

Kilroy F*****n Jones: A Novel

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João Owain Morais

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degree of PhD in Creative Writing

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Summary

*Kilroy F*****n Jones* is a PhD thesis of two parts: a novel, and an evaluative critical commentary based around elements explored in *Kilroy F*****n Jones*. The novel itself is about a young man still grieving for what he sees as his abandonment by both parents. Denied a stable family home, he has set out on a path of hedonism and reactionary thinking which can only inevitably lead to tragedy. The critical commentary, consisting of five chapters, explores the themes of identity, masculinity, the underclass, the Welsh novel, and the two primary dialects of south east Wales: Cardiff English and Wenglish. These chapters demonstrate the critical decisions I made during the creative process, which in turn substantiate the significance of such elements as Kilroy's point of view and character. Taken as a whole, they explain the Welsh – and indeed Cymraeg – nature of the story itself.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is divided into two parts: a novel, titled *Kilroy F*****n Jones*, and a critical commentary, focusing on the themes of identity, class, masculinity, representations of dialect, and *Kilroy F*****n Jones*'s relation to the contemporary Welsh novel. The creative element of the text aims to explore the relationship between the two linguistic cultures of Wales, and the compromises and tensions that can occasionally surface from this relationship. It also aims to examine how twenty-first century cultural and educational incentives towards building a truly bilingual nation, brought about since devolution, may or may not have changed our perceived ethnic and civic identities.¹ In a world of globalised communication in which Welsh culture is in danger of being neglected by its sometimes indifferent population, the text also seeks to offer a representation of an aspect of contemporary Welsh life against the backdrop of its capital. What follows is a brief introduction to the novel and its protagonist, together with an outline of the elements which mark it out as a specifically Welsh text.

*Kilroy F*****n Jones* is the story of a small-time drug dealer who is used to getting his own way, from controlling the best drug-selling patch in the capital to being a sexually successful heterosexual male. The story opens just before a drug deal at a city-centre park. Kilroy's best friend, Dafydd, introduces him to a new potential customer, Griff. Taking exception to the low quality of Kilroy's product, Griff demands his money back, and is attacked by Kilroy for his efforts. A few days later Dafydd employs Griff and Catrin (Griff's girlfriend) at the hostel bar he runs. Kilroy instantly falls for Catrin and decides to pursue her.

Kilroy gets Griff fired and attempts to woo Catrin. But Kilroy cannot help but feel that he is being watched at every turn, and his relationship with Catrin does not develop well. Then

¹ 'Iaith Pawb - A National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales', Welsh Government, <http://gov.wales/depc/publications/welshlanguage/iaithpawb/iaithpawbe.pdf?lang=en> 2003 [accessed 1 February 2017]

Kilroy's grandmother, with whom he lives, is found unconscious, and Griff is suspected of her murder. The men fight once more and Griff is seriously injured. Eventually Kilroy comes to reflect on his life and to realize what has been lost.

Most of the action in the novel is brought about by Kilroy's hubristic inability to realise when he is wrong. He is often misogynistic towards women, and arrogant and aggressive towards men. This is what eventually leads to his downfall. In this, Kilroy's character shares much with the hero of Aristotelian tragedy. While Aristotle probably did not have someone such as Kilroy in mind when he adumbrated the requirements of tragedy in the *Poetics*, Kilroy could be thought of as someone who exhibits many of the traits of the Aristotelian tragic hero, for he is an 'intermediate kind of personage [...] a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgement...'² There are manifold errors on Kilroy's part, but there remains another side to him, one that earns him the right to be thought of as a tragic figure, as he is also a young man still grieving for the death of his mother and the perceived lack of chances in his life. If he is to be thought of as a bully then it must be in acknowledgement that his situation was not of his making but in reaction to it. Hence, the cathartic final scenes, where Kilroy realises the error of his ways when it is, unfortunately, too late.

To call *Kilroy F****n Jones* a purely tragic story would, however, be to misrepresent it. Perhaps a better term would be tragi-comic, for while many chapters (especially those in the third act, between 17-23) are the results of the disastrous decisions Kilroy makes through the

² Ingram Bywater, *Aristotle on the Art of Poetry: A Revised Text with Critical Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909) p. 35 (Bywater's translation of Aristotle's original text). Aristotle goes on to describe the typical successful Greek citizen as being the ideal (He must be one who is highly renowned and prosperous- a personage like Oedipus, Thyestes, or other illustrious men of such families) but Kilroy holds true to the character description in other ways, as shown. Nevertheless, such a person, in a position of power or wealth due to inheritance or familial connection is not the ideal that would be thought of as an everyman in most strata of modern-day society, let alone in a largely working-class country such as Wales, which is the place where the audience for this novel is perceived to be.

course of the narrative, many others, especially in the first act (1-8), were written with a lighter and more absurd sense of life at the forefront.

In the critical commentary which precedes the novel, five key aspects of the text are explored in order to place *Kilroy F*****n Jones* in the context of contemporary Welsh literature. Chapter one details Kilroy's civic identity and its relation to his ethnic background; this is placed in the context of discussions of the problematics of Welsh identity in works by contemporary writers including Charlotte Williams and Meic Stephens. Chapter two details how masculinity is portrayed in contemporary fiction and its place in my novel. Chapter three, on class, discusses how ideas of the underclass have been challenged in fiction to give a more sympathetic picture of those in relative poverty. Chapter four analyses several features common to many Welsh novels and shows how my novel also shares them. Chapter five, on language, explains how the use of various Welsh dialects in the novel ensures that it can be placed in the correct geographical and cultural context. Finally, the conclusion takes a synoptic view of these elements and shows how they are interconnected in *Kilroy F*****n Jones*, creating what may be seen as an authentically Welsh, contemporary, urban novel.

IDENTITY

In her autobiographical novel *Sugar & Slate* (2002), Charlotte Williams writes of the divide and difference she feels between her Welsh identity and her identity as a person of mixed race. To Charlotte,³ Wales is a country divided between those who are allowed to belong and those who are not. She shows this towards the end of the novel:

The Welsh and the English, the Welsh-speaking and the English-speaking, the proper Welsh and the not so proper Welsh, the insiders and the outsiders, the Italians, the Poles, the Irish, the Asians and the Africans and the likes of us, all fighting amongst ourselves for the right to call ourselves Welsh and most of us losing out to some very particular idea about who belongs and who doesn't.⁴

It is indeed unfortunate when discussing 'the Welsh' and 'the not so proper Welsh' that these binary terms become a self-fulfilling prophecy on 'who belongs and who doesn't.' Williams evidently sees Wales as divided not only between Welsh speakers and English speakers, but also between outsiders of different kinds excluding (or attempting to exclude) each other. The implication is that black and minority ethnic (BAME) people cannot be fully Welsh as a result. As, according to Williams, 'the idea of black Welsh wasn't really lodged into the cultural consciousness or in fact in the cultural memory', this excludes BAME people from any notions of Welshness.⁵ The feeling of otherness and exclusion is also reflected by the artist and educator Isabel Adonis, who states that:

'Black Welsh' is not an identity; on the contrary, it is a duality and a contradiction... if I claim to be Welsh when everyone can plainly see I am 'foreign', I must be mad. But if I claim to be black, that has no significance, it's just like having freckles, and if I claim

³ I shall refer to the narrator of *Sugar & Slate* as Charlotte and the writer as Charlotte Williams or Williams from here on.

⁴ Charlotte Williams, *Sugar & Slate* (Aberystwyth: Planet, 2002) p.169.

⁵ *Sugar & Slate*, p. 177.

to be oppressed, I'm playing the race card, demanding special treatment. So to survive, I must be nothing, invisible and above all silent, because my very existence is a reminder that at least one white Welsh woman had sex with a black man, and that is the beginning of the end of the purity of the Welsh people.⁶

Thus, there are perceived to be different levels of Welshness, and some are deemed more worthy than others. I was keen to respond to this mode of thinking, as Charlotte Williams has in *Sugar & Slate*, through fiction.

Adonis's and Williams's similar assertions on how the Welsh identity brings forth a sense of exclusion in BAME groups can be found, albeit in a contestable manner, in fictional representations of Butetown, which is the area of Wales with the highest historical number of BAME groups. The best-known fictional representations – John Williams's *Cardiff Trilogy* (2000-2004) and Trezza Azzopardi's *The Hiding Place* (2001) – have been dismissed by Charlotte Williams: in an interview with the short story writer Leonora Brito, she states that 'Cardiff more and more than anywhere else has suffered from a kind of demonization/exoticisation of the black experience, even in contemporary literature.'⁷ Brito herself says of much Butetown/Tiger Bay fiction that 'black people invariably inhabit a sort of psychic corral called "Tiger Bay." They can comfortably "place" us there, or nowhere'.⁸ As Catherine Phelps points out, John Williams modelled some of his characters (notably Tony Parris of the Cardiff Three, who is thinly disguised as petty thief Mikey in *The Cardiff Trilogy*) on real members of this community, based on his research for his true crime account, *Bloody Valentine: A Killing in Cardiff* (1995).⁹ Yet Phelps also points out that 'it is Williams's insistence on continuing to cast the people of Butetown only in roles like the drug dealer, pimp and prostitute, roles already

⁶ Isabel Adonis, "Black Welsh Identity: The Unspeakable Speaks", *New Welsh Review* 54, (Winter, 2001) p. 28.

⁷ L. Brito and C. Williams, "From Llandudno to Llanrumney: Inscribing the Nation" in *New Welsh Review* 62, (Winter, 2003) p. 31.

⁸ Brito & Williams, p. 30.

⁹ Catherine Phelps, "Corralling Crime in Cardiff's Tiger Bay" in Catherine Phelps and Lucy Andrew, eds., *Crime Fiction in the City: Capital Crimes* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013).

set for them by previous literary representations, that continues to disseminate the old myths'.¹⁰ I thus turned to Charlotte Williams and Brito's own fiction in order to better understand the representation I aimed to follow.

In Leonora Brito's short story, 'Digging For Victory,' from her collection *Dat's Love*¹¹ (1995), Winston Churchill's tour ship strikes the Glamorganshire canal's lock walls and empties the canal into Cardiff Bay.¹² In order to ensure that this catastrophe is rectified, Churchill urges the people of Cardiff to excavate and reclaim the vast quantities of iron dumped into the canal over the years for the crown, so that the canal can be filled in.¹³ The narrator, Kay, listens to Winston Churchill speaking on the radio (a month before he resigns as Prime Minister in 1955): 'He is talking about "this island race" and the 'dawning of the second age of Elizabeth'.¹⁴ Her sister Teeny enters the room and turns the radio off. Teeny's contempt for Churchill is manifested in this exchange:

'Teeny!' I say sharply, 'I was listening to that! it's the Prime Minister, talking to us.'

'Us!' she says, flapping the silken arms of her kimono and mooching around the table with her eyes closed.¹⁵

Although Churchill is attempting to motivate the people of Cardiff under the banner of the British Empire, rather than of Wales, the reader suspects that Teeny's reaction would have been the same: she can feel the exclusion, and the sense of not being allowed to think she belongs, as described by Williams. But as the crowds gather and do the dirty work that needs to be

¹⁰ Catherine Phelps, p.40. This is not entirely true – in *Cardiff Dead*, for instance, Tyra Unger, one of the two main protagonists, is not a criminal but a hard-working, gym-going single mother, but she remains the exception to the rule in Williams's novels.

¹¹ Brito's background and my own are connected. Leonora Brito's west African heritage goes back to the same island, Sao Vicente, that my father's family came from. She grew up in Llanrumney, the same part of the city where my father and half my family still live. Brito's father was also in the merchant navy at the same time as my grandfather. We are distantly related. Her Cardiff-set work has therefore been, for me, an interesting example, though she works in the genre of the short story, rather than the novel.

¹² The Glamorganshire Canal ran down what is now Churchill Way in the city centre.

¹³ This is a fictional Churchill: the incident did not happen in real life.

¹⁴ Leonora Brito, "Digging For Victory" in *Dat's Love* (Bridgend: Seren, 1995) p. 68.

¹⁵ Brito, p. 68.

completed due to the damage done by Churchill's ship, Brito is also making a larger point. As Rosalyn Marron puts it, 'Brito suggests that the people were betrayed and manipulated' by Churchill, and the British state at large, into handing over their labour for nothing.¹⁶ It is only Teeny who sees this through Churchill's oratory, due to her own strong sense of Butetown identity and feeling of exclusion from larger, national identities.

This feeling of exclusion, and the theme of identity, runs throughout Brito's collection. In the title story, 'Dat's Love', for example, names take on a significant level of importance. The two characters manipulate their identities, electing American entertainers' names because being successful, black and American must have seemed more possible at the time than being successful, black and Cardiffian. This is shown when the narrator states that 'you needed an American name in those days, to help with the bookings.'¹⁷ Thus 'Archibald something or other', a singer from Butetown, adopts the name of singer and actor Dooley Wilson, of *Casablanca* fame, while Sarah Jones, his protégée (whose life is similar in many respects to the early life of Shirley Bassey, except for the motherhood at sixteen) changes her last name to Vaughan, sharing her new name with the American jazz singer and Grammy Hall of Famer.¹⁸ Dooley Wilson yearns for fame: he has already built a career and gained a degree of success (though evidently not much) under his name Archibald, but it is under his new name, one that he values enough to keep for the rest of his life, that he feels comfortable. This is contrasted with Vaughan, whose taking on of a more glamorous surname allows her to take advantage of her dual heritage, allowing her to become world famous:

Sarah Vaughan, the coloured young lady with the Welsh name: 'The Sepia, Celtic Siren,' as they billed her as. That was her gimmick: batting her eye-lashes and telling

¹⁶ Rosalyn Marron, *Rewriting the Nation: A Comparative Study of Welsh and Scottish Women's Fiction from the Wilderness Years*, PhD Thesis, University of South Wales, 2012, p. 107.

¹⁷ Brito, p. 9.

¹⁸ Brito, p. 9.

reporters she was a native, of Cardiff. They had thought she was American, but she didn't have that good a voice.¹⁹

The final sentence shows, to a certain extent, that Sarah Vaughan is willing to use her Welsh identity in a fluid manner: it is there to use when convenient.

This concern with names and naming also features in my novel. Kilroy Jones is not attempting to become a famous singer, as Wilson and Vaughan are, yet his name is equally important. He uses it as an affirmation throughout the novel, which is also the title of the novel itself. His surname – the same as Sarah Vaughan's before she took her stage name – is thus something of a matter of pride for Kilroy Jones, and a cornerstone of his identity, as 'Dooley Wilson' becomes to 'Archibald something or other'. It is a link to Kilroy's past and the reputation, in part, garnered from his dead grandfather. Kilroy tells the reader that 'there was no-one meaner than Grancha.' After Nana tells Kilroy that someone (Griff) knocked at the door of their home and Kilroy tries to work out who it is, he tells the reader that 'there ain't been no beef at Nana's door since before Grancha was dead even. Everyone knows better than to be so dumb.' When Catrin asks Kilroy about his well-known reputation, he responds by saying, 'they all knows me and what I does. Just like my Grancha before me.' Kilroy could only make such an assertion if he came from a close-knit neighbourhood, perhaps with a similar sense of community spirit to the one described by Brito in her short stories, where private matters are often public knowledge. In *Sugar and Slate*, Charlotte also discusses such a community, again relating to the issue of identity and belonging to a larger whole, when she mentions to her friend Suzanne that she is 'lucky' because of her roots in Butetown: 'There are lots of people just like you in Cardiff. You've grown up with them. You're Welsh all right. I envy you that'.²⁰ But Suzanne responds, 'You've got that wrong for a start. I belong to a lil' bit of Cardiff, not Wales

¹⁹ Brito, p. 14.

²⁰ Williams, p. 169.

at all. Wales, what's that?'²¹ Suzanne specifies the area where her identity is grounded, and not only rejects Wales but also implies that such a fragmented place does not exist. She instead finds belonging in her *milltir sgwâr* in Cardiff Bay.²²

Historically, Butetown was an area of vice and crime, a seedy area of Cardiff that many would avoid; however, this kind of outcasting has resulted in a special identity being born, as described by the writer Alan Llwyd:

Many have described Butetown or Tiger bay as a ghetto, the truth is that this area of Cardiff was a segregated area, isolated and self-definitive. The dissimilitude of the community was strong enough to give members of that community a unique sense of identity. The inhabitants of Butetown had no need to call themselves either British or Welsh. They were Bay people, and any other label would be irrelevant.²³

The situation in North Wales, where Williams grew up, is undoubtedly different from that in Cardiff, with its large population of people from a minority ethnic background. The Office of National Statistics calculates that 'In 2011 the population of Wales was 96 per cent White (2.9 million people), a higher percentage than any of the regions in England',²⁴ yet it is skewed by its capital to a certain extent, as Cardiff's proportion of minority ethnic groups is 15.2%.²⁵ (This is slightly above the average for England and Wales at 14%).²⁶ By pointing out Suzanne's feeling of difference, Williams is backing up the binary she identifies between the 'Welsh-speaking and the English-speaking, the proper Welsh and the not so proper Welsh' quoted above. As others in minority positions (such as Charlotte here) perpetuate this system of

²¹ Williams, p. 169.

²² 'Milltir sgwâr' means 'square mile' in Welsh. It is a common phrase used to mean one's own neighbourhood or familiar 'patch'.

²³ Alan Llwyd, *Cymru Ddu/Black Wales: A History* (Cardiff: Hughes a'i Fab, 2005) p.168.

²⁴ Sue Leake, *2011 Census: Ethnicity Statistics, Wales Race Forum -May 2013 Cardiff*, Welsh Government, available at www.wlga.gov.uk/download.php?id=5482&l=1 p7 accessed 25 October, 2016.

²⁵ Sue Leake, p. 7.

²⁶ Emma White, *Ethnicity and National Identity in England and Wales: 2011*, Fareham, Office for National Statistics, available at <http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/ethnicityandnationalidentityinenglandandwales/2012-12-11> accessed 25 October, 2016.

binaries, it becomes proof, in a way, that such an unfortunate situation exists. Wales and the Welsh have always been marginal to the larger British project, and this divide-and-conquer model has been one of the factors in the latter's success. It is not always easy to see these aspects of colonialism that pertain to Wales, and the value one places on them does depend on the individual values of the analyser, as Lisa Sheppard points out with regard to the minority and majority, Welsh-speaking and English-speaking people of Wales:

It is important to emphasize that ensuring an inclusive community in a multinational state, such as the United Kingdom, or in a bilingual country, like Wales, is far more complex than the process of assimilating a number of foreign cultures to one dominant host culture. It is possible for the same group to seem dominant in one situation or at one particular time, and to appear in the minority or marginal in a different situation or at a different time. The apparent status of that group depends on the perspective of the interpreter, which is likely to vary as well.²⁷

The perspective of the interpreter is likely to be different based upon a range of variables, including age, gender, political beliefs, education, and so on. In a larger sense Sheppard also points to the variable and fragmented nature not only of interpretation but also of Welsh identity itself. In this regard, Sheppard's astute analysis recalls again the work of Charlotte Williams, whose attitude to Wales and Welsh identity is by no means straightforwardly negative. On the contrary, her alter ego in *Sugar and Slate* expresses an affinity with Wales, and even describes its fragmented nature as almost a positive:

I know why it is that I like Wales. I like it because it is fragmented, because there is a loud

²⁷ Lisa Sheppard, *O'r Gymru 'Ddu' i'r Ddalen 'Wen': Darllen Amlddiwylliannedd ac Aralledd o'r Newydd yn Ffuglen Gyfoes De Cymru, er 1990*, PhD Thesis, Cardiff University, 2015, p. 5. My translation of: 'Mae angen pwysleisio bod sicrhau cymuned gynhwysol (inclusive) mewn gwladwriaeth luoswlad, fel y Deyrnas Unedig, neu mewn gwlad ddwyieithog, fel Cymru, yn llawer mwy cymhleth na phroses o gymhathu nifer o ddiwyllianau tramor i un diwylliant lletyol, dominyddol. Mae'n bosib i'r un grŵp ymddangos yn ddominyddol mewn un sefyllfa neu ar un adeg, ac i ymddangos yn lleiafrifol neu'n ymylol mewn sefyllfa wahanol neu arr adeg wahanol. Bydd statws ymddangosiadol y grŵp hwnnw yn dibynnu ar safbwynt y dehonglydd, sy'n debygol o amrywio yn ogystal'.

bawling row raging, because its inner pain is coming to terms with its differences and divisions, because it realises it can't hold on to the myth of sameness, past or present.²⁸

Charlotte can at least sense some form of unity within the fractured structure of Wales. It is notable that Charlotte states what Williams does not, as the logical endpoint of the aforementioned binary mode of exclusionary thinking would eventually lead to the accusation of institutional racism of the system that holds it in place. Minorities and Welsh speakers are, after all, on the same side and it could be argued that it is the dominating power that separates and divides them. The cultural commentator, Siôn Jobbins, upholds this view, remarking that the Welsh-speaker sees BAME groups as natural allies:

Contrary to the accepted wisdom, the creation of independent Welsh institutions doesn't militate against the ethnic minorities in Wales, but actually promotes and validates their identity [...] Seeing Welsh black and Asian faces on the Welsh media is as important to white Welsh people (and especially to the Welsh language) as it is to the ethnic minority population. Not to see those faces is to stigmatize Welsh identity as a purely ethnic one – and that's a cultural and linguistic cul-de-sac.²⁹

By 'cul-de-sac' Jobbins means that Welsh culture has surely been improved by outside influences: if this does not happen, he sees 'no future in the twenty-first century for a white-only Welsh culture – be it in Welsh or English. It would just die of boredom. The ethnic minorities are an integral part of creating an exciting new Wales'.³⁰

Kilroy Jones in my novel can therefore be seen as a product of the need for a more inclusive identity and a rejection of the binary. He is strong enough in his Welsh identity to think that he is no less Welsh than any of his contemporaries for not knowing Cymraeg nor being ethnically Welsh. Kilroy adheres to the idea of Welsh identity being a civic one, where it

²⁸ Williams, p. 198.

²⁹ Siôn Jobbins, *The Phenomenon of Welshness II* (Llanrwst: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2013) p. 125.

³⁰ Jobbins, p. 124.

is up to individuals whether they consider themselves Welsh or not. They may do so on the basis of birth or residence, even if that residence is former. There are no superior levels to this identity and one is as Welsh as anyone else who considers themselves to be so. Thus, Kilroy rightly considers himself an equal with the Cymraeg-speaking characters of the novel, despite his monolingual existence.

Other writers take issue with such a stance. Welsh as a civic identity is a hotly-debated concept, as are many concepts to do with Welsh identity. In answering the question raised by Glenn Jordan in *Postcolonial Wales* on Welsh civic identity, namely: ‘Can we reimagine Wales as consisting of a plurality of experiences, cultures and identities? Can we rethink Welshness as heterogeneous, as inclusive of difference?’³¹ Dai Smith answers that:

[...] if we choose to do so it will need to be rather more than by offering the piously raised arms of the ‘anyone can be Welsh if they want to be’ variety so beloved of politicians, largely white and recent middle-class incomers [...]³²

I would argue that Kilroy's demographic, and my own also, do not support Smith's assertion. He emphasizes that this view is normally held by the white and middle-class; I am neither white nor middle class, and neither is Kilroy. Smith's words also appear to contradict his own earlier oft-repeated observation, echoed by Jordan in his question, that ‘Wales is a singular noun but a plural experience’.³³ I will offer no argument against Smith bestowing the term ‘pious’ on any who disagree with him; but the point needs to be emphasized that the simplicity of a nuanced identity based on civic inclusion means that Smith is free to envision his own Welsh identity as much as Kilroy is, or, for that matter, those ‘white and recent middle-class incomers’ of whom he speaks. As the aforementioned quotation by Sheppard indicates (by pointing out

³¹ Glenn Jordan, “‘We Never Really Noticed You Were Coloured’: Postcolonialist Reflections on Immigrants and Minorities in Wales” in Jane Aaron and Chris Williams, eds., *Postcolonial Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009) p. 60.

³² Dai Smith, “Wales: Post in Parenthesis, a Review by Dai Smith” in Paul Chaney, Jonathan Scourfield, Andrew Thompson eds., *Contemporary Wales* Vol. 19 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007) p.282.

³³ Smith, Dai, *Wales: A Question for History* (Bridgend: Seren, 1999) p. 36.

the often complex, shifting, dominant/marginal nature of groups at any particular time in Wales), this is at once a strength and a weakness of the civic Welsh identity.

Harold Carter sees the problem of defining Welsh identity not as a new phenomenon but as a characteristic of Welsh history; he writes:

[...] one has to conclude that one of the drawbacks to the strength of a Welsh identity is that it has never had a centre, a core around which to hold fast. It has been said that, ‘the nature of God is a circle of which the centre is everywhere and the circumference is nowhere’; it might be said of Wales that the circumference is everywhere and the centre is nowhere.³⁴

As a result of this lack of centre, Carter goes on to observe that ‘there has been a whole series of different contexts of being Welsh floating around the wheel of a circumference, an airy nothing lacking a local habitation and a name’.³⁵ To Carter, this is a negative, especially when seen from an historiographical point of view, as ‘Welsh identity is still a condition with infinite variety, not diminished by modern custom, where each person has his or her own interpretation. In that sense the work of Edward I and of the Act of Union still stand as fundamentally successful after many centuries in having robbed Wales of its coherence and unity as a people and substituted conflict and rancour’.³⁶ Carter accurately (yet pessimistically) describes the situation that the Welsh find themselves in. Yet if there is a strength to be gained from it then it is, as Charlotte inadvertently points out in *Sugar & Slate* on the fragmented nature of Wales, that this myriad of voices which shape such an identity must make it an inclusive one in the end. We can either choose to accept it and make it work, or we can embrace the alternative, which is to make the Welsh identity an exclusive one. But by only allowing certain people the

³⁴ Harold Carter, *Against the Odds: The Survival of Welsh Identity* (Cardiff: Institute of Welsh Affairs, 2010) p. 127. The analogy Carter uses here was originally attributed to Empedocles.

³⁵ Carter, p. 139.

³⁶ Carter, p. 145.

right to think of themselves as Welsh we then risk alienating a large number of people, which would, ultimately, end up hastening the demise of Welsh identity anyway.

In order to avoid contributing to the disunity described by Carter, I aimed to make Kilroy Jones into a character with a strong sense of his own identity, but also someone who, despite his faults and prejudices, accepts the rights of others to think of themselves as Welsh. The use of the Welsh civic identity may be considered a nuanced usage, but the characters see themselves as centred in a very Welsh world as a result. Evidence of this can be found in the way that Kilroy talks of his surroundings: in the opening scene he tells the reader that ‘Bute Park is the best place to sell a draw in the whole damn country.’ When Griff approaches him on a busy pedestrianised street, Kilroy explains that he cannot scare Griff away with violence as ‘lucky for him that this street got more footfall than anywhere else in the country.’ Kilroy also occasionally describes Cardiff as a ‘capital’ instead of as just a city.³⁷ By referring to Cardiff as a capital, and by making its streets and neighbourhoods known to the reader, Kilroy is pulling the gravity of the story and his identity away from south-east England and the Anglocentric world and towards south-east Wales and the Cymrocentric world instead.

This representation of the way in which Kilroy Jones views the city also ties in with Cardiff’s recent emergence as a truly Welsh capital. Since narrowly voting against the National Assembly for Wales in 1997, Cardiff has grown to accept what was once a begrudging state of Welshness, inasmuch that the city voted for the Assembly to be able to make laws on all matters in the 20 subject areas it has powers for in the 2011 Referendum by a margin of 61.4% to

³⁷ Jobbins takes a very different view of Cardiff from Kilroy’s when he states that “For all the talk of the Cardiff of the *Crachach* and middle-class, its own aesthetic is lower-middle class, with aspirations so low they barely show above the pavement, a capital where the opening of the twelfth Ikea department store in the UK was celebrated as a badge of statehood, a capital whose population actually believes the pokey, Lego-like Mermaid Quay is the height of continental sophistication.” (p.100) I will point out my own view here, which is as scientific as Jobbins’s, in that I believe the people of Cardiff think of Mermaid Quay as nothing more than a nice but pricey place to go for a jolly, and Ikea as a cheap, fast place to get the kids a healthy breakfast on a Sunday morning or to replace their bunk beds when they grow up a bit, and Jobbins, despite being from Cardiff himself (though now living in Aberystwyth), seems to be displaying the ‘us and them’ mentality I aimed to avoid.

38.6%.³⁸ Jobbins also points out that it has become a bona fide centre for Welsh speakers as well, when he states that:

It has become the undisputed capital for the Welsh-speaking community (that 'audible minority', as the poet Grahame Davies calls them). Caerdydd is now their El Dorado. For many a young person from Môn or Ceredigion, Cardiff is everything – where famous people have affairs and where every weekend is an international weekend. The place where, ever increasingly, they can speak their language just as much as they did back home, in regions which have become more English as Cardiff has become more Welsh.³⁹

I was keen to reflect this in my own novel, and while the fact that three of the six characters featured in it can speak Welsh (which is above the actual percentage of Welsh speakers in Cardiff), it does reflect the ever-increasing Welshness of the city, and its allure to the Cymry Cymraeg, as described by Jobbins. Of course, other writers approach the subject in different ways. The title character of Meic Stephens' 2006 novel, *Yeah, Dai Dando*, does not believe Cardiff to be Welsh at all in the early part of the novel. We learn from Dando:

Nothin Welsh about Cardiff at all really is there? Bar a few gift shops sellin stuff with ladies in tall black hats and carved spoons and tea towels with maps of Wales and one in the Igh Street Arcade sellin cowin kilts and tartans.⁴⁰

This view is somewhat contradicted by his many interactions within the capital. Dando's first interaction with a Welsh speaker displays his own feeling of Welshness (which is similar to Kilroy's) but also that of the character he is conversing with, which is markedly different.

³⁸ Mark Jennings, *Results of the National Assembly for Wales Referendum 2011, March 2011, Paper number: 11/017* Cardiff, National Assembly for Wales, available at <http://www.assembly.wales/Research%20Documents/Results%20of%20the%20National%20Assembly%20for%20Wales%20Referendum%202011%20-%20Research%20paper-04032011-211809/11-017-English.pdf> accessed 31 October, 2016.

³⁹ Jobbins, *The Phenomenon of Welshness* (Llanrwst: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2011) pp. 97-8.

⁴⁰ Meic Stephens, *Yeah, Dai Dando* (Blaenau Ffestiniog: Cinnamon, 2006) p. 27.

Dando eventually ends up in a violent incident outside the Belvedere Hotel in Pontcanna with a character he refers to as Blackbeard.⁴¹ In this exchange (leading up to said violent incident) the drunk Blackbeard takes umbrage at Dando for not speaking Welsh:

'Siarad Cŵmrag? Speak Welsh?'

bugger theyer all at it

'No, I don't. Well, tipyn bach. No, not really.'

'Shame. You should learn.'

'Why? I talk English and everyone seems to understand me.'

'You messin with me?'

'Well, no, I'm Welsh as you are, mate, straight up.'

'No, you're not. You don't speak Welsh. You're not a real Cymro. You're just a fuckin Taffy.'⁴²

This is a situation or a mode of thinking I was keen to avoid in *Kilroy F*****n Jones*. Like Charlotte Williams, Stephens is using this situation to reinforce binary stereotypes of Welsh speakers. While this attitude probably does exist (amongst the smallest possible, unrepresentative minority of *siaradwyr*), and while it could be argued that Blackbeard's insalubrious evening has contributed towards his bigotry, it seems to have been included in the text to artificially emphasize Dando's own bigotry. For this reason I wished to take Kilroy's reactions, and the characters he interacts with, away from such a mode of thinking. Kilroy does indeed show his own prejudiced preconceptions coming to the fore when he first meets Griff. But Kilroy does not see the divide, as with Blackbeard and Dando, having anything to do with language and instead thinks of it as being connected with class:

⁴¹ A thinly-disguised Beverly Hotel on Cathedral Road, no doubt.

⁴² Stephens, p. 12.

People like this Mary who thinks they know everything would never think I can almost clock what he's saying.⁴³ In the city and everywhere else in the whole damn country until you get proper west or up north, it's always the posh people who speak the Cymraeg. And because they're posh they judges you on how you says things, and never on what actually comes out of your mouth.

This of course turns out to be untrue when Kilroy discovers later on in the narrative that Griff is in the vulnerable position of being homeless, a point Kilroy would not consider possible of a Welsh-speaking Cardiffian. In Stephens' novel, Dando is similarly prejudiced against another first-language Welsh speaker of his class, in an interaction in marked contrast with his earlier confrontation with Blackbeard. Pryderi Roberts is from north Wales and is Dando's line manager at the Gwalia building society. In this passage, Dando's own prejudice stands out when Roberts tries to connect with him through appealing to Dando's strong sense of identity:

'We come from places with a lot in common, Dave. Even the terraces and chapels are similar.'

'Okay.'

'The communal life's the same in both places, the brass bands, the choirs –'

'Okay, Okay, if you say so.'

'The only difference between us is that Welsh is my first language and English yours.'

'Yeah, okay, but we're both Welsh like.'

'I'm not saying anything different, Dave.'⁴⁴

Kilroy and Dando's prejudices both stem from their own lack of knowledge of Welsh, yet they both end up being displaced into prejudices against (presumed) power instead – Pryderi Roberts is Dando's line manager and Kilroy perceives Griff as being 'posh'. Yet both characters at once

⁴³ Griff had just spoken Welsh at this point.

⁴⁴ Stephens, p. 203.

show that they consider themselves to be as Welsh as their antagonists. Despite Kilroy's lack of knowledge of Welsh, he gives the language a level of respect he does not show to some of its speakers. Kilroy does not refer to the Welsh language by its English name: instead, he insists on calling it *Cymraeg*. Kilroy does this to ensure the language retains its dignity. By calling it *Cymraeg* he is allowing the language to be defined on its own terms. My idea for this can be traced back to Stephen Knight's usage of the term *Cymraeg* in *A Hundred Years of Fiction* (2004):

I have not been able to bring myself to call this language *Welsh*, as the use of this term (a Germanic adjective meaning 'foreigner') seems to me a damaging mockery of the status of the native language, which I will call *Cymraeg*, the native language's name for itself, as seems appropriate in a country that is officially bilingual.⁴⁵

Evidence of this way of thinking can be found when Kilroy finds himself, for the first time, in the situation of being a minority speaker in the company of others. As such it becomes an adaptation of what Lisa Sheppard refers to as 'the myth of the Welsh pub and its Welsh-speaking drinkers' hostility towards English strangers'.⁴⁶ While Kilroy is not a stranger in the *Nos Dada* where the incident takes place, the myth has been re-appropriated, as is common in contemporary Welsh fiction, so that:

[it] features the Welsh- and English-speaking inhabitants of this officially bilingual nation. The English strangers are often replaced by the Anglophone Welsh – these English speakers are locals and often more local to the particular pubs in question than their Welsh-speaking compatriots. In revisiting and remaking the myth about the Welsh pub, contemporary writers examine and, sometimes, overturn the dynamic that exists

⁴⁵ Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004) p. xv.

⁴⁶ Lisa Sheppard, "Pulling Pints Not Punches: Linguistic Tensions in the Literary Pubs of Wales" in *The International Journal of Welsh Writing in English* 3 (2015), p. 87.

between Wales's two main languages – often, it seems, to suggest the need for a more inclusive nation.⁴⁷

In this section of the novel, Catrin and Griff come into the Nos Dada to ask for jobs. When they discover that Dafydd, the bar manager, can speak Welsh, they converse in Welsh with him. Dafydd and Catrin are mindful of Kilroy's lack of Welsh language skills and they switch to English. However, Griff keeps steering them back to speak in Welsh as a form of revenge (after Kilroy's earlier act of violence). Kilroy's reaction to this is not to castigate the language itself nor its speakers as a whole, as is often depressingly common (though by no means considered normal behaviour).⁴⁸ Instead, Kilroy tells the reader that 'Griff keeps going on and on in the Cymraeg and Catrin is laughing at all his jokes. Each syllable slices through you. It's not so much the lingo itself that bothers you but the slyness of him speaking it around someone who don't really understand.' This section of the narrative displays the features identified by Sheppard, as the Nos Dada is Kilroy's local and Catrin and Griff are entering it for the first time. Also, Kilroy does not speak Welsh while others do around him, thus inverting the original premise of this tired cliché. The whole reason for Kilroy's identity being the way it is means that this passage passes the inclusivity test also. While Kilroy Jones may not be totally representative of someone from his background, it was my intention to challenge the notions set out by others in order to better represent a way forward for the Welsh identity and language relations in contemporary Wales.

⁴⁷ Sheppard, p. 87.

⁴⁸ A recent example of what could potentially be an exhausting survey from the number of examples can be found here <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/recent-twitter-spat-over-welsh-11971792>

MASCULINITY

The previous chapter explored the complexities of Welsh identities in contemporary fiction, including my own; this chapter will explore another aspect of identity, namely gender identity, and specifically the representation of masculinity. In this chapter I will put the portrayal of masculinity into comparative context by analysing alpha male-type characters represented in a selection of recent novels. Exploring masculinity is important to my own novel as Kilroy Jones's awareness of his own notions of masculinity are essential to his outlook and much of the novel's narrative. Indeed, masculinity has played an important role in Welsh novels historically, as Aidan Byrne, among others, attests. Byrne notes that the novels he selected for his own thesis are 'set in South Wales mining valleys between the late nineteenth century and the 1930s, [and] they each focus on a sensitive boy's educational, industrial, sexual and political maturation.'¹ It is interesting to note from a sociological point of view that not much has changed: Michael Ward writes in a recent survey that the Welsh form of masculinity, epitomised in the old industrial heartlands of the south Wales valleys, is centred on the performance, or mimicry of, the 'pain, heroicism and physicality' once found in the coal industry.² He also notes that sartorial decisions often act, in a Welsh context, as 'a symbolic marker of status',³ which, while not necessarily a masculine notion itself, can – as I will show – be linked to notions of masculinity expressed through Welsh characters. Without wanting to label 'Welsh masculinity' as a homogenous entity, it is important to note that masculinity differs between individuals and, from a literary point of view, between genres: while two of

¹ Aidan Byrne, *Constructions of Masculinity in Four 1930s Welsh Novels in English: Lewis Jones's Cwmardy and We Live, Richard Llewellyn's How Green Was My Valley and Gwyn Thomas's Sorrow For Thy Sons*, PhD thesis, University of Wolverhampton, 2007. Available at uk.bl.ethos.577636 p.2.

² Michael Ward, "'Placing Young Men': The Performance of Young Working-Class Masculinities in the South Wales Valleys" in Dawn Mannay, ed., *Our Changing Land: Revisiting Gender, Class and Identity in Contemporary Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016) p. 97.

³ Ward, p. 97.

the characters discussed below have geography and the love of attention-grabbing attire in common, the third, from the genre of crime fiction, is different again. The image of the ‘man in the mac’, although widely parodied, is still viewed, states Sally Munt in *Murder by the Book?* (2003) as ‘one of the folk heroes of modern popular culture.’⁴ Therefore, the inclusion of this character from the crime fiction genre shows that ‘masculinities’ would perhaps be a better term.

The novels explored along with my own are Tom Bullough’s *Addlands* (2016), which tells the story of farmer and three-county boxing champion Oliver Hamer, and his parents, Idris and Etty, and their lives on the Funnon farm in mid-Wales, and Lee Child’s *Make Me* (2015), which is a continuation of drifter and retired military policeman Jack Reacher’s slow, remorseless travail across the American Midwest. These two central male characters share many traits with Kilroy Jones. All three are physically larger than normal. They live largely violent lives, which has pushed them to the margins of society, and all three have difficulty forming personal relationships. I have divided this chapter up into three broad, connected elements, in order to explore how masculinity is portrayed in this selection of contemporary fiction. These are Physicality, the characters’ Portrayal ‘In’ and ‘Of’ Society, and their Attitudes Towards Others.

Physicality

Both Kilroy and Oliver Hamer in *Addlands* make use of ‘peacocking’ in order to differentiate themselves from their contemporaries. Peacock theory, although undoubtedly an ancient technique, can trace its modern name back to a Pick Up Artist⁵ (PUA) known only as Mystery,

⁴ Sally Munt, *Murder by the Book? Feminism and the Crime Novel* (London: Routledge, 2003) p.1.

⁵ pickup artist *n. colloq.* a person who is skilled at attracting sexual partners, or who pursues them assiduously; later also *spec.* (sometimes abbreviated *PUA*) a member of a group which shares or promotes pickup techniques, esp. online. Typically used of a man, and sometimes (esp. with reference to PUA groups) considered aggressive or predatory.

<http://www.oed.com.abc.cardiff.ac.uk/view/Entry/143444?redirectedFrom=pickup+artist#eid1178986050>

who was first introduced to the world in Neil Strauss's memoir, *The Game* (2005). Strauss explains that Mystery defined peacocking as:

...the idea that in order to attract the most desirable female of the species, it's necessary to stand out in a flashy and colorful way. For humans, he told us, the equivalent of the fanned peacock tail is a shiny shirt, a garish hat, and jewelry that lights up in the dark— basically, everything I'd dismissed my whole life as cheesy.⁶

However, despite this initial scepticism, Strauss goes on to analyse Mystery and applies peacock theory not only to attracting sexual partners but to attracting attention in general. Strauss writes about a trip that he takes with Mystery and another PUA to Moldova. Having arrived in Ukraine and reached the Transnistrian⁷ border (after paying three police bribes along the way), tensions escalate when it seems that the group must nevertheless travel back to obtain the correct documents; this does not concern Mystery, however, who has been of no use during a stressful journey while talking constantly about designs for the advert for his upcoming magic show. Mystery subsequently picks a fight with Strauss, even though they find themselves in the situation of having guns pointed towards their faces at the border checkpoint. Strauss notes of Mystery:

The guy was a narcissist. He was a flower that bloomed with attention be it positive or negative – and wilted when ignored. Peacock theory wasn't just to attract girls. It existed first and foremost to attract attention. Even picking a fight with me was just another plea for attention, because I'd been ignoring him for the past hundred miles.⁸

Such a term seems apt when used to discuss both Kilroy and Oliver Hamer. Both characters like to be the centre of attention and relish being recognised for their sartorial choices. Kilroy takes pride in his personal appearance. When he meets Catrin for the first time, in the presence

⁶ Neil Strauss, *The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pickup Artists* (New York: ReganBooks, 2005) p. 22.

⁷ This is a state with limited recognition between Moldova and Ukraine.

⁸ Strauss, *The Game*, p. 99.

of Dafydd, as she is asking for a job, he notes that she is unsure whom to talk to, as ‘Dav looks like the boss cos he's behind the bar showing off his chipped right incisor, but I looks like the boss cos I’m in front wearing a short woollen overcoat with a tartan lining.’ At another point he states, more to himself than to the reader, that you (namely, Kilroy) should ‘always make yourself as handsome as you can, even if you're just going round the shop for a pack of smokes. You has to make yourself look so sexy that you could accidentally confuse young teenage boys whose hormones are flying all over the place.’ Oliver Hamer in Bullough’s *Addlands* might agree with this sentiment, for at one point he is described by his future partner, Naomi, as ‘the vainest man I ever met’.⁹ He is described by another character as a ‘vast, grizzled man with his sovereign rings, his garish waistcoat peeping from his coat and a raven on his shoulder like some pagan sentinel’.¹⁰

‘Peacocking’ is an activity that both Kilroy and Oliver use in order to stand out and express an element of their masculine identities. Through looking smart (in the case of Kilroy) and eccentric (in the case of Oliver), both characters assert their own brands of maleness and impress it upon others in a proactive fashion. Their ‘maleness’ is foregrounded specifically due to the very nature of ‘peacocking’ itself (and its overtly masculine name). It is perhaps due to the sense of entitlement many heterosexual men feel that our patriarchal society gives them, and the subsequent attention this type of man gives to women, that it is difficult to conceive of an equivalent term for women. Kilroy and Oliver show many traits of peacocking both in what they choose to wear and their attitudes. A similar role for sartorial choices pertaining to any gender can be found in many subcultures; Dick Hebdige describes, for example, the difference between punk wear and normal clothes:

⁹ Tom Bullough, *Addlands* (London: Granta, 2016) p. 168.

¹⁰ Bullough, p. 288.

...the conventional outfits worn by the average man and woman in the street are chosen within the constraints of finance, 'taste', preference, etc. and these choices are undoubtedly significant. Each ensemble has its place in an internal system of differences – the conventional modes of sartorial discourse – which fit a corresponding set of socially prescribed roles and options. These choices contain a whole range of messages which are transmitted through the finely graded distinctions of a number of interlocking sets – class and status, self-image and attractiveness, etc. ultimately, if nothing else, they are expressive of 'normality' as opposed to 'deviance' (i.e they are distinguished by their relative invisibility, their appropriateness, their 'naturalness'). However, the intentional communication [of punk clothing] is of a different order. It stands apart – a visible construction, a loaded choice. It directs attention to itself; it gives itself to be read.¹¹

Although not part of a specific subculture, both Kilroy, with his smart coats and the 'extra-small t-shirts' he wears after working out, and Hamer, with his jewellery and constant avian companion could be seen to adhere to Hebdige's analysis of the subculture's 'deviancy'. Neither dresses in a conventional manner, as they want to draw attention to themselves overtly (instead of cultivating the 'relative invisibility' that Hebdige describes). However, where they differ from Hebdige's analysis of subculture fashion is that Kilroy and Hamer adopt their poses not from a consciousness of 'deviance' from 'normality' but from a platform of arrogance, born from wanting to be the alpha-male of the locality.

Lee Child's main character, Jack Reacher, provides a contrast in this regard for his appearance is less of a priority, perhaps owing to the fact that he was born at the US Army's Berlin base and has spent his life either wearing uniforms (as a military policeman) or being surrounded by them (during his childhood). This changes at one point, when he spots 'a rail of

¹¹ Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, (London: Routledge, 2005) p. 101.

work clothes’,¹² as ‘his own duds were four days old, and being around [Michelle] Chang made him conscious of it.’¹³ Yet, rather than think of how he would look better, he considers buying new clothes ‘a worthwhile investment.’ Later, after being asked by Chang in a hotel lobby if he needs to freshen up, Reacher ‘glanced in the mirror. Recent haircut, recent shave, recent shower, new clothes. He said, “This is about as good as it gets, I’m afraid”’.¹⁴ Reacher’s appearance may not seem to feature as an aspect of his masculinity, yet his unconcern for his own appearance suggests a type of manliness associated with the hard-working manual labourer who earns a living in clothes that are likely to get dirty. Reacher’s lack of vanity sets him apart from Kilroy and Oliver in this respect. Yet Reacher is, like Kilroy and Oliver, a larger-than-average male, described at one point by a clerk who is spying on him as ‘another big guy. A mean son of a bitch’.¹⁵ In *Addlands*, when Naomi watches Oliver from a distance through binoculars, she notes that ‘his scale [is] unarguable even at this distance’.¹⁶ Through making Oliver Hamer and Jack Reacher physically larger and athletically superior in the novels in which they appear, the authors ensure that these characters automatically become the apex predators of their fictional worlds. However, as has already been suggested, the contrast in their appearance indicates that it is inaccurate to describe a monolithic ‘masculinity’ in these contemporary novels; rather, it is necessary to refer instead to a range of ‘masculinities’.

For Reacher and Oliver, size is a given, and one only to be thought of, in the case of Oliver at least, when the ‘bulge in his shirt,’ first noticed in his early forties, ‘jarred with the man he saw in his mind’.¹⁷ It is, in turn, not something that ever crosses Reacher’s mind. Kilroy differs from Oliver and Reacher in that, for him, size matters. As a result, Kilroy has a more primal desire for power, manifested in the ‘San Fernando Workout,’ which is his personal

¹² Lee Child, *Make Me*, (London: Bantam, 2016) p. 131.

¹³ Chang is his partner for the length of this particular novel.

¹⁴ *Make Me*, p. 153.

¹⁵ *Make Me*, p. 19.

¹⁶ *Addlands*, p. 145.

¹⁷ *Addlands*, p. 188.

fitness regime. The San Fernando Valley in California is widely regarded as being the centre of the world's pornographic industry. Through following a free-weights course designed to give him the body of a male pornographic actor, Kilroy is showing the reader that, to him, to have a virile physique is a *sine qua non* of masculinity.

It is no surprise that Kilroy would think this way. A man in his situation – being from a poor, uneducated background, raised by a vulnerable woman – has less real outlet for expression than men such as Reacher and Oliver, who live without the anxiety of poverty being an ever-present background companion. Henry Giroux offers a useful contextualisation of the body, when seen through the eyes of someone in Kilroy's situation, by stating that:

Job or no job, one forever feels the primacy of the body: the body flying through the rarefied air of the neighborhood gym in a kind of sleek and stylized performance; the body furtive and cool existing on the margins of society filled with the possibility of instant pleasure and relief, or tense and anticipating the danger and risk; the body bent by the weight of gruelling labor.

The body, with its fugitive status within working-class culture, allowed us to cross racial borders and rewrite the endemic racism of our white, working-class neighborhoods.¹⁸

This 'primacy of the body' to those in Kilroy's situation also intersects with the violence of Kilroy, both in his thoughts and deeds. To Kilroy, 'Violence solves everything.' This is an important part of Kilroy's philosophy. While he comes to learn the error of his ways, with the death of his Nana and the unsatisfactory defeat of Griff, this mantra, repeated numerous times throughout the novel, is how Kilroy largely thinks of the world, until it is proven wrong in the most catastrophic of ways. He differs here from the more financially independent figures of Reacher and Oliver in that he is normally the instigator of violence. Oliver, early on, finds his friend Griffin squaring up to him and 'was surprised only that his friend was fighting him

¹⁸ H. Giroux, *Fugitive Cultures: Race, Violence and Youth* (London: Routledge, 1996) p. 5.

again'.¹⁹ Later in his adolescence, when confronted with a man maybe twice his age but with half his skill and strength, the narrative concedes that 'the man had spirit, Oliver would give him that'.²⁰ Similarly, in *Make Me*, after being asked by Chang how he feels after killing three men contracted to kill a doctor's family, Reacher responds, after avoiding the question, with 'I leave people alone if they leave me alone. Their risk, not mine'.²¹ The risk of physical injury associated with violence is not of concern to these characters but rather it is a part of them. Their familiarity with violence and the tendency to emerge from such situations largely unscathed, either mentally or physically, shows that physicality in its rawest sense becomes a status-marker in that each one is in control of other men, thereby reaffirming their alpha-male status.

Another way in which these characters differ is in their emotional life. In the next section I will explore how societal pressure has helped shape not only their reaction to physical conflict but also the inner lives of men such as Kilroy, Oliver and Reacher, who see themselves as alpha males.

Portrayal in society/portrayal of society

In a recent television programme, the artist Grayson Perry visited three groups of men – cage fighters, city brokers, and gang members – in order to examine what it is to be a man in early twenty-first-century Britain.²² In the programme Perry states that:

'Often men don't even realise they're sad... Boys are brought up to unconsciously feel they would be breaking their man contract if they were to cry too much. That's why men

¹⁹ *Addlands*, p. 48.

²⁰ *Addlands*, p. 95.

²¹ *Make Me*, p. 369.

²² "Grayson Perry: All Man" available at <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/grayson-perry-all-man> [accessed 29 May 2016]

kill themselves more – they bottle up, bottle up, bottle up, bottle up, until they’re overwhelmed by it.’²³

By talking about the way ‘boys are brought up “unconsciously”’, Perry shows how traditional views of masculinity hold that men keep emotions to themselves, often with devastating consequences. Acknowledging that this trope is found in many masculinities, Perry notes in his exploration of masculinity that accompanied this series, *The Descent of Man* (2016), that ‘globally about twice as many men kill themselves as women, in developed countries it is three times as many, and in some Eastern European states men are six times as likely to kill themselves. For many, masculinity is a fatal burden.’²⁴ Stoicism in emotional expression is regarded as a virtue, as Perry explains, which is instilled in many men since birth. I would go further to suggest that ‘boys are brought up to unconsciously feel they would be breaking their man contract,’ to use Perry’s words, when it comes to both negative *and* positive emotions, including emotions such as pain and joy. The representation of Jack Reacher in Lee Child’s novels is a good example of this. To a certain degree his character cannot change from novel to novel, since this would be contractually problematic, and so it is often left to the ‘sidekick’ character he picks up for the duration of a particular narrative to change instead. This does not appear to be an issue for Child’s massive readership;²⁵ indeed, the unchanging nature of Reacher’s character may well be regarded as one of the selling-points of the series. In his book *Reacher Said Nothing*, Andy Martin aptly describes Reacher’s character as a ‘semi-autistic socially dysfunctional drifter’.²⁶ However, one aspect that Child explores in *Make Me* that is a change from Reacher’s normal modus operandi is his self-admission to an emergency room

²³ Tim Jonze, ‘Grayson Perry: ‘Boys Think They’re Breaking the Man Contract if They Cry’, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/may/04/grayson-perry-all-man-boys-breaking-man-contract-if-they-cry> [accessed May 30 2016]

²⁴ Grayson Perry, *The Descent of Man* (London: Allen Lane, 2016) p. 119.

²⁵ Stav Sherez in *The Spectator* notes that, ‘Every four seconds, somewhere in the world, a Lee Child novel is sold.’ Stav Sherez, ‘Writing a bestseller ‘on the verge of a stroke’’ *The Spectator*, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/2016/01/writing-a-bestseller-on-the-verge-of-a-stroke/> [accessed May 29 2016]

²⁶ Andy Martin, *Reacher Said Nothing: Lee Child and the Making of Make Me* (London: Bantam, 2015), p. 218.

due to concussion. Reacher's 'tough guy' attitude towards personal health thus comes into question due to the after-effects of a fight to the death with a man named Hackett. Normally, Reacher would forget such an injury – as he has done numerous times over the course of nineteen previous novels – but he is spurred on here by other characters to seek medical assistance. Nevertheless, such a bottling up of a potentially life-threatening injury until the symptoms became too obvious to hide, is par for the course when it comes to a man such as Reacher.

But this “bottling up” that Perry discusses is, as I have asserted, not just applicable to negative emotions, a fact which is acknowledged, to an extent, by Reacher himself in *Make Me*. At one point he notices a mechanic paying him too much attention in the town of Mother's Rest, where he suspects that most of the inhabitants are keeping track of his movements for some unknown reason. When questioned, the mechanic says he recognises Reacher from his time playing football at Penn State in 1986. The mechanic explains the success of his lie to his boss later, reasoning that 'he was sure he had handled it safely, with the old football trick. Pick a good college team in a good year, and most guys were too flattered to be suspicious'.²⁷ Yet Reacher, it emerges later, is aware that the mechanic was 'covering his ass' and 'hiding behind a bullshit story.' He tells Chang that:

'Some guys might find it flattering. Maybe they wanted to be football stars. Who wouldn't? Maybe their heads get turned and the problem goes away. Plus he calibrated it to make me younger than I am. Which is flattering too, I suppose. I was already in the army in '86. I graduated in '83. The guy put on a whole big performance'.²⁸

The mechanic knows how to exploit the held-in, emotional fragility of a certain type of alpha male, and by doing so hopes to gain an advantage over Reacher. The mechanic knows full well

²⁷ *Make Me*, p. 44.

²⁸ *Make Me*, p. 46.

that men, more likely than not, hold their emotions in and get uncomfortable, and he uses this knowledge to his advantage.

Similar instances, both positive and negative, are observable in the representation of Oliver, in *Addlands*, also. When his father Idris dies, Oliver becomes the ‘boss,’ so to speak, even though he has been the *de facto* boss for a long time beforehand. But with his father’s death, a problem is raised concerning the ownership of the Funnon farm: his father’s brother, Ivor, has a claim to some of the land. Oliver does not have time to grieve over his father’s death due to this pressing issue: ‘The boss was dead. God knew that they had had their differences, but this was no less an attack on their farm. It contravened the world’s order, its justice, its right and wrong’.²⁹ The best Oliver can hope for is a channelling of his grief for his father into the feeling of injustice brought about by Ivor’s behaviour. He is, as Grayson Perry might put it, ‘bottling up’ his emotions. The only time he seems vulnerable is when he has to explain a word from the Radnorshire dialect to Naomi, his future lover, who is from near Worcester. After taking her to a picturesque vantage point across the Wye valley so that they can spot the Funnon farm’s sheep, Oliver has to explain what the word ‘tare’ means (‘Tare... Excitable, Like. Sorry, I was forgetting’).³⁰ When Naomi responds that she likes the Radnorshire dialect, Oliver ‘hesitated, briefly uncertain, his dark eyes moving in his high, carved face. Suddenly Naomi could imagine him as a boy: his will not yet in tune with his body, his size an encumbrance rather than a strength’.³¹ Naomi sees this unexpected, exposed aspect of Oliver’s character as an attractive sensitivity, long since buried by the expectations placed upon him by society, as noted by Perry. Thus, the characterization of both Reacher and Oliver bear out Perry’s findings that men tend to hold in emotion.

²⁹ *Addlands*, p. 138.

³⁰ *Addlands*, p. 151.

³¹ *Addlands*, pp. 151-2.

But when it came to Kilroy, I felt that a different approach would be needed for the type of character I expected him to be at the outset of the writing process. *Kilroy F*****n Jones* is written from a first-person perspective so that his inner life could be explored. Clearly, writing from a third-person perspective, as in *Make Me* and *Addlands*, makes the task of displaying the range of emotions in a character, whether they be male or female, much harder, as the action is often seen in what the characters do and say rather than what they are feeling at that particular moment in time. As *Kilroy F*****n Jones* is written in the first person, his confessional style of emotional articulation is there for the reader to grasp at once. This can be a straightforward affair, as in the case of jealousy: Kilroy first sees Catrin from afar, without realising her relationship to Griff. On making the connection, he says that ‘when a twonkey like him got a bird like that and the only bird in your life is your Nana, you knows that there's something wrong with the world. Sometimes, you feels like it's all on you to bring the balance back.’ But it can also be used to display a more complex array of emotional changes, which is imperative to the novel’s development. After Davviv tells Kilroy that he took his attack on Griff too far, Kilroy has to admit in his head that he is wrong. He does so by talking himself through the reasoning and guiltily telling himself off, before offering Davviv a muted response:

There ain't no point in arguing. You knew this already. If the last few weeks have taught you anything, it's that Davviv is always right about these type of things. But it's still just as important for him to say it as it is for you to hear. Sometimes, the message just gotta get hammered in.

– ‘Puttin him in ICU ain't solved fuck all.’

These examples hark back to the societal pressure men feel to behave in a certain way. While ‘male’ and ‘female’, or even ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ are not binary opposites, this pressure is, of course, nowhere near as intense or ubiquitous as the societal pressure women experience, but as an element of the gendered restrictions holding back society in general it does retain its

own dishonourable place. It is interesting (and depressing) to note that when it comes to the male, such pressure can be flouted or rejected and, being largely unlawful characters, both Kilroy and Reacher can choose to define themselves, to an extent, *against* society as individual, rugged males. Women, however, would not always find it as easy to flout or reject societal expectations without suffering the consequences, as Betty Friedan makes clear in *The Feminine Mystique*:

In almost every professional field, in business and in the arts and sciences, women are still treated as second-class citizens. It would be a great service to tell girls who plan to work in society to expect this subtle, uncomfortable discrimination – tell them not to be quiet, and hope it will go away, but fight it. A girl should not expect special privileges because of her sex, but neither should she "adjust" to prejudice and discrimination.³²

In comparing Kilroy and Reacher's positions to women, and their ability to act in conformity or rebellion, it becomes obvious that both men have a degree of privilege (so much so that they do not even realise that this privilege exists) when it comes to how much this societal pressure plays upon them. Contemporary educated western women, as Friedan points out, must resist and fight this discrimination from an early age, whereas Kilroy and Reacher can, to a certain extent, oppose it with far more ease. Thus, when Kilroy is tricked by Griff into taking a strong hallucinogenic sedative, the former justifies what happened by stating that 'life is violent like that. You can go a whole career in boxing without getting fucked up once, if your promoter thinks he can make a bit of bread out of you. But there ain't no rules in the real world. You just has to accept that you're gonna take a beating once in a while.' His belief that there 'ain't no rules' is, for Kilroy, a way of rejecting those rules and restraints he considers 'society' to have thrust upon him. Reacher similarly rejects the cultural messages of masculinity, having been through a system of institutionalised aggression, as an 'army brat,' since birth. When Chang

³² Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (London: WW Norton, 2001) p. 374.

calls Reacher ‘nuts’ for a casual act of violence, Reacher responds by saying, ‘never forget it was Uncle Sam who made me this way’.³³ Reacher has just committed an act of grievous bodily harm on two men, in contradiction to the training of situation-control he was given as a military policeman. By letting out his anger and aggression he is flouting the unspoken rule, as described by Perry, of holding his emotions in, and deferring the blame at the same time.

Oliver Hamer, however, cannot disregard society or his responsibilities as easily as Kilroy or Reacher. This farmer has a deep connection to his land – he is the ninth generation of his family to farm at the Funnon – and finds solace in his work. Oliver takes pride in his masterly attention to detail, his ability to perform physical work, and evidently feels anxious when a good job has not been done. After ploughing a furrow, he notices ‘an imprecision to its line that made Oliver grimace and blow the smoke from the side of his mouth’.³⁴ It is no surprise that a farmer feels more pride in his achievements than a drifter or a small-time drug dealer would. Reacher is happy with ‘a few bucks in my pocket, and four points on the compass’,³⁵ and Kilroy is never happier than when he is working out or forgetting his troubles through drinking and taking drugs, and not voicing or expressing his concerns, corroborating Perry’s analysis in the way that many men are brought up and the way they deal with this pressure. Oliver, however, is wedded to his work at the Funnon, and willingly accepts the role he has carved out for himself in society. What draws Kilroy, Reacher, and Oliver together under the same branch of masculinity is that (while not wanting to define it against the way women live their lives) they, as the exemplars of a certain type of (alpha) male privilege in their respective novels, have more choice when it comes to these things compared to women.

³³ *Make Me*, p. 88.

³⁴ *Addlands*, p. 127.

³⁵ *Make Me*, p. 116.

Attitudes Towards Others

While sexism is not inherently a masculine attitude, Kilroy does, for most of the narrative, think of his female peers in overtly sexual terms. Even when confronted by Dav on his habit of ‘rating’ women with marks out of ten for attractiveness, Kilroy dismisses Dav for not understanding his position, and does not notice that Dav’s shaking of his head is a dismissal in turn of Kilroy’s own attitude. Through writing from a first person perspective I sought to make the reader question Kilroy’s attitude, even if he is incapable of doing so himself. By making the reader aware that Kilroy is not listening, I want the reader to know that Kilroy is fooling himself and no-one else.

Reacher and Oliver do not mirror Kilroy’s attitude. A female character such as Michelle Chang is far more than a sexual object for Reacher; indeed, it is Chang who makes Reacher visit the emergency room, thus abandoning at least temporarily his ‘tough guy’ role. Andy Martin says of this that ‘On the one hand this shows the seriousness of the injury Reacher has sustained (from the blow to the head). But it also shows how seriously he takes the advice of Stashower. She insists that he – for once – accepts someone else’s advice to go and see a doctor. So, Reacher’s visit to the emergency room is both physiological and romantic all at once’.³⁶ Reacher considers Chang to be an equal member of their two-person team in trying to achieve their objective of discovering what happened to private detective Keever in the town of Mother’s Rest. The mission would end in tragedy were he to have the same attitude as Kilroy. But character growth, as mentioned previously, is not something that happens often in Reacher novels to the protagonist, nor is it needed with regard to his attitude towards women. When it comes to the protagonist of my own novel, however, Kilroy does learn by the end that his misogynistic attitude, as is his attitude towards violence, is unacceptable. This is brought about

³⁶ Andy Martin, *Reacher Said Nothing* (London: Bantam Press, 2015), p. 259. Michelle Chang was called Michelle Stashower at this stage of the writing process. Lee Child famously writes only one draft of his novels, with minimal changes (taking 80-90 working days), which Andy Martin documented in *Reacher Said Nothing* by watching Child write *Make Me* from two yards behind Child’s right shoulder.

through the recognition that his own family tragedy, which shaped the man he grew into, is playing out in a similar fashion in the son of one of his customers. Tyrone is Stacey's young son, who accidentally witnesses Kilroy and Stacey in the act of coitus. On learning of Stacey's family history, Kilroy feels protective of the boy. Seeing the error of his ways, Kilroy states that he could never do that to a child himself – 'Just fuck off and leave him and his old dear to fend for themselves.' If he knew who the father was, who had abandoned Stacey and Tyrone, he would 'go round his yard and smash him up.' But this turns out to be an acknowledgement that Kilroy has lived through a similar experience himself, as 'really every time you bounced his swede off the floor you'd be smacking your own father. The cunt who couldn't handle it and fucked off when Mumma's happy place didn't work no more.'

This process of growth, which comes about through confronting his past and his faults as a person, is key to Kilroy's cathartic path. By the last chapter he no longer talks of Catrin in sexual terms, but instead talks of how he likes to spend time with her. He is still grieving for the loss of his Nana, though his loss is displaced into making numerous cups of tea as she once did, but he is less likely to spend his money on drugs and alcohol and more than happy to enter back into society. His attitude towards his male contemporaries is more problematic. Kilroy delights in emasculating Dav and Griff, and often does not even notice when he is doing so. He refers to Griff as 'The Mary' throughout, in an attempt at emasculation, without acknowledging the sexist connotations of using a female given name in a negative manner. He also shampoos Griff's hair to show that he is psychologically, as well as physically, stronger.

Yet perhaps owing to his obsession with his own body, Kilroy fetishises Griff's body also, despite, or maybe because of, its difference from his own. When he first sees Griff in a fitted t-shirt, he notices that Griff has 'got that type of lean, sinewy body that you gets from chopping wood all day. You can tell he's always shifted the twice-weekly keg delivery in every pub he's ever worked in. Some birds go mad for that type of guy.' Prior to this, Kilroy states of

Griff that 'with his shoe polish curls and his cue-ball cheekbones, you can imagine he'd be highly fuckable in the village he's from.' Descriptions of Griff are more numerous than descriptions of Catrin. Kilroy is comfortably heterosexual, despite the homoerotic overtones of his assessment of Griff's body, which would be, for Kilroy, the ultimate factor of masculinity.

Kilroy Jones's notions of his own masculinity play an important role in his life and thus the narrative itself. His 'peacocking' behaviour, as found in other characters such as Oliver Hamer, brings him much in the way of confidence, even when he is in the wrong, as shown in his many first-person perspective monologues. Yet Kilroy differs from other overly-masculine characters (such as Reacher) who find themselves unable, or unwilling, to go through this cathartic process and therefore 'bottle in' their emotions. It is the physicality of the body, and the way these characters use theirs, that unites them. However, it is also worth noting that Giroux shows in his treatise that constructions of identity and differences in class can be cut through when it comes to the body, and it is this notion, class, that I shall turn to next.

The Underclass in Fiction

Having discussed two aspects of identity in the previous chapters, I now turn to examine the way in which social class influences characters and their actions. Since many of the characters in my novel inhabit the lower echelons of the class hierarchy, my discussion will focus on the concept of the 'underclass'. Many of the ideas that form the basis of the concept of the 'underclass' come from Charles Murray's influential 1990 report, *The Emerging British Underclass*.³⁷ Murray, an authoritative American libertarian sociologist, was invited to write about the so-called underclass by the *Sunday Times* as 'a visitor from a plague area to see whether the disease is spreading'.³⁸ He was invited to do so based on his work exploring the notion of an underclass in American society, and to see if any parallels could be found in the United Kingdom. Murray defines a member of the underclass as 'a certain type of poor person defined not by his condition, e.g. long-term unemployed, but by his deplorable behaviour in response to that condition, e.g. unwilling to take the jobs that are available to him'.³⁹ In essence, the 'underclass does not refer to a degree of poverty, but to a type of poverty'.⁴⁰ His report concluded that the 'values [of the underclass] are now contaminating the life of entire neighbourhoods'.⁴¹ The responsibility for this situation that the United Kingdom found itself in lay, according to Murray, not only in the hands of the often anti-social criminal faction of society, but also with 'social workers and academics prepared to make excuses to try to shield them from the consequences of their behaviour' and 'governments for wrong-headed policies

³⁷ Charles Murray, *The Emerging British Underclass* (London: The IEA Health and Welfare Unit, 1990)

³⁸ Ruth Lister, ed., *Charles Murray and the Underclass: The Developing Debate* (London: The IEA Health and Welfare Unit, 1996), p. 25.

³⁹ Lister, ed., p. 82.

⁴⁰ Lister, ed., *The Emerging British Underclass* (London: IEA Health & Welfare Unit, 1990) p. 9.

⁴¹ Lister, ed., p. 25.

that seduce people into behaving in ways that seem sensible in the short term but are disastrous in the long term'.⁴²

The report met with considerable levels of hostility from both sides of the political spectrum. The right disowned the report in an effort to shield the incumbent Thatcher government, while the left disowned it for what was seen as its mentality of victim-blaming. Nevertheless, in the years since, *The Emerging British Underclass* has continued to be an influential polemic in the realms of governmental policy and in cultural representations of the working classes.⁴³ This is due in part to a follow-on from the initial report, titled *The Emerging British Underclass: The Developing Debate* (1996). In this later text the initial report was analysed by a number of left-wing academics and journalists. Murray dismissed most of these commentaries in his rejoinder by stating that he was 'unpersuaded, for reasons that I think were already stated adequately in my original article; and I will be satisfied if the reader simply goes back and takes another look at *The Emerging British Underclass* side-by-side with their observations'.⁴⁴ In 2012, with a different Tory-led coalition administration in place, the left-wing commentator Owen Jones noted the influence of the original report when he stated that 'Murray and the Cameron Conservatives share an underlying philosophy. Social problems in working-class communities are magnified and then blamed on the personal characteristics and lifestyles of the inhabitants'.⁴⁵ The *Sunday Times*, in which the series of articles was originally published (and which was largely sympathetic to the Cameron faction of this coalition) then

⁴² Lister, ed., pp. 84-5.

⁴³ There has been a marked degree of overlap between the underclass and the working class in both governmental policy and cultural representations so I feel justified in using the term 'working-class' in this sentence, and throughout this chapter when the existence of an 'underclass' is used by those in positions of power or platform to make a point about the working class in general. For a fuller exploration see Owen Jones, *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* (London: Verso, 2012).

⁴⁴ Lister, ed., p. 81. He was particularly brutal in some cases: on Alan Walker's commentary, he said: 'it is the kind of undiluted statement of Left dogma on this topic that is fast disappearing – a sort of modern Rousseauism in which the noble savage is replaced by the noble poor person – written, as the rules apparently require, so as to convey that the Left's intellectual adversaries are not only wrong, but incompetent; not only incompetent, but sinister', p. 80.

⁴⁵ Owen Jones, *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* (London: Verso, 2012) p. 82.

stated in a 2014 editorial, after Cameron announced plans to tackle 120,000 ‘troubled families’, that ‘we are paying the price for ignoring those [Murray’s] warnings a quarter of a century ago’.⁴⁶

But the influence of this report should not continue to go unchallenged, not least in fiction, for such a mode of thinking contributes to the belief that fiction is for the middle classes, and bolsters the concept that working-class people do not read or write. The end game is that, as the *Guardian* has noted, ‘Working Class Fiction Has Been Written Out of Publishing’.⁴⁷ This is evidently not true (although the byline points to a truth about the unequal representation of various classes compared to their size). I have therefore constructed a challenge to this mode of thinking in *Kilroy F*****n Jones*.

Through framing a group of people in such a way, Murray has essentially made the case to differentiate between the worthy and the unworthy poor, an idea that I find instinctively troubling. Over half of the character cast in *Kilroy F*****n Jones* come from Murray’s supposed ‘underclass’. A small-time drug dealer, a young single mother, a recently unemployed young man of no permanent address, and an old-age pensioner (that is, Kilroy, Stacey, Griff, and Nana) could all be considered members of the ‘underclass’, even though all four could arguably claim that their situation in life is not entirely of their making. On this last inclusion (Nana) I have diverged from Murray somewhat, in that I have included old-age pensioners in the group, as Frank Field does in his commentary. Murray and Field disagree fundamentally on the issue of nurture and nature: Field thinks that membership of the underclass is due to the conditions that people can find themselves in, while Murray thinks that it is due to their behaviour.⁴⁸ As a result, Murray does not agree with including old-age

⁴⁶ ‘Troubles by the half million with a rising underclass,’ Editorial, *The Sunday Times* 17 August 2014 [accessed 1 August, 2016]

⁴⁷ Kevin Duggy, ‘Working Class Fiction Has Been Written Out of Publishing’, *The Guardian* [online] <https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2014/jun/17/working-class-fiction-publishing-assumption> [accessed 1 August, 2016]

⁴⁸ Frank Field, ‘Britain’s Underclass: Countering the Growth’ in *The Emerging British Underclass*, pp. 57-61.

pensioners in the underclass, as ‘the problem represented by the frail elderly pensioner with too little money is that he has too little money, and the problem is solved (more or less) by giving him more money’.⁴⁹ Murray thus fails to understand that money is a form of support, and support (whether from education, income, or access to advice and so on) is something in short supply to members of Murray’s underclass. Less support means fewer choices, which in turn explicitly shows the symbiotic relationship between conditions and behaviour. Pensioners can moreover be in some of the most vulnerable situations in society, so Murray’s dismissal of working-class pensioners becomes unjustifiable.

Following the format adopted elsewhere in this thesis, I will also discuss two other recent works of fiction for comparative context, to show how Murray’s ideas have been used and challenged. The first of these is Niall Griffiths’ *Stump* (2004), a novel about an amputee addict who is being hunted down by members of the criminal underworld tasked with finding him to get revenge for a crime he did not commit. The other is Martin Amis’s *Lionel Asbo* (2011), a novel about a thug who wins £140m on the lottery before subsequently getting revenge on members of his family for committing an act of incest. Both novels have much to say on the wider understanding of class in Britain, but in markedly different ways. The attitude towards the working class in *Lionel Asbo* is similar to Murray’s in *The Emerging British Underclass*, while the attitude towards the working class in *Stump* is more sympathetic to the plight of those whose circumstances have been less fortunate. I explore how each represents the working class, and the underclass, using Murray’s original indicators: ‘illegitimacy, violent crime, and drop-out from the labour force’.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Lister, ed., p. 82. It is always a ‘he’, never a ‘she’, with Murray.

⁵⁰ Lister, ed., p. 25.

Illegitimacy

Murray defines illegitimacy as:

[...] legally, the child is without a father from day one, he is often without one practically as well. Further, illegitimacy bespeaks an attitude on the part of one or both parents that getting married is not an essential part of siring or giving birth to a child; this in itself distinguishes their mindset from that of people who do feel strongly that getting married is essential.⁵¹

This mindset is evident in *Lionel Asbo*, and is one that I was seeking to avoid in my own novel. Lionel's mother, Grace Pepperdine, is a 'mother of seven children by the age of nineteen'.⁵² Desmond Pepperdine, her grandson, is born to her eldest child, Cilla, who is 'six months gone when she sat her Eleven Plus'.⁵³ Cilla is dead in *Lionel Asbo* and Grace is not in contact with the fathers of her offspring, making them identifiable members of Murray's underclass. In my own novel, Stacey Cleaver, a former neighbour of Kilroy (and one of his customers) is a single mother to Tyrone, and would thus also fit into this category. Yet Stacey does not represent the underclass in the same fashion. In *Lionel Asbo*, it is possible to work out that, since Des is fifteen and his grandmother is 39, and his mother had him when she was twelve, that Grace Pepperdine (the grandmother) had Cilla (Des's mother) at the age of twelve also. If Stacey Cleaver were to be around the same age as Kilroy, then the earliest she could have had Tyrone would have been at the very end of her teenage years. This shows how Grace and Stacey ostensibly belong to the same 'underclass' and yet their character profiles are profoundly different. Grace has seven children by several different fathers, so Amis can make a point about the irresponsibility of working-class reproduction. Stacey, on the other hand, has the one child, and she is bringing him up on her own. This is a more natural and common situation than the

⁵¹ Lister, ed., p. 26.

⁵² Martin Amis, *Lionel Asbo* (London: Cape, 2011) p. 10.

⁵³ Amis, p. 11.

one exemplified by Grace Pepperdine. Linda Tirado, in *Hand to Mouth* (2014) makes light of this when she writes that when it came to her own first pregnancy, ‘I didn’t think about the pregnancy much to begin with; I had a job to finish, then we’d sort out what to do next’.⁵⁴ She goes on to say of young women in a similar situation to herself who have been pregnant at a young age, that ‘it’s not like these girls have brilliant futures in the Ivy League that they’re passing up to have babies: those are typically reserved for the children of brilliant Ivy Leaguers. They are deciding to have their toddlers while they themselves are young and have the energy’.⁵⁵ This is a sentiment echoed by Owen Jones in the broader sense when he writes that ‘if you live in an area of high unemployment and with only unappealing, low-paid jobs on offer, why wait for motherhood?’⁵⁶ While not explicitly stated in my novel, this mode of thinking (of having no reason to wait to start a family, if one is desired) is closer to the experience of many working-class mothers whose children were born out of wedlock or long-term relationships than the experience of Grace Pepperdine. Amis echoes Murray’s assumption that an individual’s attitude alone determines their place in life. Stacey, on the other hand, could be said to follow along the path of a young mother who, owing to certain geographical and economic circumstances, feels no need to defer pregnancy in order to foster a burgeoning career or other possible life goal.

Grace Pepperdine also represents the underclass in more sinister terms. Not only is she a former teen mother, but she commits acts of statutory rape against two teenage boys in the early part of the novel. Fifteen-year-old Desmond Pepperdine writes a letter to an agony aunt called Jennaveieve, telling her of his ‘affair with an older woman’.⁵⁷ There is a catch, however: ‘The sex is fantastic and I think I’m in love. But ther’es one very serious complication and i’ts

⁵⁴ Linda Tirado, *Hand to Mouth: The Truth About Being Poor in a Wealthy World* (London: Virago, 2014) p. 42.

⁵⁵ Tirado, p. 118.

⁵⁶ Jones, p. 129.

⁵⁷ Amis, p. 3.

this; shes' my Gran!'⁵⁸ When Des brings the relationship to an end, fearful of his uncle Lionel finding out, Grace turns her affections to Rory Nightingale, who is a year younger than Des. Grace's libido knows no bounds, and can again be said to have brought on her own position in life. This is in marked contrast to Stacey, but also to Rebecca in Niall Griffiths's *Stump*. Rebecca is the protagonist's ex-girlfriend whom we meet through flashbacks in the third person (the unnamed protagonist, whom I will refer to as Stump, narrates half of the book from his own first-person perspective). Rebecca is a prostitute with five children who are all taken into care when she is 24. Her relationship with Stump is summarised, before it goes sour, as 'everything seemed always there so ready to hand, drugs and drink and sex and companionship it was all easy it was all sound but these were the good times and of course they couldn't last'.⁵⁹ One day, when heating up the prescription drug temazepam to inject for recreational use, she talks of her children. We are unaware if she is talking to Stump or to herself.⁶⁰ Rebecca says, pining for their return, that the child support services 'took five bits of *me* away thee did when thee took my children away . . .'⁶¹ Clearly under the effect of vodka and the benzodiazepine, Rebecca continues by saying, '-Mean, am off the fuckin rock⁶² now . . . can look after me own kids . . . able to . . . too right . . .'⁶³ Griffiths captures the tragedy of a person in Rebecca's position in these lines. The affirmation of 'too right' signals that Rebecca is saying the words without actually believing that she is capable of fulfilling what they say. The situation in which she finds herself at the moment she utters them would be further proof of this. Unlike Grace Pepperdine, whose libido is used to show how immoral the underclass can be, Rebecca has led a tragic life that is explained with empathy. Rebecca had (and lost) her children due to her

⁵⁸ Amis, p. 3. Punctuation appears as in original.

⁵⁹ Amis, p. 119.

⁶⁰ Niall Griffiths, *Stump* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2003) p. 120. 'She's talking, mumbling so low that she may be addressing an imaginary figure at her shoulder or maybe even the spoon itself...'

⁶¹ Griffiths, p. 120.

⁶² Crack cocaine.

⁶³ Griffiths, p. 121.

lifestyle, but her lifestyle, based around prostitution and recreational drugs, comes from her addictions. Stacey's attitude and life, in my own novel, while nowhere near as tragic or as extreme as Rebecca's, is far more similar than it is to the life of Grace Pepperdine. Although Stacey has no addictions, she was written from the same base of empathy towards those in vulnerable positions. While Grace is happy to sleep with minors and conceive at a young age, Stacey only ever shows interest in Kilroy, and is regretful of the situation of sleeping with him when she thinks he is attached.

But immoral behaviour (such as that displayed by Grace) is not the only way, according to Murray, that illegitimacy enables the growth of the underclass. Murray furthers his argument by saying that 'illegitimacy produces an underclass for one compelling reason having nothing to do with morality or the sanctity of marriage, namely: communities need families. Communities need fathers'.⁶⁴ He explains that 'the unsystematic reports I heard in towns like Birkenhead and council estates like Easterhouse in Glasgow are consistent with the reports from inner-city Washington and New York: in communities without fathers, the kids tend to run wild. The fewer the fathers, the greater the tendency'.⁶⁵ While there are indeed such people in the working class, absent fathers can be found in all levels of society. Belief in the nuclear family (as Murray sees it) fails to take into account the larger picture that surrogate fathers are often present, and wider families can also help raise children. This is reflected in my novel in that on two occasions, Stacey tells Kilroy that her sister Kelly is looking after her son. As the novel is not set over a number of years, it is impossible to know how Tyrone will turn out. The only indicators we have as to his character do not allow a prediction on this either way. I thus had to explore this theme in a different way. Kilroy himself does appear to match Murray's findings, given his non-nuclear family and lifestyle. But it is the question of attitude that

⁶⁴ Lister, ed., p. 28.

⁶⁵ Lister, ed., p. 28.

separates them. While the outcome may be largely the same, Kilroy has found himself in this position not entirely because of the fecklessness of his parents, but due to his mother's suicide. Kilroy therefore laments the lack of an authoritative figure in his life, when comparing himself to Catrin and her more sheltered upbringing, by noting that 'she didn't grow up in the arse end of a city with no-one but a Nana in the house who was spark out cold by eight every night.' This idea is furthered when Kilroy compares himself to Tyrone, and also to a child he sees playing with a frisbee. Having been through such an existence, he hopes the youngsters do not have the same upbringing as he did, when he says 'just like with you, just like with Tyrone, just like with the little frisbee nipper down the park. It ain't fair what fathers do to their sons.' Asbo, on the other hand, is indeed the embodiment of Murray's findings. Yet, in order to highlight Asbo's terrible behaviour, the other male figures in the book are largely the opposite. Only one of Asbo's siblings is unemployed: the others have found employment as a plasterer, a foreman, a plumber and a registrar.⁶⁶ Desmond, who grows up to become a successful journalist at the *Daily Mirror*, also proves to be an exception to Murray's rule, again to accentuate that it is Asbo's attitude that assures his membership of the underclass.

Crime

The next indicator on Murray's list is crime. Whereas a single parent raising a child would be entitled to Child Benefit, Murray notes that a criminal instead 'lives off mainstream society without participating in it'.⁶⁷ Yet Murray sees illegitimacy and crime as being inextricably linked. Crime is indeed a problem in many disadvantaged communities – but while Murray is correct on this symptom, his explanation of why this is a contributing factor is questionable:

⁶⁶ Amis, p. 11.

⁶⁷ Lister, ed., p. 33.

Supporting a family is a central means for a man to prove to himself that he is a '*mensch*'. Men who do not support families find other ways to prove that they are men, which tend to take various destructive forms. As many have commented through the centuries, young males are essentially barbarians for whom marriage – meaning not just the wedding vows, but the act of taking responsibility for a wife and children – is an indispensable civilising force. Young men who don't work don't make good marriage material. Often they don't get married at all; when they do, they haven't the ability to fill their traditional role. In either case, too many of them remain barbarians.⁶⁸

There are times when it would appear that Kilroy would agree with such a sentiment. When he first sees Griff and compares his own physique and position in life, Kilroy decides that Griff is a lesser man. Kilroy's belief is that 'life musta been so much better in the cave times.' Harking back to a time before civilisation, he thinks of Griff as a beta male, and that 'cos they wasn't strong enough to fight for the cavebirds against the alpha males, they had to put some stupid fucking structure on the world to get some bashment.' This does not, however, prove that Kilroy is right, nor Murray himself. Murray posits that men who do not work are unlikely to make good husbands. This does, of course, depend on the economic situation at large. Murray would be correct to an extent if jobs are available and not taken out of choice, but often there are no suitable jobs available in an area, or a large number of applicants for a small number of positions. But to make the logical leap that young men are therefore barbarians in a civilised world is one without so much as a shred of empirical evidence. If this is true of the underclass then it is also true of other classes. This conservative viewpoint is reductive without any solid basis for its justification.

Kilroy, whenever he talks of cavemen attributes or a life before civilisation, is talking about how he sees society at large. His nihilistic outlook and lack of ambition has to do with

⁶⁸ Lister, ed., p. 41.

the opportunities available to someone in his position. His viewpoint has less to do with the fact that all young men are barbarians and more to do with aspiration, or the lack thereof. As with motherhood at a young age, the options for young men are not there, and the only viable options are those which lead to anti-social and criminal behaviour. Murray furthers his argument by stating that:

If a young man's girl friend doesn't need him to help support the baby, it makes less sense for him to plug away at a menial job and more sense to have some fun – which in turn makes hustling and crime more attractive, marriage less attractive.⁶⁹

Murray again puts too much emphasis on the need for a family life for stability in his analysis. Yet he does not end it there. He carries on by stating that ‘without a job or family to give life meaning, drugs become that much more valuable as a means of distraction. The cost of drugs makes crime the only feasible way to make enough money to pay for them.’⁷⁰ What Murray fails to take into account here is that drugs are often a ‘means of distraction’ not for the reason that the drug-user has no family, but because the realities of existence can lead to distressing experiences. Young mothers do not wait for motherhood, and other people take drugs and commit crime because the options to lead different lives are not as easily available. Kilroy voices this situation towards the end of the novel, while selling drugs in a bar. He thinks that ‘it wouldn't have had to be this way if they taught you proper in school. All they teaches you is how to get away with doing fuck all. They doesn't teach you how to be a man. You doesn't learn how to live your life the way you wants to. You're just taught how to live your life how other people expects you to live it.’ Stump and Kilroy would agree on this point. Stump knows that if the accident with Rebecca that caused his amputation had not occurred, he would ‘be working in some shitty factory somewhere or stacking shelves in a supermarket in days of hate

⁶⁹ Lister. ed., p. 48.

⁷⁰ Lister. ed., p. 48.

and deafness all dull and without story'.⁷¹ Stump also says something of relevance to this argument in one of his overwhelming addictive episodes when outside a pub, when he says of other people, that 'they sleep an rise an eat shit an mumble an *work*, that's their main fuckin thing, thee *work*, slave at some spirit-sapping soul-sucking obligation until thee start dying in increments an while they're checkin their watches for their precious fuckin dinner hour I'm walkin into the just-opened pub...'⁷² When someone is raised in an atmosphere where the only options are likely to be dishearteningly unfulfilling roles for comparatively meagre returns, it is no surprise that such a feeling would develop.

Murray's most damning comments on crime and the underclass – and one that Lionel Asbo seems to embody – comes when he compares his findings in Britain with another culture entirely, that of the larger American inner cities. Murray makes a number of points in which he sees that certain members of the underclass embody 'a caricature of the barbarian male: retaliate against anyone who shows you the slightest disrespect ('disses' you). Sleep with and impregnate as many girls as possible. Violence is a sign of strength. To worry about tomorrow is weakness. To die young is glorious. What makes this trend so disturbing is not just that these principles describe behaviour, but that inner-city boys articulate them *as principles*. They are, explicitly, the code by which they live'.⁷³

As pointed out in the last chapter on masculinity, many of these characteristics can be seen in *Stump*, *Lionel Asbo*, and my own novel (the last, 'to die young is glorious,' is not in evidence in any, so will not be discussed). First on Murray's list is that males often 'retaliate against anyone who shows you the slightest disrespect.' This idea of retaliation and violence is borne out in a number of ways in the three different novels. Evidence can be found in Kilroy and Griff's initial altercation. Kilroy sees himself as above Griff in the pecking order in life,

⁷¹ Griffiths, p. 144.

⁷² Griffiths, p. 148.

⁷³ Lister, ed., p. 121.

yet this goes against the evidence he finds on seeing Griff's girlfriend (whom Kilroy sees as a potential status symbol) and also by Griff's refusal of doctored drugs. Kilroy subsequently tells the reader that 'sometimes, you feel like it's all on you to bring the balance back.' He does this by making Griff lower his guard before rendering him unconscious with a single punch. Kilroy values the fact that he has tricked someone and that he has a superior form of knowledge, in that when Griff's head hits the ground, he sees it as 'the sound of him realising all that martial arts training meant fuck all outside the Dojo.' Griff has no right, in Kilroy's view, to be on his high horse. Kilroy's self-esteem is tied into that which he can control and that which he cannot. Unfortunately, owing to his position, he has a lack of control over many aspects of his life. This lack of control manifests itself as anger. As a result, his way of dealing with it is to retaliate, often in a violent manner, as he does not see himself as having many other options. This is of course not a civilised way to deal with such a situation, but I sought to portray Kilroy acting in this way without blaming him, as Murray lays the blame on those with fewer options in life. Linda Tirado explains her own situation by stating that 'the attitude I carry as a poor person is my armor, and after so many years of fighting and clawing and protecting myself and my family from impending disaster, that armor has become a permanent part of me'.⁷⁴ Alasdair and Darren (the hitmen) in *Stump*, and Lionel Asbo himself, deal with such situations with similar outcomes but for different reasons. At one point in *Stump*, Darren discusses how he attacked a man from Blackburn in a pub. Darren has great civic pride in his home city, which is based around its working-class roots. He feels great sorrow at the decline of Liverpool, and that the decline brought a lack of jobs and an increase in heroin addiction. The way Darren sees the situation that led to his arrest is that the man from Blackburn:

'Comes into my friggin town givin it fuckin large about fuckin decline an all that shit, shadow of its former self blah blah fuckin blah, the fuck did he *think* was gunner

⁷⁴ Tirado, p. 67.

happen? Oh yeh, mate, yer right yeh, we're all shite compared to what we used to be, fuckin fuck *that*, man. Not puttin up with *that* on me own fuckin turf. No wone fuckin would. I mean, the fuckin money the city once had, biggest fuckin port in the world and the best fuckin team in the world bar none and then it's just skag an no jobs an every fuckin scally's gorra piece an all the fuckin buildings fallin down an losin one-nil at home to fuckin Blackburn, I mean, shit like that fuckin *hurts*, man'.⁷⁵

While Kilroy does not have the same civic pride that Darren displays here, the same basic implicit thought-pattern and conclusion are both evident. Both characters feel sad at something that is out of their control. This sadness manifests itself as anger, which in turn results in an act of violence in order to bring back some sort of (what they perceive as) 'balance.' As with Tirado, this has become second nature due to the spiral of precarious living that both characters, and Tirado herself, have experienced. Lionel Asbo's own act of glassing is comparable: he attacks a man by the name of Ross Knowles in a pub because he bought a second-hand car from the father of his casual lover, Gina Drago, and because Ross Knowles has a moustache like her ex-boyfriend, Marlon Welkway. Lionel says that this 'put me in a mood'.⁷⁶ This might at first glance bear resemblance to Kilroy and Darren's reasons for resorting to violence, but as the narrative progresses it is clear that this is not the case, due to the character's different values. Instead, Asbo's attack on Ross Knowles shows the sort of wounded pride more attuned to Murray's interpretation. Des explains in one of his regular letters to agony aunt, Daphne, that Gina, when in Asbo's flat, '*treats him like he isn't there, and they never touch or kiss or smile. But on the street she's all over him*'.⁷⁷ The narrator states that Gina 'never spent the night'.⁷⁸ Des states in a later letter that '*she's a famous sexpot – while he's practically a virgin!*'⁷⁹ It

⁷⁵ Griffiths, pp. 114-5.

⁷⁶ Amis, p. 18.

⁷⁷ Amis, p. 58 (Amis's italics).

⁷⁸ Amis, p. 58.

⁷⁹ Amis, p. 59.

becomes obvious later that Gina starts her relationship with Asbo in order to ‘spite and goad’⁸⁰ the ex-boyfriend, Marlon Welkway. So Asbo has no emotional attachment nor need for female company. Asbo is violent for the sake of violence, and sees Ross Knowles’s moustache as the slightest of slights, yet one with enough of the ‘diss’ element, as Murray puts it, to initiate a huge and violent response.

This evidence of Asbo’s lack of libido might also seem to go against Murray’s second indicator, that young men in Asbo’s, Kilroy’s and Darren’s situation will ‘sleep with and impregnate as many girls as possible.’⁸¹ After all, Asbo is ‘*practically a virgin,*’ as Des tells Daphne. An interview with Asbo in a newspaper, after he wins the lottery, tells us that he has ‘an alarming shakiness in the sexual sphere’.⁸² But this hides the fact that Asbo lost his virginity to Cynthia when ‘he started sleeping with her when she was ten (and Lionel was nine)’.⁸³ This is, for Amis, a signifier as to how the underclasses really behave – along with Desmond’s relationship with his grandmother. Desmond does eventually go on during the novel to have a relationship (and child) with Dawn, but Des is used as a foil to Asbo in order to show just how stereotypical Asbo is.

Due to his own libido, Kilroy could be shown to conform to Murray’s second point in wanting to procreate with as many females as he can. According to Murray’s logic, this should be something from which he does not learn. Kilroy would therefore go on to create the next generation of ‘illegitimate,’ underrepresented young people living in relative poverty in a single-parent family. But Kilroy learns from his mistakes. Near the beginning of the novel, Dafydd has to tell Kilroy not to rate women in marks out of ten on how attractive he (Kilroy) finds them, when Dafydd says, ‘These are women. You can juss give someone a number and dismiss em.’ But this is part of Kilroy’s trajectory that leads to one of his eventual realisations

⁸⁰ Amis, p. 60.

⁸¹ Lister, ed., p. 121

⁸² Amis, p. 151.

⁸³ Amis, p. 8.

that he does not understand as much about how to live as well as he once thought. After sleeping with Stacey, Kilroy eventually comes to the conclusion that 'it takes a real man to stick with a girl and treat her how she should be treated'. He believes that by staying with a woman, 'you're showing that you believe in something bigger than yourself. You're showing how fucking great you are but also that there's better people out there than you and you are with them and they are yours'. By thinking in such a way, Kilroy is diverging from Murray's fourth point, that 'to worry about tomorrow is weakness'. By learning from his mistakes, he grows as a character and as a human being. This is despite his tendency to live only in the moment earlier on in the novel.

Kilroy also shows examples of this tendency at other times during the narrative, yet in a way which again challenges Murray's original analysis. Murray would morally disagree with this way of living, yet he postulates that young men believe that 'to worry about tomorrow is weakness' without thinking why someone would live in the here and now in the first place. This is shown in Kilroy's attitude towards drug-taking: at one point in the narrative, Griff drops a bag of white powder in front of Kilroy's stool, an act that Kilroy thinks is accidental. Kilroy picks it up and goes straight to a toilet cubicle in order to snort 'a big fat dangerous half-grammer'. Before this incident, Kilroy states that 'when someone says the C word, all those memories of the powerup times are always pulling at the back of your swede. And you can't stop thinking about it until you've filled up your sniffer and you're rushing at a hundred miles an hour on your bar stool'. For Kilroy, drugs are a form of escapism from the dreariness of his life and the problems he encounters. As soon as the opportunity is presented to him, he takes it there and then. It is not as if Kilroy has a job to go to the next day. Later on, after having an argument with Catrin, Kilroy ingests a dose of the psychoactive drug MDMA, telling the reader that 'When you ain't got no brothers and sisters and your best spar works eighty hours a week, you learns to survive without a wingman. You doesn't need no one but yourself. Not a spar, not

a family, not a bird, nothing. There's plenty of fun to be had out there'. Similarly, in *Stump*, when Alastair explains to Darren, who points out that the police beat Alastair up over two wraps of cocaine, that he 'got three grand compo,' Darren ripostes with, '– Yeh, an stuck the fuckin lot of it straight up yer nose'. These characters have little in the way of opportunity, and as a result have little in the way of aspiration, and therefore act accordingly.

No such comparison can be made with Asbo. He does not take drugs, but he similarly shows no regret for other criminal actions, as Murray would expect. In fact, he is often proud of his behaviour, without showing a reason for why he has behaved in such a way. Asbo 'always spoke of his five and a half years (on and off) in a Young Offender's Institution (or *Yoi*, as he called it) with rueful fondness, like one recalling a rite of passage – inevitable, bittersweet. *I was out for a month*, he would typically reminisce. *Then I was back up north. Doing me Yoi*'.⁸⁴ In order to be proud of his time in a Young Offenders Institution, Asbo must never have worried about the consequences of his actions. Therefore, he is deemed to be solely responsible not only for his actions, but also for the position which saw him presented with this opportunity in the first place.

Drop-Out from the Labour Force

Murray asserts that 'the definitive proof that an underclass has arrived is that large numbers of young, healthy, low-income males choose not to take jobs'.⁸⁵ He does have sympathy to a certain extent – he believes that if an economic slump takes place, and many young people find themselves out of work, a situation may develop where, 'as economic times improve, they are competing for the same entry-level jobs as people 10 years younger, and employers prefer to hire the youngsters'.⁸⁶ This would inevitably lead to a situation of demoralisation. Kilroy's 'job,' so to speak, is as a drug dealer, which he subsidises through taking change from

⁸⁴ Amis, p. 19.

⁸⁵ Lister ed., p. 37.

⁸⁶ Lister ed., p. 38.

phoneboxes. He has a criminal record of some sort, as he states (while waiting for a reply from a text message) that ‘each second's wait for the reply feels like one of those long Friday nights on tag’. I would expect someone in his position to also claim jobseekers’ allowance (JSA), though this is not mentioned in the text – the narrative takes place over a short period of time, which could easily be during the two-week period between attending back-to-work interviews. If the reader feels that the narrative would take longer than a two-week period, it must be pointed out that the ability to fill out a Claimant Commitment form, prior to the back-to-work interview with the work coach at a Jobcentre Plus is a skill which can be efficiently executed, and cynically fabricated, by anyone in a matter of minutes, and would be irrelevant to the narrative.

The question that arises out of such incidents is this: why would anyone wish to stay on JSA when employment offers better rewards? Murray’s ‘hypothesis’ takes as its underlying cause the poor attitude towards work of those in the underclass.⁸⁷ Murray believes that ‘Britain is experiencing a generation gap by class. Well-educated people from affluent homes are working in larger proportions and working longer hours than ever. The attitudes and behaviour of the middle-aged working class haven’t changed much. The change in stance toward the labour force is concentrated among lower-class young men in their teens and twenties’.⁸⁸ This stance does of course neglect to take into account the number of opportunities the middle classes might get in comparison to the working classes. One illustration of this lack of opportunity is when Stump, on his way to his JSA interview, talks of the cognitive dissonance in call-centre work as ‘that necessary alteration of behaviour demanded by certain jobs’ which leads to a less-than-fulfilling life:⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Lister, ed., p. 39.

⁸⁸ Lister, ed., pp. 39-40.

⁸⁹ *Stump*, p. 39. I agree with this wholeheartedly due to my own experience. I’ve worked in six different call centres for four different companies – National Rail Enquiries, 118 888, BT 118 405, and Card Protection Policy. I found the work so soul-destroying that in each one, eventually I would get too depressed to turn up, quitting without notice (on more than one occasion during my lunch break).

‘Them kinds of places, the interviews an the tests an stuff, they’re just designed to work out whether yer dim enough for the job, cos there’s no way a work force made up of lively imaginations would ever put up with forty hours of low-paid drudgery an tedium every friggin week. Most people, of course, *are* too bright for such jobs, but they get compelled into accepting them by the dreary demands of daily life, the usual financial imperatives. Which only ever results in one thing: a deep, deep frustration. Disillusionment goin to impotence goin eventually to a terrible fuckin anger’.⁹⁰

It can come as no surprise – considering the options – that not everyone would want to endure such an existence, if the only jobs available are of the kind described by Stump. While Murray would have no sympathy with this kind of decision, he would surely understand that the option of a tedious job is not the best of incentives compared to JSA. Kilroy has therefore taken the decision – rightly or wrongly – to drop out from the labour force.

We can also test Murray’s hypothesis, to a certain extent, in fiction, by comparing the situation between Kilroy and Dafydd or Griff to that of Lionel Asbo and Desmond. Though Lionel Asbo and his nephew go to the same school, and grow up in the same flat in south-east London, Desmond is used by Amis to show what is possible if one wants to leave the underclass through hard work, instead of through a game of chance. When it comes to my own novel, Dafydd and Griff have lived markedly different lives from that of Kilroy. Dafydd works eighty-hour weeks while Kilroy does not. Kilroy compares himself to Dafydd on numerous occasions, and as a result it is possible to learn a little about Dafydd’s own upbringing and life chances. What we learn about Dafydd through the narrative is that ‘the way he talks, you can tell that he was one of those posh kids in school who had to actually pay for their dinner’. This is not an indication of Dafydd’s ‘poshness’, so to speak, as much as it is Kilroy’s prejudicial

⁹⁰ *Stump*, p. 38.

misunderstanding as to what constitutes 'poshness' in the first place. Even from a young age, Kilroy reveals to us that the odds were stacked against him. In a similar fashion, Kilroy says of Griff's smart clothes that 'you knows he didn't only get new clothes when someone his Nana knows from down the bingo got a grandson who's grown out of his'. This again shows the difference in class and wealth, and the opportunity this would bring with it, that Kilroy reveals to the reader.

Asbo and Desmond's upbringings tie in with Murray's postulation that the blame for their situations ultimately lies with the individual. As the conditions of Asbo and Desmond's lives are largely the same (before Asbo's lottery win), the difference between them is 'one of attitude. Des loved it, his intelligence; and Lionel hated it. Hated it? well, it was plain as day that he had always fought it, and took pride in being stupid on purpose'.⁹¹ As Asbo purposefully keeps himself ignorant, Amis indicates that it is his own fault that he is a member of the underclass. Kilroy, on the other hand, learns from his mistakes. When Kilroy wants to attack Griff for putting his Nana in hospital, Daf tells him to go to the police. Kilroy instead commits grievous bodily harm against Griff. Yet Kilroy learns that 'Puttin him in ICU ain't solved fuck all'. Asbo would not take this attitude, nor would he understand Dafydd (were they in the same novel) insisting that telling the police would be the right thing to do. This is explored by Amis after Asbo's lottery win, when he tells Des off for reporting on crime: 'Look at this. Gutsy Grandma Thwarts Ganger Getaway. *By Desmond Pepperdine*. Look at this. Brave Bank Guard Frees Trapped Raid Blonde . . . No. No. you got to walk away from that, Des. Forthwith,' he said (with difficulty). 'You betraying *you own class!* And I can't have it, son. I can't have it'.⁹² The working class is the criminal class, holding itself down due to its own bad attitude. Yet in

⁹¹ Amis, p. 13.

⁹² Amis, p. 160.

my novel, as in *Stump*, I have attempted to counter this belief in an effort to counter the texts that have emerged into this world which blame the victims for their own misfortune.

*Kilroy F*****n Jones and the Contemporary Welsh Novel*

This chapter analyses the characteristics of a range of recent novels in order to examine *Kilroy F*****n Jones*'s claim to being a Welsh novel. Drawing on postcolonial ideas – albeit from a creative writer's point of view – it discusses how the selected novelists explore the themes of language, place, and identity in Wales.

Postcolonial approaches to Welsh writing in English have proliferated since the turn of the century. Nevertheless, the critics who first adopted these approaches and pointed out the applicability of postcolonial concepts to the situation of Wales met with considerable resistance. A case in point was the furore occasioned by the publication of Stephen Knight's *A Hundred Years of Fiction* (2004). This historical survey of twentieth-century fiction in Wales divided Welsh novels into three broad categories, within a postcolonial model. The three categories were: the 'First Contact Romance' (of the late nineteenth century), the 'Industrial Settlement' (or Welsh fiction up to roughly the mid-twentieth century), and novels of 'Integration and Independence' (novels up to the early twenty-first century). Knight's reading of Anglophone Welsh fiction was condemned as a misreading of history by one of its early reviewers, Dai Smith (whose own novel, *Dream On* (2013), is analysed below). Smith's objections are summarised in his initial review, in which he states that postcolonialism 'is patently strongest as a guide to cultural behaviour and artistic expression if it can stand directly in the line of a straightforward and undeniable colonial past.'¹ However, Smith did not acknowledge a point raised by Patrick McGuinness that 'Colonialism is a multiple, ongoing, shape-changing phenomenon, and the term itself is elusive and complex (yes, and often vague, misused and imprecise, too).'² The effect of this discussion, played out in issues 66-70 of the

¹ Dai Smith, 'Psycho-Colonialism,' *New Welsh Review* 66 (Winter, 2004) p. 23.

² Patrick McGuinness, 'Letters,' *New Welsh Review* 67 (Spring, 2005) p. 119.

New Welsh Review, was to legitimize the use of postcolonial theory in the Welsh context (probably much to Smith's chagrin), and to establish it as a valuable analytical tool. In her contribution to the debate, Kirsti Bohata states that 'the validity of a postcolonial discussion of Welsh writing in English is not dependent on showing that Wales was once a colony or is now post-colonial, still less that Welsh history conforms to a linear model of conquest, colonialism and post-colonialism.'³ Further to this, she states that the 'simplistic binaries'⁴ often used in postcolonial discussion are not adequate when describing Wales alongside its larger neighbour, England. Instead, she suggests that 'where postcolonialism is most valuable, then, seems to be in reaching deeper understandings of inter-cultural dynamics, especially as expressed in literature, as well as in understanding the historical and politico-economic foundations of hegemonic, subaltern and hybrid cultures'.⁵ Since my main interest is in the contemporary Welsh novel, Knight's model would not be useful for me, as every novel would automatically fall into the 'Integration and Independence' category. This chapter will therefore follow Bohata's guidelines, which she develops more fully in her own critical text, *Postcolonialism Revisited*, and apply them to recent Welsh novels, including my own in this thesis, in a comparative analysis.⁶

'Welsh Novels,' then, can be defined as novels in which recognizable features of Wales and its people are represented. This is not to say that a novel must talk about *cawl mamgu* or be about a miner or contain Lady Llanover stovepipe hats, but it should be written as it were from within Welsh culture. This is in order to represent, as far as is possible, an authentic, or at least convincing, version of Wales to both to its people and readers from further afield. The representation of a distinctive language and place, are common (though not essential) methods of rendering 'Welshness' in Welsh novels. I will analyse a number of features common to many

³ Kirsti Bohata. "Comment: 'Psycho-Colonialism Revisited'", *New Welsh Review*, 69, (Autumn, 2005) p. 34.

⁴ Bohata, *NWR* 69, pp. 34-5.

⁵ Bohata, *NWR* 69, p. 38.

⁶ Kirsti Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004)

Welsh novels using the postcolonial methods described by Bohata. The Welsh novels analysed are *Freshars* (2008) and *Freshers* (2010) by Joanna Davies, *Dream On* (2013) by Dai Smith, *Random Births and Lovehearts* (2015) by Catrin Dafydd, and *The Book of Idiots* (2013) by Christopher Meredith. The features analysed appear below under the subtitles Place, Language, and Non-Englishness. However these three categories, being that they are commonly found in Welsh novels, have many overlapping qualities.

Place

Dai Smith's *Dream On* (2013) explores the lives of two characters, and offers two similar yet contrasting views of Wales. Digger Davies is an ex-rugby player, whose wife inherits a holiday home in France; Billy is a photographer who, at the outset, is newly returned to the Valleys from New York after twenty years, in order to trace a girl he thinks may be his daughter. The two characters never meet, though Wales may be seen as the central link between them. The characters in this novel are not only shaped by the place, but their location continues to craft their individual narrative stories. Each as a result has plenty to say about the Wales they once knew and the one they currently inhabit.

For comparison, I have also looked at a novel taking place solely in Wales. Joanna Davies published the Welsh-language *Freshars* in 2008 and went on to publish the English language version, *Freshers*, in 2010. I chose *Freshars* and *Freshers* as Davies translated the text herself, so the novel appears as close to the author's original vision in both languages as is possible. Due to the difference in cultural knowledge and the expectations of each audience, Davies uses different techniques to assert the Welshness of the texts. *Freshers* tends towards explicitly noting the fact that the novel is set in Wales. Being that *Freshars* is written in y Gymraeg, such explicit assertions of Welshness would be redundant. But context becomes lost occasionally in *Freshers*, and must be sketched in with additional lines of text. The fact that

Taliesin, where much of the story takes place, is a loosely-disguised Pantycelyn Hall – the Welsh-language hall of residence and well-known bastion of Welsh culture in Aberystwyth, where students have been known (with support from Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg) to demonstrate vociferously in a manner that the non-Cymraeg students of Aberystwyth do not seem to engage in, would not be lost on a reader of *Freshers*.⁷ When Lois and Fflur request to move out of Taliesin due to the anti-social behaviour of many of its inhabitants, they are told by Dr Gari that ‘dwi ddim yn cytuno gyda’ch disgrifiad chi o Daliesin’ (‘I don’t agree with your description of Taliesin’).⁸ However, in *Freshers*, Dr Gary (of the newly anglicised name) feels compelled to tell them beforehand that ‘Taliesin has been a much loved institution for forty years’.⁹

Davies is justified in including the additional line in *Freshers* to provide the relevant context. But additional lines to let the reader know that they are reading a Welsh novel often appear in less subtle ways in the text. When Lois moves out of Taliesin Hall and into a flat with her friend Fflur, her new room is described as ‘painted a cheery yellow and it had a huge sash window, which made it sunny and bright, at least when the sun shone – this was Wales.’¹⁰ *Freshers* does away with most of the description – and any mention of the country which Lois inhabits – when it says, ‘...ac roedd gan Lois ystafell braf iddi hi ei hun ym mlaen y tŷ’ (‘Lois had a pleasant room to herself in the front of the house’).¹¹ Similarly, when Lois learns from Sioned that she is merely the latest in a long line of students Sioned’s husband has had relationships with, ‘she hoped that Sioned was lying – that what she said couldn’t be true, this was Aberystwyth not Paris, Wales didn’t do “open relationships” except maybe for some of

⁷ ‘Pantycelyn Hall Protest: Deal Seals Future of Homes’ at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-mid-wales-33222110> [accessed 25 February, 2016].

⁸ Davies, Joanna, *Freshers*, (Llandysul: Gomer, 2008) p. 103.

⁹ Davies, Joanna, *Freshers*, (Dinas Powys: Honno, 2010) p. 140.

¹⁰ *Freshers*, p. 140.

¹¹ *Freshers*, p. 105.

the old hippies in the hills.’¹² In *Freshars*, the passage reads ‘Gobeithiai fod Sioned yn dweud celwydd – allai’r hyn a ddywedodd hi byth fod yn wir’ (‘she hoped that Sioned was lying – that what she said couldn’t be true’).¹³

Digger Davies and Billy in *Dream On* also demonstrate the author’s thematic use of place, albeit in a different way. As might be expected of a creative piece written by a historian making his first serious foray into the art of the novel after a fifty-year career in academia, Digger Davies meditates at length on what has brought him to feel the way he does about life. Digger senses that the world has changed while he has not. The rest of the world looks at what he knew first-hand with the eye of the outsider. Davies does not appreciate being told by others the story of his own people. He ‘became crotchety when all that he had himself lived through, intimately felt even, was reduced by the turn of the new century to documentary films which, neat and tidy and removed, could have been referring to the Romans or South Sea Islanders as much as the native inhabitants of the Valleys’.¹⁴ In this he shares a similar feeling to Billy, who finds himself returned to a place that was once his and is now alien. His former Valleys town has gone ‘all to hell. Big City incomers, toffee-nosed, hippie, English, Welshy Welsh. The rugby club had gone all to hell, betrayed by Judases of various stripes and flavours’.¹⁵ Anything that was not exactly how it was left when Billy was last in his Valleys town has, in his view, been lost to an unwelcome level of progress.

Kirsti Bohata raises some questions that are pertinent to Davies’s and Smith’s novels as well as to my own, and indeed to anyone who sees themselves as a writer of Welsh fiction in English:

For whom does a Welsh writer writing in the English language write? An English audience? A monoglot English-speaking Welsh audience? Or a bilingual Welsh

¹² *Freshers*, p. 253.

¹³ *Freshars*, p. 203.

¹⁴ Dai Smith, *Dream On*, (Cardigan: Parthian, 2013) p. 92.

¹⁵ Smith, p. 167.

audience? How do these different readers approach an English-language Welsh text? Even for an author who uses standard English, there will be decisions to be made about how far one wishes to ‘explain’ or ‘gloss’ details of Welsh culture, history or geography for the benefit of readers outside Wales.¹⁶

It seems that Davies has chosen the path, for the most part, of ‘explaining’ certain things in *Freshers*, both to her Welsh readers and readers from elsewhere. In the case of Taliesin Hall, this is unavoidable, in order to provide context. But in the cases where Wales is mentioned overtly, this seems optional, to let the reader, possibly non-Welsh, know where the narrative is taking place. Smith, on the other hand, through *Digger and Billy*, has decided to instil the sense of place in a more inverted manner. By talking about what has been lost and how the place now appears, *Digger and Billy* are able to give a precise overview of their locale from the point of view of what has happened over the last few decades, while also showing how it has affected the people. The fact that it is a distinctively Welsh Valleys landscape, with talk of the rugby club and the ‘Miners’ Strike’,¹⁷ shows that Smith is also going through the process Bohata describes of having to gloss and explain, but in a subtler way. When it comes to my own responses to Bohata’s questions, like Smith in *Dream On*, I made the conscious decision to ensure that the word ‘Wales’ does not appear once in *Kilroy F*****n Jones*, and that any constructs of place do not rely on conspicuous literary devices. This is also true of the word ‘Welsh.’ I did not feel the need to let the reader know that the text, or the setting, is Welsh. The fact that it is written in vernacular Cardiff English makes it obvious that it is Welsh anyway. The use of Welsh names, and themes, seemed enough without having to spell it out for the reader.

¹⁶ Kirsti Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004) p. 115.

¹⁷ Smith, p. 92.

As place, and language, have been shown to be connected topics in Welsh novels, it is to language I will turn next, building on the argument already started in this section.

Language

Kilroy's story does not leave a handful of specific places in Cardiff, as *Freshars/Freshers* in their turn barely leave Aberystwyth, so the opportunity to explore place must be handled in a different way to the characters in *Dream On*. The place that Billy has returned to, that he no longer recognises, is culturally very different from the one he remembers. This explains his frustration at the changes. Yet much like with Digger, there would be no frustration were it not for the affection Billy holds for his home town. Despite being away for twenty-odd years, Billy cannot shake the feeling of Welshness, or at least Welshness lost, when it comes to his sense of being. Billy is looking at the town, the Valleys, and its inhabitants both from within and from a position apart from their way of life and social and organisational progress. Kilroy and the characters of *Freshars/Freshers* are not outsiders in the same way. This displacement of Welsh identity is further analysed during Billy's trips to Cardiff and the much-maligned Heritage Centre. Billy thinks he is 'prepared for the rash of bilingual signage in the streets and even for the Welsh-language announcements for *'y tren nesaf'* while waiting for a train.¹⁸ Yet it is not only the implications of the Welsh Language Act 1993 that make him feel 'more alien yet.' The announcer moves on to give the information in an accent that was:

[...] impeccably English, with the syllables of every place name I had ever known or grown up with, separated out into a speak-your-weight tone that managed to locate every wrong inflection and stress possible in the brave new world of esperanto.¹⁹

¹⁸ Smith, p. 163.

¹⁹ Smith, p. 163.

Billy, new to his own country and speaking for the assembled commuters with his attitude unchanged from twenty years previously, states that ‘most of us on that platform were being addressed in two languages we did not speak. I felt more speechless than I had for two decades.’²⁰ It is interesting to note that Billy is talking of the past here, yet only the past in his own lifetime: had he gone beyond the point when he was born he would have to admit, eventually, to the Cymraeg-ness of the place where he spent his formative years. Bohata says that ‘tensions between advocates of the Welsh language and those within Wales who bitterly resent and are hostile towards Welsh cannot be ignored, and the polarity of the language debate and the strength of feeling attached to it do not allow the author to withdraw from the arena of the debate’.²¹ Billy is definitely hostile towards the Welsh language, yet he is also hostile to the Received Pronunciation and badly-pronounced place-names of the (recorded) announcer. If the version of English he was expecting to hear on the railway station platform is presumably Wenglish, then RP is just as alien to him as the Cymraeg that came before it. Kilroy thinks along similar lines, though not when it comes to Cymraeg. When told by Griff that his ‘attitiwde absoliwtely disgusts me,’ Kilroy thinks that Griff said it in an accent ‘so thick he should be registered disabled.’

On the other side of the debate from Billy are the characters in *Freshars/Freshers*. Here, problems occasionally arise in the act of translation, and I was conscious to ensure that the same thing did not happen in my own novel. At times in *Freshers*, Davies uses specific cultural signifiers which would be little known to a non-Cymraeg-speaking audience. When translated into English, these signifiers do not convey their meaning as perfectly as the author might have first imagined. As a result, a close reading of both texts allows the reader to see not only what works in one language better than the other but also how language can play a role in

²⁰ Smith, p. 163.

²¹ Bohata, p. 116.

representing images of culture. An example of this can be found in the way Fflur reacts when spotting an old friend while on a night out during freshers' week:

'Cai!' Fflur shouted as she walked toward him with Lois following nervously. 'How are you, you old cunt?'²²

To a reader unfamiliar with Welsh slang, Fflur's use of a vulgar term when addressing her friend might appear offensive. However, the derogatory term at the end, in Welsh, is a common term of affection used around the Caernarfon area. In *Freshars*, Fflur says, 'Sut wyt ti ers tro'r hen gont?'²³ The use of the term 'gont' (in its mutated form here) as a common term of affection between friends would not have been lost on a reader of *Freshars* and is less shocking than it would appear to an unknowing reader of *Freshers*.

A similar situation occurs in the translation when the 'Fat Slags' sing a bawdy song at the Cooper's Arms (a real pub in Aberystwyth frequented by the Cymry Cymraeg, commonly known as *Y Cŵps*) to the tune of *Men of Harlech*, about the girls in Taliesin Hall. In Welsh, the new lyrics scan perfectly:

'Ni yw merched Taliesin,
Ni yw'r rhai â *discharge* melyn...'²⁴

In the English version, however, with the song being trochaic, the word 'the' and the (added) syllable '-li' in 'Taliesin' are unnaturally used as stressed syllables:

'We are the Taliesin large,
'We're the ones with yellow discharge...'²⁵

This chant, being that it does not translate well into English, should probably have been removed, as all meaning is lost. In the earlier instance, I feel it may have been more useful for

²² *Freshers*, p. 43.

²³ *Freshars*, p. 18.

²⁴ *Freshars*, p. 13.

²⁵ *Freshers*, p. 37.

Fflur to have said 'cont' (unmutated) in *Freshers*, as she did originally two years previously in *Freshars*. Bohata talks of the impact that the untranslated word can have by saying:

The untranslated word acts as a timely reminder to the arrogant Euro- or Anglocentric reader of the limits of his or her knowledge but also, crucially, in an English-language Welsh text the use of untranslated Welsh asserts the cultural difference of 'English'-language Welsh writing.²⁶

By using the term 'cont' instead of its English counterpart, Davies could have asserted the difference of the text in a much subtler way. A word similar to its original, yet decidedly different in delivery and acceptance, would allow the reader to see the distinction between a culture they know and one to which they are being (potentially) introduced. Instead, by changing the word to its English equivalent, the opportunity is lost and a clearly unintended meaning is conveyed.

This is not something that I wanted to repeat. Catrin calls Griff (and later Kilroy) *cariad*, and not the de facto English equivalent, 'love'. Through using *cariad* I aimed to make it clear to the reader that this was a Welsh novel. It is a given that this term needs less of an explanation than the term 'cont,' but the context in which they appear should provide enough for the reader to work it out for themselves. As Bohata notes, the dominant language in the text can find itself conceding its total control over the reader when a word imbued with strong emotional meaning (such as *cariad*) appears. In this case it indicates the Welshness of the novel. This is of course not to say that every translation needs some form of exposition to show just exactly how Welsh it is. Sometimes in *Freshars/Freshers* the text is exactly the same in its Welshness in the original as it is in its translation. Lois is told by Fflur, when first meeting her new friend in *Y Cŵps*, that 'fi wedi cael digon fan hyn gyda'r twats *Welsh-Nash* 'ma i gyd.' Pam 'se ni'n symud

²⁶ Bohata, p. 122.

mlaen i rywle arall?’²⁷ in the English version, Fflur says the same: ‘I’ve had enough of being here with these Welsh Nash twats. Why don’t we move on somewhere else?’²⁸

While the supposed “twattishness,” so to speak, of the students regarded as the ‘Welsh Nash’ in the text is made clear (which is essentially some lewd, boisterous behaviour not unknown in any student pub), no previous indications are made of their political leanings. The use of ‘Welsh Nash’ as a signifier does not need translation. Nationalists of all types, whether they be civic or cultural, are often, as a lazy informal fallacy, generalized as ethnic nationalists. The translation, and subsequent knowledge of ‘Welsh Nash’ being a derogatory term, needs no further explanation.

Other writers approach the Welsh language differently. Christopher Meredith appears to play with the reader’s expectations by writing in English while hinting that some of his characters in *The Book of Idiots* are speaking in Welsh. It is never clear if the language that the narrator, Dean, and his friend Wil are speaking is Welsh or the Wenglish dialect of the Eastern Core Area: Wil talks of the death of King Henry I, caused by a ‘surfeit of lampreys,’ and the death of a previously-mentioned Norman baron.²⁹ ‘We owe this day’, he says, and ‘maybe even the fact that we aren’t talking English – or French – to something really mouldy some twat ate a very long time ago, and a seriously nasty case of indigestion’.³⁰ When Dean subsequently says that something Wil said was ‘Ballocks’, Wil responds by saying that the root of ‘testify’ is the same as that of ‘testes,’ indicating that it is English in which he said this word. This would not have been possible had he said the Welsh words, as ‘testify’ translates as *tystio* and testicles as *ceilliau*, which do not share the same etymological root. But this is something that the reader must accept. No indications are made as to the language Wil and Lloyd are speaking, apart from the obvious one, in that the text is English. Yet, at another point, when they are in a

²⁷ *Freshers*, p. 16.

²⁸ *Freshers*, p. 40.

²⁹ Christopher Meredith, *The Book of Idiots* (Bridgend: Seren, 2012) p. 48.

³⁰ Meredith, p. 194.

pub, a German man leaves his family and approaches Wil and Lloyd to ask what language they are speaking. Wil informs the man that they are speaking Welsh. The German man's wife asks, 'Gibt's die Spracher denn überhaupt noch?' ('Do speakers [of Welsh] actually still exist?') to which he replies, 'Das müssen einige der letzten sprecher sein.' ('They have to be some of the last speakers.') When asked for his name, Wil says, 'Call me Caliban.' This is a clear allusion to the only indigenous islander in *The Tempest*, who was taught the coloniser's language and 'how to curse' in it.³¹ Many critics see Caliban as a kind of archetype of colonialism – the browbeaten and ignoble native – so Wil's comment, though expressed in a jocular fashion, is an indicator as to his language, identity and history.³²

Meredith subverts the readers' expectations, at a late stage, as to what language his characters (Wil and Dean) have been speaking throughout the novel. As my novel is mainly written in Cardiff English with a protagonist whose knowledge of Welsh is more limited than that of Wil and Dean I decided instead to leave the Welsh untranslated on the page. In this respect my approach is similar to the one employed by Catrin Dafydd in her *Random Births and Lovehearts*. Both my protagonist, Kilroy Jones, and Sam Jones, the protagonist of Catrin Dafydd's novel, have a limited Welsh vocabulary. Both regret not knowing more. Sam Jones is trying to enroll her daughter in Welsh swimming lessons, but is told over the phone by an assistant that with only seventeen children, there aren't enough to warrant putting on the course. Sam offers to contact three other sets of parents in her daughter's class and is confident of

³¹ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act 1, scene ii, 1.518, Open Source Shakespeare Edition http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/views/plays/play_view.php?WorkID=tempest&Act=1&Scene=2&Scope=scene&LineHighlight=517#517 [accessed 2 February 2017]

³² This is analysed along a postcolonial model by Lisa Sheppard in "Troï Dalen 'Arall': Ailddehongli'r berthynas rhwng cymunedau Cymraeg a Saesneg de Cymru mewn dwy nofel ddiweddar yng ngoleuni ffigwr yr 'arall'" in *Gwerddon* (21), pp. 26-46. (My translation of this title into English would be "Turning the 'Other' Sheet: Reinterpreting the relationship between Welsh- and English-speaking communities in south Wales in two recent novels in light of the figure of the 'other'"). Pages 43-5 are relevant to this discussion, not least this quotation: 'Wil, therefore, plays the role of colonial subject mimicking the colonizer: he chooses to appear as the 'other', and chooses the role of the slave. He revels in the otherness his identity as a Welsh speaker offers him. Ironically, although he chose to play the role of a slave, he is a master of both languages, and that mastery is what allows him to challenge the order [of language dominance],' p.45.

making up the numbers, but the assistant dismisses her idea due to the closeness of the deadline. This is a situation that Sam seems to know all too well. After saying that ‘this country gets on my nerves’ due to the ‘things you can and can’t do’, Sam goes on to share an allegory:³³

‘Last week when we were in Caerphilly with the kids, me and Arse,³⁴ we went into this little café. I wanted a cheese and ham toastie but they said they couldn’t do it. There was a cheese and ham sandwich on the menu, and toast, but they said they couldn’t make me a cheese and ham toastie. I swear things are the wrong way round’.³⁵

This feeling of things being the wrong way round, when it comes to the language issue, is a central theme of the novel. The use of untranslated words runs throughout the text. When Sam raises this lack of Welsh-language swimming lessons with her daughter’s teacher, Arwyn Pritchard, he says ‘yn y cyfarfod staff heno, ‘na i godi’r mater ar gyfer y minutes. See what they say. We’ll sort this out.’ Sam thinks of him as a kind man as ‘he didn’t want to use all Welsh sentences that would scare me off’.³⁶ Dafydd expands on this later when Sam once again finds herself in a flirty conversation with Mr Pritchard. She is told that the lessons will not be offered in Welsh: ‘Bloody county council. Nes i gynnig neud y gwersi ‘yn hunan’.³⁷ Sam thinks that ‘for a moment I feel hellish envious of him. It’s an ugly feelin’ that I don’t want to get accustomed to. All that Welsh inside his head. All those things he can say that I can’t. All that claim he has on things that are just out of my reach and always will be.’³⁸ Sam’s reaction is typical of Kilroy also, and I would argue that it is actually typical of a lot of Welsh people. In fact, this feeling is almost echoed by Kilroy, when he first meets Catrin and Griff. He talks of his own experience learning Welsh in school, and ponders on his regret at not paying more attention, saying:

³³ Dafydd, Catrin, *Random Births & Lovehearts* (Llandysul: Gomer, 2015), p. 57.

³⁴ The unfortunate (in many ways) nickname of her friend.

³⁵ Dafydd, p. 58.

³⁶ Dafydd p. 76.

³⁷ Dafydd, p. 112. ‘I offered to run the classes myself.’

³⁸ Dafydd, p. 113.

That's the thing with the lingo. In school, you'd fuck around in the Cymraeg class more than you would in any other. It wasn't just that you could get away with it more. It was that you couldn't give a fuck if you did or if you didn't. And now you're all grown up, you knows people who speaks it. You sees it on all the signs and you even hears it in the streets, and you kinda wishes that you paid more attention.

Kilroy's views of the Welsh language, a part of his own culture of which he can only be aware of to a limited degree, are thus made clear here.

Non-Englishness

Englishness in Wales plays a somewhat insipid role in Meredith's *The Book of Idiots*. The narrator, Dean Lloyd, points out the Englishness of the people he knows at every juncture, presumably to show his own Welshness. We are left in no doubt, due to Dean's insistence in pointing out the English characters, that the land is Welsh land and that the English are different. He says of the landlord in the pub where he has a drink with his friend Wil that he spoke to them 'in an English Midlands accent'.³⁹ He says of his acquaintance Jeff earlier on that he 'almost said *roit* and *spoit*. He had that sort of West English accent that's getting rare'.⁴⁰ He later says that he 'had to concentrate to understand him [Jeff] sometimes, as if his was a language I knew imperfectly'.⁴¹

This implies difference. Jeff and Dean are not of the same people, and something is obviously lost in translation. This is also true of their parachute jump trainer, Dave, who is described as 'a skinny little Englishman'.⁴² They get 'drilled' by Dave prior to the jump, and much like his encounters with Jeff, Dean finds himself thinking:

³⁹ Meredith, p. 68.

⁴⁰ Meredith, p. 9.

⁴¹ Meredith, p. 13.

⁴² Meredith, p. 30.

[We] learned the strange language along the way. He was a Jump Master. A parachute was called a parachute or a rig, never a chute. The rig was attached to your harness by lines, never ropes or strings.⁴³

Dave has the superiority due to his position and they are forced to learn his language. Even though he is probably physically weaker and smaller than the narrator, hence the pointing out of his physique, he is the dominating member of their (brief) relationship.

I did not want to define *Kilroy F***n Jones* through Englishness, and indeed, no English characters appear in this novel. Instead, when English people are mentioned, it is in a similar way to Joanna Davies in *Freshers/Freshars*. In the former, Cerys is initiated into Taliesin Halls by her new third-year friends known as the ‘Fat Slags’ (or to their parents as Bethan, Sali and Catrin). In *Y Cŵps*, they lament the lack of attractive male students of their acquaintance:

‘The English are the sexiest,’ Sali said, sadly.

‘There must be some good looking Welshmen...’ Cerys said, hopefully.

‘Well, Huw Ruthin, of course, but he’s so immature,’ Bethan said watching Huw at the bar as he guzzled a yard of beer with his cronies.

‘No, the English guys are cooler; they’ve got better clothes, better hair, better moves...’
Catrin said wistfully.

‘Why don’t we go and hang out with them, then?’ Cerys said enthusiastically. ‘Where do they drink?’

‘Forget it, Cerys,’ Sali said, dismissively. ‘They may be better looking but they’re English and obviously that makes them arseholes. We don’t mix with them and they don’t mix with us...’⁴⁴

⁴³ Meredith, p. 30.

⁴⁴ *Freshers*, p. 51.

The version of this in *Freshars* is much shorter, reducing the exchange to one line before they change subject: ‘Trueni nad oes dim llawer o bishyns yn y neuaddau Cymraeg. Y Saeson yw’r rhai mwya pishynllyd,’ dywedodd Sali’n drist.’⁴⁵ (I would translate this as, ‘It’s a pity there aren’t many pieces in the Welsh halls. The English are the sexiest,’ Sali said sadly.’). The expression of non-Englishness therefore is a significant way in which *Freshers* and *The Book of Idiots* assert their status as Welsh novels. No such expressive stipulation of non-Englishness can be found in *Freshars*, it being superfluous. Kilroy Jones, much like the ‘Fat Slags’ in *Freshers*, points out early on his own non-Englishness, albeit in terms of class and exclusion:

They all act like their Mummas and Dads weren't around when they were kids like how it was with some of us, but really they live out in the How Do You Do parts of England where the houses ain't even together in a row.

As the English students in *Freshers* have better hair and moves than their Welsh counterparts in Taliesin Hall, so do the English students mentioned in *Kilroy F*****n Jones* have access to better homes, and presumably better life choices. This does not go far to explain why Kilroy is so bitter towards people born into a situation out of their control, but the assertion of non-Englishness justifies its inclusion, much like *Freshers* and *The Book of Idiots*, as a Welsh novel.

Digger Davies is also clear on his non-Englishness. He spends most of his time in the pages of *Dream On* in France. The foreignness of his locale seems to bring out the Welshness in him, and consequently the novel. In one scene, Digger, watching an English family, meditates on the fact that he feels more Welsh outside of the United Kingdom:

He had never felt more Welsh, something he had rarely had to contemplate in the past, than when he sat in the village square on the swing seat placed outside the one-room bar, sipping a thimbleful of their pasteurised lager, and having to listen, for you could not avoid the nasal decibel level, to the Saxon herd who popped in and out of the caves

⁴⁵ *Freshars*, p. 26. ‘Pishyn’ (piece) is West Walian slang for an attractive person.

they had paid local builders to re-model to fit the pics in the glossy mags which she pored over.⁴⁶

In a similar vein to the 'Fat Slags' and Cerys in *Freshers*, Digger Davies also finds that he can define himself more clearly as Welsh in the presence of English (and in this case also French) people, knowing that he is neither. Unlike Kilroy Jones, the issue of class does not come into Digger Davies's mind, for he is undoubtedly of the same class as the 'Saxon Herd.' We learn as readers that he is the director of a building company, and he can afford to visit and maintain this holiday home that he and his wife visit frequently. Yet he identifies the 'Saxon herd' to be as different from his own identity as the locals themselves in the small French village. In this way, Welsh identity is expressed as a negation of Englishness as much as a series of positive markers.

⁴⁶ Smith, pp. 83-4. The 'she' at the end refers to Digger Davies's wife.

CARDIFF ENGLISH & WENGLISH

As the previous chapter indicates, one of the key markers of Welshness is language, yet this is not confined to the Welsh language alone, but may be expressed through the specific accents and dialects found in Wales. This section discusses the characteristic types of dialect found in Cardiff, which I sought to represent with accuracy in my novel. Cardiff English (CE) is the type of dialect spoken along the south Wales coastal belt from Barry in the Vale of Glamorgan to Newport in what was previously called Gwent. According to Collins and Mees, it is likely that in this area, ‘English has been spoken by the vast majority of the population since well before 1800, in some cases possibly from the time of the Norman Conquest’.¹ Wenglish does not emerge in local speech until north of Caerphilly Mountain.² Collins and Mees stated in 1990 that ‘The speakers of CE and related accents probably number just under half a million people’,³ which, considering the population growth shown in the censuses between this time is likely to have risen in the 25 years since.⁴

It is often said that the Cardiff accent does not sound particularly Welsh. Collins and Mees state that ‘A frequent reaction from people who encounter the accent of the Cardiff-Newport area for the first time seems to be that it scarcely sounds like a ‘proper Welsh accent’ at all’.⁵ Coupland similarly states that ‘It has become part of the folk mythology of Cardiff that

¹ Beverley Collins and Inger Mees, ‘Cardiff: A Real-Time Study of Glottalisation’ in Foulkes, Paul, and Docherty, eds., *Urban Voices* (London: Arnold, 1999) p. 185.

² The English spoken in the South Wales region which roughly encompasses the Valleys, from Cwmaman in the west to Torfaen in the east, is commonly known as Wenglish.

³ Beverley Collins and Inger Mees, ‘The Phonetics of Cardiff English’ in Nikolas Coupland and Alun Thomas, eds., *English in Wales*, (Avon: Multilingual Matters, 1990) p. 87.

⁴ The Welsh government put the Cardiff population at 296,941 in 1991 and estimates the 2015 population at 357,160 so this is a reasonable supposition. Data from “National level population estimates by year, age and UK country” available at <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Population-and-Migration/Population/Estimates/nationallevelpopulationestimates-by-year-age-ukcountry> [accessed 1 February 2017]

⁵ Collins and Mees, ‘The Phonetics of Cardiff English’, 1990 p. 87.

“Cardiff is a language on its own”, with its own history and associations and its ambiguous relationship with Welshness’.⁶

While the Cardiff accent might not sound like a ‘proper’ Welsh accent to the people Collins and Mees allude to (and it does indeed raise the question of who exactly gets to define what a ‘proper’ Welsh accent is in the first place), it does have similarities with many other accents in Wales. The accent might seem un-Welsh enough to the native speaker of Welsh – or a Welsh person with a more recognizably unanglicised accent – yet if Cardiff speakers find themselves on the other side of the Severn Bridge, they are sure enough soon to find themselves being reminded of just how Welsh they sound. So, what is responsible for this perceived ‘difference’ in the Cardiff accent? Linguistic and historical research suggests that it is the diphthongisation of much of Cardiff speech, a characteristic brought about when huge numbers of people migrated to the city during the latter half of the nineteenth century, that makes CE sound so different when compared to the accents of the rest of south Wales. Nick Shepley, in *The Story of Cardiff*, even suggests that ‘it can be argued that modern Cardiff was built by the Irish’,⁷ owing to the huge immigration which took part over a relatively short period (the population of the city increasing from 26,630 in 1851 to 209,804 in 1911.)⁸

However, it is no surprise that Cardiff English, with its broad As and flat pitch (by Welsh standards at least), stands out to so many people. Surrounded by a sea of three sides of lilted Wenglish, its difference, to someone expecting to hear Stacey when instead they get Nessa, must be quite the eye-opener.⁹ The linguist Robert Lewis describes the main differences thus:

⁶ Coupland, Nikolas, *Dialect in Use: Sociolinguistic Variation in Cardiff English* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988) p.18.

⁷ Nick Shepley, *The Story of Cardiff* (Stroud: The History Press, 2014) p. 443.

⁸ GB Historical GIS / University of Portsmouth, Cardiff District through time | Population Statistics | Total Population, *A Vision of Britain through Time*. URL: http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10150530/cube/TOT_POP [Date accessed: 3rd November 2015]

⁹ This is a reference to the BBC show *Gavin & Stacey*: Joanna Page, who plays Stacey, uses a variation of her natural West Wenglish accent (being that she’s from Treboeth near Swansea) and Ruth Jones uses a CE accent to play Nessa, Stacey’s best friend, from Barry.

Generally speaking, the accent is more anglicised, the vowel sounds are often quite different to those of the Valleys (e.g. the proverbial *Pint of Dairk in Cairdiff Airms Pairk*), in which the vowel sound is repeatedly pronounced as in the first vowel of the word *mare*, where Wenglish would have a long a-sound). Cardiff speech today contains quite a few diphthongs, even triphthongs (combinations of three vowel sounds), in positions where Wenglish would retain pure, simple vowel sounds. Furthermore, the process of glotalling has definitely gained a foothold in the speech of many younger people.¹⁰

These characteristic speech patterns, as described by Lewis, are evident in two of the city's best-known writers, Dannie Abse and John Williams. Dannie Abse's autobiographical novel, *Ash on a Young Man's Sleeve* (1954), tells the story of a young boy growing up in the Cardiff district of Roath during the 1930s. Abse's later text, *There Was a Young Man from Cardiff* (1991) is a novel of linked short stories, also based in autobiography. John Williams' 'Cardiff Trilogy' (*Five Pubs, Two Bars and a Nightclub* (1999), *Cardiff Dead* (2000), *The Prince of Wales* (2003)) and novella/short story volume, *Temperance Town* (2004), are all set at the turn of the millennium, and tell the stories of various villains, each of whom has a connection through either birth or belonging to the Butetown and Cardiff Bay areas. In these works both Abse and Williams have made use of various aspects of CE in order to better represent a sense of place. As previously discussed, belonging and a sense of place can be explored as much through language and dialect as it can through description, and this was something I was keen to probe in *Kilroy F*****n Jones*. The main character, and Stacey, are lifelong citizens of Cardiff and, as such, their speech patterns should be seen as representative examples of CE, insofar as CE can be represented on the page. As the story is viewed from the first-person

¹⁰ R. Lewis, *Wenglish: The Dialect of the South Wales Valleys* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2008) p. 26.

perspective of Kilroy, Stacey inevitably sounds a lot more ‘Cardiffian’ than Kilroy does, as he is hearing her voice himself.

Drawing on the linguistic analyses of CE made by Coupland, Mees and Collins, in the following I will explain how I set about representing the characteristics of CE in *Kilroy F*****n Jones*. I will use examples from the works of Abse and Williams to better explain my own approach and to put the novel in its correct geographical and cultural context. For ease of reading, I have split CE into three distinct parts: pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. I will then detail the features of CE which were impractical to represent on the page, and the reasons for omitting them.

Pronunciation

The dropping of the sounds of ‘G’ & ‘H’ are common phonetic characteristics of CE, and is also found in many other non-standard forms of dialect.¹¹ Coupland describes ‘G’ dropping as ‘an obvious candidate for detailed variation study as a pervasive British social dialect feature’.¹² However, with regard to ‘H’ dropping, he describes the use of it by speakers of CE as ‘variably present/absent in the speech of many individuals, as it is in many varieties of English’.¹³ Although dropping of the letter ‘H’ is not as common as ‘G’ dropping, Abse makes use of both. In *Ash on a Young Man’s Sleeve*, the narrator’s Catholic friend, Sidney, states the difference between Jews and Catholics is that ‘they puts ‘ats on when they pray, we takes them off’.¹⁴ Similarly, in Abse’s ‘Artificial Flowers,’ the invalided Rodney Price says of his doctor, ‘Anatomically speaking I doubt ‘e knows ‘is ‘ead from ‘is arse’.¹⁵ A similar pattern emerges with Abse’s characters when it comes to ‘G’ dropping. When alighting from a tram outside the

¹¹ ‘Standard’ is seen in dialect in the UK as being RP. Every dialect is standard: they are not ‘unstandard’ so to speak, but RP is unfortunately used as a base and for the sake of clarity. Therefore in the context of this chapter it is a base I feel compelled to use.

¹² Coupland, 1988, p. 57.

¹³ Coupland, 1988, p. 58.

¹⁴ Dannie Abse, *Ash on a Young Man’s Sleeve* (London: Robson Books, 2002) p. 23.

¹⁵ Abse, 2001, p. 71.

Dutch Café in *Ash on a Young Man's Sleeve*, the narrator describes the conductor as announcing, 'All aboard what's goin' aboard'.¹⁶ But Abse mainly refrains from allowing his narrators to engage in the dropping of consonants, both in direct speech or when describing his situation to the reader, perhaps to reflect the better educational environment within the family home. Apart from one incident in 'The Pencil Box', it is normally the other characters in Abse's fictional world who speak Cardiff English. In this one story, however, the narrator finds himself in conversation with his schoolmates outside of the school setting. One of the boys is a figure that the narrator is wary of due to his physical, bullying ways. There is a notable shift in the narrator's speech pattern in this section, perhaps to better reflect his attempt to fit in. Where the narrator said to his mother that he was 'going to the park' not a few lines before, he now asks the aforementioned bully, Peter Williams, if he's 'goin' to catch fish', to perhaps mirror the CE Peter himself is shown to speak when he asks the narrator if he's 'comin' or not'.¹⁷

The characters of John Williams' world are a social class below that of Abse's narrator. It would be expected to assume that they would drop the letters 'g' and 'h' from their speech on a regular basis. However, despite other elements of CE being incorporated into his characters' speech, 'g' and 'h' dropping are both absent from John Williams's fiction. The dropping of the letter 'h', as Coupland states, is a not uncommon variable, which would make it unessential when attempting to represent CE in dialogue. The dropping of the letter 'G', however, is not only common in CE but is also prevalent in many other dialectical forms of English across the world. I can only assume that Williams chose not to drop the letter 'G' due to his practice of using apostrophes to indicate omissions or variations from standard written English. Lewis details this in a section titled 'The Problems of Writing in Dialect', when he states that many writers 'remain as far as possible with the spelling of the standard language,

¹⁶ Abse, 2002, p. 78.

¹⁷ Abse, 2001, p. 20. This is called accommodation in sociolinguistic theory.

indicating divergence from the standard by means of apostrophes and similar devices'.¹⁸ Williams seems to have avoided the use of 'g' and 'h' dropping (while wanting to stick with the approach Lewis describes here) due to the disadvantage this approach entails, especially when it comes to his particular writing style: Williams uses dialogue profusely through his fiction – much more than Abse does – and as the 'ing' suffix is so common in English, it would have made for an untidy collection of apostrophes on the page, to say the least. Lewis also describes a second way in which to represent dialect, which is when texts 'adopt a radical approach to reflect the particular sounds of a dialect'.¹⁹ Many characters in Niall Griffiths *Grits* (2000), discussed below, adopt this second, phonetic, immersive approach.

After reflecting on my own creative process, I found that I naturally opted, for the most part, for Lewis's third approach, which is a 'middle way based primarily on the familiar spelling system of the standard language but to be read following detailed explanation of the sounds which the standard spellings represent in the dialect'.²⁰ I disagree with Lewis in this slightly, as a glossary, or a phonetic instruction section at the beginning of a work of fiction can cut into the time actually spent reading the main body of text itself, and if the author relies on it too heavily then it is bound to inhibit the suspension of disbelief. The use of dialect should be instinctively understood by the reader (which Griffiths achieves with *Grits*), even if the reader has little to no knowledge of the dialect in question, which I hope I've made possible through my own knowledge of Wenglish and Cardiff English through this detailed course of study and research. In order to better reflect the phonology of the typical CE speaker I therefore decided to adopt 'g' and 'h' dropping in dialogue itself, but not in the main corpus of the narrative, namely the interior monologue, thus freeing *Kilroy F*****n Jones* from the constraints of the apostrophe. My aim in doing so was to show that the narrator was not the

¹⁸ Lewis, 2008 p. 29.

¹⁹ Lewis, 2008 p. 30.

²⁰ Lewis, 2008, p. 30.

same as his gruff exterior. Despite what comes out of his mouth, he too can be said to have a mind of some sorts, as shown in earlier chapters of this thesis (notably the chapter on masculinity). This pattern of interior/exterior was followed in much of the pronunciation of CE throughout this creative piece.

Another omission by Williams, and indeed by Abse too, exists in the voicing of alveolar stops which are normally missing from other forms of dialectal English. In the case of terms such as ‘*got a*’ and ‘*lot of*,’ Coupland states that ‘Cardiff speakers produce a voiced tap or flap [r] as a further slightly different non-standard variant’.²¹ I decided to include this as it is a common speech characteristic. Kilroy asks Griff if he has ‘gorra dog’ before his initial attack in the first chapter, and later on, when in a private shop, he asks an assistant if he’s ‘gorra problem.’ Owing to its recognisability and colouring of the language, I thought it essential to include the voiced flap as a distinctive, though little used (in the text itself), signifier of the Cardiffian vernacular.

Letters and consonants disappear regularly in CE. Mees writes that ‘/ð/ is normally approximant rather than fricative and frequently suffers assimilation or elision’.²² Abse omits the fricative numerous times when writing the speech of Lol, an acquaintance of his narrator. When coming across the word ‘presumption’ for the first time, Lol asks, ‘what’s ‘at mean?’²³ Similarly, Abse omits the nasal when the same character also asks, ‘why ar’t you at school?’

It is a pattern repeated by Williams, although not so much in the CE sense but as it is in most non-standard British dialect forms. When Mandy gets an unwelcome knock on the door in *Five Pubs, Two Bars and a Nightclub*, her current beau, Nev, asks her, ‘You want me to go down and tell ‘em to fuck off?’²⁴ In my novel, Kilroy follows this pattern of consonant

²¹ Coupland, 1988, pp. 29-30.

²² Collins and Mees, 1990, p. 90.

²³ Abse, 2001, p. 85.

²⁴ John Williams, *Five Pubs, Two Bars and a Night Club* in *The Cardiff Trilogy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006) p. 84.

dissipation where it sounds correct, for example, when asking Griff the gender of his mother's dog, he says, 'Well what is it, en?' At other times, when the word 'then' would appear at the beginning of the sentence, he uses the word in its unadulterated form, such as when he says to Griff, 'You spiked one of my pints. Then you dropped that baggy on purpose.'

A related characteristic Cardiffian speech sound is the 'elision of final alveolar stops in utterance-final position'.²⁵ A common example, which is repeated by Abse, is the use of the word 'dunno,' which is to be found in most non-standard British dialectal forms. CE does, however, have a major, much-used differentiation which Abse and Williams do not use. While 'then' becomes 'en' in CE as in the previous example, 'that' changes form to become 'tha.' Kilroy makes frequent use of this part of his linguistic heritage, by calling Griff 'tha trout,' and 'tha Mary.' The use of 'tha' instead of 'that' is not universal for every sense of the word, and is again only used when necessary. When Griff tries to talk to Kilroy outside a phonebox, Kilroy says to him, 'you do that.' There are two reasons for this change. The first is that it is at the end of a sentence, and keeping the word whole gives greater emphasis to the words being spoken. The second is due to the Cardiffian tendency to overly affricate consonants. Coupland points out that this is such a well-known feature that, 'probably, it is the affrication here that a local journalist noted (*Cardiff Post*, 1983, February 24th) and ingeniously transcribed using normal English alphabetic symbols as 'Kiaadiff'.²⁶

This is not an easy (nor always desirable) phonetic characteristic to include, but it is an essential one to the CE sound. John Williams must have felt this way too, as when Mark sees Tony Pinto on his release from jail in the novel *Five Pubs*, his first reaction is, "'Kin 'ell, blood'".²⁷ The affrication is weighted perfectly in this example, and it is an authentic use of the Cardiff way of speech. The only reason Kilroy does not follow suit is because this would not

²⁵ Coupland, 1988, p. 30.

²⁶ Coupland, 1988, pp. 30-1.

²⁷ Williams, 2006, pp. 140-1.

be a good representation of his character (and the same could be said of Stacey, who also speaks CE).

Vocabulary

When making a study of dialectal vocabulary in fiction, it is important to distinguish between what is from the writer's (or the character's) own common pool of words and what words could be considered to be from their larger dialect or culture group. Kilroy is a case in point, as this character says many words that would not be considered part of the wider CE lexicon but I thought of them as being entertaining enough to include nonetheless, and their similarity (and perhaps genesis) in the Cardiff working-class community where I may have first heard (or thought) of them is evident in some cases. Kilroy often refers to parts of the body by their function. Lips become 'kissers,' and noses become 'sniffers.' Derogatory terms are either borrowed from other cultures (such as the Deep South 'goober') or are conglomerations of multiple derogatory terms (such as 'twonkey'). Such terms are not necessarily from CE but are used in order to give a flavour of the playfulness and inventiveness of the language users of this part of the world.²⁸

Kilroy's idiolect aside, I felt it was important to represent CE in lexical terms to create a sense of authenticity. Another facet used to suggest such authenticity is Kilroy's terms of address toward his contemporaries. 'Bro' is not unusual in other dialects but it is one that has usurped 'bra,' as used by John Williams's characters, in the last fifteen years or so (Williams also notably borrows 'butt'²⁹ from Wenglish on a few occasions).³⁰ It is inconceivable for Kilroy that any other term could be used (and profusely at that). A more Cardiffian word (and one just as essential to the lexicon, though not being exclusive to it) is the term 'spar.' In order

²⁸ This is also found in the inventive vocabulary of the Rhondda writer, Gwyn Thomas, who refers to people as 'voters', for example. See Pearl Zinobier, *A Study of Aspects of Gwyn Thomas's Humor*, Iowa State University, Retrospective Theses and Dissertations, Paper 70, 1970
<http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1065&context=rtd> [accessed 12 January 2017]

²⁹ Williams, 2006, p. 101.

³⁰ Williams, 2006, pp. 131/152.

to be someone's spar, they must be trusted beyond doubt and be known intimately. Deriving its origins from the boxing ring, a spar is someone who is trusted to not go overboard and cause harm (hence the issue of trust) yet is someone who you know from an intimate and unusual situation – in full physical exertion where exhaustion and pain stop any pretence or barriers being erected. In some ways, an individual can know a spar better than their spouse or parents. Other words Kilroy uses which are pure CE include 'tamping' (being annoyed) and 'clamming' (having an overwhelming desire to consume an addictive substance).³¹ Williams uses the term 'ta-ra' for goodbye, which Kilroy would definitely use were he the type of character to be so polite. Abse's characters go one step further, by engaging with language in a way that Kilroy doesn't. As with Williams, Abse also borrows from Wenglish when he uses the term 'mun',³² but his characters also use Welsh loan words and terms, such as 'Duw'³³ and 'Ach y fee'.³⁴ Coupland points out that 'loans from Welsh are rare',³⁵ which is why, though Kilroy is in close approximation with Cymraeg due to his relationship with his 'spar', Dafydd, I decided that it would be incorrect for him to follow suit. While Kilroy certainly respects Cymraeg and is envious of people who can speak it, his usage of words is reflected in his confidence in using it, which is at zero.

Grammar

From the point of view of writing *Kilroy F*****n Jones*, the element of CE grammar can be expressed in the text in a much subtler way than is possible when representing pronunciation and vocabulary. This is due to the fact that I chose to write it from the first person perspective. As Williams writes from the third person perspective, and Abse (although also writing in the first person) follows Robert Lewis's previously discussed first mode of representing the

³¹ 'Tamping', like 'spar', can also be found in other dialects and is, again, just as essential to the lexicon, though not exclusive to it.

³² Abse, 2002, p. 74.

³³ Abse, 2002, pp. 28/71.

³⁴ Abse, 2002, p. 57.

³⁵ Coupland, 1988, p. 39.

vernacular, neither follows the organic rules of sentence structure of CE except when in dialogue. *Kilroy F*****n Jones* is different in that much of the action and opinions are taking place within the mind of the main character, so it was only natural that the whole text would reflect this.

Present tense verbs in CE are different from more standard forms of English. Coupland writes that ‘the central aspect of non-standardness here is the extension of the inflected verb form (written as ‘-s’) to the whole present tense paradigm (*I likes it; we lives in Splott; they squeaks when I walks*) in addition to the third person singular environment where it occurs in standard varieties of English.’³⁶ It is not surprising, therefore, that examples of this abound in the work of Abse and Williams. Characters such as Bobby in Williams’ *The Prince of Wales*, for instance, introduce themselves by saying, ‘I’m Bobby. They calls you Mazz, don’t they?’³⁷ while Abse’s characters, such as the aforementioned bed-bound Rodney Price in *There Was a Young Man From Cardiff*, state things such as, ‘I writes to her but she don’t answer.’³⁸

The added ‘s’ is an essential part of CE. In popular culture this is reflected well in the website address of one of the area’s main satirists, the comedic hip-hop group Goldie Lookin Chain, which is youknowsit.co.uk (GLC are also known for a song called ‘You Knows I Loves You’).³⁹ Kilroy and Stacey both ensure that their verbs are in the present tense continuously. Kilroy tells the reader early on that ‘you only needs to know one thing,’ while Stacey says to Catrin, ‘You talks so funny.’

While the added ‘s’ in present tense verbs is an essential part of CE and my intention was to follow CE speech patterns as closely as possible in order to give the reader an authentic reading experience, I was also aware of how this grammatical foible of CE could come across,

³⁶ Coupland, 1988, pp. 33-4.

³⁷ Williams, John, *The Prince of Wales in The Cardiff Trilogy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006) p. 234.

³⁸ Abse, 2001, p.76.

³⁹ ‘Goldie Lookin Chain – You Knows I Loves You’, URL: http://www.56.com/u41/v_OTg2OTg5ODI.html [Date accessed 9 November 2015].

after usage in sentence after sentence, as an annoying literary tic. Kilroy and Stacey follow the pattern as expected, but not to excess, so Kilroy can still be found, in some instances, to ‘normalise’ his speech patterns. This switching between standard and non-standard forms of English is a common feature and was made use of for the benefit of the reader, rather than to convey that such switching is possible.

Still with regard to Cardiffian verbs, Coupland goes on to explain that ‘this extended use of –s can also occur with the ‘full’ forms of the irregular verbs BE and DO (*they’s awful; we does it often*) and occasionally with HAVE (*we never has homework*).’ He also states that, ‘the inflected form of auxiliary DO (*does*) is found (in Cardiff and occasionally in Reading), as in *they does try like*’.⁴⁰ While neither Abse nor Williams follows this particular form of the added ‘s’, I did find it worked well with the character of Kilroy to further highlight his non-standard use of speech. Thus, Kilroy can often be found uttering sentences like ‘I leans back and has a look around.’ Again, in order to ensure a smoother reading experience, this aspect of CE was kept within an instinctive boundary of usage.

Where ‘s’ is not used to extend verbs in the present tense, another CE feature (which also features in many other British social dialects) is the ‘reduction of complex prepositions to adverbial (rather than ‘pure’ prepositional) components.’⁴¹ Examples of this from Williams’ fiction include Mazz, the protagonist of *The Prince of Wales* saying to Bobby, ‘I’ve seen you round, haven’t I?’⁴² (instead of ‘I’ve seen you around [town],’ perhaps), and the musician Charlie Unger, when talking to him about records from abroad, saying ‘I knows the feller brought this lot in’ (instead of the more standard ‘I know the feller [who] brought this lot in’).

⁴³ Stacey in my own novel also follows this usage, when she states that ‘If you has one kid they

⁴⁰ Coupland, 1988, pp. 34-5.

⁴¹ Coupland, 1988, p.35.

⁴² Williams, 2006, p. 234.

⁴³ Williams, 2006, p. 232.

gives you a flat down Ely, if you has two they gives you a house up Pentrebane' (instead of down [in] Ely and up [in] Pentrebane).

Another grammatical feature common to other British dialects is the use of the invariant tag 'isn't it?' at the end of sentences. Coupland does state that 'the invariant tag *isn't it?* is sometimes used in stereotyping Welsh English'.⁴⁴ The only notable usage of it in the work of Abse and Williams is when the narrator's friend, Philip, in Abse's debut novel says, 'There's daft, i'n'it?'⁴⁵ In its shortened form, this *isn't it?* bears resemblance to the tag 'innit' as popularised through the rise of perhaps the UK's youngest dialect, Multicultural London English (MLE). The 'innit' of MLE, however, is normally used as a statement (similar to the way in which Kilroy uses the word 'standard').

The use of *isn't it?* did not seem necessary when forming Kilroy or Stacey's speech patterns, and, as Coupland points out (and despite the similar use in MLE), it sounded too 'South Wales' for it to be considered purely Cardiffian. A variation on this tag I used instead was 'is it.' This may also have its roots in Cymraeg – I also included the Welsh version in a sentence of Dafydd's when he says, 'ti'n siarad Cymraeg, i'fe?' yet, as with many instances of adhering to the rules of grammar when writing mainly in dialect, it is often best to stick with what feels 'right' rather than being dogmatic. Kilroy also goes on to use this tag at the beginning of sentences when he states, for example, (more than once in the answer to questions he receives), 'is it fuck.'

Other parts of CE grammar share more in common with forms of Standard Welsh English (SWE). One that is surprisingly little used, considering how often it is said in real life as opposed to fictional depictions, is what Coupland calls 'the use of compound forms of the standard positional and directional adjuncts *here* and *there* – *by here*, *by there*'.⁴⁶ Williams

⁴⁴ Coupland, 1988, p. 36.

⁴⁵ Abse, 2001, p. 23.

⁴⁶ Coupland, 1988, p. 37.

does not use this feature at all, and Abse uses it only once, in the ‘by here’ sense, when the bed-bound Rodney Price declares to a fellow inpatient, ‘If I wasn’t shackled by ‘ere I’d bloody do you’.⁴⁷ My feeling is that this more probably has to do with what is usable in a fictional context rather than the authors omitting it for any other reason. It is only used in my novel three times, and the last might go to show why. In this last incident of ‘by there’ being used, Stacey’s young child discusses his father’s face by saying, ‘My daddy’s got a big nose, and his has got a spot on it, right by there.’ Immediately after this line I had to write another line to put in context what the child meant: ‘He points just to the right of the tip of his own little button.’ While there is nothing wrong with having to do this every now and then, it makes the reader aware of the words on the page and the act of reading instead of immersing them in the story and image. This is why I decided not to implement this critical element of CE as constantly as the term is used in real life.

Moving on from SWE’s influence on CE to the influence of Cymraeg itself, predicate fronting is a feature of note. Coupland states that ‘Predicate fronting may be quite a rare instance of Welsh substratal influence on Cardiff English, weighing against the large number of cases where such influences on other dialects of Welsh English are *not* typical of Cardiff speech’.⁴⁸ Abse’s narrator in ‘The Pencil Box’ uses predicate fronting when he says, ‘So many colours it had’.⁴⁹ Similarly, when the narrator’s teacher describes Moses descending Mount Sinai, he does so by saying, ‘Dead quiet it was’.⁵⁰

Although a feature of note in how this can make CE sound more Welsh, I found little use of it, except when Stacey says of Kilroy, ‘Such a woman with your hair, you are.’ As a number of other characters – most notably Griff – use this in their speech constantly, I thought

⁴⁷ Abse, 2002, p. 71.

⁴⁸ Coupland, 1988, p. 37.

⁴⁹ Abse, 2002, p. 19.

⁵⁰ Abse, 2002, p. 13.

it better to use this as an opportunity to differentiate between their speech by not including it as much as it might be used in the real world.

Features of CE which were impractical to represent

Diphthongs are an important part of CE and they may be used to differentiate CE speakers from those of Wenglish. Whereas a speaker of CE would pronounce the word ‘whole’ with a diphthongated ‘o’, the speaker of Wenglish would give it a pure vowel sound, making it more as if the word was pronounced ‘hool.’ The reason I raise this point is because *Kilroy F*****n Jones* houses characters speaking either CE or Wenglish (apart from Nana), and this difference in pronunciation couldn’t be clearer, yet it is absent from much fiction. I could find only one instance in the work of both Abse and Williams. Abse emphasises the diphthong in his characters’ speech on one occasion: when Rodney Price receives a letter bearing sad news, he says to the narrator, ‘You doan understand’.⁵¹ In any case, Abse spells ‘don’t’ as ‘doan’ here more to accentuate the ‘elision of final alveolar stops in utterance-final position’ as previously mentioned, rather than to accentuate the diphthong, and is forced to do so in order to avoid using the more clumsy (and ambiguous sounding) ‘don’.⁵² Accentuating every diphthong – a common feature in most sentences – seemed unnecessary when trying to represent CE. As CE is used for Kilroy's interior monologue and his dialogue (and that of Stacey too) it would have been overwhelming to insist on writing every diphthong phonetically. I decided that the use of diphthongs was better kept to the speech patterns of Wenglish (when they are indeed used in that dialect, being that they are not as common) in order to promote its otherness rather than to use them in the parts of the text which are written in CE.

Another feature omitted from the text was what Collins and Mees term the ‘rising or mid-level contour with a high-rise termination.’⁵³ This is the process of making every sentence

⁵¹ Abse, 2002, p. 82.

⁵² Coupland, 1988, p. 30.

⁵³ Collins and Mees, p. 195.

sound like a question. Many people think of this as a modern phenomenon; Mees and Collins, however, point out that this has been a feature of CE for quite some time:

Not only are they consistently to be heard on our recording as far back as 1976, but informal observations indicate that the phenomenon dates back much further. The Cardiff-born co-author of this chapter (BC) remembers from as early as the late 1950s that English visitors to the town regularly commented on the lines of ‘Why do Cardiff people always seem to be asking questions when they’re actually trying to tell you something?’⁵⁴

This would have been a relatively straightforward feature of CE to include and could be accommodated at even the latest possible stage of the writing process, by including a question mark on the ends of various sentences (ensuring, of course, that it was not overused, as I have attempted to do with other features of CE). Indeed, not to include such a long-established feature would need stout reasoning. While neither Abse nor Williams mark this type of intonation in their fiction, I can offer a passage from a Booker prize-winner as evidence to explain why I did not include it myself. Ian McEwan’s obsessive antagonist Jed Parry, in his 1997 novel, *Enduring Love*, is introduced as a person who speaks with a rising inflection. Even in his first two sentences of dialogue, it is possible to feel the annoyance that would have been generated had McEwan chosen to follow this path of intonational representation:

Parry had his generation’s habit of making a statement on the rising inflection of a question – in humble imitation of Americans, or Australians, or, as I heard one linguist explain, too mired in relative judgements, too hesitant to say how things were in the world.

⁵⁴ Collins and Mees, p. 195.

Of course, I didn't think of any of this at the time. All I heard was a whine of powerlessness, and I relaxed. What he said was, 'Clarissa's really worried about you? I said I'd come down and see if you're alright?'⁵⁵

McEwan also raises a good point in this passage about subordination and the rising inflection. The narrator Joe Rose points out that all he heard 'was a whine of powerlessness.' Apart from the jarring quality the rising inflection gives to the text – even in this brief passage, I find myself stopping and starting – this would not have suited the character of either Kilroy or Stacey. Both characters are active in both their speech and manners and for them to have used the rising inflection in their respective speech patterns would have suggested misleadingly that they were somewhat passive.

One final aspect of CE which I did not include was glottal replacement. Robert Lewis notes that when it comes to Cardiff, 'the process of glottalling has definitely gained a foothold in the speech of many younger people'.⁵⁶ Much like the rising inflection and the diphthong, to include words such as 'wa'er' and 'lo'ery' would not, in my view, have made the text 'be'er.'

The characteristic parts of Wenglish

While the massive rise in the population of Cardiff during the mid-nineteenth century came from many parts of Britain and Ireland, thus giving the city a less 'Welsh' edge to its speech, the area where Wenglish is spoken had an in-migration from many other parts of Wales, and thus retained a much more 'Welsh' sound in its developing dialect.⁵⁷ John Edwards describes the Wenglish dialect as 'a form of speaking which retains the rhythms, refrains, cadences and inflections of Welsh, but one which shows, also, the major influence of a one-time alien language – English – which was brought to South Wales from many areas in Britain and

⁵⁵ Ian McEwan, *Enduring Love* (Vintage: London, 2006) p. 24.

⁵⁶ Robert Lewis, 2008 p. 26.

⁵⁷ Lewis (2008) mentions this in his chapter titled 'A Brief History of Wenglish' pp.13-16; also John Davies, when discussing immigration in Wales in *A History of Wales* writes that "it was possible to retain in Wales a large proportion of those who migrated from the rural areas, largely because the South Wales coalfield was able to attract and maintain them." (John Davies, *A History of Wales*, (London: Allen Lane, 1993) p. 382.)

elsewhere, when the onward march of the industrial revolution turned the region into a British “Klondyke”.⁵⁸ Owing to the density of population in this area, Wenglish is spoken by roughly a million people, about double that of CE speakers or speakers of Cymraeg (although it must be added that many of the latter would be included in the total number of Wenglish speakers from all across this Valleys region, not least on its Western fringes such as in the aforementioned Cwmaman, where 68% of the population have Welsh language skills).⁵⁹

‘Wenglish’ is not an academic term. It should be seen as a reflection of the playfulness and the ability of many people of the South Wales Valleys to make fun of themselves and their situation in an area known for its high levels of unemployment and poverty.⁶⁰ If I were to follow the academic model zealously then I would have been obliged to edge towards Trudgill and Hannah’s definition of Standard Welsh English, as explained in their seminal book, *International English* (1994). Coupland disagrees that this Standard Welsh English mode of speaking exists at all, and I am inclined to agree with him. In his essay on the subject, which uses data obtained from the speech of various politicians, he concludes by saying:

The notion of a ‘standard variety’ [of Welsh English] seems to find no natural place. Defined distributionally, there is no standard visible in the data we have considered, and there cannot be because of the complexities of class structuring and regional and ethnic affiliation in Wales. If a standard is defined evaluatively on the basis of attributed prestige, it still lacks the consensus the term ‘standard’ seems to demand.⁶¹

⁵⁸ J. Edwards, *Talk Tidy*, (Creigiau: Tidyprint Publications, 2003) p. 1.

⁵⁹ I calculated the percentage from the table at: “Welsh Language Skills, 2011 (KS207WA), Area: Ammanford (Parish)” [online] <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadTableView.do?a=5&b=11119995&c=Ammanford&d=16&e=62&g=6491975&i=1001x1003x1032x1006&k=welsh&m=0&r=1&s=1485968875832&enc=1&doMainId=62&dsFamilyId=2533> Office for National Statistics, 2013 [accessed 1 February 2017]

⁶⁰ “Monitoring Poverty & Social Exclusion in Wales 2013” [online] <https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/poverty-exclusion-wales-summary.pdf> Joseph Rowntree Foundation. [Accessed 01 February, 2017]

⁶¹ Nikolaus Coupland, “‘Standard Welsh English’: A Variable Semiotic” in Nikolaus Coupland, ed., *English in Wales* (Avon: Multilingual Matters, 1990) p. 254.

Having stated that I am more inclined to agree with Coupland, I have however deferred to Trudgill and Hannah on a few points which seem to bear parallels with the study carried out by Robert Lewis. His book, *Wenglish* (2008), is far more useful than Trudgill and Hannah's updated entry in *International English*, and *Wenglish's* exhaustive study of the phonology, morphology and lexis of Wenglish make it a more suitable base on which to base the speech of some of the characters in *Kilroy F*****n Jones*. It is for these reasons that I have used *Wenglish* for most of the following comparison with other works of fiction when placing the speech of Catrin, Griff and Dafydd into its appropriate cultural and grammatical contexts.

The works to which mine will be compared are a selection of texts written by Rachel Trezise, Ron Berry, and Niall Griffiths. Trezise's *Sixteen Shades of Crazy* (2009) is based in the Rhondda, and its three main characters, Siân, Rhiannon, and Ellie, are all native to the area.⁶² Ron Berry's *So Long, Hector Bebb* (1970, republished 2006) is set in the Cymmer Valley, Blaenafon, and *Flame & Slag* (1968) is set in the fictional village of Daren (the possible location of which is discussed later). The only novel set outside of the Wenglish core area used in this study is *Grits* (2000) by Niall Griffiths, which contains a sufficient number of characters speaking Wenglish (noting that no dialect area has strict boundaries) to allow it to be used.

It is important to note from the outset that the characters' speech in *Kilroy F*****n Jones* looks very Wenglish because we are experiencing their words from the point of view of Kilroy. This is how he 'hears' everything. As Dafydd, Catrin, and Griff would either consider themselves bilingual or Cymraeg first-language speakers, their speech pattern would undoubtedly be emphasised to someone such as Kilroy who is more used to hearing the broad /a/ of 'Caardiff,' or one of any dozen or so accents from Polish to Damascan to Mogadishan on a day-to-day basis in his inner-city area, which would not necessarily include the Wenglish of a bilingual person from the Valleys.

⁶² Most of the novel takes place in the fictional village of ABERALAW.

Robert Lewis, in his previously-mentioned text identifies three core areas of Wenglish. These are the Western, Central, and Eastern core areas. As Cymraeg is spoken by half the characters in my novel and the language has a central role in both the plot and theme of *Kilroy F*****n Jones*, it was important, for the sake of authenticity, to locate the area where Catrin, Dafydd, and Griff spent their formative years as being either the Western or the far Western part of the core area. The main characteristic of these areas is the amount of crossover the Wenglish spoken there has with Cymraeg itself. Lewis states that ‘generally speaking, the further west one travels, the greater the frequency of Welsh loan words and expressions in Wenglish’.⁶³ He goes on to say that ‘in the **Far Western** part of the Wenglish Core Area, there is a tendency for many words to be used almost interchangeably between English (i.e. Wenglish) and Welsh (i.e. Colloquial South Wales Welsh). In this way Welsh continues to supply lexical material to Wenglish in an active way, which is not really the case in the Central and Eastern Wenglish areas’.⁶⁴ This is reflected in each character’s choice of words and their sentence structure. It is worth pointing out that the characters in *Kilroy F*****n Jones* do not, for the most part, come from the same core areas as the characters in the fiction of Trezise, Berry, or Griffiths (apart from perhaps one exception, the Welsh-speaking Sioned in *Grits*, who never reveals where she is from but bears all the hallmarks of being from if not the far western core area then certainly slightly north of it). Trezise’s characters tend to come from Lewis’s central area, while Griffiths’ characters tend to come from the central area or, as previously mentioned, slightly north of the far western area. I do not consider this to be a problem when it comes to comparison, as Wenglish covers a large enough area for each character to be speaking the same dialect. It would take someone who has spent considerable time in these areas to hear any difference at all.

⁶³ Lewis, p. 19.

⁶⁴ Lewis, 2008, p. 19.

Through analysing Lewis's observations on Wenglish along with Trudgill and Hannah's contentious research findings, I formed a core pronunciation and grammatical skeleton on which to base the speech of Catrin, Dafydd, and Griff. Using Lewis's extended glossary (which he in turn built upon Edwards' earlier books) I built up an authentic vocabulary of words to pepper their speech. These have been discussed below in the same order as I did with Cardiff English: Pronunciation, Vocabulary, and Grammar.

Pronunciation

I will start with a part of Wenglish which appears in many other varieties of non-standard English (as Coupland states, and which I quoted earlier) including CE, which is the dropping of the letters 'g' and 'h'.⁶⁵ In his guide to speaking Wenglish, Lewis states that the person wishing to speak Wenglish should 'not pronounce the letter **h** except in the name of the letter, **haitch**, and in words which contain the name of the letter e.g. **Haitch TV, Haitch P Sauce**'.⁶⁶ This is a common element of various British dialects, yet it is still one that retains some power to affect the text. Rhiannon in Trezise's novel, *Sixteen Shades of Crazy*, exhibits this characteristic in her speech, stating 'Just 'cause ewe 'aven' 'ad a cock since nineteen ninety God knows!'⁶⁷ and, more notably, when she says, 'Ewer not supposed to ask a lady urgh age'.⁶⁸ I say more notably as I find it interesting that Trezise has moved the 'h' to the end of the word, giving it more than a passing resemblance to the exclamative word 'argh,' which, as 'urgh' appears to me in this passage, is onomatopoeic. A 'lady' suggests a female of dignity and class, and to utter the word 'ugh' in combination with the word 'lady' in such an undignified manner is somewhat ironic. With this twist on one single word, Trezise has managed to inject more humour into her novel than would otherwise have been included, while also retaining the authentic Valleys voice of her character.

⁶⁵ Coupland, p. 57.

⁶⁶ Lewis, 2008, p. 294. Emphasis in the original.

⁶⁷ Rachel Trezise, *Sixteen Shades of Crazy* (London: Blue Door, 2009) p. 171.

⁶⁸ Trezise, 2009, p. 157.

Griffiths also has characters dropping their ‘h’s in his novel *Grits*, but he uses the technique sparingly, with only two (Welsh) characters using it on two separate occasions – one being Roger, from Merthyr Tydfil, who asks his friend Geraint if he remembers his ‘isstry lessons’, and the other, Bill, using it a number of times in quick succession.⁶⁹ It is to Bill I would like to turn to as he, in similar fashion to Trezise’s Rhiannon, shows how the use of such a simple and well-known speech pattern can illuminate other matters. Bill, a wild, mountain-dwelling hermit, when presumptuously asked by a character called Malcolm what the experience of having nothing is like, responds (in interior monologue form) ‘I yav it fuckin all up yer, I do’ (referring to his mind).⁷⁰ Griffiths, like Trezise, is again following the pattern of ‘h’ dropping that is a pattern of Wenglish and many other Welsh (and British for that matter) dialects, yet he is also subtly pointing out a rare occurrence at the same time. Bill is a mysterious figure and, much like Sioned, we are given no indication as to where he is from, but it would be safe to assume that it would be either the far western area of the Wenglish core area or perhaps slightly north of that (remembering, again, that no dialect has strict boundaries). It would be expected of someone from this area to retain pure vowel sounds – as previously mentioned, a typical characteristic of Wenglish speakers is to pronounce the word *whole* as ‘hool’ – yet Bill diphthongises both ‘have’ and ‘here’ to become ‘yav’ and ‘yer.’

At this point it seems worth pointing out that ‘yer’ is a common enough way of pronouncing ‘here’ in Wenglish. Ron Berry’s character Hector Bebb’s sparring partner, Len Jules, makes use of it, and drops the letter ‘h’ three times in quick succession, when he taunts Bebb by saying, ‘ere’s a little fairy in yere. Come unwell ‘ave you, darlin?’⁷¹ Jules uses two different forms of the word ‘here’ in this sentence, reflecting two different uses of the word.

⁶⁹ Niall Griffiths, *Grits*, (London: Vintage, 2000) p. 383.

⁷⁰ Griffiths, 2000, p. 349. Bill might have been inspired in part by Ron Berry’s character, Hector Bebb – both live in the wild, and Griffiths talks of the influence Berry’s novel had on him during his formative years in his foreword to the 2006 *Library of Wales* edition.

⁷¹ Berry, pp. 14-5.

As 'h' dropping is used by all three authors, it would only be right for the characters in *Kilroy F*****n Jones* also to speak in this manner. When Griff is trying to lure Kilroy into a trap using ketamine, he tells him 'I ad a sneaky little one' already'. Similarly, when Kilroy tries to gain revenge, Griff tells him that he cannot get Dafydd involved as 'E'll go ape'. However, the technique of 'h' dropping is not always suitable. The first example I gave could quite easily, in the same manner as Griffiths and Berry dropped the letter 'h', have been 'I yad' instead. This is due to its location in the middle of the sentence. The second example, being at the beginning of the sentence, is more problematic. There is a subconscious tendency, as far as I am concerned, to pronounce letters at the beginning of sentences in their unadulterated form, or at least this was the *modus operandi* I kept at the forefront when writing. But as this line precedes a break to announce the speaker ('Griff says') and an earlier utterance, it seems to work in situ. 'E'll' for 'he'll' seems to work anyway. When Griff asks Kilroy to stay away from his ex-girlfriend, he does so by asking, 'How would you like it' if someone who meant everything to him was taken away? In this case 'ow' would not have been a good substitution for 'how.' It appears too ambiguous and looks to be trying too hard to make the point of 'h' dropping. As such, I decided to use my discretion and refrain from using it.

When it came to 'g' dropping, I also needed to use discretion. This is another common feature of Wenglish and is a technique used by all the authors I reviewed.⁷² While Trezise and Griffiths both use the standard '-in' form for '-ing,' using words such as 'standin'⁷³ (Trezise), and 'speakin' and 'laughin' (Griffiths), Berry uses a variation. *So Long Hector Bebb* follows the same pattern of 'g' dropping, yet every character in *Flame and Slag* use the standard -ing, regardless of how Cymraeg or Wenglish their speech may be, but the characters in *This Bygone*, while not typical users of any words ending in -in' in their speech, seem to make a special

⁷² Lewis: 'In words ending in -ing, these letters are pronounced -in except monosyllables like **thing, sing,**' p. 32.

⁷³ Trezise, p. 159.

allowance for profanities. Thus, instead of saying ‘fucking’ and ‘shitting,’ the characters of *This Bygone* instead say ‘fucken’⁷⁴ and ‘shitten’.⁷⁵ Daren, the village where the novel is set, is fictional, so it is impossible to say where exactly Berry intended to locate it. But by analysing the use of –en for –ing, it is possible to come up with an approximation. Tench notes that for the people of Abercrave, in the Swansea Valley, ‘/ŋ/ is regularly replaced in final unaccented –ing as /n/’.⁷⁶ As the Wenglish characters of *Kilroy F*****n Jones* are meant to be from at least this area, if not slightly more to the west, it felt appropriate that their speech would reflect this and that they would pronounce –ing as –en too. Dafydd, as a result, can be heard to say ‘playen’ and ‘goen,’ Catrin says ‘doen,’ and Griff says ‘tryen.’ They each follow this pattern wherever possible.

Another form of letter dropping occurs with the letter ‘t,’ which is also a feature of CE (and, as pointed out there, a feature of many other British dialects).⁷⁷ This appeared in a number of separate entries in my previous CE section, but for this Wenglish section I will amalgamate them all. The reason they are not being kept separate can be traced back to the use of three consecutive words: ‘what’s the matter.’ Where this is used in Standard English it appears as a whole sentence, but Wenglish speakers can reduce it down to one word, as Hector Bebb’s manager Sammy John does, when he asks Bebb and fellow boxer Bump Tanner, ‘Whassamatter with you two’?⁷⁸ This is an example of Lewis’s rule that ‘there is a tendency not to pronounce **t** in final position’.⁷⁹ Berry is taking this one step further through using the similarity of the vowel sounds to show how quickly it is possible to say this sentence. Lewis also goes on to say that ‘some speakers have a tendency to pronounce intervocalic **t** as a trilled

⁷⁴ Ron Berry, *This Bygone* (Llandysul: Gomer, 1996), pp. 7/9/12. etc. This is a common expletive throughout the novel.

⁷⁵ Berry, p. 15.

⁷⁶ Paul Tench, ‘The Pronunciation of English in Abercrave,’ in Nikolaus Coupland and Alun Thomas, eds., *English in Wales* (Avon: Multilingual Matters, 1990), p. 130.

⁷⁷ Coupland calls this ‘the elision of the final alveolar stop’. See: Coupland, 1988, p. 30.

⁷⁸ Berry, p. 31.

⁷⁹ Lewis, p. 34.

r. It should be noted that the two vowels between which the *t* stands need not be in the same word'.⁸⁰ (As it happens, in the same passage of dialogue that Sammy says 'Whassamatter,' he also says 'shurrup' three times). I decided to use both of these rules, which can be seen when Griff asks Catrin, 'Wassamarra.' This has the added bonus of not only sounding Wenglish but also sounding somewhat Cymraeg in its pronunciation, as recognisable yet unusual as it is.

The general pattern of 't' dropping is followed throughout Wenglish, with various characters in Griffiths' novel saying, on occasion, 'wha,'⁸¹ 'tha,'⁸² 'carn,'⁸³ and 'juss'.⁸⁴ Each of these is also used by the characters in *Kilroy F*****n Jones* too. Lewis states, however, that 't' dropping also occurs in negative verbal contractions, and this is not entirely suitable for the purposes of fictional authenticity.⁸⁵ 'T' dropping in words such as *won't* and *don't* is unproblematic in a dialect such as CE in which speakers naturally use the diphthong as a mode of word expression (as in the earlier Abse example of 'doan'), but it becomes more of an issue when trying to represent Wenglish.⁸⁶ Any workarounds look untidy and appear ambiguous enough to stop the reader in their tracks. 'Won't' could theoretically become 'worn' or 'waun' to retain the pure Wenglish vowel sound, but each of these is a separate word in itself. 'Waun' is a Welsh word, meaning 'heath,' or 'moorland,' and as a proportion of the text is in Welsh it would have appeared confusing to include a word that appears Welsh but is actually a clumsy attempt at Wenglish pronunciation. This might sound like a trivial point, but Wenglish's relationship to the diphthong is important, and one that must be correct in order for the text to appear authentic. As mentioned before, Wenglish speakers tend to express their vowels as 'pure vowels.' Lewis states that 'the vowels, whether long or short, are all simple sounds – the quality

⁸⁰ Lewis, p. 35.

⁸¹ Griffiths, p. 58.

⁸² Griffiths, p. 88.

⁸³ Griffiths, p. 215.

⁸⁴ Griffiths, p. 351.

⁸⁵ Lewis, p. 294.

⁸⁶ Abse, p.82.

of the sound does not vary during pronunciation'.⁸⁷ Berry emphasises this in his characters' speech by removing the diphthong from certain words so that they appear as 'agenst'⁸⁸ and 'ooman'⁸⁹ (and 'ent'⁹⁰ for 'ain't') in his fiction. Where the diphthong is used, it is normally accentuated to such a degree that it could be considered a larger 'Welsh' sound, and is one that sets apart (most) Welsh accents from all other accents of the English language. Lewis states of the diphthong:

diphthong of ew, iw (i + u/w) this combination does not exist precisely in SE but is close to the vowel sound in SE *you*. It is the same as the Welsh diphthong **iw**, which could also be used in transliterating the sound. It is a combination of the short **i**-sound and the rounded **u**. This sound is characteristic of Wenglish.⁹¹

While Berry's use of the 'pure vowel' sound is not to my liking entirely – it appears on the page, to me at least, to make the character talking in this way appear to be a simpleton – the use of the diphthong as Lewis describes it was a given in my representation. Thus, one of the first things Griff says to Kilroy is, 'Youer attitiwde absoliwtley disgusts me,' Catrin calls Griff an 'absoliwt prick,' Dafydd tells Kilroy not to be 'stiwpid,' and also, at one point, tells him he has to leave in order to finish his 'diwties.'

The 'iw' diphthong of Wenglish is similar in a way to that of the Wenglish pronunciation of 'you.' Griff pronounces 'you' as 'iw.' Tench points out that this is not how Abercrave speakers would say the word⁹² – indeed, Lewis states that '**you** is sometimes pronounced **ew**',⁹³ but this is a variation I feel comfortable in using. It is, after all, through

⁸⁷ Lewis, p. 35.

⁸⁸ Berry, 1996, p. 6.

⁸⁹ Berry, 1996, p. 10.

⁹⁰ Berry, 2006, p. 16.

⁹¹ Lewis, p. 38. One of the reasons it's important to include the diphthong is that Wenglish speakers tend to express their vowels as 'pure vowels.' Lewis states that 'the vowels, whether long or short, are all simple sounds – the quality of the sound does not vary during pronunciation.' (p.35.)

⁹² 'the form /ju:/ is used where y appears initially before an /u:/ vowel, as in *you*, *youth*, as in RP': Tench, 1990, p. 134.

⁹³ Lewis, p. 286.

Kilroy that the reader is experiencing the use of this word and the reader will undoubtedly be aware of this fact. In addition, there appear to be a number of variables. Trezise prefers to use the spelling ‘ewe,’⁹⁴ which gives a more rounded pronunciation, or a softening of the diphthong at least, while Griffiths prefers ‘yew’.⁹⁵ Yet another distinctive feature of Wenglish in relation to ‘you’, according to Lewis, is that ‘**possessive adjectives** get an extra syllable. **Your** is pronounced **youer**, **ewer** or **yor**, **our** is pronounced **ouer** and **there** is pronounced **theyer**. These spellings may also be used’.⁹⁶ Indeed, Wenglish speakers also tend to put extra syllables in wherever they can – ‘food’ can become ‘fooad’ and poor becomes ‘pooer.’ Trudgill and Hannah point out that ‘The vowels /ɪc/, /ʊc/ do not occur in many varieties of WEng. *Fear* is /fi:ɟc/, *poor* is /pu:wɟc/. Similarly, *fire* is /faiɟc/’.⁹⁷ Trezise prefers ‘Ewer’ while Griffiths prefers ‘yer’⁹⁸ (but he does use ‘owers’⁹⁹). ‘Youer’ and ‘theyer’ seemed more suitable for *Kilroy F*****n Jones*. *Grits* is a novel from multiple perspectives and Griffiths has used this to his advantage in the different spellings and representations he has used but, much like Trezise in *Sixteen Shades of Crazy*, I decided that uniformity in the vernacular would make deciphering what is potentially a new dialect for the reader an easier task. ‘Ouer’ and ‘Ower’ are more problematic. While ‘Ouer’ would be in keeping with ‘youer’ and ‘theyer,’ it could also be interpreted as ‘oouer,’ which has something of the saucy seaside postcard about it. ‘Ower’ stands out as it is not uniform with the other possessive adjectives, so a compromise was reached by leaving ‘our’ alone.

⁹⁴ Trezise, pp. 157/159/171.

⁹⁵ I am particularly fond of the exchange (using ‘yew’ twice in short succession) that occurs when Roger wakes up after a heavy session, to find himself in the back of a car, with his friends, Geraint and Griff, driving to dispose of his body:

“– Jesus, Pricey, yew fuckin twat!

– We thought yew wir fuckin dead, mun!” (Griffiths, p. 89.)

⁹⁶ Lewis, p. 283.

⁹⁷ Peter Trudgill and Jean Hannah, *International English* (4th ed.), (London: Arnold. 2002) p. 32.

⁹⁸ Griffiths, p. 383.

⁹⁹ Griffiths, p. 89.

Vocabulary

Wenglish is a dialect rich in distinctive words, many of which are not found anywhere else in Wales (or, for that matter, the British Isles). Consider how Hector Bebb's manager, Sammy John, brings his pillow talk alive through the use of Wenglish while talking to his wife Sue: 'Listen, Ginger, we're all right as we are. Lovely Jinj, *cwtch-cwtch-cwtch*, my lovely Jinj'.¹⁰⁰ Without wanting to explain the magic of the sentence away – I'm sure it speaks for itself – the repetition of the word *cwtch* gives an almost onomatopoeic sense to this sentence, as a *cwtch* is so much more than a cuddle or a hug, and denotes a form of coming home and stillness that cannot quite be replicated in the English language.

Such is the power of Wenglish. Yet I refrained from using much in the way of a Wenglish vocabulary when it came to the characters. Dialogue works best in fiction (for me at least) if it is functional above all else, and there were other, less artificial ways of portraying character and place through dialogue than artificially squeezing in a handful of Wenglish words into the text. There was a danger that the characters who speak through the medium of Wenglish would end up more aligned with the stage Welsh in novels such as Richard Llewellyn's *How Green Was My Valley* than they would with realism. Therefore, while Kilroy Jones has his own idiolect, the Wenglish characters in the novel each have a much reduced idiolect. This is not to say an attempt was made to lessen their portrayal or development, but rather that Wenglish in itself is so lively a dialect from grammatical and lexical points of view that I found no need to further differentiate it to show its uniqueness.

An exception was made for one habitual speech norm. One of the most common forms of address in *Kilroy F*****n Jones* are informal ones used between males. The most famous Wenglish one is undoubtedly 'butt' or 'butty'.¹⁰¹ The term 'butty' is found in all of Berry's

¹⁰⁰ Berry, 2006, p. 40.

¹⁰¹ Williams uses these terms for the distinctive speech habits of some of his characters in his *Cardiff Trilogy*: from the perspective of a native Cardiffian, I found that the use of this term, so out of place in characters from Cardiff, drew enough unnecessary attention to the text to warrant me not doing the same.

novels (including the variant ‘regular butty’¹⁰² in *This Bygone*).¹⁰³ I decided not to allow Dafydd and Griff to use this word, as it is more often associated with the central and eastern core areas of Wenglish, and not the western part, where the influence of Cymraeg would undoubtedly play a part in the prevalent way in which one informally obtains the attention of a companion. A variant of ‘butty’ used mainly in the western core area is ‘boy:’ in *Flame and Slag*, the narrator’s grandparents, Glyndwr and Margaret Stevens, both speakers of Cymraeg, use this term throughout their parts in the novel, only calling the narrator ‘Rees’ or ‘Reesy’ on occasion. This might seem at first glance to be the pet name the narrator’s elderly grandparents have given him, but ‘boi’ is a common form of address in many parts of west Wales. Indeed, the narrator’s future father-in-law, on their first meeting, says of his similarity in looks to his father: “‘Dai Stevens will never die while you’re alive, boy!’”¹⁰⁴ and Roger, from Griffiths’ *Grits*, says ‘A fuckin *real* Wales fyer boy’,¹⁰⁵ and ‘Fuckin survivor me, boy.’¹⁰⁶

Again, ‘boy’ and ‘boi’ did not feel like useful terms of address for Dafydd and Griff. It can be interpreted as an emasculating (or even infantilizing) term, especially for someone not accustomed to it, and I could not imagine the central character standing for being called this. The use of this term would have either warranted a change in the narrative, or, more than likely, a change in characterisation. Neither would have been desirable: a change in the narrative could only have occurred with, say, Griff calling Kilroy ‘boy’ in the first chapter, where he would quickly learn his lesson; but as this chapter is 4500 words long anyway, to make it longer when every other one is around 2400 seemed unnecessary: and a change in characterisation would undoubtedly lead to a change in the narrative along the line also.

¹⁰² Berry, 1996, p. 7.

¹⁰³ Berry, 1996, p. 5; Berry, 2006, p. 14; Berry, 1968, p. 158.

¹⁰⁴ Ron Berry, *Flame & Slag* (London: W. H. Allen, 1968) p. 13.

¹⁰⁵ Griffiths, p. 57.

¹⁰⁶ Griffiths, p.57. Also, Sioned uses this term on more than one occasion, e.g. p. 395 & p. 397.

Having rejected ‘butty’ and ‘boi’, then, an alternative term of address had to be found. Finally, I settled on ‘brawd’ instead: the Welsh form of the word ‘brother.’ This is a common term used throughout the western core area of Wenglish and indeed in many other towns in west Wales, such as Llanelli. Its main use is similar to the CE version of ‘spar;’ however, it can also be used in an ironic sense, or to denote parity – when Griff calls Kilroy by this term when they first meet he is essentially referring to him as his equal and contemporary. The multiple meanings of the word are also reflected further on when Dafydd tells Kilroy that Griff ‘Ain’t my proper brawd.’ This felt more in keeping with the language of the novel, while also being recognisable enough to be understood at once.

Grammar

Along with unusual words and terms of address, Wenglish is influenced by the Welsh language. This is not altogether surprising considering the location of its core areas. To return to Edwards’ previously-quoted definition:

It is a form of speaking which retains the rhythms, refrains, cadences and inflections of Welsh, but one which shows, also, the major influence of a one-time alien language – English – which was brought to South Wales from many areas in Britain and elsewhere.¹⁰⁷

As already discussed, one feature of the syntactic influence of Welsh on CE is what Coupland calls ‘predicate fronting,’ or the inversion of the expected verb-predicate order in a sentence.¹⁰⁸ Trudgill and Hannah refer to this as ‘the use of predicate object inversion for emphasis’.¹⁰⁹ No mention is made in their analysis of the influence of the Welsh language and I feel inclined to disagree with them. The use of predicate fronting/object inversion does not just appear when emphasis is needed, but also under many other contexts – enough to consider it a part of normal

¹⁰⁷ John Edwards, *Talk Tidy* (Creigiau: Tidyprint Publications, 2003) p. 1.

¹⁰⁸ Coupland, 1988, p. 37.

¹⁰⁹ Trudgill and Hannah, p. 33.

day-to-day speech. In discussing word order in Wenglish, Lewis states that ‘such differences can usually be traced back to the natural word order of the Welsh language’.¹¹⁰ On a related note, as a caveat he notes that ‘there is greater flexibility in word order in Wenglish than in Standard English’.¹¹¹ As this is such a common grammatical practice amongst Wenglish speakers, it was not hard to find examples of it. Every author has used it in the books selected as examples. Dewi in *This Bygone* says ‘Queer, teachers are, not like other men’.¹¹² Rhiannon in *Sixteen Shades of Crazy* says, ‘Twenty-bloody-nine, I am’.¹¹³ And an ‘ole feller’ the crew in *Grits* meet outside a pub says (using predicate fronting/object inversion three times in as many lines) ‘Am bloody tellin yew! It was *there*, a say! Saw it with me own bare eyes I did, a bloody spaceship it was, in the sky, big as a bloody church, boy! Lights goin on an off, makin bloody beepin noises it was! There! Clear as day!’¹¹⁴

Two of the three Wenglish characters in my novel also use this speech habit. Daf, for example, tells Kilroy on his flirting with Catrin: ‘Playen a dangerous game there, you are.’ Griff, trying to explain to Dafydd that an incident at the bar is Kilroy's fault and not his own, says, ‘Crazy, he is.’ Multiple other examples can be found throughout the text. Catrin does not follow this speech pattern. Predicate fronting is a passive form of speech in that it is not as direct in its communication. This would not have suited the character of Catrin, who is a direct person throughout.

Features of Wenglish which were impractical to represent

Much like with Cardiff English, the many grammatical peculiarities of Wenglish should be seen, by the creative writer, more as possibilities rather than steadfast rules and their mere existence does not necessarily mean that they should all be used. They may not be suitable for

¹¹⁰ Lewis, p. 294.

¹¹¹ Lewis, p. 294.

¹¹² Berry, 1996, p. 11.

¹¹³ Trezise, p. 157.

¹¹⁴ Griffiths, p. 96.

this story for multiple reasons – whether these reasons be due to location (with certain words/phrases being used more in the central core/eastern areas), education (this is not a definite rule but the more educated are less likely, for instance, to follow Lewis's rule of 'multiple negatives'¹¹⁵), class, or otherwise. Bella, the wife of Hector Bebb's trainer Abe, uses a grammatical rule that features both in Lewis's book on Wenglish and Trudgill and Hannah's entry under Welsh English, which I found impractical to represent due to the way this rule 'reads' on the page. This rule is what Trudgill and Hannah call 'the use of adjective and adverb reduplication for emphasis'.¹¹⁶ Lewis says the same thing: 'An adjective may be intensified by repetition, as in Welsh'.¹¹⁷ Bella gives a great double example of this when she talks of her husband's constitution and stubbornness: 'You coax, coax – you stop coaxing I've tried. He won't tend to his health and strength. Won't wont! Deep down he's hard as judgement day'.¹¹⁸ On both occasions, the repetition of the word ('coax' and 'won't') does indeed emphasise its initial meaning. Bella goes on to use the technique again, saying that 'Abe's eyes went tiny-tiny, as they do',¹¹⁹ and 'born for grunt-grunting, these porky men'.¹²⁰ But in *Flame and Slag*, the narrator turns to his wife in an argument and says, "'Be glad about it," I said, insisting. "Ellen, I'm glad, glad all over! See"'!¹²¹ While the first two examples from Bella in *So Long, Hector Bebb* perform their roles to show the stress she is under, this repetition of the word 'glad' by the narrator in *Flame and Slag* can be read in more than one way. This is because of the comma between the two instances of 'glad.' This comma either denotes the emphasis of the word 'glad' or it is used in the same way a full stop could be in this part of the sentence, in order to link an appositive, as "glad all over" may also be read in that way. In other words, this

¹¹⁵ Lewis, p. 277.

¹¹⁶ Trudgill and Hannah, p. 33.

¹¹⁷ Lewis, p. 282.

¹¹⁸ Berry, 2006, p. 42.

¹¹⁹ Berry, 2006, p. 43.

¹²⁰ Berry, 2006, p. 65.

¹²¹ Berry, 1968, p. 14.

sentence can be read as “I’m glad glad all over!” or as “I’m Glad. Glad all over!” depending on the reader. Due to this ambiguity in meaning I decided against using adjective/adverb repetition as a literary device.

Another form of speech impractical for use in fiction, despite its common use in Wenglish, is what Lewis calls ‘**The second form of the present tense, with *to do***: ‘we do run’ instead of simply, ‘we run’.¹²² This is a feature of Wenglish which could possibly come from Cymraeg – back when Wenglish was forming, a Cymraeg English-learner, educated in Welsh at a Non-Conformist Sunday school and learning Saesneg for the first time after moving to the Valleys (or a Valleys resident learning to speak the Saesneg they now heard all around them) could possibly have translated the sentence ‘*rydw i’n gwneud*,’ as an example of the point I am laboriously trying to make, as ‘I do do.’

If you were to walk down Treorchy or Aberdare High Street, it would not take long to hear multiple examples of the additional ‘do’ in the speech of the people. It is an important aspect of Wenglish. If Catrin, Dafydd and Griff were to remain authentic to their western core area roots, this was a form of speech that I was unable to give them, as Lewis points out,

This is a characteristic feature of Wenglish as spoken in the central and eastern parts of the core area but it is much less common in the Western area, where the simple forms are in general use.¹²³

While the addition of ‘do’ would certainly be in keeping with the typical usage of Wenglish, it would not be when it comes to the western, or far western core area of the dialect. As such, for the sake of accuracy and credibility, it was never used.

This chapter has demonstrated how place, language, and dialect are used by a range of contemporary Welsh writers, including myself, to capture the specificity of Welsh life. It has

¹²² Lewis, p. 232.

¹²³ Lewis, p. 232.

shown how the rich variations of language found in Wales offer great scope to would-be writers of 'the Welsh novel' and, at the same time, present them (us) with difficult creative choices at every turn.

Conclusion

In *Kilroy F*****n Jones* I aimed to represent the road where the two linguistic cultures of Wales cross. The aim of the critical commentary was to articulate the thought processes and decisions brought about by the research I completed into aspects of literature, language and identity that pertain specifically to Wales or the story I wished to tell. I also used the commentary to place my own novel in the context of a range of other works of contemporary fiction, and to compare my own choices and strategies with those of other writers, both Welsh and English.

In the chapter on Kilroy's identity I showed how a character such as Kilroy Jones thinks of himself as Welsh through his civic identity. I explored how other people of mixed race, or of a background similar to Kilroy's (including other characters) view their own identity, whether it be hybrid, such as Charlotte in Charlotte Williams's *Sugar and Slate*, or a specific part of Cardiff (such as Charlotte's friend, Suzanne) or used in order to exploit commercial interests, such as Sarah Vaughan in Leonora Brito's *Dat's Love*. Then, I showed how despite his occasional animosity towards the Welsh language, Kilroy Jones, much like the title character of Meic Stephens's *Yeah, Dai Dando*, considers himself to be as Welsh as anyone else.

The chapter on masculinity showed how Kilroy Jones's awareness of his own masculine performativity is essential to his outlook and thus the narrative as a whole. Concentrating on his physicality, his use of violence and his pride in his personal appearance, I explored how these factors influenced the story in both my own novel, and how they have influenced the characters in other novels. I explored the 'peacocking' behaviour of my novel's protagonist and compared it with similar behaviour(s) found in a selection of other contemporary fiction. Drawing on recent work by Grayson Perry theorizing masculinity, I also explored how societal pressure makes men 'bottle in' their feelings, often with devastating

consequences, and I sought to show how Kilroy Jones's first-person perspective allows him to purge these negative emotions to a certain extent. In keeping with the discussion of the first-person perspective, I showed how the reader is right to question Kilroy's attitude in regards to his attitude towards others, even if he is incapable of doing so himself.

In the chapter on class I traced how a mode of influential neoliberal thinking, used to blame some of the most disadvantaged members of society for the situations in which they find themselves, has been portrayed and challenged in fiction. By comparing and contrasting my novel with works by Niall Griffiths and Martin Amis, I sought to bring out how, owing to the character demographics of *Kilroy F*****n Jones*, and its sympathetic portrayal of such people, my novel sides with those that wish to challenge this mode of thinking, instead of passively endorsing it. Referring to Owen Jones's contestatory *Chavs*, I suggested that the notion of the 'underclass' as adumbrated in neoliberal thought is actually a strategy to demonise the working classes.

In the chapter on the contemporary Welsh novel I analysed the methods by which writers establish the 'Welshness' of their fiction, identifying a number of features common to many Welsh novels. I demonstrated that *Kilroy F*****n Jones* shares these common features and might therefore legitimately be considered a Welsh novel. I discussed how place is often at the forefront of Welsh novels, as it is in my own, where Cardiff is central. I showed that problems occasionally arise in the act of translation, and how two very different novels handled those problems. I learned from reading these novels how to avoid problems of this sort myself, while also sharing these contemporary writers' commitment to showing the bilingual nature of contemporary Welsh society. The section on non-Englishness revealed that allusion to the eastern side of the Severn Bridge is often a defining feature of contemporary Welsh novels; in my own creative practice I sought to move away from this by shifting the centre of gravity away from England and putting it in Cardiff instead.

The chapter on language offered a quite detailed linguistic analysis of the two main dialects associated with south Wales, noting their portrayal in novels including my own and works by Dannie Abse, Ron Berry, Niall Griffiths and Rachel Trezise. In analysing *Kilroy F*****n Jones* I showed how some of the characters, such as Kilroy and Stacey, conform to the Cardiff English dialect of south-east Wales, while others conform to the Wenglish dialect of the western core area. Drawing on linguistic analyses, I explained how I set about representing the pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar of these dialects in the novel. I used examples from other Welsh novels to better explain my own approach and to put my novel in its correct geographical and cultural context. Reflecting on my own attempts to achieve linguistic authenticity, and on analogous attempts by other writers, I concluded that there are limitations to the use of dialect in fiction and I sought to show how complete authenticity is impractical and must at times give way to aesthetic judgements.

This commentary has selected particular aspects of my own work and the work of other contemporary writers of fiction to analyse and compare. It has not attempted to be exhaustive but to be genuinely self-reflexive, drawing out certain preoccupations, strategies, and characteristics that seem to me to be shared among a range of creative texts that, on the face of it, may appear very different. I have drawn on certain ideas drawn from postcolonial, gender, and linguistic theory to help frame my discussion, and to suggest ways in which my creative work and my own personal engagement in it, may be understood to have relevance in a wider context, both within Wales and beyond.

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