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EMRYS LLOYD PETERS  
1916 - 1987

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By the death earlier this year of Emrys Lloyd Peters, we have lost an inimitable teacher, colleague and friend.\* I knew him for over forty years, during which many of my friendships have subtly changed their character. For me, not the least of Emrys's virtues was that throughout our whole friendship, he remained so consistently the same. He was consistent in the small things which inspire affection, like his fondness for tweed caps, costly (to use his word) silk ties, and sausages; for his (or rather, Stella's) garden, and, I will add, for getting his own way. And he was consistent in the large things which inspire something more than affection: a shrewdness of judgment, firmness of principle, generosity of spirit, high good humour and, when the time called for them, exemplary courage and fortitude.

It is ironical in its way that it is I who should be here to memorialize Emrys, since he was convinced, sometimes maddeningly, that his memory was much fuller and more accurate than my own. His creative imagination certainly made my own memories more memorable; that imagination, together with his gifts of persuasion, enabled him to impose upon his friends (and those few who were not) such personal qualities as he thought best for them. Even now, I have a sense of being subject to his correction. As Henry Stanley said of David Livingstone, no one knew better how to make people think well of themselves.

Emrys did not give his friendship by instalments. When I first met him, with Stella, in his rooms in Downing College, Cambridge, on a cold autumn day in 1945, as we toasted ourselves by their fire, I soon realized that I was not there merely to make polite acquaintance. I was already being assimilated to (what we later learnt to call) a 'domestic group'. For the familial spirit of hearth and home was exceptionally strong in him. Many of us have felt its warmth, and it went wherever Emrys and Stella went. The deep feeling for family and community, nurtured in Merthyr Tydfil, informed his intimate understanding of the Bedouin of Cyrenaica and the villagers and townsfolk of the Lebanon. Few have treated more sensitively than Emrys the complex affections, obligations, and compulsions, of kinship.

I conclude, as I hope he might have wished, by acknowledging the unfailing pleasure of his company. He of course took his

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\* Text of an address delivered at a Memorial Meeting for Professor Peters held at the University of Manchester on 10th March 1987.

subject and his professional duties very seriously; and always under his humour there was a powerful strain of religious *gravitas*. But from our first meeting until our last in December 1986, there was never an occasion without intelligent laughter. When we first met, we had both very recently been demobilized, an experience which left us, and others of our generation, light-hearted and somewhat light-headed. That at least may explain why we found ourselves in such a comical and academically eccentric subject as 'Arch. & Anth.' was in the Cambridge of that time. Emrys always had a genius for extracting amusement, often hilarity, from the most intractable anthropological material, from anthropometry to zoomorphism; and we were fortunate too to be taught by Glyn Daniel and Evans-Pritchard, professionally very distinguished, but the least solemn or self-important of mentors. It was the best of apprenticeships to 'Arch. & Anth.'. Now, when academic life has become so earnest, insecure and harassing, we shall miss Emrys all the more, for the lightness of touch with which he imparted his learning, his wisdom in university affairs, and his calm strength of academic purpose. The Department of Social Anthropology here in Manchester owes much of its reputation to his leadership and choice of colleagues, as he would have been the first to say also of his predecessor, Max Gluckman. He gave something of great value to all who knew him, and I thank his successor, Marilyn Strathern, as well as Paul Baxter, Anthony Cohen and others who helped her, for gathering us together here today to express our admiration and gratitude for his life and work.

GODFREY LIENHARDT

II

I knew Emrys for rather fewer years than others who are speaking this afternoon.\* We did not meet until 1972, a mere fifteen years ago. I can be certain about that date since I am sure that if I had met Emrys before I would not have forgotten it, and I can recall our first meeting with some clarity. It was when I joined the Social Anthropology Committee of what was then the SSRC. We served together on that committee for two years, and in that time he taught me a great deal. He was a good committee man. He kept quiet except when it was essential to stress some point, and then he spoke with a great economy of words. He refrained from repeating what had already been said, and whilst he

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was keen that any item got a proper airing he could see no point in not completing business expeditiously. He had no time for humbug and a sharp nose for the research proposal with over-padded expenses. Early on I supported Emrys on some issue, I cannot now recall just what, and after that he looked upon me as an ally. He often got my support, but not always and he would not have expected to. In due course Emrys moved on to the Social Studies subcommittee of the UGC, and I became chairman of the SSRC Social Anthropology Committee. This was the period when the storm clouds were gathering, and I think we both found it helpful to have the other to confer with as retrenchment began to bite. Few people have appreciated just what an important part Emrys played in protecting social anthropology during the first round of university cuts at the beginning of this decade.

That was one aspect of Emrys, and the one I got to know first. I now wish to refer to a rather different Emrys; the relaxed Emrys. He loved Oxford and needed very little excuse, or no excuse at all, to visit it. He would often spend the night there before one of his numerous meetings in London, and was frequently there for social or academic occasions, sometimes with Stella, sometimes alone. These visits invariably had their convivial side. There was nothing Emrys liked more than sitting in the Horse and Jockey or the bar of Wolfson College, surrounded by colleagues, friends and postgraduates, often, it must be admitted, of the prettier, female sort. These gatherings gave him the opportunity to rehearse his large repertoire of stories about anthropologists. The stories were not always completely free of hyperbole, nor perhaps of scurrility, but then few stories are not improved by the addition of such ingredients. However, Emrys was careful never to give offence, and I have heard him alter a story to suit different audiences, obviously with this in mind. I am not going to tell an Emrys story this afternoon; it is not the proper occasion. But there will be many such occasions, and Emrys will be with us when they are told.

By chance, earlier this week I was reading a chapter of a D.Phil. student's thesis. It was on marriage with the FBD, a topic to which Emrys made an important contribution. The student's discussion inevitably, and correctly, included a consideration of Emrys's work. The point here, and it is the last I wish to make, is that a scholar's life does not end with his death; his ideas take on a life of their own and sustain the memory of him. I expect the memory of Emrys to be with us for a very long time.

PETER RIVIERE

PROFESSOR E.L. PETERS  
AND THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY

As the two addresses above show very clearly, Professor Peters was a good friend to Oxford anthropology and Oxford anthropologists. He received his D.Phil. from Oxford in 1951 for his thesis on 'The Sociology of the Bedouin of Cyrenaica', and he maintained his contacts with Oxford ever after.

He had taken up residence in Oxford in Michaelmas 1947 (he was a member of Lincoln College) and is remembered as a regular attender, with his wife Stella, at Anthropological Society meetings. The records are incomplete and the date of his joining the Society is not recorded - he joined again in 1980 after attending a meeting of the Society on one of his frequent visits to Oxford.

His fieldwork took him away from Oxford for 1948 and from September 1949 to mid-December 1950, and it seems that he was never in Oxford long enough to serve on the Society's committee. His name did, however, come up regularly at committee meetings as a suggested speaker for the following term - on at least three occasions in the early 1950s alone. But it was not until the Society's 729th meeting, on Tuesday 2nd December 1980, that he was to address it. His title was 'The Paucity of Ritual among Pastoralists', and that is about all that is recorded in the minutes, apart from a note in pencil to the effect that the Secretary would complete the record on his return from the field. The Secretary never did complete the record and without a memory with Emrys's skill, he will not attempt to do so now. A letter in the files, from Emrys to the then President, Professor Beattie, accepting the invitation to speak, reminds us that his argument was that the paucity is alleged rather than factual and that the problem of paucity is misdirected.

Emrys took an active interest in the fortunes of *JASO*, contributing a review of the second volume of Babikr Bedri's *Memoirs* (to Volume XIV, no. 1), and he was preparing two more reviews before his final illness. The editors once sent him a complimentary copy of an issue it was thought would interest him. He responded by taking out a subscription and saying how he had enjoyed reading the issue 'including the odd soporific bits'. As many students who came to enjoy and look forward to his conversation on his visits to Oxford would agree, we enjoyed listening to him - and there were never any soporific bits.

JEREMY COOTE  
Former Secretary, OJAS

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