

ENGLISH AND WELSH

To be invited to give a lecture under the O'Donnell Trust, and especially to give the first lecture in Oxford of this series, is an honour; but it is one which I hardly deserve. In any case a less dilatory performance of the duty might have been expected. But the years 1953 to 1955 have for me been filled with a great many tasks, and their burden has not been decreased by the long-delayed appearance of a large 'work', if it can be called that, which contains, in the way of presentation that I find most natural, much of what I personally have received from the study of things Celtic.

However, this lecture is only, was only by the Electors intended, I think, to be an Introduction, a curtain-raiser to what will, I hope, be a long series of lectures by eminent scholars. Each of these will, no doubt, enlighten or challenge even the experts. But one purpose the series will have, so far as the intentions of the munificent founder, the late Charles James O'Donnell, can be discerned: that is, to arouse or strengthen the interest of the English in various departments of Celtic studies, especially those that are concerned with the origins and connexions of the peoples and languages of Britain and Ireland. It is in fact to a certain extent a missionary enterprise.

In a missionary enterprise a converted heathen may be a good exhibit; and as such, I suppose, I was asked to appear. As such anyway I am here now: a philologist in the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic field. Indeed a Saxon in Welsh terms, or in our own one of the English of Mercia. And yet one who has always felt the attraction of the ancient history and pre-history of these islands, and most particularly the attraction of the Welsh language in itself.

I have tried to some extent to follow that attraction. I was advised to do so indeed by a Germanic philologist, a great encourager and adviser of the young, born 100 years ago this

month: Joseph Wright. It was characteristic of him that this advice was given in the form: 'Go in for Celtic, lad; there's money in it.' That the last part of the admonition was hardly true matters little; for those who knew Wright well, as an elder friend rather than as an official, knew also that this motive was not really the dominant one in his heart.

Alas! in spite of his advice I have remained a Saxon, knowing only enough to feel the strength of John Fraser's maxim – which he used to propound to me, with a gleam in his eye of special malice towards myself (as it seemed): 'A little Welsh is a dangerous thing.'

Dangerous certainly, especially if you do not know it for what it is worth, mistaking it for the much that would be much better. Dangerous, and yet desirable. I would say, for most students of English, essential. Mr C. S. Lewis, addressing students of literature, has asserted that the man who does not know Old English literature 'remains all his life a child among real students of English'. I would say to the English philologists that those who have no first-hand acquaintance with Welsh and its philology lack an experience necessary to their business. As necessary, if not so obviously and immediately useful, as a knowledge of Norse or French.

Preachers usually address the converted, and this value of Celtic (particularly Welsh) philology is perhaps more widely recognized now than when Joseph Wright gave me his advice. I know many scholars, here and elsewhere, whose official field is in English or Germanic, who have drunk much more than I from this particular well of knowledge. But they often remain, as it were, secret drinkers.

If by that furtive or at least apologetic attitude they disclaim possession of more than the dangerous little, not presuming to enter the litigious lists of the accredited Celtic scholars, they are perhaps wise. Welsh at least is still a spoken language, and it may well be true that its intimate heart cannot be reached by those who come to it as aliens, however sympathetic. But a man should look over the fences of a neighbouring farm or garden – a piece of the country which he himself inhabits and tills – even if he does not presume to offer advice. There is much to learn short of the inner secrets.

Anyway, I grant that I am myself a 'Saxon', and that therefore my tongue is not long enough to compass the language of Heaven. There lies, it seems, a long silence before me, unless I reach a destination more in accordance with merit than with Mercy. Or unless that story is to be credited, which I first met in the pages of Andrew Boord, physician of Henry VIII, that tells how the language of Heaven was changed. St Peter, instructed to find a cure for the din and chatter which disturbed the celestial mansions, went outside the Gates and cried *caws bobî*, and slammed the Gates to again before the Welshmen that had surged out discovered that this was a trap without cheese.

But Welsh still survives on earth, and so possibly elsewhere also; and a prudent Englishman will use such opportunities for speech as remain to him. For this tale has little authority. It is related rather to the contemporary effort of the English Government to destroy Welsh on earth as well as in Heaven.

As William Salesbury said in 1547, in a prefatory address to *Henry the eyght: your excellent wysdome . . . hath causede to be enactede and stablyshede by your moste cheffe & heghest counsayl of the parlyament that there shal herafter be no difference in lawes and language bytwyxtre youre subiectes of youre principalyte of Wales and your other subiectes of your Royalme of Englande.*

This was made the occasion, or the pretext, for the publication of *A Dictionary in Englyshe and Welshe*. The first, and therefore, as Salesbury says, *rude (as all thinges be at their furst bygynnyng)*. Its avowed object was to teach the literate Welsh English, enabling them to learn it even without the help of an English-speaking master, and it contained advice that would certainly have aided the Royal Will, that the English language should ultimately drive out the Welsh from Wales. But though Salesbury may have had a sincere admiration for English, *iaith gyflawn o ddawn a buddygoliaeth*, he was (I suppose) in fact concerned that the literate Welsh should escape the disabilities of a monoglot Welshman under the tyranny of the law. For Henry VIII's *Act for certain Ordinances in the King's Majesty's Dominion and Principality of Wales* laid it down that all ancient Welsh laws and customs at variance with English law should be held void in courts of justice, and that all legal proceedings must be conducted in English. This last and most oppressive rule was maintained until recent times (1830).

Salesbury was in any case a Welsh scholar, if a pedantic one, and the author of a translation into Welsh of the New Testament (1567), and joint author of a translation of the Prayer Book (1567, 1586). The Welsh New Testament played a considerable part in preserving to recent times, as a literary norm above the colloquial and the divergent dialects, the language of an earlier age. But fortunately in the Bible of 1588, by Dr William Morgan, most of Salesbury's pedantries were abandoned. Among these was Salesbury's habit of spelling words of Latin origin (real or supposed) as if they had not changed: as, for example, *eccles* for *eglwys*, from *ecclesia*.

But in one point of spelling Salesbury's influence was important. He gave up the use of the letter *k* (in the New Testament), which had in medieval Welsh been used more frequently than *c*. Thus was established one of the visible characteristics of modern Welsh in contrast with English: the absence of *k*, even before *e*, *i*, and *y*. Students of English, familiar with the similar orthographic usage of Anglo-Saxon scribes derived from Ireland, often assume that there is a connexion between Welsh and ancient English spelling in this point. But there is in fact no direct connexion; and Salesbury, in answer to his critics (for the loss of *k* was not liked), replied: *C for K, because the printers have not so many as the Welsh requireth*. It was thus the English printers who were really responsible for spelling *Kymry* with a *C*.

It is curious that this legal oppression of the Welsh language should have occurred under the Tudors, proud of their Welsh ancestry, and in times when the authority and favour of the politically powerful were given to what we might call 'The Brut and all that', and Arthurian 'history' was official. It was hardly safe to express in public doubt of its veracity.

The eldest son of Henry VII was called Arthur. His survival, whether he had fulfilled any Arthurian prophecies or not, might (it may be surmised) have much changed the course of history. His brother Henry might have been remembered chiefly in the realms of music and poetry, and as the patron of such ingenious Welshmen as that numerologist and musician, John Lloyd of Caerleon, whom Mr Thurston Dart has studied and is studying.¹ Music indeed might well be considered by O'Donnell lecturers

as one of the points of closest contact between Wales and England; but I am quite incompetent to deal with it.

However, as things turned out, music and verse were only the toys of a powerful monarch. No Arthurian romance would avail to protect Welsh custom and Welsh law, if it came to a choice between them and effective power. They would weigh no more in the balance than the head of Thomas More against a single castle in France.

Governments – or far-seeing civil servants from Thomas Cromwell onwards – understand the matter of language well enough, for their purposes. Uniformity is naturally neater; it is also very much more manageable. A hundred-per-cent Englishman is easier for an English government to handle. It does not matter what he *was*, or what his fathers were. Such an 'Englishman' is any man who speaks English natively, and has lost any effective tradition of a different and more independent past. For though cultural and other traditions may accompany a difference of language, they are chiefly maintained and preserved by language. Language is the prime differentiator of peoples – not of 'races', whatever that much-misused word may mean in the long-blended history of western Europe.

Málin eru höfuðeinkenni þjóðanna – 'Languages are the chief distinguishing marks of peoples. No people in fact comes into being until it speaks a language of its own; let the languages perish and the peoples perish too, or become different peoples. But that never happens except as the result of oppression and distress.'

These are the words of a little-known Icelander of the early nineteenth century, Sjéra Tómas Sæmundsson. He had, of course, primarily in mind the part played by the cultivated Icelandic language, in spite of poverty, lack of power, and insignificant numbers, in keeping the Icelanders in being in desperate times. But the words might as well apply to the Welsh of Wales, who have also loved and cultivated their language for its own sake (not as an aspirant for the ruinous honour of becoming the lingua franca of the world), and who by it and with it maintain their identity.

As a mere introducer or curtain-raiser, not as an expert, I will

speak now a little further about these two languages, English and Welsh, in their contact and contrast, as coinhabitants of Britain. My glance will be directed to the past. Today English and Welsh are still in close contact (in Wales), little for the good of Welsh one might say who loves the idiom and the beautiful word-form of uncontaminated *Cymraeg*. But though these pathological developments are of great interest to philologists, as are diseases to doctors, they require for their treatment a native speaker of the modern tongue. I speak only as an amateur, and address the *Saeson* and not the *Cymry*; my view is that of a *Sayce* and not a *Waugh*.

I use these surnames – both well known (the first especially in the annals of philology) – since *Sayce* is probably a name of Welsh origin (*Sais*) but means an Englishman, while *Waugh* is certainly of English origin (*Walh*) but means a Welshman; it is in fact the singular of *Wales*. These two surnames may serve both to remind students of the great interest of the surnames current in England, to which Welsh is often the key, and to symbolize the age-long interpenetration of the peoples speaking English and Welsh.

Of peoples, not races. We are dealing with events that are primarily a struggle between languages. Here I will put in an aside, not unconnected with my main theme. If one keeps one's eye on language as such, then one must regard certain kinds of research with caution, or at least not misapply their results.

Among the things envisaged by Mr O'Donnell, one of the lines of inquiry that seems indeed to have specially attracted him, was nomenclature, particularly personal and family names. Now English surnames have received some attention, though not much of it has been well informed or conducted scientifically. But even such an essay as that of Max Förster in 1921 (*Keltisches Wortgut im Englischen*) shows that many 'English' surnames, ranging from the rarest to the most familiar, are linguistically derived from Welsh (or British), from place-names, patronymics, personal names, or nick-names; or are in part so derived, even when that origin is no longer obvious. Names such as Gough, Dewey, Yarnal, Merrick, Onions, or Vowles, to mention only a few.

This kind of inquiry is, of course, significant for the purpose

of discovering the etymological origin of elements current in English speech, and characteristic of modern Englishry, of which names and surnames are a very important feature even though they do not appear in ordinary dictionaries. But for other purposes its significance is less certain.

One must naturally first set aside the names derived from places long anglicized in language. For example, even if *Harley* in Shropshire could be shown to be beyond doubt of the same origin as *Harlech* (*Harddlech*) in Wales, nothing instructive concerning the relations of the English and Welsh peoples arises from the occurrence of *Harley* (derived from the Shropshire place) as a family name in England. The etymology of *Harley* remains an item in place-names research, and such evidence as it affords for the relations of Welsh (or British) and English refers to the distant past, for which the later surname has no significance. Similarly with the surname *Eccles*, even when that place-name or place-name element is not under suspicion of having nothing to do with *ecclesia*.

The case may be different when a name is derived from a place actually in Wales; but even such names could migrate far and early. A probable example is Gower: best known to English students as the name of a fourteenth-century poet whose language was strongly tinged with the dialect of Kent, the whole breadth of Ynys Prydain from the region of Gŵyr. But with regard to such names, and indeed to others not derived from place-names, the Welsh origin of which is more certain or more obvious – such as *Griffiths*, *Lloyd*, *Meredith*, or *Cadwallader* – one should reflect that the patrilinear descent of names makes them misleading.

English or Anglo-Norman names were no doubt adopted in Wales far more freely and extensively than were Welsh names at any period on the other side; but it is, I suppose, hazardous to assume that everyone who bore a Welsh name in the past, from which eventually a surname might be derived – Howell or Maddock or Meredith or the like – was necessarily of Welsh origin or a Welsh-speaker. It is in the early modern period that names of this sort first become frequent in English records, but caution is, no doubt, necessary even in dealing with ancient times and the beginning of the contact between the two languages.

The enormous popularity, to which place-names and other records bear witness, of the *Cad/Chad* group of names or name elements in early England must be held to indicate the adoption of a name as such. The anglicization of its form (from which the *Chad* variety proceeds) further supports this view. The West-Saxon royal genealogy begins with the 'Celtic' name *Cerdic*, and contains both *Cadda/Ceadda* and *Ceadwalla*. Leaving aside the problems which this genealogy presents to historians, a point to note in the present context is not so much the appearance of late British names in a supposedly 'Teutonic' royal house, as their appearance in a markedly anglicized form that must be due to their being borrowed as names, and to their accommodation like ordinary loan-words to English speech-habits. One deduction at least can be safely made: the users of these names had changed their language and spoke English, not any kind of British.² In themselves these names prove only that foreign names like foreign words were easily and early adopted by the English. There is, of course, no doubt that the view of the process which established the English language in Britain as a simple case of 'Teutons' driving out and dispossessing 'Celts' is altogether too simple. There was fusion and confusion. But from names alone without other evidence deductions concerning 'race' or indeed language are insecure.

So it was again when new invaders came to Britain. In later times it cannot be assumed that a man who bore a 'Danish' name was (in whole or part) of Scandinavian 'blood' or language, or even of Danish sympathies. *Ulfcytel* is as Norse a name as *Ceadwalla* is British, yet it was borne by a most valiant opponent of the Danes, the alderman of East Anglia, of whom it is recorded that the Danes themselves said that no man *on Angelcynne* had ever done them more damage in fighting.³ Not every Brián and Níál in Iceland had Irish blood in his veins.

Mixture of peoples is, of course, one of the ways in which the borrowing of names takes place. Mothers have, no doubt, always played an important part in this process. Yet one should reflect that even when the adoption of a name was due in the first instance to, say, intermarriage, this may have been an event of small general importance. And once a name has been adopted it may spread quite independently. When we come to patrilinear

surnames it is obvious that these may multiply without any addition to the 'blood' to which their etymology would seem to testify, indeed rather with the extinction of it as an effective ingredient in the make-up, physical or mental, of the bearers of the name.

I am not a German, though my surname is German (anglicized like Cerdic) – my other names are Hebrew, Norse, Greek, and French. I have inherited with my surname nothing that originally belonged to it in language or culture, and after 200 years the 'blood' of Saxony and Poland is probably a negligible physical ingredient.

I do not know what Mr O'Donnell would have said to this. I suspect that to him anyone who spoke a Celtic language was a Celt, even if his name was not Celtic, but anyone who had a Celtic name was a Celt whatever he spoke; and so the Celts won on both the swings and the roundabouts.

But if we leave such terms as Celtic and Teutonic (or Germanic) aside, reserving them for their only useful purpose, linguistic classification, it remains an evident conclusion from history that apart from language the inhabitants of Britain are made of the same 'racial' ingredients, though the mixing of these has not been uniform. It is still patchy. The observable differences are, however, difficult or impossible to relate to language.

The eastern region, especially in the south-east (where the breach with the Continent is narrowest), is the area where the newer layers lie thicker and the older things are thinner and more submerged. So it must have been for many ages, since this island achieved more or less its present peculiar shape. So, if these parts are now considered the most English, or the most Danish, they must once have been the most Celtic, or British, or Belgic. There still endures the ancient pre-English, pre-Roman name of Kent.

For neither Celtic nor Germanic forms of speech belong in origin to these islands. They are both invaders, and by similar routes. The bearers of these languages have clearly never extirpated the peoples of other language that they found before them. This, however, is, I think, an interesting point to note, when we consider the present position (that is, all that has followed

since the fifth century A.D.): there is no evidence at all for the survival in the areas which we now call England and Wales of any pre-Celtic speech.⁴ In place-names we may find fragments of long-forgotten Neolithic or Bronze Age tongues, celticized, romanized, anglicized, ground down by the wear of time. It is likely enough. For if pre-English names, especially of mountains or rivers, survived the coming of the North Sea pirates, they may as well have survived the coming of the Celtic Iron Age warriors. Yet when the place-names expert hazards a pre-Celtic origin, it in fact only means that from our defective material he cannot devise any etymology fit to print.

This eradication of pre-Indo-European language is interesting, even if its cause or causes remain uncertain. It might be thought to reflect a natural superiority of Indo-European kinds of language; so that the first bringers of that type of speech were eventually completely successful linguistically, while successors bringing languages of the same order, contesting with their linguistic peers, were less so. But even if one admits that languages (like other art-forms or styles) have a virtue of their own, independent of their immediate inheritors – a thing which I believe – one has to admit that other factors than linguistic excellence contribute to their propagation. Weapons, for instance. While the completion of a process may be due simply to the fact that it has gone on for a very long time.

But whatever the success of the imported languages, the inhabitants of Britain, during recorded history, must have been in large part neither Celtic nor Germanic: that is, *not* derived physically from the original speakers of those varieties of language, nor even from the already racially more mixed invaders who planted them in Britain.

In that case they are and were not either 'Celts' or 'Teutons' according to the modern myth that still holds such an attraction for many minds. In this legend Celts and Teutons are primeval and immutable creatures, like a triceratops and a stegosaurus (bigger than a rhinoceros and more pugnacious, as popular palaeontologists depict them), fixed not only in shape but in innate and mutual hostility, and endowed even in the mists of antiquity, as ever since, with the peculiarities of mind and temper which can be still observed in the Irish or the Welsh on the one

hand and the English on the other: the wild incalculable poetic Celt, full of vague and misty imaginations, and the Saxon, solid and practical when not under the influence of beer. Unlike most myths this myth seems to have no value at all.

According to such a view *Beowulf*, though in English, must, I should say, be far more Celtic – being full of dark and twilight, and laden with sorrow and regret – than most things that I have met written in a Celtic language.

Should you wish to describe the riding to hunt of the Lord of the Underworld in 'Celtic' fashion (according to this view of the word), you would have to employ an Anglo-Saxon poet. It is easy to imagine how he would have managed it: ominous, colourless, with the wind blowing, and a *wóma* in the distance, as the half-seen hounds came baying in the gloom, huge shadows pursuing shadows to the brink of a bottomless pool.

We have, alas! no Welsh of a like age to compare with it; but we may glance none the less at the White Book of Rhydderch (containing the so-called *Mabinogion*). This manuscript, though its date is of the early fourteenth century, no doubt contains matter composed long before, much of which had come down to the author from times still more remote. In it at the beginning of the *mabinogi* of Pwyll Prince of Dyfed we read how Pwyll set out to hunt in Glyn Cuch:

And he sounded his horn and began to muster the hunt, and followed after the dogs and lost his companions; and while he was listening to the cry of the pack, he could hear the cry of another pack, but they had not the same cry and were coming to meet his own pack.

And he could see a clearing in the wood as of a level field, and as his pack reached the edge of the clearing he could see a stag in front of the other pack. And towards the middle of the clearing lo! the pack that was pursuing it overtaking it and bringing it to the ground. And then he looked at the colour of the pack, without troubling to look at the stag; and of all the hounds he had seen in the world he had seen no dogs the same colour as these. The colour that was on them was a

brilliant shining white, and their ears red; and as the exceeding whiteness of the dogs glittered so glittered the exceeding redness of their ears. And he came to the dogs and drove away the dogs that had killed the stag, and baited his own pack upon it.

But these dogs that the prince had driven off were the hounds of Arawn, King of Annwn, Lord of the Underworld.

A very practical man, with a keen feeling for bright colour, was this Pwyll, or the writer who described him. Can he have been a 'Celt'? He had never heard of the word, we may feel sure; but he spoke and wrote with skill what we now classify as a Celtic language: Cymraeg, which we call Welsh.

That is all that I have to say at this time about the confusion between language (and nomenclature) and 'race'; and the romantic misapplication of the terms Celtic and Teutonic (or Germanic). Even so I have spent too long on these points for the narrow limits of my theme and time; and my excuse must be that, though the dogs that I have been beating may seem to most of those who are listening to me dead, they are still alive and barking in this land at large.

I will turn now to the Celtic language in Britain. But even if I were fully qualified, I should not now be giving a sketch of Celtic philology. I am trying only to indicate some of the points in which this study may offer special attraction to the speakers of English, points which have specially attracted me. So I will pass over 'P and Q': I mean the difficult and absorbing problems that are presented by the linguistic and archaeological evidence concerning the immigrations from the European mainland, connected or supposed to be connected with the coming of different varieties of Celtic speech to Britain and Ireland. I am concerned in any case only with 'P-Celts' and among those with the speech-ancestors of the Welsh.

The first point that I think should be considered is this: the antiquity in Britain of Celtic language. Part of Britain we now call England, the land of the Angles; and yet all the days of the English in it, from Hengest to Elizabeth II, are short on an archaeological scale, short even on a Celtic scale. When our

speech-ancestors began their effective linguistic conquests – no doubt much later than their first tentative settlements in such regions as the Sussex coast – in the fifth century A.D. the Celtic occupation had probably some thousand years behind it: a length of time as long as that which separates us from King Alfred.

The English adventure was interrupted and modified, after hardly more than 300 years, by the intrusion of a new element, a different though related variety of Germanic coming from Scandinavia. This is a complication which occurred in historically documented times, and we know a good deal about it. But similar things, historically and linguistically undocumented, though conjectured by archaeology, must have occurred in the course of the celticizing of Britain. The result may be capable of a fairly simple generalization: that the whole of Britain south of the Forth–Clyde line by the first century A.D. shared a British or 'Brittonic' civilization, 'which so far as language goes formed a single linguistic province from Dumbarton and Edinburgh to Cornwall and Kent'.⁵ But the processes by which this linguistic state was achieved were no doubt as complicated, differing in pace, mode, and effect, in different areas, as were those of the subsequent process, which has at length achieved a result which 2,000 years hence might be generalized in almost the same terms, though referring to the spread not of 'Brittonic' but of English. (But parts of Wales would have still to be excepted.)

For instance, I do not know what linguistic complications were introduced, or may be thought to have been introduced, by the 'Belgic' invasion, interrupted by Julius Caesar's ill-considered and deservedly ill-fated incursion; but they could, I suppose, have involved dialectal differences within Celtic as considerable as those which divided ninth-century Norse from the older Germanic layer which we now call 'Anglo-Saxon'.⁶ But 2,000 years hence those differences which now appear marked and important to English philologists may be insignificant or unrecognizable.

None the less, far off and now obscure as the Celtic adventures may seem, their surviving linguistic traces should be to us, who live here in this coveted and much-contested island, of deep interest, as long as antiquity continues to attract the minds of

men. Through them we may catch a glimpse or echo of the past which archaeology alone cannot supply, the past of the land which we call our home.

Of this I may perhaps give an illustration, though it is well known. There stands still in what is now England the ruinous fragment of an ancient monument that we have long called in our English fashion *Stonehenge*, 'the suspended stones', remembering nothing of its history. Archaeologists with the aid of geologists may record the astonishing fact that some of its stones must certainly have been brought from Pembrokeshire, and we may ponder what this great feat of transport must imply: whether in veneration of the site, or in numbers of the population, or in organization of so-called primitive peoples long ago. But when we find 'Celtic' legend, presumably without the aid of precise geological knowledge, recording in its fashion the carrying of stones from Pembroke to Stonehenge, then we must also ponder what that must imply: in the absorption by Celtic-speakers of the traditions of predecessors, and the echoes of ancient things that can still be heard in the seemingly wild and distorted tales that survive enshrined in Celtic tongues.

The variety of Celtic language that we are at present concerned with was one whose development went on at about the same pace as that of spoken Latin – with which it was ultimately related. The distance between the two was greater, of course, than that separating even the most divergent forms of Germanic speech; but the language of southern Britain would appear to have been one whose sounds and words were capable of representation *more Romano* in Latin letters less unsatisfactorily than those of other languages with which the Romans came in contact.

It had entered Britain – and this seems to me an important point – in an *archaic state*. This requires some closer definition. The languages of Indo-European kind in Europe do not, of course, all shift at the same pace, either throughout their organization or in any given department (such as phonetic structure). But there is none the less a general and similar movement of change that achieves successively similar stages or modes.

Of the primitive modes of the major branches – the hypothetical common Indo-European wholly escapes us – we have now no

records. But we may use 'archaic' with reference to the states of those languages that are earliest recorded. If we say that classical Latin, substantially the form of that language just before the beginning of our present era, is still an example of the European archaic mode, we may call it an 'old' language. Gothic, though it is recorded later, still qualifies for that title. It is still an example of 'Old Germanic'.

That even so limited a record is preserved, at this stage, of any Germanic language, even of one comparatively well advanced in change,⁷ is of great importance to Germanic philology.⁸ Anything comparable that represented, say, even one of the dialects of Gaul would have profound effects on Celtic philology.

Unfortunately, for departmental convenience in classifying the periods of the individual languages of later times, we obscure this point by our use of 'old' for the earliest period of their effective records. Old Welsh is used for the scanty records of a time roughly equivalent to that of the documents of Anglo-Saxon; and this we call Old English.

But Old English and Old Welsh were not on a European basis old at all. English certainly, even when we first meet it in the eighth century, is a 'middle' speech, well advanced into the second stage, though its temporary elevation as a learned and cultured language retarded for a time its movement towards a third.⁹ The same might be said for Old Welsh, no doubt, if we had enough of it. Though the movement of Welsh was naturally not the same as that of English. It resembled far more closely the movement of the Romance languages – for example, in the loss of a neuter gender; the early disappearance of declensions contrasted with the preservation in verbs of distinct personal inflexions and a fairly elaborate system of tenses and moods.

More than 200 years passed in the dark between the beginning of the linguistic invasion of Britain by English and our first records of its form. Records of the fifth and early sixth centuries would certainly produce some surprises in detail for philologists (as no doubt would those of Welsh for a like period); yet the evidence seems to me clear that already in the days of Hengest and Horsa, at the moment of its first entry, English was in the 'middle' stage.

On the other hand, British forms of language had entered

Britain in an archaic state; indeed, if we place their first arrival some centuries before the beginning of our era, in a mode far more archaic than that of the earliest Latin. The whole of its transformation, therefore, from a language of very ancient mode, an elaborately inflected and recognizable dialect of western Indo-European, to a middle and a modern speech has gone on in this island. It has, and had long ago, become, as it were, acclimatized to and naturalized in Britain; so that it belonged to the land in a way with which English could not compete, and still belongs to it with a seniority which we cannot overtake. In that sense we may call it an 'old' tongue: old in this island. It had become already virtually 'indigenous' when English first came to disturb its possession.

Changes in a language are largely conditioned by its own patterns of sound and function. Even after loosening or loss of former contacts, it may continue to change according to trends already in evidence before migration. So 'Celts' in their new situations in Britain, no doubt, continued for some time to change their language along the same lines as their kinsmen on the Continent. But separation from them, even if not complete, would tend to halt some changes already initiated, and to hasten others; while the adoption of Celtic by aliens might set up new and unprecedented movements. Celtic dialects in this island, as compared with their nearest kin overseas, would slowly become British and peculiar. How far and in what ways that was true in the days of the coming of the English we can only guess, in the absence of records from this side and of connected texts of known meaning in any Celtic dialect of the Continent. The pre-Roman languages of Gaul have for all practical purposes disastrously perished. We may, however, compare the Welsh treatment of the numerous Latin words that it adopted with the Gallo-Roman treatment of the same words on their way to French. Or the Gallo-Roman and French treatment of Celtic words and names may be compared with their treatment in Britain. Such comparisons certainly indicate that British was divergent and in some respects conservative.

The Latin reflected by the Welsh loan-words is one that remains far closer to classical Latin than to the spoken Latin of the Continent, especially that of Gaul. For example: in the

preservation of *c* and *g* as stops before all vowels; of *v* (*u*) as distinct from medial *b* (*ð*); or of quantitative distinctions in vowels, so that Latin *ā*, *i* are in Welsh treated quite differently from *ā*, *ē*.¹⁰ This conservatism of the Latin element may of course be, at least in part, due to the fact that we are looking at words that were early removed from a Latin context to a British, so that certain features later altered in spoken Latin were fossilized in the British dialects of the West. Since the spoken Latin of southern Britain perished and did not have time to develop into a Romance language, we do not know how it would have continued to develop. The probability is, however, that it would have been very different from that of Gaul.

In a similar way the early English loan-words from French preserve, for instance in *ch* and *ge* (as in *change*), consonantal values of Old French since altered in France. Spoken French also eventually died out in England, and we do not know how it would have developed down to the present day, if it had survived as an independent dialect; though the probability is that it would have shown many of the features revealed in the English loan-words.

In the treatment of Celtic material there was, in any case, wide divergence between Gaul and Britain. For example the Gallo-Roman *Rotomagus*, on its way to *Rouen*, is represented in late Old English as *Rodem*; but in Old Welsh it would have been written **Rotmag*, and later **Rodva*, **Rhodfa*.

English was well set in its own, and in many respects (from a general Germanic point of view) divergent, directions of change at the time of its arrival, and it has changed greatly since. Yet in some points it has remained conservative. It has preserved, for instance, the Germanic consonants *þ* (now written *th*) and *w*. No other Germanic dialect preserves them both, and *þ* is in fact otherwise preserved only in Icelandic. It may at least be noted that Welsh also makes abundant use of these two sounds.¹¹ It is a natural question to ask: how did these two languages, the long-settled British and the new-come English, affect one another, if at all; and what at any rate were their relations?

It is necessary to distinguish, as far as that is possible, between languages as such and their speakers. Languages are not hostile one to another. They are, in the contrast of any pair, only similar

or dissimilar, alien or akin. In this, actual historical relationship may be and commonly is involved. But it is not inevitably so. Latin and British appear to have been similar to one another, in their phonetic and morphological structure, to a degree unusual between languages sufficiently far separated in history to belong to two different branches of western Indo-European language. Yet Goidelic Celtic must have seemed at least as alien to the British as the language of the Romans.

English and British were far sundered in history and in structure, if less so in the department of phonetics than in morphology. Borrowing words between the two would have presented in many cases small difficulty; but learning the other speech as a language would mean adventuring into an alien country with few familiar paths. As it still does.¹²

Between the speakers of British and English there was naturally hostility (especially on the British side); and when men are hostile the language of their enemies may share their hatred. On the defending side, to the hatred of cruel invaders and robbers was added, no doubt, contempt for barbarians from beyond the pale of Rome, and detestation of heathens unbaptized. The Saxons were a scourge of God, devils allowed to torment the Britons for their sins. Sentiments hardly less hostile were felt by the later baptized English for the heathen Danes. The invective of Wulfstan of York against the new scourge is much like that of Gildas against the Saxons: naturally, since Wulfstan had read Gildas and cites him.

But such sentiments, especially those expressed by preachers primarily concerned with the correction of their own flock, do not govern all the actions of men in such situations. Invasion has as first objectives wealth and land; and those who are successful leaders in such enterprises are eager rather for territory and subjects than for the propagation of their native tongue, whether they are called Julius or Hengest or William. On the other side leaders will seek to hold what they can, and will treat with the invaders for their own advantage. So it was in the days of the Roman invasions; and small mercy did the Romans show to those who called themselves their friends.

Of course in the first turmoils the defenders will not try to learn the language of the barbarian invaders, and if, as the story

goes in the case of the English-speaking adventurers, these are in part revolted mercenaries, there will be no need. Neither do successful land-grabbers in the first flush of loot and slaughter bother much about 'the lingo of the natives'. But that situation will not last long. There will come a pause, or pauses – in the history of the spread of English there were many – in which the leaders will look ahead from their small conquests to lands still beyond their grasp, and sideways to their rivals. They will need information; in rare cases they may even display intelligent curiosity.¹³ Even as Gildas accuses the surviving British princes of warring with one another rather than with the enemy, so the kings of small English realms at once began to do the same. In such circumstances sentiments of language against language, Roman against barbarian, or Christendom against heathendom will not outweigh the need for communication.

How was such communication carried on? Indeed for that matter how were the many surviving British place-names borrowed, once we move farther in and leave the ports and coastal regions that pirates in the Channel might long have known? We are not told. We are left to an estimate of probabilities, and to the difficult analysis of the evidence of words and place-names.

It is, of course, impossible to go into details concerning the problems that these present. Many of them are familiar in any case to English philologists, to whom the Latin loan-words in Old English, for instance, have long been of interest. Though it is probably fair to say that in this matter the importance of the Welsh evidence is not yet fully recognized.

According to probability, apart from direct evidence or linguistic deductions, Latin of a kind is likely to have been a medium of communication at an early stage. Though *medium* gives a false impression, suggesting a language belonging to neither side. Latin must have been the spoken language of many if not most of the defenders in the south-east; while some sort of command of Latin is likely to have been acquired by many 'Saxons'. They had been operating in the Channel and its approaches for a long time, and had gained precarious footholds in lands of which Latin was the official tongue.¹⁴

Later British and English must have come face to face. But

there was certainly never any iron-curtain line, with everything English on the one side, and British on the other. Communication certainly went on. But communications imply persons, on one side or both, who have at least some command of the two languages.

In this connexion the word *wealhstod* is interesting; and I may perhaps pause to consider it, since it has not (as far as I am aware) received the attention that it deserves. It is the Anglo-Saxon word for an 'interpreter'. It is peculiar to Old English; and for that reason, besides the fact that it contains the element *wealh*, *walh* (on which I will say more in a moment), it is a fair conclusion that it arose in Britain. The etymology of its second element *stod* is uncertain, but the word as a whole must have meant for the English a man who could understand the language of a *Walh*, the word they most commonly applied to the British. But the word does not seem necessarily to have implied that the *wealhstod* was himself a 'native'. He was an intermediary between those who spoke English and those who spoke a *welisc* tongue, however he had acquired a knowledge of both languages. Thus Ælfric says of King Oswald that he acted as St Aidan's *wealhstod*, since the king knew *scyttisc* (sc. Gaelic) well, but Aidan *ne mihte gebigan his spræce to Norðhymbriscum swa hræpe þa git*.¹⁵

That the *Walas* or Britons got to know of this word would not be surprising. That they did seems to be shown by the mention among the great company of Arthur in the hunting of the Twrch Trwyth (*Kulhwch and Olwen*) of a man who knew all languages; his name is given as Gwrhyr Gwalstawt Ieithoed, that is Gwrhyr Interpreter of Tongues.

Incidentally it is curious to find a bishop named *Uualchstod* mentioned in Bede's History, belonging to the early eighth century (about A.D. 730); for he was 'bishop of those beyond Severn', that is of Hereford. Such a name could not become used as a baptismal name until it had become first used as a 'nickname' or occupational name, and that would not be likely to occur except in a time and region of communications between peoples of different language.

It would certainly seem that eventually at any rate the English made some efforts to understand Welsh, even if this remained a professional task for gifted linguists. Of what the English in

general thought about British or Welsh we know little, and that only from later times, two or three centuries after the first invasions. In Felix of Crowland's life of St Guthlac (referring to the beginning of the eighth century) British is made the language of devils.¹⁶ The attribution of the British language to devils and its description as cacophonous are of little importance. Cacophony is an accusation commonly made, especially by those of small linguistic experience, against any unfamiliar form of speech. More interesting is it that the ability of some English people to understand 'British' is assumed. British was, no doubt, chosen as the language of the devils mainly as the one alien vernacular at that time likely to be known to an Englishman, or at least recognized by him.

In this story we find the term 'British' used. In the Anglo-Saxon version of the Life the expression *Bryttisc sprecende* appears. This no doubt is partly due to the Latin. But *Brettas* and the adjective *bryttisc*, *bryttisc* continued to be used throughout the Old English period as equivalents of *Wealas* (*Walas*) and *wielisc* (*waelisc*), that is of modern *Welsh*, though it also included Cornish. Sometimes the two terms were combined in *Bretwalas* and *bretwielisc*.

In modern England the usage has become disastrously confused by the maleficent interference of the Government with the usual object of governments: uniformity. The misuse of British begins after the union of the crowns of England and Scotland, when in a quite unnecessary desire for a common name the English were officially deprived of their Englishry and the Welsh of their claim to be the chief inheritors of the title British.

'Fy fa fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman', wrote Nashe in 1595 (*Have with you to Saffron Walden*).

Child Rowland to the dark tower came,
His word was stil: Fie, foh, and fum,
I smell the blood of a British man,

Edgar says, or is made to say, in *King Lear* (III. iv).

The modern Englishman finds this very confusing. He has long read of British prowess in battle, and especially of British stubbornness in defeat in many imperial wars; so when he hears of Britons stubbornly (as is to be expected) opposing the landing

of Julius Caesar or of Aulus Plautius, he is apt to suppose that the English (who meekly put themselves down as British in hotel-registers) were already there, facing the first of their long series of glorious defeats. A supposition far from uncommon even among those who offer themselves for 'honours' in the School of English.

But in early times there was no such confusion. The *Brettas* and the *Walas* were the same. The use of the latter term, which was applied by the English, is thus of considerable importance in estimating the linguistic situation of the early period.

It seems clear that the word *walh*, *wealh* which the English brought with them was a common Germanic name for a man of what we should call Celtic speech.¹⁷ But in all the recorded Germanic languages in which it appears it was also applied to the speakers of Latin. That may be due, as is usually assumed, to the fact that Latin eventually occupied most of the areas of Celtic speech within the knowledge of Germanic peoples. But it is, I think, also in part a linguistic judgement, reflecting that very similarity in style of Latin and Gallo-Brittonic that I have already mentioned. It did not occur to anyone to call a Goth a *walh* even if he was long settled in Italy or in Gaul. Though 'foreigner' is often given as the first gloss on *wealh* in Anglo-Saxon dictionaries this is misleading. The word was not applied to foreigners of Germanic speech, nor to those of alien tongues, Lapps, Finns, Esthonians, Lithuanians, Slavs, or Huns, with whom the Germanic-speaking peoples came into contact in early times. (But borrowed in Old Slavonic in the form *vlachû* it was applied to the Roumanians.) It was, therefore, basically a word of linguistic import; and in itself implied in its users more linguistic curiosity and discrimination than the simple stupidity of the Greek *barbaros*.

Its special association by the English with the Britons was a product of their invasion of Britain. It contained a linguistic judgement, but it did not discriminate between the speakers of Latin and the speakers of British. But with the perishing of the spoken Latin of the island, and the concentration of English interests in Britain, *walh* and its derivatives became synonymous with *Brett* and *bryttisc*, and in the event replaced them.¹⁸

In the same way the use of *wealh* for slave is also due solely

to the situation in Britain. But again the gloss 'slave' is probably misleading. Though the word *slave* itself shows that a national name can become generalized in this sense, I doubt if this was true of *wealh*. The Old English word for 'slave' in general remained *þeow*, which was used of slaves in other countries or of other origin. The use of *wealh*, apart from the legal status to which surviving elements of the conquered population were no doubt often reduced, must always have implied recognition of British origin. Such elements, though incorporated in the domain of an English or Saxon lord, must long have remained 'not English', and with this difference preservation in a measure of their British speech may have endured longer than is supposed.

This is a controversial point, and I do not deal with the question of place-names, such as Walton, Walcot, and Walworth, that may be supposed to contain this old word *walh*.¹⁹ But the incorporation in the domains conquered by the English-speaking invaders of relatively large numbers of the previous inhabitants is not denied; and their linguistic absorption must have steadily proceeded, except in special circumstances.

What effect would that have, did that have, on English? It had none that is visible for a long time. Not that we should expect it. The records of Old English are mainly learned or aristocratic; we have no transcripts of village-talk. For any glimpse of what was going on beneath the cultivated surface we must wait until the Old English period of letters is over.

Unheeded language without pride or sense of ancestry may change quickly in new circumstances. But the English did not know that they were 'barbarians', and the language that they brought with them had an ancient cultivation, at any rate in its tradition of verse. It is thus to the appearance of linguistic class distinctions that we should look for evidence of the effects of conquest and the linguistic absorption of people of other language, largely into the lowest social strata.

I know of only one passage that seems to hint at something of the kind. It refers to a surprisingly early date, A.D. 679. In that year the Battle of the Trent was fought between the Mercians and Northumbrians. Bede relates how a Northumbrian noble called Imma was captured by the Mercians and pretended to be a man of poor or servile class. But he was eventually recognized

as a noble by his captors, as Bede reports, not only by his bearing but *by his speech*.

The question of the survival in 'England' of British population and still more of British forms of speech is, of course, a matter of debate, differing in the evidence and the terms of the debate from region to region. For instance, Devonshire, in spite of its British name, has been said on the evidence collected by the Place-names Survey to appear as one of the most English of the counties (onomastically). But William of Malmesbury in his *Gesta Regum* says that Exeter was divided between the English and the Welsh as late as the reign of Athelstan.

Well known, and much used in debate and in the dating of sound-changes, are the Welsh place-names given in Asser's *Life of Alfred*: such as *Guilou* and *Uisc* for the rivers Wiley and Exe, or *Cairuuis* for Exeter. Since Asser was a native of South Wales (as we should now call it), Welsh was presumably his native language, though he may eventually have learned as much English, shall we say, as his friend the king learned of Latin. These names in Asser have been used (e.g. by Stevenson) as evidence for the survival of Welsh speech even as far east as Wiltshire as late as the end of the ninth century.

With the mention of Asser I will return, before I close, to the point that I mentioned when I began: the interests and uses of Welsh and its philology to students of English. I do not enter into the controversy concerning the genuineness of Asser's *Life of Alfred*, whether it is a document belonging approximately to A.D. 900, as it purports to be, or is in fact a composition of a much later date. But it is clear that in this debate we have a prime example of the contact of the two schools of learning: Welsh historical and philological scholarship and English. Arguments for and against the genuineness of this document are based on the forms of the Welsh names in it, and an estimate of their cogency requires at least some acquaintance with the problems attending the history of Welsh. Yet the document is a life of one of the most remarkable and interesting Englishmen, and no English scholar can be indifferent to the debate.

To many, perhaps to most people outside the small company of the great scholars, past and present, 'Celtic' of any sort is,

nonetheless, a magic bag, into which anything may be put, and out of which almost anything may come. Thus I read recently a review of a book by Sir Gavin de Beer, and, in what appeared to be a citation from the original,²⁰ I noted the following opinion on the river-name *Arar* (Livy) and *Araros* (Polybius): 'Now *Arar* derives from the Celtic root meaning running water which occurs also in many English river-names like *Avon*.' It is a strange world in which *Avon* and *Araros* can have the same 'root' (a vegetable analogy still much loved by the non-philological when being wise about words). Catching the lunatic infection, one's mind runs on to the River Arrow, and even to arrowroot, to Ararat, and the descent into Avernus. Anything is possible in the fabulous Celtic twilight, which is not so much a twilight of the gods as of the reason.

That was perhaps, in this time and place, an unnecessary aside. I am addressing those of rational mind and philological learning; but especially those who in spite of these qualifications have not yet for themselves discovered the interests and the uses of Welsh and its philology.

I have already glanced at the interest of this study to Romance philology, or the later history of spoken Latin, and of the special importance that it has for Anglo-Saxon. But the student of English as a Germanic tongue will find many things that throw new light on his familiar material; and some curious similarities interesting to note, even if they are dismissed as parallels produced by chance.

It would not be my place to treat them extensively, even if I had the time. I will only refer to two points in illustration. A traveller should at least produce some samples.

As an example of a curious parallelism I will mention a peculiar feature of the Old English substantive verb, the modern 'be'. This had two distinct forms of the 'present': A, used only of the actual present, and B, used only as a future or consuetudinal. The B functions were expressed by forms beginning with *b-*, which did not appear in the true present: thus, *bīo*, *bist*, *bið*; pl. *bīoð*. The meaning of *bið* was 'is (naturally, always, or habitually)' or 'will be'.

Now this system is peculiar to Old English. It is not found

in any other Germanic language, not even in those most closely related to English. The association with the *b*-forms of two different functions that have no necessary logical connexion is also notable. But I mention this feature of Old English morphology here only because the same distinction of functions is associated with similar phonetic forms in Welsh.

In Welsh one finds a true present without *b*-forms, and a tense with a *b*-stem used both as a future and a consuetudinal.²¹ The 3 sg. of the latter tense is *bydd* from earlier **bið*.²² The resemblance between this and the OE form is perhaps made more remarkable if we observe that the short vowel of OE is difficult to explain and cannot be a regular development from earlier Germanic, whereas in Welsh it is regularly derived.

This similarity may be dismissed as accidental. The peculiarity of OE may be held to depend simply on preservation in the English dialect of a feature later lost in others; the anomalous short vowel of *bist* and *bið* may be explained as analogical.²³ The OE verb is in any case peculiar in other ways not paralleled by Welsh (the 2 sg. of the true present *earð*, later *eart*, is not found outside English). It will still remain notable, none the less, that this preservation occurred in Britain and in a point in which the usage of the native language agreed. It will be a morphological parallel to the phonetic agreement, noted above, seen in the English preservation of *þ* and *w*.

But this is not the full story. The Northumbrian dialect of Old English uses as the plural of tense B the form *biðun*, *bioðun*. Now this must be an innovation developed on British soil. Its invention was strictly unnecessary (since the older plural remained sufficiently distinct from the singular), and its method of formation was, from the point of view of English morphology, wholly anomalous.²⁴ Its similarity (especially in apparent relation to the 3 sg.) to Welsh *byddant* is obvious. (The still closer Welsh 1 pl. *byddwn* would not have had, probably, this inflexion in Old Welsh.)

In my second example I return to a matter of phonology, but one of the highest importance. One of the principal phonetic developments in Old English, which eventually changed its whole vocalic system and had profound effect upon its morphology, was that group of changes usually called by us *umlaut* or 'mutation'. These changes are, however, closely paralleled by the changes

which in Welsh grammar are usually called 'affection', thus disguising their fundamental similarity, though in detail and in chronology there may be considerable differences between the processes in the two languages.

The most important branch of these changes is *i*-mutation or *i*-affection. The problems attending their explanation in English and in Welsh are similar (for instance, the question of the varying parts played by anticipation or 'vowel harmony' and by epenthesis), and the study of them together throws light on both. Also, since the phonology of the place-names borrowed by the English in Britain is of great importance for the dating of *i*-mutation in their language, it is not only desirable but necessary for the English philologist to acquaint himself with the evidence and the theories on both sides. The English process is also important to the Welsh philologist for similar reasons.

The north-west of Europe, in spite of its underlying differences of linguistic heritage – Goidelic, Brittonic, Gallic; its varieties of Germanic; and the powerful intrusion of spoken Latin – is as it were a single philological province, a region so interconnected in race, culture, history, and linguistic fusions that its departmental philologies cannot flourish in isolation. I have cited the processes of *i*-mutation/*i*-affection as a striking example of this fact. And we who live in this island may reflect that it was on this same soil that both were accomplished.²⁵ There are, of course, many other features of Welsh that should have a special interest for students of English. I will briefly mention one before I conclude. Welsh is full of loan-words from or through English. This long series, beginning in Anglo-Saxon times and continuing down to the present day, offers to any philologist interesting illustrations of the processes of borrowing by ear and spoken word,²⁶ besides providing some curious features of its own. The historian of English, so often engaged in investigating the loan-words in his own too hospitable tongue, should find its study of special interest; though in fact it has been mainly left to Welsh scholars.

The earlier loans are perhaps of chief interest, since they sometimes preserve words, or forms, or meanings that have long ceased to exist in English. For instance *hongian* 'hang, dangle', *cusan* 'a kiss', *belltws* 'chapel (subordinate church)' and also 'a secluded spot', derived from OE *hongian*, *cyssan*, (*ge*)*bedhūs*. The

Englishman will note that the long-lost *-an* and *-ian* of Old English infinitives once struck the ears of Welshmen long ago; but he will be surprised perhaps to find that *-ian* became a loan-element in itself, and was added to various other verbs, even developing a special form *-ial*.²⁷ He cannot therefore, alas, at once assume that such words as *tincian* 'tinkle' or *mumlian* 'mumble' are evidence for the existence in Old English (**tincian*, **mumelian*) of words first actually recorded in Middle English.

Even the basest and most recent loans have, however, their interest. In their exaggerated reflection of the corruptions and reductions of careless speech, they remind one of the divergence between Latin and the 'Vulgar' or 'Spoken Latin' that we deduce from Welsh or French. *Potatoes* has produced *tatws*; and in recent loans *submit* > *smit-io*, and *cement* > *sment*. But this is a large subject with numerous problems, and I am not competent to do more than point out to the English that it is one worthy of their attention. For myself, as a West-Midlander, the constant reflection, in the Welsh borrowings of older date, of the forms of West-Midland English is an added attraction.

But no language is justly studied merely as an aid to other purposes. It will in fact better serve other purposes, philological or historical, when it is studied for love, for itself.

It is recorded in the tale of *Lludd a Llefelys* that King Lludd had the island measured in its length and its breadth, and in Oxford (very justly) he found the point of centre. But none the less the centre of the study of Welsh for its own sake is now in Wales; though it should flourish here, where we have not only a chair of Celtic graced by its occupant, but in Jesus College a society of Welsh connexions by foundation and tradition, the possessor among other things of one of the treasures of Medieval Welsh: The Red Book of Hergest.²⁸ For myself I would say that more than the interest and uses of the study of Welsh as an adminicle of English philology, more than the practical linguist's desire to acquire a knowledge of Welsh for the enlargement of his experience, more even than the interest and worth of the literature, older and newer, that is preserved in it, these two things seem important: Welsh is of this soil, this island, the senior language of the men of Britain; and Welsh is beautiful.

I will not attempt to say now what I mean by calling a language

as a whole 'beautiful', nor in what ways Welsh seems to me beautiful; for the mere recording of a personal and if you will subjective perception of strong aesthetic pleasure in contact with Welsh, heard or read,²⁹ is sufficient for my conclusion.

The basic pleasure in the phonetic elements of a language and in the style of their patterns, and then in a higher dimension, pleasure in the association of these word-forms with meanings, is of fundamental importance. This pleasure is quite distinct from the practical knowledge of a language, and not the same as an analytic understanding of its structure. It is simpler, deeper-rooted, and yet more immediate than the enjoyment of literature. Though it may be allied to some of the elements in the appreciation of verse, it does not need any poets, other than the nameless artists who composed the language. It can be strongly felt in the simple contemplation of a vocabulary, or even in a string of names.

If I were to say 'Language is related to our total psycho-physical make-up', I might seem to announce a truism in a priggish modern jargon. I will at any rate say that language – and more so as expression than as communication – is a natural product of our humanity. But it is therefore also a product of our individuality. We each have our own personal linguistic potential: we each have a *native language*. But that is not the language that we speak, our cradle-tongue, the first-learned. Linguistically we all wear ready-made clothes, and our native language comes seldom to expression, save perhaps by pulling at the ready-made till it sits a little easier. But though it may be buried, it is never wholly extinguished, and contact with other languages may stir it deeply.

My chief point here is to emphasize the difference between the first-learned language, the language of custom, and an individual's native language, his inherent linguistic predilections: not to deny that he will share many of these with others of his community. He will share them, no doubt, in proportion as he shares other elements in his make-up.³⁰

Most English-speaking people, for instance, will admit that *cellar door* is 'beautiful', especially if dissociated from its sense (and from its spelling). More beautiful than, say, *sky*, and far more beautiful than *beautiful*. Well then, in Welsh for me *cellar*

doors are extraordinarily frequent, and moving to the higher dimension, the words in which there is pleasure in the contemplation of the association of form and sense are abundant.

The nature of this *pleasure* is difficult, perhaps impossible, to analyse. It cannot, of course, be discovered by structural analysis. No analysis will make one either like or dislike a language, even if it makes more precise some of the features of style that are pleasing or distasteful. The pleasure is possibly felt most strongly in the study of a 'foreign' or second-learned language; but if so that may be attributed to two things: the learner meets in the other language *desirable* features that his own or first-learned speech has denied to him; and in any case he escapes from the dulling of usage, especially inattentive usage.

But these predilections are not the product of second-learned languages; though they may be modified by them: experience must affect the practice or appreciation of any art. My cradle-tongue was English (with a dash of Afrikaans). French and Latin together were my first experience of second-learned language. Latin – to express now sensations that are still vivid in memory though inexpressible when received – seemed so *normal* that pleasure or distaste was equally inapplicable. French³¹ has given to me less of this pleasure than any other language with which I have sufficient acquaintance for this judgement. The fluidity of Greek, punctuated by hardness, and with its surface glitter, captivated me, even when I met it first only in Greek names, of history or mythology, and I tried to invent a language that would embody the Greekness of Greek (so far as it came through that garbled form); but part of the attraction was antiquity and alien remoteness (from me): it did not touch home. Spanish came my way by chance and greatly attracted me. It gave me strong pleasure, and still does – far more than any other Romance language. But incipient 'philology' was, I think, an adulterant: the preservation in spite of change of so great a measure of the linguistic feeling and style of Latin was certainly an ingredient in my pleasure, an historical and not purely aesthetic element.

Gothic was the first to take me by storm, to move my heart. It was the first of the old Germanic languages that I ever met. I have since mourned the loss of Gothic literature. I did not then.

The contemplation of the vocabulary in *A Primer of the Gothic Language* was enough: a sensation at least as full of delight as first looking into Chapman's *Homer*. Though I did not write a sonnet about it. I tried to invent Gothic words.

I have, in this peculiar sense, studied ('tasted' would be better) other languages since. Of all save one among them the most overwhelming pleasure was provided by Finnish, and I have never quite got over it.

But all the time there had been another call – bound to win in the end, though long baulked by sheer lack of opportunity. I heard it coming out of the west. It struck at me in the names on coal-trucks; and drawing nearer, it flickered past on station-signs, a flash of strange spelling and a hint of a language old and yet alive; even in an *adeiladwyd 1887*, ill-cut on a stone-slab, it pierced my linguistic heart. 'Late Modern Welsh' (bad Welsh to some). Nothing more than an 'it was built', though it marked the end of a long story from daub and wattle in some archaic village to a sombre chapel under the dark hills. Not that I knew that then. It was easier to find books to instruct one in any far alien tongue of Africa or India than in the language that still clung to the western mountains and the shores that look out to Iwerddon. Easier at any rate for an English boy being drilled in the study of languages that (whatever Joseph Wright may have thought of Celtic) offered more hope of profit.

But it was different in Oxford. There one can find books, and not only those one's tutor recommends. My college, I know, and the shade of Walter Skeat, I surmise, was shocked when the only prize I ever won (there was only one other competitor), the Skeat Prize for English at Exeter College, was spent on Welsh.

Under severe pressure to enlarge my apprentice knowledge of Latin and Greek, I studied the old Germanic languages; when generously allowed to use for this barbaric purpose emoluments intended for the classics, I turned at last to Medieval Welsh. It would not be of much use if I tried to illustrate by examples the pleasure that I got there. For, of course, the pleasure is not solely concerned with any word, any 'sound-pattern + meaning', by itself, but with its fitness also to a whole style. Even single notes of a large music may please in their place, but one cannot illustrate this pleasure (not even to those who have

once heard the music) by repeating them in isolation. It is true that language differs from any 'large music' in that its whole is never heard, or at any rate is not heard through in a single period of concentration, but is apprehended from excerpts and examples. But to those who know Welsh at all a selection of words would seem random and absurd; to those who do not it would be inadequate under the lecturer's limitations, and if printed unnecessary.

Perhaps I might say just this – for it is not an analysis of Welsh, or of myself, that I am attempting, but an assertion of a feeling of pleasure, and of satisfaction (as of a want fulfilled) – it is the ordinary words for ordinary things that in Welsh I find so pleasing. *Nef* may be no better than *heaven*, but *wybren* is more pleasing than *sky*. Beyond that what can one do? For a passage of good Welsh, even if read by a Welshman, is for this purpose useless. Those who understand him must already have experienced this pleasure, or have missed it for ever. Those who do not cannot yet receive it. A translation is of no avail. For this pleasure is felt most immediately and acutely in the moment of association: that is in the reception (or imagination) of a word-form which is felt to have a certain style, and the attribution to it of a meaning which is not received through it. I could only speak, or better write and speak and translate, a long list: *adar, alarch, eryr; tân, dwfr, awel, gwynt, niwl, glaw; haul, lloer, sêr; arglwydd, gwas, morwyn, dyn; cadarn, gwan, caled, meddal, garw, llyfn, llym, swrth; glas, melyn, brith*,³² and so on – and yet fail to communicate the pleasure. But even the more long-winded and bookish words are commonly in the same style, if a little diluted. In Welsh there is not as a rule the discrepancy that there is so often in English between words of this sort and the words of full aesthetic life, the flesh and bone of the language. Welsh *annealladwy, dideimladrwydd, amhechadurus, atgyfodiad*, and the like are far more Welsh, not only as being analysable, but in style, than *incomprehensible, insensibility, impeccable, or resurrection* are English.

If I were pressed to give any example of a feature of this style, not only as an observable feature but as a source of pleasure to myself, I should mention the fondness for nasal consonants, especially the much-favoured *n*, and the frequency with which word-patterns are made with the soft and less sonorous *w* and

the voiced spirants *f* and *dd* contrasted with the nasals: *nant*, *meddiant*, *afon*, *llawenydd*, *cenfigen*, *gwanwyn*, *gwenyn*, *crافanc*, to set down a few at random. A very characteristic word is *gogoniant* 'glory':

*Gogoniant i'r Tad ac i'r Mab ac i'r Ysbryd Glân,
megis yr oedd yn y dechrau, y mae'r awr hon, ac y
bydd yn wastad, yn oes oesoedd. Amen.*

As I have said, these tastes and predilections which are revealed to us in contact with languages not learned in infancy – *O felix peccatum Babel!* – are certainly significant: an aspect in linguistic terms of our individual natures. And since these are largely historical products, the predilections must be so too. My pleasure in the Welsh linguistic style, though it may have an individual colouring, would not, therefore, be expected to be peculiar to myself among the English. It is not. It is present in many of them. It lies dormant, I believe, in many more of those who today live in Lloegr and speak Saesneg. It may be shown only in uneasy jokes about Welsh spelling and place-names; it may be stirred by contacts no nearer than the names in Arthurian romance that echo faintly the Celtic patterns of their origin; or it may with more opportunity become vividly aware.³³

Modern Welsh is not, of course, identical with the predilections of such people. It is not identical with mine. But it remains probably closer to them than any other living language. For many of us it rings a bell, or rather it stirs deep harp-strings in our linguistic nature. In other words: for satisfaction and therefore for delight – and not for imperial policy – we are still 'British' at heart. It is the native language to which in unexplored desire we would still go home.

So, hoping that with such words I may appease the shade of Charles James O'Donnell, I will end – echoing in rejoinder the envoi of Salesbury's Preface:³⁴

Dysgwn y llon Frythoneg!
Doeth yw ei dysg, da iaith deg.

NOTES

- 1 Some of his work is contained in B.M. MS. Add. 31922, together with compositions by Henry and his friends.
- 2 The names from which *Cerdic* and *Ceadwalla* were derived may be assumed to have had some such late British form as *Car[a]dic* and *Cadwallôn*. In the West-Saxon forms the accent was shifted back to accord with the normal Germanic initial stress. In *Ceadwalla*, and probably in *Cerdic*, the initial *c* had been fronted, and the pronunciation intended was probably nearer modern English *ch* than *k*. The genealogy begins with *Cerdic* in the sense that this name is given to the ancestor of the later kings who first landed in Britain in A.D. 495 (according to the Chronicle) at a place called *Cerdices ora*. The relation of this account to real events is debatable. The borrowing of names must at least indicate close contacts. If *Cerdic* actually existed, the family to which he belonged can hardly have come first to Britain in his time. But when we come to *Cadda* in the fourth generation after *Cerdic*, and *Ceadwalla* in the sixth (in the late seventh century), the situation is quite different.
- 3 After the Battle of Thetford in 1004: *hi naefre wyrser handplegan on Angelcynne ne gemetton bonne Ulfcytel him to brohte* (Chronicle C and D).
- 4 Scotland presents different problems, which do not concern us, except as affording a glimpse of the fact that the Celticizing in language of this island was at least as complicated a process as that which eventually produced 'English'. Of the survival of a pre-Celtic and non-Indo-European language in 'Pictland' the most recent discussion is that of Professor Jackson in ch. vi of *The Problem of the Picts* (ed. F. Wainwright, 1955).
- 5 Jackson, op. cit., p. 156.
- 6 The 'Belgic' invasion did not resemble the Scandinavian invasions in routes or points of impact. Actually in these respects it strikingly resembled the invasion of those elements in the 'Anglo-Saxon' immigration to whom the debatable name of 'Jutes' is given.
- 7 In the days of Ulphilas the language of Scandinavia must have been in many respects far more archaic.
- 8 Especially aesthetically. In Gothic we are afforded specimens of a real language, and though unfortunately these do not represent its free and natural use, we can perceive in them a language of beautiful and well-ordered word-form, well fitted for the liturgical use to which it was at one time put.
- 9 The shifts of language naturally do not present sharp boundaries between 'periods', but this second or 'middle' period of English ended in the thirteenth century; after which the third period began. Though this is not the division usually made.
- 10 These features are exemplified in *ciwdod* (*ciuitāt-em*), *ciwed* (*ciuitās*), *gem* (*gemma*); *pader* (*Pāter noster*) beside *yscawl*, *ysgol* (*scōla*); *ffydd* (*fides*) beside *swydd* (*sedēs*).
- 11 Whereas the remigrant British, the Breton of Armorica, has changed *p* (*th*) to *s* and later *z*.
- 12 Though it may be noted that many of the things that strike the modern Saxon as insuperably odd and difficult about Welsh have no importance for the days of the first contacts of British and English speech. Chief among these are, I suppose, the alteration of the initial consonants of words (which revolts his Germanic feeling for the initial sound of a word as a prime feature of its identity); and the sounds of *ll* (voiceless *l*) and *ch* (voiceless back spirant). But the consonant-alterations are due to a grammatical use of the results of a phonetic process (soft mutation or lenition) that was probably only just beginning in the days of Vortigern. Old English possessed both a voiceless *l* and the voiceless back spirant *ch*.
- 13 Alfred was no doubt an exceptional person. But we see in him a case that shows how even bitter war may not wholly destroy the desire to know. He was engaged in a desperate conflict with an enemy that came very near to robbing him

of all his patrimony, yet he reports his conversations with a Norseman, Ohthere, about the geography and economics of Norway, a land that he certainly did not intend to invade; and it is clear from Ohthere's account that the king also asked some questions about languages.

- 14 This may seem probable enough; but it does not promise easy evidence to the historical philologist. He will be faced with Latin incorporated in Welsh, and in English (each with its own phonetic history), and with different kinds of Latin on either side of the Channel.
- 15 We here see the word applied to a tongue that was though Celtic not British. *Wealhstod* became the ordinary word in Old English for either an interpreter or a translator; but that was at a much later date. It seems never, however, to have been applied to communications with the 'Danes'.
- 16 Latin Life, ch. xxxiv. 'What follows occurred in the days of Coenred, king of the Mercians [704-9], when the pestiferous British foes of the Saxons were embroiling the English in piratical raids and organized devastation. One night at time of cock-crow, when according to his custom the hero Guthlac of blessed memory began his vigils, suddenly as if he were lost in a trance he seemed to hear the roaring of a tumultuous crowd. At that he started up from his light sleep and rushed from the cell where he sat. Standing with ears cocked he recognized words and the native mode of speech of British soldiers coming from the roof; for when in former times he had been isolated among them on his various expeditions he had learned to understand their cacophonous manner of speaking. Just as he had made sure that it came through the thatch of the roof, at that moment his whole settlement seemed to burst into flames.' The devils then caught Guthlac with their spears.
- 17 Its origin is not of importance in this context. It is commonly supposed to be the same as that of the Celtic tribal name represented in Latin sources as *Volcae*: that is derived from it at a time sufficiently early to allow it to be germanicized in form.
- 18 Traces remain of the sense 'Romans'. *Widsith*, which contains many memories of pre-migration days, has an archaic form *mid Runwalum*, and mentions *Wala rice* as the realm ruled by *Casere* (Caesar); *weala sunderricht* and *reht Romwala* are found in two glosses on *ius Quiritum*. But these are not normal uses. Later applications to Gaul (France) are probably not derived from English tradition.

The men who established themselves at Richard's castle in Hereford in 1052 were called *Normanni* and *pa Frencyscan*, but in the Laud Chronicle *pa welisce* (*waelisce*) *men*. And when Edward the Confessor returned from abroad the same Chronicle says that he came of *Weal-lande*, meaning Normandy. But these are not natural English uses and are in fact simply items of the influence of Norse upon the English of the late period. In Norse *valskr* and *Valland* had continued to be applied specifically to Gaul. There is other evidence of the influence of Norse in the same part of the same Chronicle: *woldon raedan on hi* (always mistranslated 'plot against') is an anglicization of Norse *ráða á* 'to go for, to attack'.

- 19 They were generally supposed to do so; but it has been shown that in fact many contain either *weall* 'wall' or *weald* 'forest'. But scepticism has in reaction probably swung too far. In any case a number of these names must still be allowed to contain *walh*, among them several in the east far from Wales: Surrey, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk. When these names were first made they must have referred to groups of people who were not regarded as English, but were recognized as British; and language must have been the principal characteristic by which this was judged. But how long that situation lasted is another matter.
- 20 For my purpose it does not matter at all whether Sir Gavin or his reviewer was the author of the remark: both were posing as scholars.
- 21 The association of these two dissimilar functions is again notable. Old Irish uses *b*-forms in these two functions, but distinguishes between future and consuetudinal in inflexion. The Welsh tense (*byddaf*, &c.) as a whole blends the two functions, though the older language had also a form of the 3 sg. *bid* (*bit*) limited to consuetudinal use. The difference of function is not yet fully realized by Anglo-Saxon

scholars. The older dictionaries and grammars ignore it, and even in recent grammars it is not clearly stated; the consuetudinal is usually overlooked, though traces of it survive in English as late as the language of Chaucer (in *beth* as consuetudinal sg. and pl.).

- 22 The Irish, Welsh, and English forms relate to older *bī*, *bij*- (cf. Latin *fīs*, *fit*, &c.). The development from *bij*- to *bið*- in Welsh is due to a consonantal strengthening of *j* which began far back in British. When *ij* reached the stage *ið* is not known, but a date about A.D. 500 seems probable.
- 23 The influence of the short *i* in the forms of the true present might be held responsible. In a pre-English stage these would have been *im*, *is*, *ist* (*is*).
- 24 The addition of a plural ending (normally belonging to the past tense) to an inflected form of the 3 sg. In this way *biðun* differs from the extended form *sindun* made from the old pl. *sind*. The latter was already pl. and its ending *-nd* could not be recognized as an inflexion, whereas the *ið* of *bið* was the normal ending of the 3 sg.
- 25 Some philologists (e.g. Förster, in *Der Flussname Thenise*) now hold that the English process belonged to the seventh century and was not completed till the beginning of the eighth; it thus belonged wholly to Britain and did not begin until after the completion of the first stage of British *i*-affection (the 'final *i*-affection'). But no linguistic matters are simple in this region. The beginnings of the process in English must lie back in pre-invasion times, whatever may be true of its results, or of any of its vocalic effects sufficient to be recognized in spellings. For this process is not peculiar to the English dialect of Germanic, transferred from its native soil west to Celtic Britain. Indeed the native soil of English seems to have been a focus of this phonetic disturbance (in its inception one primarily affecting consonants). Northwards it is found attacking the Scandinavian dialects with almost equal severity; though southwards its effects were more limited or later. Certainly moving west, within the area of the disturbance, the process was not retarded in English – what would have happened if it had moved southwards is another matter – and in the event English became the language of *i*-mutation *par excellence* and its results were far more extensive than in any form of British. In British, for instance, long vowels were not affected; but in English nearly all long vowels and diphthongs were mutated.
- 26 For the most part. The cultivated written language of Wales has naturally, at all times, been less open to invasion. Neither has cultivated English been the chief source of the loans.
- 27 Probably in origin a dissimilation where the verb stem contained nasals: as in *tincian/tincial* (ME. *tinken*); *mumial*, *mumlian* 'mumble'.
- 28 It also possesses in MS. Jesus Coll. Oxford 29 a copy of the early Middle English *Owl and Nightingale*, which in its history illustrates in other terms the progress of English words. Written in the south-east, it passed to the West Midlands and there received a western dialectal dress; but it was preserved in Wales, and reached Jesus College in the seventeenth century from Glamorgan.
- 29 For there is concomitant pleasure of the eye in an orthography that is home-grown with a language, though most spelling-reformers are insensitive to it.
- 30 A difficult proportion to discover without knowing his ancestral history through indefinite generations. Children of the same two parents may differ markedly in this respect.
- 31 I refer to Modern French; and I am speaking primarily of word-forms, and those in relation to meaning, especially in basic words. *Incomprehensibility* and its like are only art forms in a diluted degree in any language, hardly at all in English.
- 32 Each, of course, with immediately following 'sense'.
- 33 If I may once more refer to my work, *The Lord of the Rings*, in evidence: the names of persons and places in this story were mainly composed on patterns deliberately modelled on those of Welsh (closely similar but not identical). This element in the tale has given perhaps more pleasure to more readers than anything else in it.
- 34 Dyscwcch nes oesswcch Saesneg / Doeth yw e dysc da iaith dec.