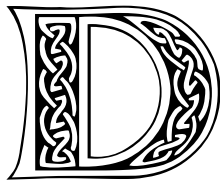


Inheritance¹

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1



ispossessed by the diaspora of time and place
he tries to find glosses, words, clues to the past
etched on to the pages' margins,
in themselves blank,
not even a possibility to read between the
lines.

Gradually, black hieroglyphics begin to take shape,
morph from memory
into recognizable meaning
like a negative dipped into acid.

The image which takes shape is of his grandfather,
The Reverend Hugh Hughes-Jones,
Welsh Calvinist Methodist preacher who
gave his last sermon a month before he died
and was buried
still wearing his dog-collar.

What did he leave to his kin?
What words of wisdom were his
Inheritance.

¹ The following poem won 3rd prize in the 2003 E-Steddfod competition. This competition has taken the traditional Welsh Eisteddfod into cyberspace. It is open to Welsh people living at home and abroad and, unlike the National Eisteddfod, the entries can be in Welsh or English. In 2003, the title for the most prestigious of the literary competitions - that of the 'lengthy' poem - was 'Etifeddiaeth' (Inheritance or Heritage). I decided to frame the poem around an episode in the life of my grandfather, a Welsh Methodist Minister.

I would like to dedicate the poem to Anders Ahlqvist for the work he has done over the years for Celtic Studies in Finland and elsewhere. It is his heritage that we are celebrating in this festschrift.

2

1961 – there were still trams on Lime St
The Beatles – stale from Hamburg -
were bringing life to the Cavern.

A long train ride from Rhyl.
The Rev. Hugh Hughes-Jones embarked on his
annual pilgrimage to Liverpool
to browse the bookshops for
Hanes y Methodistiaid Calфинаidd yng Nghymru*

The Rev. Hugh Hughes-Jones, 83 years old,
with a back that had never stooped,
crossed Lime Street as the wind blew across the Mersey,
changed gear, went into gale force overdrive.
The Reverend's hat was swept away
by the boreal gust.
It lifted off his head, somersaulted in the air,
and landed in the middle of the road
as the cars proceeded to stampede.

3

The Reverend Hugh Hughes-Jones, with a
back that had never stooped,
walked slowly to his hat,
a hat that had survived two world wars
and countless revivals.

Like Moses parting the Red Sea
Hughes-Jones lifted his umbrella and
stopped the cars from their relentless
rampage.

One by one they braked to a demure
and obedient stop as the preacher
inched his dignified way towards his
hat.

A back that had never stooped
now bent down with unhurried grace
to pick up the hat, dust it, place it
deliberately onto his head,
touch the rim – not in taeog-like**
deference – to acknowledge the

stoppage of time and the stillness of cars.

Then he walked with the confidence and
security of an octogenarian
Welsh Methodist preacher
slowly back to the pavement.

Under the brim of his hat
rescued from the tyre's flattening tread
two bright eyes sparkled in mischievous glee.
A modest smile transformed
his thin lips into a grin
of quiet satisfaction.

4

The Reverend Hugh Hughes-Jones had
suspended time
had stopped the rush of motion,
humbled the machine, and
in that frozen moment
reminded us all of the importance
of a battered, old hat.

**History of the Calvinist Methodists in Wales*

*** Taeog means servile.*