn 'the chief promoter', Lady Llanofor, insisted on the schoolmaster teaching Welsh to the children as well as English.³⁹ At a more elevated level, she was also involved, at first, in trying to create a more effective chair of Welsh at Lampeter, and then, in pursuit of the same end, in supporting the foundation of Llandoverly College. If Lampeter failed to produce a Welsh-speaking clerisy then Llandoverly would do its job for it.

These enthusiasts in the renovation of Welsh society may not have understood its structure as well as they should and extemporised when necessary. However, the degree of invention involved (and only careful research can show us how much) came about not only because the attempts at cultural renovation may have been inexpert or ill-informed but because securing cultural autonomy under the nose of the British state of the time could only have been done by also presenting a national tableau which satisfied English picturesque expectations. The Scots had shown the way to achieve this through creating a national costume. George IV appeared in a kilt when he visited Edinburgh in 1822, thus giving Royal approval to this means of recognising Scottishness in a united kingdom. As Walter Scott said, 'We are the Clan, and our king is the Chief.'⁴⁰ Perhaps the Scottish visit of the Waddington family in 1810, when there was a meeting with Walter Scott, encouraged its members to see the Welsh as in some way an equivalent of the Scottish people and that they too could show clan loyalty to their chiefs, their distinctiveness easily recognisable in their dress or their music. Herder could teach them that, not only was a language culture the true basis for a nation, it was also the means to achieve social cohesion.

A secure Welsh identity was not seen by the Llanofor circle as in any way a threat to a United Kingdom and there was genuine loyalty to the British Crown. It was to be expected, therefore, that it would be successful in gaining Royal approval. What may now appear as excessive fawning towards the Crown was then, whether sincere or not, a necessary part of the process of showing how unthreatening Welsh cultural self-consciousness could be, how there was a difference between cultural and political nationalism. If it involved the strengthening of loyalty to the British Crown, then it might be viewed with some indulgence. In his dedication to Prince Albert in the *Liber Landavensis* of 1840, William Jenkins Rees could hardly have been outdone in his effort to show just how loyal and devoted the Welsh were to their sovereigns. The Queen even had in her veins 'the best blood of the ancient Princes of Wales'.⁴¹ Bunsen's access to the Crown, through his friendship with Prince Albert, was also likely to have helped secure Royal patronage for the Llanofor cause, whether through Mr Griffith, Lady Llanofor's harpist, playing for Prince Albert and the Queen when a triple harp was given to the Prince of Wales in 1843, or through Carl Meyer becoming Prince Albert's librarian and private secretary in 1846.⁴²

The Cymreigyddion was also successful in creating an English awareness of Welsh culture. To have the 1845 Eisteddfod reported in such detail and with such respect in the *Illustrated London News*⁴³ was a high point in the effort to convince the English that Welsh cultural revival was unthreatening. The public display of Welshness, often through the medium of English, may have been worthy of ridicule but it was important to establish a case for Wales in an English-speaking Britain. Charlotte Guest, with the support of scholars in the circle, translated what she called in English the Mabinogion, which began appearing in 1838. Perhaps more than any other work, it helped convince a wider world that Wales had a literature which was European in significance. Thomas Stephens's book *The Literature of the Cymri*, published in 1849 with John Guest's support, was another successful product of the Cymreigyddion which helped persuade English literary figures like Matthew Arnold that Wales had a distinctive literature to be taken seriously.

With this success behind it, the Llanofor strategy might have been expected to go from strength to strength, seen from outside as presenting a safely loyal principality while re-vitalising its culture within. But this did not happen. Why not? Though there were reasons why the Welsh themselves may not have been entirely happy with it, we need to recognise the extent to which external forces worked against it. Herder, as we have seen, in affirming cultural pluralism, was all too aware of the way state-machines had scant regard for particular language communities. Thomas Price may have wanted to excite nationality in Wales in the true Herder spirit but others, especially those who served state-machines, were coming to use the concept of nationality in much more sinister and aggressive ways. We need to have some awareness of the contemporary craze for ethnology (the comparative study of the races of mankind) if we are to appreciate the terms in which attacks on, and defences of, Wales were being framed. The Cymreigyddion was very much in touch with these new developments since it had its own ethnological visitor in Dr James Prichard, who was the leading British ethnologist of the time. On his visit in 1838, having already secured for the Celts a place in the Indo-European family in his *Eastern Origins of the Celtic Nations* of 1831, he met Bunsen and, on the basis of the friendship they formed, dedicated his *Natural History of Man* of 1843 to him.

While it was possible to be an ethnologist and remain loyal to the pluralist spirit, there were increasingly those who saw racial difference as genetic, producing better or worse versions of *homo sapiens*. Perhaps it was the imperialist state-machine which, having got its hands on the concept of race, set out to fashion it into an ideological weapon to help impose its power. Race could be used to secure the superiority or inferiority of groups and it was producing some ugly manifestations. John Pinkerton, for example, in his *Dissertation on the Origin and Progress of the Scythians or Goths* maintained that the Irish, the Scottish highlanders, the Welsh, the Bretons and the Spanish Biscayans, as the original peoples of Europe, showed a fatal moral and intellectual weakness which made them impervious to the refinements of civilization. Price thought it necessary to strike back at this attack on the Celts in his *Essay on the Physiognomy and Physiology of the Present Inhabitants of Britain* in 1829 and no wonder that Jane Williams, in her preface to the second volume of her work on Price, of 1855, observed that

It is much to be lamented that many potent directors of public opinion still cherish strong prejudices not merely against Welshmen, but also against every branch of Cambrian and Celtic literature.⁴⁴

These prejudices against Wales should be seen, of course, in the context of concerns over the most effective means the state should adopt in order to cope with the disturbances in what Lord Melbourne called 'the worst and most formidable district in the kingdom'.⁴⁵ In terms of wider British interests, the Llanofor strategy would either be ineffective, so that worker radicalism would

not be controlled by it, or else effective, and therefore dangerously separatist. From an English viewpoint, trying to cope with the Scotch Cattle, the Chartists or Rebecca with the re-assertion of a specifically Welsh national culture must have seemed like pouring fuel on a fire to put it out. With enough troubles on its plate, the last thing the state would have wanted was a Welsh national movement which would unify around a body of language, culture, religion and economy. Even when it was most unthreatening, the Cymreigyddion raised the issue of Welsh nationhood. In the dedication to the *Liber Landavensis*, for example, Wales is referred to as an ancient and distinguished nation. While the Llanof strategy fitted totally within the picture of a Kingdom in which separate nations were united through allegiance to a British, not an English Crown, it was a view of British sovereignty which the more triumphalist of the English found it difficult to recognise.

Aspects of Benjamin Hall's political activity may also have caused concern. Apart from being a source of irritation over his insistence on the church providing Welsh-speaking clergy, in July 1843, when regular reports of the Rebecca Riots were appearing in the press, he spoke and voted in favour of Smith O'Brien's motion in Parliament for the consideration of the causes of discontent in Ireland. Scrutineers might have been encouraged to see worrying parallels between Llanof's Welsh revival and 'Young Ireland' nationalism. Interestingly, while O'Brien became associated with Young Ireland and the revolt which grew from it, its theorist was Thomas Davis who was asking for a revival in the Irish language to achieve an effective bilingualism. Losing one's native tongue, he said, was 'the worst badge of conquest'. 'A nation should guard its language more than its territories'.⁴⁶

The Bunsen connection may also have caused some alarm. While it might have been tolerable, even desirable, for the English, as fellow Teutons, to draw sustenance from him, there would surely be mischief in his cultural nationalism if it gave succour to the Welsh.

However conservative the intention and the practice, therefore, the Llanof strategy could not have avoided being seen as radical by English eyes. Those who wished to be at the head of an organic society within Wales had to question the way in which the institutions of state were made inadequate for them by English colonial policy. The Llanof strategy surely helped convince the state that a much more active programme of anglicising would have to be pursued if Wales was to be fully absorbed into England. It was the strength of Llanof, not its weakness or irrelevance, which helped make necessary the bold strategy of the Blue Books. It had been realised that control through military force not only involved using an expensive and blunt instrument but it neglected the more important cultural front. Anglicising schools, especially, would be a cheaper and more invasive means of social control.

Much attention has been given to the attack on the language in the Blue Books but their message was already present, in embryo, in the Report on the Rebecca Riots of 1844. Her Majesty's Commissioners had told her then that ignorance of English was

a great drawback upon the advancement of the community, and a serious impediment to the removal of those evils which most require correction. Its inconvenience is felt in a practical shape in the obstacles which it presents to the efficient working of many laws and institutions.⁴⁷

Furthermore, since they were relieved to tell her that 'the disturbances of the country, though so widely extended, were not connected with political causes, and that nothing like a general spirit of disaffection, or organised hostility to the laws, pervaded the community',⁴⁸ it would clearly have

been plain mischief-making actively to support the Welsh language, thereby creating further opportunity for possible disaffection. Only an anglicised population would become peaceful subjects of her realm.

The Cymreigyddion would, therefore, have known, even before the well-received 1845 Eisteddfod, that its comprehensive strategy could not continue without being in direct conflict with the designs of central government. Its failure, therefore, to attend seriously to the language needs of people in Abergavenny and its border area probably had more to do with the message of the Rebecca Report than it had with the reluctance of its gentry members to get too involved in the Cymreigyddion's real purpose.

In the Blue Books there were several direct references to the Cymreigyddion and its members and all were, more or less, disparaging. For example

A society called the Cymreigyddion indeed exists, and holds meetings at Abergavenny, where a band of literati promote Welsh literature by making English speeches once a year in its defence. Its proceedings are perfectly innocuous. One of its distinguished members has written a history of Wales, but couched in such antique phraseology that its sale, it is said, has never repaid the expense of printing it.⁴⁹

This is not the language of a detached civil servant but of someone who considered it both authorised and necessary to expose the Cymreigyddion to ridicule. Far from being 'perfectly innocuous', a harmless diversion for English-speaking gentry, it was evidently seen as a threat since it presented a Welsh literature where there should not have been one and worked for continuity and renewal in a Welsh-speaking Wales when the Commissioners' reports were supposed to give conclusive evidence that the language, and its evil effects, should cease as soon as possible.

In what purported to be an educational survey, there was a striking lack of interest in bilingualism, perhaps an indication that what the Cymreigyddion was pioneering in the crucial border area was seen as a dangerously sensible policy which would do nothing to bring Welsh-speaking subversion to an end. Though the Report tells us that Lady Llanofor insisted on her Abercarn schoolmaster teaching Welsh to the children as well as English, we are left in no doubt of her wrong-headedness since it also tells us that the teacher 'thought it quite impracticable to teach the Welsh language to English children, as they would not stay in the school sufficient time'.⁵⁰ At Cwmdu, though the policy of dividing the day's teaching equally between Welsh and English was reported, the Commissioner concentrated on what he was meant to report on. Did the children know what 'sinners' meant and did they understand the catechism they recited?⁵¹ Llanofor school did not receive a visit so its bilingualism went unrecorded and uncriticised. We are simply told that it had 'been conducted in a very satisfactory manner'.⁵² Perhaps Lord Llanofor's status made this uncharacteristic caution necessary.

The favourable view of Welsh language and people that the Cymreigyddion was projecting was very much under attack in the Blue Books. They read almost as supportive material for some popular ethnological treatise. They might almost have been written to confirm that the Celts, in the words of one such volume, 'were altogether an unchaste nation ... and had very little sense of shame'.⁵³ When the Report said 'The Welsh language is a vast drawback to Wales, and a manifold barrier to the moral progress and commercial prosperity of the people. It is not easy to overestimate its evil effects',⁵⁴ it was crude ethnology which gave it a kind of intellectual respectability. It was also the ethnological climate which enabled the Commissioners to present

problems generated by economic and social change as simply the product of racial character and language. Perhaps, however, despite this aggressively mono-cultural approach, the Commissioners did pay unintended homage to Herder by assuming that, while the English language was, in some way, implicated in the creation of the ideology they served, Welsh was, in some way, a language which generated an alternative way of thinking. Perhaps, when they said of the Welsh that they had ‘a natural benevolence and warmth of heart, which powerfully deters them from acts of malice and all deliberate injury to others’, they were recognising that the Welsh language, though a ‘vast drawback’ to progress, as defined by English-speaking oligarchs of the day, was a creative civilizing agent in its own right. Perhaps, deep down, they sensed that their politically expedient stance was intellectually untenable.

In the years immediately after the Blue Books, the Llanofor strategy suffered a series of additional setbacks which seemed to ensure that any remaining impetus would be lost. In 1848 Thomas Price died, as did Mrs Waddington in 1850 and John Guest in 1852. Charlotte, on remarrying, turned her mind to the conventional interests of an English lady. Bunsen left Britain in 1854 and, in the same year, the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion was wound up. Lord Llanofor held government posts from 1854 and Lady Llanofor was deeply involved in editing the six volumes of the Delany papers which began appearing in print in 1861.

Also, by the 1860s, when Matthew Arnold published his *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, the belief in race had developed into such a dominant pseudo-science that it was possible for him to argue for a Welsh character without the language to support it and there were even Welsh people who thought he talked sense. In Arnold, linguistic empiricism asserted itself with a vengeance so that abandoning the Welsh language was seen, not as a crime against civilization, but as ‘a necessity of what is called modern civilization’.⁵⁵ The Enlightenment wisdom of a Thomas Price or a Christian Bunsen was nowhere to be seen. Not surprisingly, when Arnold did decide to turn to Bunsen’s work and read what had been said by the man who had kept a fatherly eye on him after Dr Arnold’s early death and helped secure for him his job as an HMI, the thought of someone of an alternative intellectual tradition appeared to him, though very edifying, merely ‘splay-footed’.⁵⁶ Also, by the 1860s, he thought he was able to engage in what he called conciliation with the Welsh,⁵⁷ and, by 1887, the Times,⁵⁸ earlier vituperative, could also afford to be conciliatory for, by that time, the colonial tide was flowing nicely in their favour.

The Llanofor strategy could not have gone unchallenged, and, on its own, probably would not have been adequate in coping with the social and cultural problems that an industrial Wales was presenting, but, in its time, it formed a necessary step in the securing of Welsh life and, pursued with zeal, it was fruitful. In so far as it failed, it was the victim, not only of its own limitations, but of the skilful policy of a paranoid English establishment which saw Welsh cultural resurgence as a danger to its interests. It may have been the case that the strategy would have come to the end of its natural life in mid century but the intervention of the Reports of 1844 and 1847 surely hastened that end.

In the circumstances, what was achieved by this Welsh movement in the Romantic period was truly remarkable and it has left us a precious legacy. The part Lady Llanofor played in it has secured for her a prominent place in the Welsh Pantheon. In our own age of globalised uniformity, it is still the case that civilization will only be maintained by language communities, with their shared identities, shared histories, lives with particular pasts, presents and futures, just as that Lady and her friends had realised. The thought which inspired them has more relevance now than ever, as Wales forms part of the European community.

Bunsen exhorted the members of the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion to go beyond the enthusiasm of the moment, to keep up their zeal for a language and its life. 'We must not let it die', he said. Neither must we.

¹C. E. Vulliamy, *Aspasia, the Life and Letters of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany, 1700-1788* (Bles, London, 1935), p. 231.

²Joyce Hemlow, *The History of Fanny Burney* (Clarendon, Oxford, 1958), p. 258.

³Charlotte Barrett (ed.), *Diary and Letters of Madame d'Arblay* (Swan Sonnenschein, London, 1893), Vol. II, p. 537.

⁴H.J.C.Grierson (ed.), *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott* (Constable, London, 1932), Vol. II, p. 470.

⁵Joyce Hemlow (ed.), *Burney Journals and Letters* (Clarendon, Oxford, 1984), Vol. XI, pp. 539-40.

⁶Sian Rhiannon Williams, 'Llwydlas, Gwenynen Gwent a Dadeni Diwylliannol y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Bymtheg' in Geraint H. Jenkins (ed.), *Cof Cenedl XV* (Llandysul, 2000).

⁷Sir Joseph Bradney, *A History of Monmouthshire, the Hundred of Abergavenny, Part 2* (1906 and Academy Books, London, 1992), p. 385.

⁸Hemlow, *Burney Journals and Letters*, p. 485.

⁹Frances Baroness Bunsen, *A Memoir of Baron Bunsen* (Longman Green, London, 1868), Vol. I, p. 110.

¹⁰Augustus J. C. Hare, *The Life and Letters of Frances Baroness Bunsen* (Dalby, Isbister and Co., London, 1879), Vol. I, p. 81.

¹¹John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. IV, chapter XIX, 7.

¹²Baroness de Staël-Holstein, *Germany*, O. W. Wight (trans.), (Hurd and Houghton, New York, 1875), Part IV, chapter X, 1, p. 363.

¹³Bunsen, *A Memoir of Baron Bunsen*, Vol. I, p. 154.

¹⁴*ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 575.

¹⁵*ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 218.

¹⁶*ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 77.

¹⁷Sir Isaiah Berlin, *The Age of Enlightenment* (Mentor, New American Library, New York, 1963), p. 273.

¹⁸*ibid.*, p. 275.

¹⁹Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. III, chapters 1 and 2.

²⁰B. Suphan (ed.), 'Ueber die Neuere Deutsche Litteratur' in *Herders Sammtliche Werke* (Berlin, 1877), Vol. II, p. 18.

²¹F. M. Barnard (ed.), 'Ideas for a Philosophy of History' in *Herder on Social and Political Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 284.

²²Bunsen, *A Memoir of Baron Bunsen*, Vol. I, p. 86.

²³*ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 495.

²⁴Hemlow, *Burney Journals and Letters*, p. 466.

²⁵John Davies, *History of Wales* (Penguin, London, 1994), p.386.

²⁶Bunsen, *A Memoir of Baron Bunsen*, Vol. I, p. 376.

²⁷F. Max Müller, *Biographical Essays* (Longmans Green, London, 1884), p. 337.

²⁸Hare, *The Life and Letters of Frances Baroness Bunsen*, Vol. I, p. 491.

²⁹*ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 68.

³⁰Bunsen, *A Memoir of Baron Bunsen*, Vol. I, p. 585.

³¹*ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 224.

³²Barnard (ed.), *Herder on Social and Political Culture*, p. 324.

³³Stephen Neill, *Anglicanism* (Penguin, London, 1958), p. 317.

³⁴*Welsh in Education and Life* (HMSO, London, 1927), p. 44.

- ³⁵R. Tudur Jones, 'The Church and the Welsh Language in the Nineteenth Century' in Geraint H. Jenkins (ed.), *The Welsh Language and Its Social Domains, 1801-1911* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2000), p. 228.
- ³⁶*ibid.*, Mark Ellis Jones, "'The Confusion of Babel'?" The Welsh Language, Law Courts and Legislation in the Nineteenth Century', p. 593, footnote 36.
- ³⁷*Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales, in three parts. Part II, Brecknock, Cardigan, Radnor and Monmouth* (London, 1847), p. 137.
- ³⁸Arthur Herbert Jones, *His Lordship's Obedient Servant* (Gomer, Llandysul, 1987), p. 138.
- ³⁹*Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales, Part II*, p. 308.
- ⁴⁰Tom Steel, *Scotland's Story* (Fontana, Collins, London, 1985), p. 212.
- ⁴¹Rev. W. J. Rees (ed.), *Liber Landavensis* (Welsh Manuscript Society, Llandovery, 1840), p. ii.
- ⁴²Bunsen, *Memoir of Baron Bunsen*, Vol. II, pp. 119-20.
- ⁴³*Illustrated London News*, Oct. 25, 1845.
- ⁴⁴Jane Williams, *The Literary Remains of the Rev. Thomas Price, Carnhuanawc* (Llandovery, 1855), Vol. II, p. x.
- ⁴⁵Gwyn A. Williams, *The Merthyr Rising* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1988), p. 19.
- ⁴⁶James Lydon, *The Making of Ireland* (Routledge, London, 1998), p. 296.
- ⁴⁷*Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry for South Wales* (London, 1844), pp. 36-7.
- ⁴⁸*ibid.*, p. 1.
- ⁴⁹*Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales, Part II*, p. 66.
- ⁵⁰*ibid.*, p. 308.
- ⁵¹*ibid.*, p. 137.
- ⁵²*ibid.*, p. 307.
- ⁵³John Kennedy, *The Natural History of Man, or Popular Chapters on Ethnography* (Cassell, London, 1851), p. 54.
- ⁵⁴*Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales, Part II*, p. 66.
- ⁵⁵Matthew Arnold, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature' in R. H. Super (ed.), *Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1962), Vol. III, p. 297.
- ⁵⁶George W. E. Russell (ed.), *Letters of Matthew Arnold, 1848-1888* (Macmillan, London, 1895), Vol. I, p. 397.
- ⁵⁷*ibid.*, p. 367.
- ⁵⁸*The Times*, August 10, p. 9, column 3.