

STUDYING WALES TODAY: A MICRO-COSMOPOLITAN APPROACH

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Professor M. Wynn Thomas OBE FEA FLSW FBA

Abstract

In this article, originally delivered as a lecture, Professor M. Wynn Thomas, the Founding Vice-President of the Learned Society of Wales, sets out his vision for Wales Studies and how to ensure its development and future. Using Michael Cronin's concept of 'micro-cosmopolitanism', the article argues that Wales Studies, that is, academic research in any discipline that addresses the condition of Wales, is a flourishing area that could play a more influential role in the global culture and economy despite Wales's small size. Professor Thomas sets out a three-phase plan for Wales Studies which the Learned Society of Wales intends to implement, given sufficient resources and government support.

The last couple of decades have seen the flowering of a golden age of 'Wales Studies' (broadly defined as academic research across all disciplines addressing the condition of Wales past and present). Wales needs actively to safeguard and promote the research initiatives that enable us to understand and cherish the particular nexus of complexities that make Wales distinct. This is the essence of the study of Wales – an enterprise that needs the co-operation of a multitude of different intellectual and academic disciplines not only across the Arts and Humanities but also including some of the work of its Sciences.

But current activity lacks co-ordination to encourage genuine multi-disciplinary exchange and sound institutional and financial underpinning to ensure its long-term sustainability. The Wales Studies initiative of the Learned Society of Wales proposes to address these deficits in three stages:

- Phase one: assembling maximum information about the variety and wealth of this research, with a view to encouraging and enabling a much more robust institutional system of support, and to facilitating the advertisement of this success story both across Wales and the UK and (as a 'soft power' initiative) on a global stage;
- Phase two: encouraging (partly by means of a dedicated multi-disciplinary and inter-institutional Wales Studies website) the development of a Wales Studies Alliance that would greatly assist in advancing the aims outlined under Phase One;

- Phase three: the development of a strategy for ensuring the development of a sustainable, balanced, and visionary programme of Wales Studies research across all disciplines and institutions.

I could equally well have entitled this lecture: ‘Studying Wales Today: epic views of a small country’. That subtitle would have been borrowed from one of the most internationally-minded and globally renowned of all the Fellows of the Learned Society of Wales, Jan Morris (to whom, incidentally, the Cymmrodorion Society awarded its Medal in October this year). She used it as the subtitle of the highly personal history of Wales she wrote, with her customary brio, over thirty years ago. Because my theme, like hers, is the surprisingly extensive and intricate cultural contours of a tiny area of negligible land. To foreground this, and to bring it into appropriate contemporary focus, I have ventured instead to refer rather grandiosely in my subtitle to a ‘micro-cosmopolitan Wales.’ This is a term borrowed from a seminal essay by Michael Cronin, Ireland’s leading scholar of translation practice.¹

Cronin’s declared aim in coining the term was to deliver ‘intellectuals from [small, “marginal”] nations such as Ireland, Scotland and Wales’ from ‘the facile dualism of macro perspectives’. ‘Macro-cosmopolitanism’, in Cronin’s terms, encapsulates the unexamined supposition that only large politico-cultural units can nurture a tolerant, fluid, humane pluralism and a hospitable openness to others. From this perspective, small units are to be condemned for the inevitable narrowness of their mental horizons, the fixity of their essentialist identities, and their bigoted hostility to cultural variety. Cronin’s introduction of the concept of ‘micro-cosmopolitanism’ is therefore designed to break up this barren dualism.

Micro-cosmopolitan thinking is not, writes Cronin, an approach which involves the opposition of smaller political units to larger political units (national or transnational), but one which in the general context of ‘cosmopolitan ideals [...] seeks to diversify or complexify the smaller unit’. In other words it is a cosmopolitanism not from above but from below.

So, what he is advocating is a ‘defence of difference, not *beyond*’ such small units as Wales, but *within* them. To this end, he employs the concept of ‘fractal differentialism’. This is a ‘term [which] expresses the notion of a cultural complexity which remains constant from the micro to the macro scale. That is to say, the same degree of diversity is to be found at the level of entities judged to be small or insignificant as at the level of large entities’. The exploration of this micro-diversity could therefore be roughly described as the cultural equivalent of nano-technology. To illustrate the point, Cronin borrows from the thinking of the French-Polish mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot. In 1977 he came up with an intriguing answer to the question he’d posed: ‘How long is the coast of Britain?’ Mandelbrot’s point was that ‘at one level the coast was *infinitely* long’, since a satellite’s estimation of it would differ exponentially from that, say, of an insect, traversing it laboriously

1 Michael Cronin sets out his theories of translation and identity in the globalized world in two books, *Translation and Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2003) and *Translation and Identity* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2006).

pebble by pebble. The more fine-grained one's mapping of the coast's contours, the more, not the less, complex the whole process became. Much the same law, Cronin argues, applies in the case of cultural studies. Accordingly, 'the micro-cosmopolitan movement [...] situat[es] difference and exchange at the *micro*-levels of society', rather than at the '*macro*' level customarily supposed to be the exclusive location of such progressively diverse cosmopolitan practices.

And this micro-approach 'mapping' of Wales would also require the mobilization in concert of a number of different disciplines. I should explain that I do not have in mind an extension of the limp fashionable exercises that nowadays too often pass as 'interdisciplinary' in character. Unfortunately, such a practice is endorsed by the funding councils that treat interdisciplinarity as if it were straightforward and unproblematic. I have in mind a multi-disciplinary approach of a quite different, much more stringent and demanding order, where disciplines do not just passively reinforce and collaborate with one another but interact dynamically, challengingly, and at times confrontationally in recognition of the differences as much as the similarities between their respective approaches and conclusions. After all, different disciplines involve totally different kinds of language use, as Wittgenstein might put it. They constitute the human world quite differently, thus mirroring the complexity of our human being. The result of adopting such a practice would then be not the kind of conventionally representational image of a topic thoughtlessly produced today but a multi-dimensional, or rather a multi-perspectival, imaging. The creative arts at their most original, for example, seldom if ever meekly confirm historical realities in the familiar forms routinely assumed and described by historians. They usually offer a radically strange and 'other' means of imaginative entry into past experience that resists 'normalization' into our conventional envisaging of the past.

Viewed in this microscopic and stereotypic way, then, tiny Wales would assume an inexhaustibly rich but dauntingly complex plurality of internal existence and of external interconnectedness. Of course, any attempt to suggest that the Welsh might pay a little more attention to this instantly provokes some to bleat that this is narrow nationalism, provincialism, balkanization and so on. I have my own views as to what it is in the Welsh psyche and the Welsh past that give rise to such a knee-jerk response. But this is not the place to air them. Instead, let me just point to the comment of the renowned intellectual of the Left, Tom Nairn. He said that the more, in this modern world, one comes to appreciate the distinctiveness of any one of that world's constituent parts, however small or large, the more one comes to appreciate the inter-dependence of those parts. And in what follows, what I shall quite simply want to suggest is that Wales needs actively to safeguard and promote the research initiatives, across all academic disciplines, that enable us to understand and cherish the particular nexus of complexities that make Wales distinct. This, for me, is the essence of Wales Studies – an enterprise that needs the co-operation of a multitude of different intellectual and academic disciplines not only across the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences but also including some of the work of its STEMM subjects (science, technology, engineering, mathematics, medicine). And if one is looking for evidence already existent in Wales Studies of a resulting aliveness to the *international*, then I would point, at random, to Simon Brooks's setting of Welsh political and intellectual life during the high Victorian

period against the rise of national awareness across Europe in the wake of the 1848 revolutions; to Angharad Price's setting of T. H. Parry-Williams's work in the context of his exposure to Continental Modernism during his study at Freiburg and the Sorbonne; to Huw Bowen's work on Welsh contributions to the British Empire; to Daniel Williams's brilliant studies of interconnections between Wales and Black America; to Jasmine Donahaye's definitive account of Welsh relations to the Jews, to Israel, and to Palestine, and so on.²

And lest anyone still think that I am about to indulge in what Americans would call 'boosterism' – that is, the kind of shameless hyping of Wales that, for me, makes St David's Day dinners so very disheartening – let me, in my declining years, share with you a shameful secret. Although I was born in Wales, raised here, have spent the seventy and more years of my life entirely here, and hope yet to die here, I have no very high opinion of my country. We have always seemed to me to be in so many important ways an unremarkable people. I have a very much higher opinion of the Scots, the ridiculously talented Irish – and yes, the indisputably impressive English. So my feelings towards my own beloved, exasperating country are perfectly captured in Touchstone's words about his ragged, uncouth, and illiterate innamorata Audrey, in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*: 'An ill-favoured thing, sir, but mine own'. I certainly feel that the weak Welsh sense of self-worth needs strengthening. But I would not have that happen by the usual means of resorting to hyperbole and bluster. So I am cheered by the thought that perhaps Swansea's most lasting contribution to world history may, after all, be not Dylan Thomas or William Grove (originator of the fuel cell), but Bird's Custard, reputedly invented by a Port Tennant chemist whose wife was allergic to eggs. All this does not prevent me from passionately valuing those features that make Wales distinctive – elusive and unquantifiable though those may be, as they are in the case of every nation.

But let me hasten on now to the meat of my argument, which rests on several convictions, namely that the last twenty years or so have seen a golden age of Wales Studies; that this has by now made possible the development of a truly multi-disciplinary approach to Wales present and past; except that such a development is seriously inhibited by the fact that very few indeed of those engaged in this excitingly diversified field have the faintest awareness of what is happening elsewhere; that no attempt has yet been made to grasp, or to co-ordinate, or to project anything like the totality of this remarkable, major achievement; that it therefore remains a hidden, unexploited, asset of the modern higher education system; that partly as a result, the modern higher education system in Wales is in danger of undermining key practices that have enabled and continue precariously to sustain this important achievement; and that in order to forestall such an eventuality, and indeed to

2 Simon Brooks, *Pam na fu Cymru: Methiant Cenedlaetholdeb Cymraeg* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 2015); Brooks, *Why Wales Never Was: The Failure of Welsh Nationalism* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2017); Angharad Price, *Ffarwel i Freiburg: Crwydriadau Cynnar T. H. Parry-Williams* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 2013); Huw Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756–1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Daniel Williams, *Black Skin, Blue Books: African-Americans and Wales, 1845–1945* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012); Jasmine Donahaye, *Whose People? Wales, Israel, Palestine* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012).

capitalize on existing successes and strengths, a series of actions may be necessary – some of which may involve active government support and intervention. What follows is a brief account of how the Learned Society of Wales proposes to initiate some of these remedial actions, and thus work towards the realization of some of the key objectives I would regard as essential to the sustaining of Wales Studies and its development in a healthy, international, micro-cosmopolitan direction.

The last few decades, as I have asserted, have been a golden age of Wales Studies scholarship. You perhaps hadn't noticed? Well, nor had I until recent reflection. And that lack of awareness is a striking symptom of the underlying problem I am addressing this evening. The scholarship has spanned a multitude of disciplines, and so has remained invisible in the totality of its achievement and implication for want of any context to register it and of any mechanism to mediate it to fellow scholars, the media, the general public, or the political class. Moreover, the majestic achievements of Welsh historians of a previous golden age means that Wales Studies continues to be viewed very largely through the narrow, distorting lens of a single discipline. That of course is a kind of back-handed compliment to the ghosts of the likes of those two mighty atoms Glanmor Williams and Gwyn Alf Williams, to great medievalists like R. R. Davies, and to the still looming presence of Ralph Griffiths, Kenneth O. Morgan, Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, Geraint Jenkins and others of their august recent generation. But it won't do. History alone cannot provide us with an adequate meta-narrative or grand narrative of the national past and present, nor can it alone provide us with our marching orders into the future.

I cannot cure that malaise of our History-worship here this evening. But I can very briefly highlight just a few significant instances of fruitful new 'directions of travel' (in today's jargon) that have been opened up across so many disciplines over the last quarter of a century. What follows is, of course, simply personal, randomly illustrative and not systematic and exhaustive. There's the insertion of the Welsh case into the context of post-colonial discussion world-wide by Kirsti Bohata in her *Postcolonialism Revisited* and by Chris Williams and Jane Aaron in their collection of related essays.³ There's the nuanced examination of Wales-Jewish and Wales-Israeli relations by Jasmine Donahaye in her classic study *Whose People?: Wales, Israel, Palestine*, and the revelatory treatment of the socio-cultural correlations between Wales and Black America in Daniel Williams's *Black Skin, Blue Books*. Jerry Hunter has unearthed a body of letters in Welsh by Ohio boys serving in the American Civil War and has traced early-nineteenth-century Welsh involvement with Native Americans.⁴ Ambivalent Welsh cultural responses to the USA have been explored in the multi-author collection *Gweld Sêr*, while Huw Bowen's work on Welsh involvement in the work of Empire building is ongoing and seminal.⁵ The essays on Welsh history Huw organized in conjunction with the *Western Mail*, and the publications accompanying, have rejuvenated interest in a somewhat

3 Kirsti Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited: Writing Wales in English* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004).

4 See for example Jerry Hunter, *Llwyd Cenhedloedd: Y Cymry a Rhyfel Cartref America* (Llanrwst: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2003).

5 M. Wynn Thomas, ed., *Gweld Sêr: Cymru a Chanrif America* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 2001).

jaded scene. Martin Johnes's recent study *Wales Since 1939* (Manchester, 2012) has helped liberate Welsh history from the iron dual grasp of proletarian Labour and Nationalist narratives. Russell Davies, the writer and broadcaster, has begun to explore the racy and seamy undersides of Welsh social life in works colourful and troubling by turn.⁶ Hywel Teifi Edwards has published classical accounts of the Eisteddfod as a seminal national institution, as of the sadly overlooked Welsh-language culture of the industrial valleys.⁷ Important contributions from the Media Studies field include Gwenno Ffrancon's book on Welsh cinema and Elain Price's groundbreaking account of the creation of S4C.⁸ Balancing these breakthroughs into entirely new fields of study is the radically revisionary work on Dylan Thomas by John Goodby (and others), significant for its hybrid definition of anglophone Welshness, its claims for Wales as a pioneer of anglophone poetic modernism, and its analysis of the populist nature of Welsh international cultural outreach.⁹

Our understanding of the Welsh choral tradition and the culture of which it has been an expression has been immeasurably enriched by Gareth Williams's work.¹⁰ The history of Nonconformist Wales from zenith to decline is traced in Densil Morgan's *The Span of the Cross* (2011) while Robert Pope has examined the interface between Nonconformity and Socialism in a series of publications, and I have attempted in *In the Shadow of the Pulpit* (2010) to take the measure of Nonconformity's considerable impact on Welsh anglophone literature.¹¹ The history of Welsh theology is Densil Morgan's new ambitious project, while young scholars like Llion Wigley are interested in charting the development of Welsh interest in early twentieth-century psychoanalysis.

No more authoritative work of cultural history could be found than Dafydd Johnston's wonderful recent volume on the Great Century of the late medieval Welsh bardic tradition.¹² Literary biography – a genre traditionally pitifully weak in Wales – has of late enjoyed a remarkable flowering, with Dai Smith's study of the early Raymond Williams, and a series of immensely informative biographies by

- 6 See for example *Secret Sins: Sex, Violence and Society in Carmarthenshire, 1870–1920*, 2nd edn (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012); *Hope and Heartbreak: A Social History of Wales and the Welsh, 1776–1870* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005); and *People, Places and Passions: A Social History of Wales and the Welsh, 1870–1948, Volume 1* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015).
- 7 Hywel Teifi Edwards, *The Eisteddfod* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1990). Edwards's collections of essays on the valleys include *Cwm Tawe* (1993), *Cwm Rhondda* (1995), and *Merthyr a Thaf* (2001).
- 8 Gwenno Ffrancon, *Cyfaredd y Cysgodion: Delweddu Cymru a'i Phobl ar Ffilm, 1935–1951* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 2003); Elain Price, *Nid Sianel Gyffredin Mohoni! Hanes Sefydlu S4C* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 2016).
- 9 John Goodby, *Poetry of Dylan Thomas: Under the Spelling Wall* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).
- 10 See for example Gareth Williams, *Do You Hear the People Sing? The Male Voice Choirs of Wales* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 2015).
- 11 See for example Robert Pope, *Building Jerusalem: Nonconformity, Labour and the Social Question in Wales, 1906–1939*, 2nd edn (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014).
- 12 Dafydd Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr: Hanes Beirniadol Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg, 1300–1525* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 2005).

Robin Chapman and Alan Llwyd of several of the giants of the twentieth-century Welsh-language renaissance.¹³

Most recently, the rich, previously unexplored area of History of Science in Wales has begun to be mapped through a new series of important University of Wales Press monographs edited by Gareth Ffowc Roberts and John Tucker. This is a major breakthrough, opening Wales Studies up not just to one additional discipline area but to a whole new universe of enquiry, with the intellectual potential to transform our notions of Wales Studies, and with the practical benefit of providing a bridge to STEMM research.

The field of Gender Studies has developed apace, and it has grown to encompass not just Women's Studies but Male Studies and Gay Studies – witness the groundbreaking recent collection of essays edited by Huw Osborne entitled *Queer Wales* (2016). As for Welsh women writers, the revelatory work of Jane Aaron, Katie Gramich and others has added a whole new dimension to our view of our cultural past and present and remains to be properly integrated into our estimation of the achievements of the anglophone culture of Wales, too long, perhaps, regarded as primarily a male, 'coalfield' achievement. The work of Sarah Prescott and others has shown how our understanding of Wales's anglophone literary culture needs to be extended chronologically to include key works produced in the eighteenth century and earlier. Such a move away from an obsession both with the twentieth century and with the coalfield was already being signalled in the first authoritative overview of Welsh writing in English across the centuries, published nearly fifteen years ago.¹⁴ And that pioneering work is now shortly to be superseded by two landmark publications from Cambridge University Press and Oxford University Press. The former will publish a monumental one-volume companion to the literatures of Wales, while the latter will publish a series of definitive volumes outlining the historical development of both Welsh and Anglo-Welsh literature.¹⁵

Then there are the mushrooming research groupings, the Centres and Institutes that are currently vigorously active. The oldest, and one of the most distinguished, of course is CAWCS – the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies. Over a quarter century and more its magisterial publications have set new standards for Welsh scholarship. The manuscript poems of major Welsh poets of the Middle Ages have been definitively edited, and there have been multi-disciplinary projects on the social history of the Welsh language, Welsh responses to the French Revolution, Welsh involvement with English Romanticism, the record of European travellers in Wales, Thomas Stephens's correspondence with the leading Germanic historiographers of the nineteenth century. And of course CAWCS has published some of Peter Lord's revelatory work on the visual culture of Wales. Then there are other prominent centres, such as WISERD – the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods. Recent projects there include

13 Dai Smith, *Raymond Williams, A Warrior's Tale* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2007).

14 M. Wynn Thomas, ed., *A Guide to Welsh Literature, vol. 7: Welsh Writing in English* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003).

15 *The Cambridge History of Welsh Literature*, ed. by Geraint Evans and Helen Fulton, is due to appear early in 2019. Oxford University Press is planning to publish four monographs on different historical periods of literature in Wales.

several on civic participation across Wales, in both Wales and Scotland, and within the education system; studies on dementia and alcohol abuse in Wales; interesting analyses of the attitudes of Welsh schoolchildren to the teaching of Welsh in schools, and so on. And the Wales Governance Centre at Cardiff University is dedicated to research into all aspects of the law, politics, government and political economy of a devolved Wales that remains badly in need of informed, dispassionate, expert advice across these crucial areas.

In some ways, the most auspicious feature of all of this ‘golden age’ is the extraordinary growth in the number of young postgraduates completing doctoral study – mostly at their own expense – across all disciplines. My own field of the Anglophone literary culture of Wales has alone seen the completion of nearly 100 theses in the last fifteen years. And yet, sad to report, no attempt has ever been made to consolidate this cohort of talent into a sharing community of scholars alive to the multi-disciplinary context in which they are in fact working. Nor has any support system for them been developed by their seniors, with the aim of establishing clear career paths and safeguarding crucial publication outlets. The single greatest threat to the future of Wales Studies at present is the threat to the University of Wales Press – a subject I will briefly touch on again later.

Add to all this the body of Welsh-language scholarship, very largely by younger scholars, that is now beginning to be produced under the auspices of the Coleg Cymraeg, and the exciting development of new on-line courses by the Open University in Wales, and it is clear enough that we are indeed living in a golden age of Wales Studies. But has anyone attempted even simply to log all this activity, let alone construct an overview of it? Are researchers in these disparate fields ever enabled, let alone encouraged, to learn of the work ongoing in other fields, some of which is strikingly relevant to, cognate with, and even directly overlapping their own? Moreover, is this widespread research activity solidly grounded on long-term institutional or governmental commitments to provide Wales with the research programmes and platforms that it needs as a modern nation? The answer is no: witness the sink holes that have long alarmingly pock-marked this terrain, unnervingly revealing that what appears to be solid ground is nothing of the sort. What is exposed is the lamentable lack of a robust sustaining infrastructure and of an overarching and guiding strategy.

Twenty years ago, for instance, historians of Wales disappeared virtually overnight, with the simultaneous retirement of a whole generation of distinguished practitioners. Realizing there was no obligation to replace them, the then university colleges decreed there was no market demand for such specialists, and the result was crisis. Since then there have been, and continue to be, a number of disturbingly similar cases. Major contributions to Wales Studies have been made in the past by social anthropology and by the philosophy of religion. But by today, both anthropological and philosophical work relating to Wales have been allowed to disappear completely from the Welsh higher-education landscape. A few years ago, Bangor University abruptly decided to close the only centre dedicated to the social and cultural history of religion in a Wales that until relatively recently defined itself primarily in terms of its Nonconformist culture; the small, but utterly indispensable, funding grant from HEFCW that had supported research publications relating to

Wales across a range of Arts and Humanities disciplines was suddenly discontinued a few years ago; since that grant was subsequently distributed to universities, the number of titles enabled by it has halved; the University of Wales Press – Wales’s only academic publishing house, and an internationally respected one at that – is hovering on the verge of extinction as I speak; the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies will soon no longer have the University of Wales to support it and is being transferred to the care of a new university that has no track record of basic research, let alone of advanced research.¹⁶ Recently, the National Library of Wales decided, presumably because of lack of funding, not to continue supporting the Research Chair in Digital Humanities which had promised to help Wales at long last enter the world-wide race to develop major on-line research sites and projects. And while the NLW has led other countries in providing digital access to historic newspapers, periodicals and the like, research development and exploitation of these priceless resources has stalled for lack of funding. What this series of crises makes very clear indeed is the failure hitherto to develop a truly robust, *sustainable* research culture of Wales Studies.

In the face of all these warning signs, it frankly worries me that there is no central, co-ordinating academic body to identify, highlight, and address serious issues such as this, let alone to remedy them. Such is the ‘you in your small corner and I in mine’ outlook now diligently fostered by the competitive ethos that pits universities against each other, and such is higher education’s eagerness to follow in whichever lucrative direction consumer demand leads it, that I think the wider public good – or the deeper ‘civic interest’ to adopt the currently fashionable phrase – is always liable to be placed seriously at risk.

All this, then, by way of background and context for the Learned Society’s Wales Studies project, which I see as developing over three phases, as follows:

- Phase one: preparing the ground and fire-fighting;
- Phase two: creation of multi-disciplinary Wales Studies Alliance (with support of research community and other partners);
- Phase three: construction of a fully-costed strategy designed to provide Wales Studies with a clear sense of direction and a sustainable future (in collaboration with HEFCW and appropriate agents of Welsh Government).

One of the primary aims of Phase One would be to showcase the wealth of Wales-related research – something the Welsh Government should frankly be doing in its own interests. Contrast the case of Ireland, where large sums are spent annually to promote Irish Studies programmes worldwide. Some fifteen years ago, for instance, Ireland made available a multi-million pound grant to Liverpool University to establish a Chair of Irish Studies to be named – I kid you not – the Tony Blair Chair. Notre Dame, one of the top 25 American universities, is a huge power-house of Irish Studies at the very heart of the US college system. This very

16 The University of Wales is in the process of merging with three other institutions (Trinity College Carmarthen, Lampeter, and Swansea Metropolitan) to become a new institution, the University of Wales Trinity St David.

autumn, the Irish Research Council has advertised a research programme with the aim of ‘enriching the pool of knowledge and expertise available and accessible for addressing Ireland’s current and future needs, whether societal, cultural or economic’. And the majority of postgraduate and postdoctoral research grants in Ireland go to candidates whose projects relate to Ireland. A maturely devolved Scotland has likewise provided Scottish Studies programmes across the world with significant practical support. The Scottish Government website sees a number of different ministries advertising their practical support for Scottish Studies, including a recent £40,000 award to the Association for Scottish Literary Studies, the establishment of a Scottish Studies Working Group to advise the Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland’s Languages, and so on.

The Learned Society of Wales is currently embarked on Phase One of the project that features a series of practical initiatives intended to prepare the ground and build towards the longer-term aims of the Wales Studies project that I will later outline. Recent and ongoing work includes the following:

- Submitting evidence to the Diamond Review;
- Sponsoring a keynote lecture by Professor Marc Shell (Harvard, Comparative Literature) at last summer’s highly successful Conference on Welsh Studies organized at Harvard by Professor Daniel Williams from Swansea University;
- Exploiting the potential for formal Wales Studies education in schools provided by the recent Donaldson Report;
- Organizing, in conjunction with the Open University, a social event designed to encourage a sense of common purpose and solidarity amongst the rapidly growing cohort of doctoral and post-doctoral researchers active in the Wales Studies area;
- Founding a cross-party working committee of AMs to encourage constructive interaction between the academic community and National Assembly members;
- Developing, in partnership with the Open University in Wales, a series of short on-line videos featuring enthusiastic young researchers active in various fields of Wales Studies research;
- Arranging a series of lectures, across the university system in Wales, advertising important current research projects in Wales Studies;
- Co-operating with the current Chair of the Comparative Literature Association of the UK with a view to encouraging much closer research co-operation between the five nations of the ‘Anglo-Celtic Archipelago’;
- Organizing / co-ordinating a major event, to be staged at the Senedd – with the aim of attracting both media and government attention – to advertise the achievements of the Golden Age of Welsh Studies; to underline its potential as a national asset to be celebrated both locally and across the UK, and to be advertised on the global stage; and to argue the case for developing a strategy and structure that would enable the speedy resolution of local ‘crises’ and would guarantee a long-term sense of direction and assurance of stability within this crucial area of learning and research;

- Advising and partnering HEFCW in its ongoing work of devising a visionary, workable strategy for the future of the higher education sector in Wales.

So much for some of the initiatives featured in the first phase of the Wales Studies project. The second, medium-term phase, would concentrate on establishing a loose, flexible, digital Wales Studies Alliance. Such an Alliance, consisting of researchers, centres, institutes, and key national institutions such as the National Library, National Museum, and the Open University in Wales, would be established, supported, and developed through a dedicated website hub that would perform a number of crucial functions and provide a number of services. In purpose, these should be both inward-facing (that is, designed to develop and serve this multi-disciplinary research community) and outward-facing (that is, ensuring dissemination of information to government and to the public at large). They should also include a prominent international dimension, which would involve advertising Wales Studies as a national asset, along the lines already very well, and very successfully, established in Ireland and in Scotland. The cultivation of an international profile would also facilitate the benchmarking of Welsh Government practice in this important field against best practice internationally. And at the core of the Alliance website would be digital activities such as the following:

- Creating a one-stop shop for information about on-going research and related activities across all institutions and disciplines;
- Promoting active, multi-disciplinary information exchange amongst the community of researchers;
- Producing a continuously-evolving on-line newsletter highlighting key contemporary developments;
- Monitoring and recording data relevant to establishing the REF-value of Wales Studies research;¹⁷
- Organizing an annual interdisciplinary conference of Wales Studies researchers;
- Enabling an overview of the state of health of the Wales Studies scene and thus facilitating timely, targeted, and effective lobbying actions where relevant;
- Producing and updating reports on the ‘match’ (or mismatch) between Wales Studies research activity and the strategic and policy aims of key potential funding sources;
- Creating an attractive interface between the research community and both government and the general public.

The work of the Alliance should significantly facilitate progress towards the

17 The REF, or Research Excellence Framework, is a regular audit of research quality in the higher education sector, undertaken every six or seven years by HEFCE and HEFCW. The last REF took place in 2014; the next one is scheduled for 2021. University research funding is directly related to the outcomes of each REF exercise.

final and most important phase: the construction of a fully-costed multi-disciplinary Strategy for the Study of Wales, designed to replace the current patchwork – deeply unsatisfactory and chronically precarious – of arbitrary, purely adventitious, and ad-hoc research programmes, and guaranteeing the stability of this research sector. By ‘Strategy’ I have in mind not a top-down approach to research programme development but rather the identification of fundamental principles and the laying down of broad guidelines – for instance, to ensure that there is a healthy balance between research into contemporary Wales (which tends to be closely tied to established government objectives and funding opportunities) and the Wales of the past. Underdeveloped research resources could also be identified, with particular emphasis, perhaps, on encouraging far better co-operation between academic institutions and key national bodies such as the National Library and the National Museum of Wales. For instance, very little advantage has been taken hitherto of the wealth of author manuscripts, BBC scripts and the like at the NLW; or of that Library’s body of papers relating to the key role of the Welsh Arts Council in developing the current cultural scene. And then there is the huge, rapidly proliferating, field of digital research, which is being pursued at the ‘local’ level of institutions but which needs to be addressed at ‘national’ level as a matter of urgency.

While the Learned Society (as, primarily, a body of distinguished researchers from all institutions and disciplines) would seem to be the most appropriate national agency for hosting many of these developments, there are obvious limits to the funds it is already investing in them. Meaningful implementation of the full Wales Studies project would therefore necessitate a modest amount of additional funding for an extended period. While I should not want to underestimate the challenge involved in finding such a sum, recent developments do seem to provide some serious grounds for hope that some immediate initial progress might be made, because what I have been proposing is naturally aligned to, and therefore contributes very directly to, several of the nodal aims signalled in recent key policy statements and documents:

- Both the Curriculum Review and the Donaldson Report lay down a blueprint for Wales Studies developments in the schools system;
- The Diamond Review underlines the importance to higher education of both Welsh-medium and Wales Studies research and study programmes;
- The Diamond Review also strongly advocates the use of the LSW, as a prestigious body of independent expertise, by Welsh government, via HEFCW, for a number of purposes ranging from consultancy exercises to research grant awards and higher-education strategy implementation. And it strongly recommends that a sum of £1 million be earmarked for such purposes;
- The Diamond Review further emphasizes the potential the LSW offers for ‘contributing to the development of Wales’s “soft power”’ and for ‘better recognizing the quality of scholarship existing in and associated with Wales’;
- The crucial Well-being of Future Generations Act lays out the central

objectives that will determine and inform all Welsh Government actions over the coming years, and among them is the intention to ‘involve people reflecting the diversity of our communities’;

- In her recent speech, the new Welsh minister for Education, Kirsty Williams, made such crucial points as the following: ‘I am clear that our universities must be “of” their place and “of” their people as a first principle. It is from this stewardship that universities will fulfil their national, civic and international roles and responsibilities’; ‘The referendum showed that our notions of togetherness and bonds between communities are perhaps weaker than we imagined. Welsh Universities, as civic and international institutions, have a responsibility as stewards of community, city and country’;
- HEFCW’s *Draft Higher Education Strategy to 2026* includes an important section on culture and language, in which it is stated that ‘there is a need to support the teaching of Welsh culture and history, the University of Wales Press [also singled out by Diamond as a key research asset] and the Dictionary of the Welsh Language. A clear and explicit commitment is needed, to support and promote teaching, research and publication in this area of scholarship, in order to secure its long-term future’.

I would add my own coda to these heartening statements about the serious need to strengthen and develop a Welsh sense of civic identity. Individuals reproduce their identities through the continuity and change embodied in their offspring. As human beings, we are biologically programmed to do this. Communities reproduce their identities by analogous ways, but of course there is no biological programming involved there. Instead, ‘reproduction’ (which blends continuity and change) relies on a subtle nexus of dynamic mechanisms and processes; and it is one of the vital functions of universities to help us understand and cherish these.

The policy statements I have just listed help, then, to identify the encouraging – and hopefully enabling – context within which the LSW is now beginning to implement its three-phase Wales Studies project, although much will clearly depend on the readiness of government to implement Diamond’s most important recommendations.

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It was only as I was putting the finishing touches to this lecture that I realized that, for me, it was bound to seem something like a valedictory address, as I shall be stepping down as Founding Vice-President of the Learned Society in a few months’ time. The timing seems to me providential, because since we are all urged these days to ensure we leave a ‘legacy’, I am very content that this vision of a micro-cosmopolitan Wales should be mine. And at its very heart, I must confess, lies a deep commitment to the creation of a genuinely bilingual, bicultural nation. That, for me, is an essential component of a micro-cosmopolitan Wales. It is, I know, often vulgarly supposed that it is English that links us to the wide world while Welsh separates us from it. The very reverse is in some ways true. English, if it were ever to become the sole language of Wales, would separate us from the

common human world-wide experience of multilingualism and multiculturalism. The overwhelming majority of the world's nations and countries are, after all, multilingual, home to indigenous languages other than English. And if you want to read an academic book that has become a recent sensation across the globe because it warns against the terrible human cost of language-loss under the unintentionally autocratic rule of the worldwide Empire of English, then turn to *The Fall of Language in the Age of English* (New York, 2015) by the leading Japanese novelist Minae Mizumura.

My micro-cosmopolitan Wales would, then, be a country that, having been educated, not least by its universities, to appreciate everything that was singular and accordingly precious about itself, would be able and ready to make its contribution, however marginal and modest, to the international community.