

**MANUFACTURING MASCULINITIES;
MANUFACTURING HISTORY:
MASCULINITY, GENRE AND SOCIAL CONTEXT IN SIX
ANGLOPHONE NOVELS OF THE SOUTH WALES VALLEYS**

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Abstract

This thesis examines representations of Welsh masculinity in six South Wales anglophone novels: Gwyn Jones's *Times Like These* (1936), Lewis Jones's *Cwmardy* (1937), Menna Gallie's *Strike for a Kingdom* (1959), Ron Berry's *So Long, Hector Bebb* (1970), Roger Granelli's *Dark Edge* (1997), and Kit Habianic's *Until Our Blood is Dry* (2014). Understanding masculinity as a cultural construct, the following chapters analyse the interconnection between the patriarchal, industrialised social context from which such masculinities emerge, as well as the generic forms through which they are fictionally inscribed in these novels.

This thesis applies a broad range of literary and gender theories to close readings of Welsh industrial fiction. Specifically, it draws extensively on R. W. Connell's formulation of hegemonic masculinity, supplemented by the prominent work of Judith Butler, Michael Kimmel and others. Pierre Macherey and Raymond Williams inform much of the understanding of the interrelationship of culture and society. And the work of Stephen Knight, Katie Gramich and Dai Smith, among many others, has been vital to this study's understanding of the broad field of Welsh fiction in English.

Chapter One adapts Raymond Williams's tripartite schema of 'dominant', 'residual' and 'emergent' energies in social process to read masculinities in *Times Like These* as studies inflected through a historicised perspective. Focusing on the construction of the individual rather the politicising of the community in *Cwmardy*, Chapter Two examines how the coercive paradigms of patriarchal masculinity in the novel fragment both the debilitatingly sensitive Len Roberts and his physically robust, though emotionally suppressed father, Jim. Chapter Three examines how Menna Gallie's whodunnit *Strike for a Kingdom* manipulates a traditionally patriarchal sub-genre to feminise and infantilise Welsh miners, thereby challenging both the gendering and genre of earlier male-authored industrial novels. Chapter Four diverges from considering masculinity as a cultural construct to argue that in Ron Berry's paean to 'authentic' masculinity, *So Long, Hector Bebb*, Hector is an intertextualised amalgam of heroic, mythical characteristics whose lineage extends back to antiquity. The final chapter analyses how, in *Dark Edge* and *Until Our Blood is Dry*, the 1984-85 miners' strike subjects Welsh masculinities to fundamental challenges of self identity when confronted by a radical government and a politically engaged feminism.

Although the critical field devoted to studying masculine representations in the Valleys is expanding, it remains relatively small. With the passing of the mining industry and its associated signifiers like boxing, a whole tranche of Welsh literary history is threatened with elision from public consciousness, or incorporation into a mythical retrospective of stabilised masculinity predicated on unassailable patriarchal hegemony. As becomes apparent in the following chapters, a gendered reading of the texts exposes 'masculinity' as an elusive concept, as capable of incarcerating men in a patriarchal code of practice as of liberating them.

The literary is all around us, and it is always doing its work upon us.

Frank Lentricchia, *Criticism and Social Change*

(Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1983)

For all the destruction of communities by market forces, the country which has embodied the ideals of brotherhood and in which sisterhood has become a living force in recent years, offers ways of apprehending common experience that we do not find in Middle England.

Jeremy Hooker: *Imagining Wales: A View of Modern Welsh Writing*

in English (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001)

One of the ways of re-introducing the nation to its own history is through providing it with conscientiously historical but compelling narrative fictions.

M. Wynn Thomas, Afterword to *A Toy Epic* (Emyr Humphreys)

(Bridgend: Seren Books, 1989)

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Introduction

In 1984, the year the miners' strike began, Beatrix Campbell wrote:

The socialist movement in Britain has been swept off its feet by the magic of masculinity, muscle and machinery. And in its star system, the accolades go to the miners — they've been through hell, fire, earth and water to become hardened into heroes. It is masculinity at its most macho that seems to fascinate men.

Miners are men's love object.¹

Campbell argued powerfully for the damaging effects such a 'cult of masculinity' centred on the 'glamour of miners' had upon women in mining communities. Two years later, Deirdre Beddoe claimed that Welsh women had been rendered 'culturally invisible' by the male image of Wales — 'a land of coalminers, rugby players and male voice choirs' — that was not only masculinist and homosocial, but invariably 'macho'.² Much work in both literary studies and social history has been undertaken in order to make visible the various 'inconspicuous' identities of the marginalised female presence. This thesis argues that such a cult of hegemonic masculinity, as identified by Campbell, Beddoe and many others, could be equally problematic for many of the men of these communities.

The term hegemonic masculinity, which recurs throughout this thesis, was generated by R. W. Connell to explain 'a configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of patriarchy which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women'.³ Arguing against masculinity as an element in the

¹ Beatrix Campbell, *Wigan Pier Revisited: Poverty and Politics in the 80s* (London: Virago, 1984), pp. 97. Campbell later includes 'footballers, boxers, soldiers and miners' as exemplars of the 'cult of masculinity', p. 97.

² Deirdre Beddoe, 'Images of Welsh Women', in *Wales - The Imagined Nation: Essays in Cultural & National Identity*, ed. Tony Curtis (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1986), pp. 227-238 (p. 227).

³ R. W. Connell *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), p. 77. In a broader, though related, context, Raymond Williams believes hegemony, 'constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of society to move': Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, repr. 2009), p. 110.

essentialised self, Connell emphasises that masculinity does not precede human action but is constituted in it.

As the following studies of anglophone Welsh novels indicate, Beddoe's hegemonic vision of 'corporate ranks' of Welsh men,⁴ stabilised in their identity, unified in their patriarchy, and collectively coded by their male-voice choir blazers and rugby-club kit breaks ranks when subjected to individualised, gender-specific examination. Hegemonic masculinity, in which men are traditionally cast as stabilised, rational, decisive, autonomous and macho, enacts a divisive construct that promulgates an array of desirable but rarely attainable masculine signifiers. As a consequence, as John Tosh argues: 'the core practices of hegemonic masculinity discriminate against men as well as women'.⁵

The six anglophone novels comprising this thesis give primacy to Valleys' masculinities as a cultural construction constituted in human action within a prescribed geographical area.⁶ They connect the social context out of which these masculinities emerged and the hybridised generic forms through which they are fictionally articulated. The novels are: Gwyn Jones's *Times Like These* (1936), Lewis Jones's *Cwmardy* (1937), Menna Gallie's *Strike for a Kingdom* (1959), Ron Berry's *So Long, Hector Bebb* (1970), Roger Granelli's *Dark Edge* (1997), and Kit Habianic's *Until Our Blood is Dry* (2014).

⁴ Deidre Beddoe, 'Images of Welsh Women', p. 227.

⁵ John Tosh, 'Hegemonic Masculinity and the History of Gender', in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, ed. Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 41-62 (p. 47).

⁶ This thesis regards the Valleys as the loci from which the novels' actions spring and through which masculinities are defined. The hills both oppose and complement what occurs in the valleys, but the novels are about the people of the Valleys, not the people of the hills. Valleys is capitalised throughout the thesis where it refers to the valleys of industrialised South Wales.

Ben Knights argues that fiction can contest the implicit assumption that the coordinates of male identity are both regularised and universal.⁷ The expressive qualities of the literary text, he notes, with its focus on the complex interaction between individualised subjects and their phenomenological context, offer an arena where normative masculinity can be inspected, challenged and deconstructed from a variety of theoretical standpoints. And, as becomes evident, the texts examined in this thesis destabilise monolithic edifices of patriarchal inscription while acknowledging their enormous signifying power.

Until recently men, as men, had remained the unmarked norm: a man was what a woman was not. 'We would not dream of looking up the word "Man" in the index of a history book,' wrote Angela V. John in 1984, 'yet it is still considered "promising" if books have long index entries under "Woman"'.⁸ Powerful arguments by post-structuralist feminists have helped erode this duplex approach to gender. And the conviction that masculinity is neither innate nor monolithic, but socially constructed and pluralistic has generated male-authored inspections of masculinity as, what Michael Kimmel has called, 'a problematic gender construct'.⁹ But whereas Welsh female scholars have responded to these theoretical developments by inspecting, through literature, what it is to be a Welsh woman rather than a Welshwoman, there has been little

⁷ Ben Knights, *Writing Masculinities* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 112. See also Raymond Williams: 'The relatively mixed, confused, incomplete or inarticulate consciousness of actual men in that period and society is thus overridden in the name of this generalised system', Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 109.

⁸ Angela V. John, 'A Miner Struggle? Women's Protests in Welsh Mining History', in *Llafur*, IV. 1 (1984), 72-90 (p. 87).

⁹ Michael Kimmel, *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity*, (London: SAGE, 1987), p. 10.

corresponding gender-specific investigation of Welsh men rather than Welshmen.¹⁰

M. Wynn Thomas has described the Valleys, a densely populated area of Wales, as 'a unique society', producing a literature connecting 'the writers' common experience [...] of belonging to a place apart', neither recognisably English nor traditionally Welsh.¹¹ Nigel Edley and Margaret Wetherell contend that gender definition can be influenced by local as well as national cultural perceptions. 'Certain practices and activities', they write:

become dominant and habitual in certain areas of society as a result of prevailing material pressures. As a consequence, different types of men and women emerge, and different types of masculinity and femininity. There is the possibility of considerable variation depending on people's local circumstances and the way these interact with national and global movements.¹²

Topographically separated from each other, culturally discontinuous from the rest of Wales but united by a single and dangerous industry, socially hybridised but strongly communal, rich in coal but economically exploited, the Valleys constitute a fascinating site, a crucible for examining through its literature the effect a socio-economic model — patriarchal industrial capitalism — predicated on the concept of the fixed identity of the hegemonic male has had upon South Wales masculinity as a culturally defined construct.¹³

¹⁰ Paul O'Leary writes that much the same is true of gendering Welsh history: 'To the extent that gender has been used as a category of analysis in the history of Wales hitherto, it has tended to be deployed as a means of understanding women's experiences alone': 'Masculine Histories: Gender and the Social History of Modern Wales', *The Welsh History Review*, 22. 2 (December 2004), 252-277 (p. 261).

¹¹ M. Wynn Thomas, *Internal Difference: Twentieth-Century Writing in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), p. 26.

¹² Nigel Edley and Margaret Wetherell, *Men in Perspective: practice, power and identity* (Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1995), p. 128.

¹³ This thesis broadly follows John Tosh's definition of patriarchy as 'descriptively to indicate those areas where men's power over women and children constitutes a significant form of stratification'. John Tosh, *Maleness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Harlow: Pearson, 2005), p. 53.

Its hybridised novels, the products of massive social and cultural upheaval, reflect a hybrid society discontinuous with *gwerin* culture.¹⁴ Arising out of this discontinuity, this thesis investigates how these masculinities are shaped through social interactions that require constant, unsettling negotiation and re-negotiation of identity. The six novels of this study were chosen because they cover a period of eighty years in a relatively confined topographical space and reflect the history of masculine representation throughout the twentieth-century Valleys industrial experience, from the first two decades in *Cwmardy*, to the cataclysmic 1984-85 miners' strike represented in *Dark Edge* and *Until Our Blood is Dry*.¹⁵

Roger Horrocks argues that 'each culture produces the masculinities it needs',¹⁶ and analysis of these novels illustrates how a model of masculinity was imposed on the industrialised Valleys, in which the ideals of machismo were nurtured, disseminated and mythologised as the ideal. As Steffan Courtney-Morgan observes, in its social construction of such masculinity, 'the experience of emotionality and passivity, nurturing and intimacy was made problematic because of their association with essentially feminine characteristics'.¹⁷

¹⁴ In the first decade of the twentieth century, immigration into South Wales was pro rata second only to that of the United States. See Daniel G. Williams, *Black Skin, Blue Books: African Americans and Wales 1845-1945* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), p.192. Kenneth O. Morgan estimates that between 1921 and 1931 about 430,000 people moved out of Wales, most of them permanently: *Rebirth of a Nation* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002), p. 231. Tony Bianchi writes that 'Between 1976 and 1986 over one million people — 36% of the population - moved in or out of Wales': 'Aztecs in Troedrihwgair: recent fictions in Wales', in *Peripheral Visions*, ed. Ian A. Bell (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), pp. 44-76 (p. 45).

¹⁵ The 1984/85 Miners' Strike has been the subject of two historical examinations from a gendered perspective: Steffan Courtney-Morgan, *Men on Strike: Masculinity and the Miners' Strike of 1984-85 in South Wales* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Swansea, 2007); Rebecca Davies, *'Not Just Supporting But Leading': The Involvement of the Women of the South Wales Coalfield in the 1984-85 Miners' Strike* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glamorgan, 2010).

¹⁶ Roger Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis: Myths, Fantasies and Realities* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994), p. 91.

¹⁷ Steffan Courtney-Morgan, *Men on Strike: Masculinity and the Miners' Strike of 1984-85 in South Wales*, p. 71.

Illustrated principally through bodily practice requiring strength, courage, skill and endurance at work, mining masculinity was enacted, as Beatrix Campbell notes, through a range of associated signifiers such as contact sport, especially boxing and rugby, homosocial bonding and dominance of public space.¹⁸ The myth of the miner stood in paradigmatic opposition to all that was regarded as essentially feminine.

* * * * *

Close reading of the novels in this thesis is informed by the work of a range of gender, literary and cultural theorists. Together, they provide the methodology on which the proposition of this study rests: that the gendered narrative of twentieth-century Valleys fiction is the narrative of a repressive macho exemplar of masculine self-identity. The theories of R. W. Connell, especially, underpin the examination of masculinity in the following chapters, though they are supported by other gender theorists like the feminist Judith Butler, and analysts of theories like Michael Kimmel, Lynne Segal, Victor J. Seidler, Anthony Easthope and Stephen Whitehead.

In *Gender & Power* (1987), Connell explained the source of the term 'hegemonic masculinity' as a signifier of the codes of practice that characterise normative masculinity. The term was adapted from the work on hegemony of Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), the Italian Marxist who theorised that it was through the inculcation of ideology as a totalised rationale in social practice that the bourgeoisie in Italy achieved and maintained power. Applying Gramsci's paradigm of cultural hegemony to a study of masculinity, Connell examines how hegemonic masculinity itself is 'a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organisation of private life and cultural processes'.¹⁹ Connell identifies alterity as fundamental in

¹⁸ See also Michael Ward, *The Performance of Young Working-Class Masculinities in the South Wales Valleys*, (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cardiff, 2013), pp. 27-30.

¹⁹ R. W. Connell, *Gender & Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987, repr.1996), p. 184.

securing a social ascendancy, and argues that 'achieving [masculine] hegemony may consist precisely in preventing alternatives gaining cultural definition and recognition'.²⁰ *Gender & Power* was followed by Connell's groundbreaking *Masculinities* (1993), which further defines the term 'hegemonic masculinity' as 'the accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women'.²¹ Hegemonic masculinity is, Connell states, 'the one form of masculinity rather than others [that] is culturally exalted'.²² Connell's term, with its seemingly infinite flexibility of definition, has entered the mainstream of gender debate on masculinity, not least, as a point of departure for a study of those men, the majority, who either reject or aspire, whether successfully or not, to achieve hegemonic status.

Judith Butler's feminist *Gender Trouble* (1990), in which she theorises that there is no pre-discursive gendered self and therefore no 'abiding substance',²³ to gender has also influenced this study's approach to masculinity. Her argument that gender, and therefore identity, are constructed through a series of repeated performances suggests that the gendered body 'has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality'.²⁴ Consequently, the viability of 'man' and 'woman' as nouns is questionable. Butler therefore advises caution against a wholesale 'colonising epistemological strategy that would subordinate different configurations of domination under the rubric of a transcultural notion of patriarchy'.²⁵ However, for the purposes of this study, the

²⁰ R. W. Connell, *Gender & Power*, p. 186.

²¹ R. W. Connell *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005) p. 77.

²² Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 77.

²³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* [1990] (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p. 33.

²⁴ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 185.

²⁵ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 48.

term 'patriarchy' is used descriptively of a social organisation in which men and women are assigned different social roles with different gendered expectations of performance.

'Patriarchy' and 'hegemonic masculinity' have become both specific nominators and inseparable Siamese twins in gender studies. Stephen Whitehead makes a useful distinction between them when he proposes that: 'hegemonic masculinity differs from patriarchy in that there is less of an essentialist assumption about the outcome'.²⁶ However, while patriarchy is a structural mode of social organisation and hegemonic masculinity 'embodies a "currently accepted" strategy',²⁷ which may modulate and modify over time, they are imbricated dimensions of the same gendered model, where the intention is to define the terms of social organisation through gender, and therefore establish power over others.

The critical method of this thesis exposes the assumptions of the essentialised, autonomous self implicit in this paradigm as epistemologically generated rather than ontologically grounded. As discussion of the novels demonstrates, the instability, both individually and socially, generated by patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity is externalised by social upheaval in the form of strikes, and internalised in the insecure identity it creates in male characters. They are required to negotiate, resist, or strive to reconcile the irreconcilable demands of a hierarchical power system, where they are patriarchally designated wage slaves at work, and patriarchally sanctioned principals at home. Ideologically subservient in one context, ideologically dominant in another, they become fissiparous sites subject to damaging tensile forces, leading to what Stephen Whitehead sees as 'the pathological and

²⁶ Stephen Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), p. 90.

²⁷ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 77

emotionally damaging consequence of striving to live out [an] unattainable masculine behaviour'.²⁸

There have been several other influences on this thesis which have enabled me to develop a sustained analysis of Valleys literary masculinities. Two in particular stand out: Raymond Williams and Pierre Macherey. While the contribution of Raymond Williams's *The Welsh Industrial Novel* (1979) cannot be over-estimated in the study of anglophone Welsh literature, it is the significance of his 'Culture is Ordinary' (1958) that runs like a subterranean stream through this study. Reflecting on his own personal experience of culture in the essay, Williams records his stupefaction upon reading Clive Bell's *Civilisation* (1928), and asks: 'What kind of life can it be, I wonder, to produce this extraordinary fussiness, this extraordinary decision to call certain things culture and then separate them, as with a park wall, from ordinary people and ordinary work?'.²⁹ Williams's question raised a question for me. If culture is ordinary, how then to read the novels of this thesis by a means other than the dominant aesthetic assumption that culture is both qualitative and exclusive? Pierre Macherey's *A Theory of Literary Production* (1978) provided a means.³⁰

Macherey's deconstructive method in *A Theory of Literary Production* brought to my attention another kind of reading, where a novel emerges not from 'a "natural" empirical reality, but that intricate reality which men (sic) — both writers and readers — live, that reality which is *their ideology*',³¹ (original italics). His seemingly simple proposition that 'the work is never — or only apparently — a coherent whole', that it is 'necessarily accompanied by a *certain*

²⁸ Stephen M. Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities*, p. 127.

²⁹ Raymond Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary' [1958], in *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism* (London: Verso, 1989), pp. 92-100 (p. 94).

³⁰ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

³¹ Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, p. 155.

absence, without which it would not exist', (original italics),³² encouraged the novels in this thesis to be approached as the products of a particular culture and a particular history, without what E. P. Thompson called, 'the enormous condescension of posterity',³³ of the kind Raymond Williams observed in Bell's *Civilisation*.

Yet progress in this area is slow and incremental. As Kirsti Bohata noted in 2004: 'Even within Wales itself, the status of Welsh writing in English is generally very low'.³⁴ Bohata's point springs from her postcolonial perspective, and although this thesis is not a study of Welsh colonisation by England, the colonial paradigms of dominance, resistance, subservience and mimicry which Homi K. Bhabha identifies in *The Location of Culture*,³⁵ and Bohata in *Postcolonialism Revisited* directly and indirectly inform the discussions of Valleys masculinities which follow. Virtually any study of the novels reveals the unsettling cultural impact of England upon Wales. 'In Wales', Bohata writes, 'the discourse of hybridity (if such a thing can be said to exist) can construct acculturation in terms of cultural dilution or pollution'.³⁶ It might not, of course, as Bohata acknowledges, but the challenges of self definition facing the hybridised, colonised Welshman appear from the first novel this study addresses to the last.

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Criticism engaging specifically with representations of masculinity in anglophone Welsh literature reveals an interesting gender balance. Emma

³² Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, pp. 41, 85.

³³ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* [1963] (London: Penguin, 1968): cited by Katy Shaw, *Mining the Meaning: Cultural Representations of the UK 1984-85 Miners' Strike* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), p. 2.

³⁴ Kirsti Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 12.

³⁵ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

³⁶ Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited*, p. 156.

Smith's doctoral thesis, later published in book form,³⁷ remains the only full-length study by a female critic. Katie Gramich addresses the role of gender in Rhys Davies's short stories, and argues that he 'does not seek to put a feminist case, nor primarily to attack a narrow patriarchy, but rather to blur the rigid gender divisions which must have made his own life, as a firmly closeted homosexual, such a tediously repeated performance of repression'.³⁸ In an essay on Welsh border writing by men, Gramich explores 'the ways in which cultural, linguistic, religious and even temperamental differences are often seen as inextricably linked with gender'.³⁹ Alyce von Rothkirch focuses particularly on 'hegemonic masculinity — the ideology of the most powerful masculinity' — in her article on early twentieth-century Welsh drama in English, and analyses how J. O. Francis's play *Change* [1912] 'charts the demise of the hegemonic image of the classless male Welsh identity, embodied in the *gwerin* ideology'.⁴⁰ Among male critics, Aidan Byrne's 2007 doctoral thesis on four 1930s novels has been, to date, the only male-authored full-length volume devoted to representations of masculinity in anglophone Welsh fiction.⁴¹ Byrne has also developed one of his thesis chapters into an article on Richard Llewellyn's *How Green Was My Valley*, in which he argues that the novel 'espouses a populist

³⁷ Emma Smith, *Masculinity in Welsh Writing in English: the cases of Lewis Jones, Gwyn Jones, Gwyn Thomas and Ron Berry* (Saarbrücken Germany: VDM, 2009).

³⁸ Katie Gramich, 'The Masquerade of Gender in the Stories of Rhys Davies', in *Decoding the Hare*, ed. Meic Stephens (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), p. 204-215 (p. 213).

³⁹ Gramich, '"Those Blue Remembered Hills": Gender in Twentieth-Century Welsh Border Writing by Men', in *Gendering Border Studies: Gender Studies in Wales*, ed. Jane Aaron, Henrice Altink and Chris Weedon (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), pp. 142-162 (p. 142).

⁴⁰ Alyce von Rothkirch, 'There's a Change Come over the Valley: Masculinism in Early Twentieth-century Welsh Drama in English', in *Beyond the Difference*, ed. Daniel G. Williams and Alyce von Rothkirch (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), pp. 71-83 (p. 73).

⁴¹ Aidan Byrne, *Representations 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'* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Wolverhampton, 2007).

neo-fascist modernism'.⁴² Focusing on two texts, Llewelyn Wyn Griffith's memoir *Up To Mametz* (1931) and David Jones's *In Parenthesis* (1937), Steve Hendon has examined how Great War soldiers 'faced extraordinary challenges to established notions of masculinity'.⁴³

Within the relatively small field of criticism on these novels, the following articles have provided a context and provoked a response in the chapters that follow on particular texts. Readings of *Cwmardy* by Rolf Meyn, David Bell and Carole Snee focus on its generic taxonomy and lodge the novel, together with its sequel *We Live* (1939), safely within the ideological corpus of proletarian literature, 'making clear the inevitability of the victory of the new over the old social forces'.⁴⁴ 'In spite of their differences', Meyn writes, 'both *Cwmardy* and *We Live* fit into the category [of] proletarian social novel'.⁴⁵ One almost hears a sigh of relief that they may be generically accommodated, and therefore read, in this way. John Pikoulis shifts attention away from the novel as socialist realism to a more psychologically informed approach to Len Roberts's construction as a fissured individual, which has helped inform the argument of this study.⁴⁶

Published a decade after the 1926 strike, Gwyn Jones's *Times Like These* features briefly in surveys of the Welsh novel and in articles on 1930s novels generally, but has attracted nowhere near the same degree of critical interest as

⁴² Aidan Byrne, "The Male Shoutings of Men": Masculinity and Fascist Epistemology in *How Green Was My Valley*, in *The International Journal of Welsh Writing in English*, Vol 1, ed. Alyce von Rothkirch (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), 167-190 (p. 167).

⁴³ Steve Hendon, 'The Landscape of "Particular Men": Representations of Great War Masculinities: Llewelyn Wyn Griffith and David Jones', in *International Journal of Welsh Writing in English*, Vol 2, ed. Alyce von Rothkirch (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), 54-82 (p. 54).

⁴⁴ Rolf Meyn, 'Lewis Jones's *Cwmardy* and *We Live*: Two Welsh Proletarian Novels in Transatlantic Perspective', in *British Industrial Fictions*, ed. H. Gustav Klaus and Stephen Knight (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), pp. 124 -136 (p. 127).

⁴⁵ Meyn, 'Lewis Jones's *Cwmardy* and *We Live*' p. 134.

⁴⁶ John Pikoulis, 'Lewis Jones', in *Anglo-Welsh Review*, 62-71, and 'The Wounded Bard; The Novels of Lewis Jones, Glyn Jones and Emyr Humphreys', in *New Welsh Review*, 26 (1994), 22-34.

Cwmardy. Stephen Knight guardedly views it as 'a novel of exposé rather than engagement',⁴⁷ an observation which this thesis acknowledges, but sees as a methodology rather than an unintended outcome. This study diverges from James A. Davies's judgement that the novel is marred by tonal uncertainty and, unlike Davies, regards the novel's use of pastoral as essential to its discursive architecture.⁴⁸

After an early appreciation of Menna Gallie's work by Raymond Stephens, in which he considers *Strike for a Kingdom* alongside *The Small Mine* (1962), and identifies her commitment to community in both novels, critical examination of her work fell away.⁴⁹ In 1992, two years after Gallie's death, Angela Fish contrasted Gallie's success abroad, especially in America, and her neglect in this country.⁵⁰ Significantly, Fish was the first reader to identify, albeit briefly, Gallie's representation of men as gendered 'men' in *Strike for a Kingdom*. It is an insight which this thesis develops. Angela V. John's championing of Gallie, from her edition of *Strike for a Kingdom* for Honno in 2003, to her article on Gallie's entire *oeuvre*, 'Place, Politics and History: The Life and Novels of Menna Gallie' in 2006, has helped Gallie achieve wider recognition.⁵¹ Katie Gramich's view that there is, 'a clear feminist vision underlying virtually all of Gallie's writings'⁵² invites the novel to be read through a gender-specific lens,

⁴⁷ Stephen Knight, 'How Red Was My Story', in *Planet*, 98 (1993), 83-94 (p. 91).

⁴⁸ James A. Davies, 'Kinds of Relating: Gwyn Thomas, (Jack Jones, Lewis Jones, Gwyn Jones) and the Welsh Industrial Experience', in *The Anglo-Welsh Review*, 86 (1987), 73-86.

⁴⁹ Raymond Stephens, 'The Novelist and Community: Menna Gallie', in *Anglo-Welsh Review*, 14. 34 (1964-65), 52-63.

⁵⁰ Angela Fish, 'Flight-deck of experience', in *New Welsh Review*, 18 (1992), 60-64.

⁵¹ Angela V. John, 'Place, Politics and History: The Life and Novels of Menna Gallie', in *Llafur*, 9.3 (2006), 47-57.

⁵² Katie Gramich, 'Both in and Out of the Game: Welsh Writers and the British Dimension', in *A Guide to Welsh Literature*, Vol VII: *Welsh Writing in English*, ed. M. Wynn Thomas (Cardiff University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 255-277 (p. 261).

and raises crucial questions on how Gallie's brand of feminism influenced her depictions of passive masculinity in *Strike for a Kingdom*.

Presenting, by contrast, a hyper-virile masculinity in its eponymous hero, Ron Berry's *So Long, Hector Bebb* (1970) has been scrutinised by both Emma Smith and Sarah Morse for its representations of masculine power defined through the body. Smith regards Hector Bebb the boxer as 'a fighter from a lost world',⁵³ while Morse's essay on the novel engages with 'the relation of body and capital', where Hector's manager 'occupies a position analogous to that of the exploitative colliery owner'.⁵⁴ Morse also devotes space to the novel in her doctoral thesis where her focus is on the interconnection of Hector's location on the Welsh moors and his gender definition.⁵⁵ In his essay on recent Welsh fiction, 'Aztecs in Troedrhwiwgwair', Tony Bianchi devotes more space to Duncan Bush's *Glass Shot* (1993), a novel that he argues 'echoes' Berry's, than to Berry's own novel. Nonetheless, in his paragraph on *So Long, Hector Bebb*, he identifies how the novel positions Hector's 'authentic' masculinity as a statement of intent against a Wales receding into post-industrial trauma and trivialisation.⁵⁶

Roger Granelli's *Dark Edge* (1997) and Kit Habianic's *Until Our Blood is Dry* (2014), two novels focusing on the 1984-85 miners' strike, have received surprisingly little critical attention. Reviews of *Dark Edge* on its publication were not favourable. Richard John Evans in *New Welsh Review* felt that 'by making Elliott [a policeman] such a psychotic thug, Granelli prevents any real

⁵³ Emma Smith, *Masculinity in Welsh Writing in English*, p. 142.

⁵⁴ Sarah Morse, "'Maimed Individuals': The Significance of the Body in *So Long, Hector Bebb* (1970)", in *Mapping the Territory*, ed. Katie Gramich (Cardigan: Parthian, 2010), pp. 271-287 (p. 277).

⁵⁵ Morse, *The Black Pastures: The Significance of Landscape in the Works of Gwyn Thomas and Ron Berry* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Swansea, 2010), pp. 161-163.

⁵⁶ Tony Bianchi, 'Aztecs in Troedrhwiwgwair: recent fictions in Wales', pp. 44-76 (pp. 62-63).

exploration of the role of the police in the strike'.⁵⁷ And Catherine Merriman in *Planet* believed that 'Granelli wears his political sympathies far too blatantly on his sleeve'.⁵⁸ Katy Shaw identified in novels of the strike like *Dark Edge*, 'a distorting and factional monologism at the heart of the contemporary histories of the coal dispute'.⁵⁹

Little has yet been written about *Until Our Blood is Dry* apart from a handful of reviews on its publication in 2014. In a generally favourable piece in the *Welsh Arts Review*, Dylan Moore suggests that: 'We do, however, find it difficult to care for Gwyn', the protagonist.⁶⁰ Liz Jones's fine review of the novel in *Planet*, however, sees Gwyn Pritchard as a flawed character destroyed by forces outside his control or comprehension: 'ultimately he is tragic and pathetic'. Her insight that the novel is 'a latter-day Greek tragedy of misplaced loyalties and feuds nursed across the generations' acknowledges its intense localism and recurring relevance to a patriarchy fragmenting under new social and gender prescriptions.⁶¹

* * * * *

This thesis is divided into five chapters, each subjecting a single text, and in the final chapter two related texts, to close scrutiny. Chapter One challenges the view that *Times Like These* is marred by its 'failure of vision'.⁶² Reading it as a novel engaging with cultural and individual convulsion rather than politicised industrial conflict, the chapter argues that its imaginative thrust emerges from what Raymond Williams calls 'the complex interrelations between movements

⁵⁷ Richard John Evans, in *New Welsh Review*, 40 (1998), 88-89 (p. 88).

⁵⁸ Catherine Merriman, in *Planet*, 131 (1998), 104-105 (pp. 104-105).

⁵⁹ Katy Shaw, *Mining the Meaning: Cultural Representations of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), p. 6.

⁶⁰ Dylan Moore, review of *Until Our Blood is Dry*, *Wales Arts Review*, 10, www.walesartsreview.org/ (22.05.2014).

⁶¹ Liz Jones, review of *Until Our Blood is Dry*, in *Planet*, 216 (2014), 157-158.

⁶² James A. Davies, 'Kinds of Relating', p. 76.

and tendencies both within and beyond a specific and effective dominance'.⁶³ More specifically, the chapter locates masculinity in the novel within the frame of three broad categories of social process which Williams calls, the 'dominant', the 'residual' and the 'emergent'. Williams argues that the last two 'in any real process, and at any moment in the process, are significant both in themselves and in what they reveal of the characteristics of the "dominant"'.⁶⁴ The chapter focuses principally on four representations of masculinity, each one drawn from a cultural repository comprising differing perspectives of masculinity as a gender. The 'dominant' masculinity is practised through patriarchally validated power embodied in the mine owner Sir Hugh Thomas, and his henchmen Webber and Henshaw. Two 'residual' forms of masculinity, that is masculinities 'formed in the past, but [...] still active in the cultural process',⁶⁵ are represented collectively and singly in the pastoral practices of the miners, who significantly are never portrayed at work underground, and whose values interfuse with recognisable elements of eighteenth-century neo-Augustan communal civility represented through the figure of Denis Shelton. In the culturally liminal figure of Broddam, an upwardly mobile businessman, the novel constructs an 'emergent' form of masculinity, one that recurs in varying forms throughout Valleys fiction, and examines the challenges of identity facing the individually ambitious Welshman. In his self-fashioning, Broddam is anxious to acquire the signifiers of the English 'gentleman', but is equally anxious to avoid humiliating faux pas. His Monmouthshire background is significant here for, like Gwyn Jones, he was born in what Katie Gramich describes as, 'a notoriously ambivalent county',⁶⁶ neither Welsh nor English. The thesis argues that in

⁶³ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 121.

⁶⁴ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 122.

⁶⁵ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 122.

⁶⁶ Katie Gramich, "'Those Blue Remembered Hills': Gender in Twentieth-century Welsh Border Writing by Men", p. 145.

Broddam the novel addresses the problematic of the hybridised self, a figure who emerges as a form of colonised 'mimic-man', a shadow figure lacking an interior landscape.⁶⁷

Lewis Jones's *Cwmardy* and *We Live* (1937, 1939) have been generally regarded together as 'a major Marxist contribution from Britain to international industrial fiction'.⁶⁸ Chapter Two approaches *Cwmardy* as generically different from *We Live* which tells 'the larger story' of 'community radicalisation',⁶⁹ and focuses on the novel as the study of two individual masculinities. Referencing Pierre Macherey and others, the chapter examines how *Cwmardy* hybridises the *Bildungsroman* and the novel of industrial conflict. In doing so, it constructs a fragmented narrative exposing the damaging imposition of a socio-economic model of gender normativity on both the physically weak Len Roberts and his physically powerful father, Big Jim. Unlike the traditional *Bildung*, Len fails to achieve self-realisation by the end of the novel, his commitment to social justice through political action being continually vitiated by his emotional sensitivity and introspective temperament. Jim is allocated a different kind of victimhood, his hypermasculine identity being dependent on the suppression of finer emotion, and requiring a constraining performance of apparently seamless somatic power, a legacy of his imperial soldiering.

Chapter Three examines how Menna Gallie's *Strike for a Kingdom* (1959), adopting a subversive strategy Homi Bhabha elsewhere calls 'Sly civility',⁷⁰ encodes a trenchantly anti-patriarchal industrial narrative through seeming acquiescence to the implicit social reassurances of the whodunnit, in which

⁶⁷ See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 85-92.

⁶⁸ Stephen Knight, 'Anarcho-Syndicalism in Welsh Fiction in English', in *To Hell with Culture*, ed. H. Gustav Klaus and Stephen Knight (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), pp. 51-65 (p. 57).

⁶⁹ Knight, 'Anarcho-Syndicalism in Welsh Fiction in English', p. 57.

⁷⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 93.

patriarchy is the unmarked norm. Referencing both Gallie's archive and Gayle Rubin's argument that 'men and women are closer to each other than either is to anything else',⁷¹ the chapter analyses the text's incorporation of male characters into a discursive triad with women and children, whose passive forbearance of their poverty constructs them as sympathetic, often comic victims of a patriarchal, exploitative model. Detaching Welsh miners from ideological socialism and from representations of combative gender acquisition, the novel accommodates them seemingly uncontroversially within the whodunnit sub-genre, whose readership was accustomed to a divertingly transgressive act progressing toward the re-establishment of a stable social order.⁷² The novel therefore not only challenges the generic conventions of the whodunnit, but allows its female narrative voice to distinguish male structures of feeling from earlier portrayals in Welsh fiction of miners acknowledging approved models of masculinity.

Referencing Ron Berry's archive, Chapter Four traces how *So Long, Hector Bebb* (1970) evolved from draft narratives in which Hector is an unhappily married patriarch, a promising boxer, father of a disabled son, and a minor criminal, to his final incarnation as a mythopoeic masculinity: an intertextual amalgam of classical, English and American mythic archetypes. Unlike the passive striking miners in *Strike for a Kingdom*, he is defined by his somatic agency. In his doomed trajectory from champion boxer to fugitive farm-hand to wild man living on the moors to his tragic though inevitable early death, the novel addresses the problematic interaction in the elite, 'authentic' male of the civilised and the primitive, the passive and the active, the instinctive and the cerebral. In a text whose narrative fragmentation replicates the existential

⁷¹ Gayle Rubin, 'Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex', in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp. 157-210 (p. 179).

⁷² See John Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 45.

isolation of the characters and the mutual incompatibility of men and women, the chapter scrutinises how marriage is presented as a dysfunctional arrangement.

Chapter Five analyses masculine constructions in Roger Granelli's *Dark Edge* (1997) and Kit Habianic's *Until Our Blood is Dry* (2014), two novels devoted to the 1984-85 miners' strike. In each, the strike is not a temporary rupture in industrial relations but an overture to the virtual disappearance of deep mining in the Valleys.⁷³ Generically different — *Dark Edge* is a hybridised *Bildungsroman* and form of *roman à thèse*, 'a Cain and Abel scenario enacted in a backward Welsh valley' (*Dark Edge* p. 180), and *Until Our Blood is Dry* a more spacious depiction of a mining community — each novel pairs masculinities connected by a common thread to examine their differences of gender definition through implicit counter-discourse. Focusing its narrative on the divergent trajectories of two half-brothers, Edwin and Elliott Bowles, *Dark Edge* places them on opposing sides of the strike. The chapter reads the construction of the somatically powerful policeman Elliott as a *roman à thèse*, a study in psychotic patriarchal narcissism endemic in neoliberal consumerism. The striking miner Edwin is investigated as a Bakhtinian *Bildung*. The chapter argues that Edwin progresses through his *chronotopic*,⁷⁴ quasi-religious communion with Welsh landscape, quickened by his developing affection for the Englishwoman Kathryn Peters, toward the possibility of a fulfilled, hybridised future.

A similar antithetical pairing strategy is employed also in *Until Our Blood is Dry*: Gwyn Pritchard and Iwan Jones, connected through the marriage of their

⁷³ Paul O'Leary writes of the strike as, 'an event which at the time appeared to represent continuity in the traditions of mining communities but, in reality, marked the end of a particular social formation and resulted in the destabilising of traditional relations between the sexes in these communities': 'Masculine Histories: Gender and the Social History of Modern Wales', in *The Welsh History Review*, 22. 2 (December 2004), 252-253.

⁷⁴ 'Chronotope' is a term coined by Bakhtin for 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature': M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), p. 85.

children, are diverging representations of patriarchal masculinity, Gwyn's pathologically controlling, Iwan's based on mutual inter-gender respect and expressive affection. The power struggle between the government and the miners is channelled discursively through the contrast between Adam Smith-Tudor's powerfully unified, charismatic masculinity representing the ruthless coherence of management, and the political equivocation and grubby lubriciousness of the Labour M. P., Harry Cross. And the novel's representation of an unambiguously gay relationship, the first in Welsh mining fiction, portrays the formative impact of employment on gender identification, where the stabilised identity of the gay hairdresser Siggy differs from the crisis of gender definition his partner Matthew Price experiences as a gay miner.

One of the distinguishing features of the six novels comprising this thesis is the autobiographical or deeply personal compulsion impelling each narrative into existence, whether written 'from *inside* the industrial communities',⁷⁵ (original italics), or not. *Cwmardy*, *So Long*, *Hector Bebb*, and *Dark Edge* come from novelists resident in the stricken Rhondda communities of which they write.⁷⁶ The three other novels also spring out of personal witness: Cecil Price records that Gwyn Jones 'hated the coal owners' for sacking his father for insubordination,⁷⁷ the fate of Oliver Biesty in *Times Like These*; Menna Gallie's *Strike for a Kingdom*, 'my first and obvious novel, the inevitable one',⁷⁸ is both a protest novel set in the 1926 strike and a memoir in the guise of a whodunnit; for

⁷⁵ A feature of Welsh industrial novels that Raymond Williams feels distinguishes them from their English counterparts: *The Welsh Industrial Novel* (Cardiff: University College, Cardiff, 1979), p. 7.

⁷⁶ Katy Shaw positions Granelli along with non-Welsh novelists of the strike like David Peace (*GB84*) and William O'Rourke (*Notts*), who 'are not from, based in or even committed to researching mining regions', but, citing Raymond Williams, she regards them as "sympathetic observers", *Mining the Meaning*, p. 145. As Granelli was born and lives in Pontypridd, at the foot of the Rhondda valleys, *Dark Edge* falls into a different Raymond Williams category of Welsh industrial novel, as one written within the community.

⁷⁷ Cecil Price, *Gwyn Jones* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1976), p. 9.

⁷⁸ Menna Gallie Archive, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth; talk given to Swansea Writers' Group, L.1/16.

Kit Habianic, a former resident of Caerphilly, *Until Our Blood is Dry* is 'the novel I needed to write'.⁷⁹ As though united in common cause, the texts inscribe a socio-economic paradigm in which masculine formation is not so much a fictional creation as a re-collected history based on empirical experience. To adapt M. Wynn Thomas, they are 'salvage operations mounted by the imagination, attempts to reclaim a lost personal and social world'.⁸⁰ Whether these writers are part of a Welsh diaspora or not, writing Wales for them is a cathartic imperative as well as a creative endeavour; what Homi Bhabha calls 'a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present'.⁸¹

The thesis adapts Judith Butler's argument that 'the universal person and the masculine gender are conflated',⁸² to argue that industrial patriarchy in South Wales absorbed the individual person into a manufactured prescription of desirable masculinity to satisfy the demands of a particular socio-economic order. Embedded in the discourses of the novels examined are the consequences of this institutionalising of masculinity. The collapse of industry in South Wales has, M. Wynn Thomas suggests, effected a sundering that is different from but as radical as the earlier discontinuity between rural and industrial Wales: where writers now feel a 'sense of being separated from the history of their own community' as they engage with Wales's post-industrial trauma.⁸³ Yet this is only partially the case. Katy Shaw writes that 'history is not only open to confrontation and revision but is incremental',⁸⁴ and there are

⁷⁹ Kit Habianic, *Wales Online*, www.walesonline.co.uk, (22. 08. 2014).

⁸⁰ M. Wynn Thomas, 'Afterword' to Emyr Humphreys's *A Toy Epic* (Bridgend: Seren, 1989), pp. 125-126.

⁸¹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 63.

⁸² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 13.

⁸³ M. Wynn Thomas, *Internal Difference*, p. 44.

⁸⁴ Katy Shaw, *Mining the Meaning*, p. 2.

indications of an incremental literary engagement with rather than separation from South Wales's industrial history. Keith, in Christopher Meredith's *Shifts* (1988), set in a distressed former Welsh steel-town, for instance, comes to understand his present circumstances through studying the history of his region. To consolidate his identity, and perhaps forge a new one, he begins to learn Welsh.⁸⁵ Dai Smith's kaleidoscopic novel *Dream On* (2013),⁸⁶ considers South Wales's history through what he describes as 'the lens of the last century's time-capsule'.⁸⁷ And, as illustrated in the closing chapter of this study (partly focused on a novel that had not been published when this thesis was begun), the Valleys' troubled history, together with the disenfranchised masculinities it engendered, continues to nag its writers into engagement with its recent past.

⁸⁵ Christopher Meredith, *Shifts* (Bridgend: Seren, 1998).

⁸⁶ Dai Smith, *Dream On* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2013).

⁸⁷ Dai Smith, 'Author's Notes', *Wales Online*, www.walesonline.co.uk, (10. 08. 2013), n. p.

Chapter One

Dominant, Residual, Emergent: Forms and Formations of Male Identity in *Times Like These* (1936)

Introduction

Clustered amid other anglophone Welsh novels written within the sphere of industrial fiction in the 1930s,¹ *Times Like These* has attracted brief critical comment and only guarded praise.² Perhaps this is the reason for Gwyn's Jones's own modest assessment of the novel in 1987, as 'a quiet and honest story about quiet and honest people living their quiet and honest lives in a South Wales mining valley'.³ Written by a young academic on his return to Wales from England, rather than a politically active Lewis Jones, the novel's perceived lack of passion and absence of ideological centrality have led fellow academics to formulate judgements as noncommittal in their phrasing as they believe the text to be in its narrative tone. In different articles, Stephen Knight, for instance, regards it as both 'judiciously cautious in its judgements' and 'earnest';⁴ for Dai Smith, it is 'scrupulously weighted';⁵ James A. Davies is less guarded. In an article devoted principally to Gwyn Thomas, he argues that, as the son of a striking miner in 1926, Gwyn Jones was 'too close to

¹ For example, Jack Jones's *Rhondda Roundabout* (1934) and *Black Parade* (1935); Lewis Jones's *Cwmardy* (1937) and *We Live* (1939), Gwyn Thomas's *Sorrow for thy Sons* (rejected in 1937 for its bleakness, published in 1986), and Richard Llewellyn's *How Green Was My Valley* (1939).

² Gwyn Jones, *Times Like These* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1936; reissued 1979). All future references are to the 1979 edition.

³ Gwyn Jones, 'Anglo-Welsh Literature, 1934-1946: A Personal View', in *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (London: Issued by the Society, 1987), p. 184.

⁴ Stephen Knight, "'A New Enormous Music': Industrial Fiction in Wales", in *A Guide to Welsh Literature: Vol. VII, Welsh Writing in English*, ed. M. Wynn Thomas (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 47-90 (p. 72), and 'A collective challenge to constraining forces', in *New Welsh Review*, 47 (1999), 28-31 (p. 28).

⁵ Dai Smith, 'A Novel History', in *Wales — The Imagined Nation: Essays in Cultural and National Identity*, ed. Tony Curtis (Bridgend: Seren, 1991), pp. 129-158, (p. 141).

the dilemma to provide a clear fictional understanding', the dilemma being that Jones himself 'did not wish or was unable to remain in the world of his upbringing'.⁶ Scholars on one side see intellectual restraint as the novel's distinguishing feature, and on the other regard it as emotionally incoherent.

This chapter argues that *Times Like These* can more profitably be read by applying what Raymond Williams describes elsewhere as 'the dynamic interrelations [...] of historically varied and variable elements' to its representations of masculinity.⁷ Writing generally of the intricate layering of historical process, Williams argues that:

the 'dominant' culture can be judged only alongside 'the 'residual' and the 'emergent', which in any real process, and at any moment in the process, are significant both in themselves and what they reveal of the characteristics of the 'dominant'.⁸

The values of a 'residual' culture for Williams have been 'effectively formed in the past, but they are still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present'.⁹ The 'emergent' culture occupies a more liminal position, one in which 'new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationships are continually being created', although it necessarily seeks to accommodate 'earlier social formations and phases of the cultural process'.¹⁰

When Williams's abstractions are applied to the particularities of masculine representation in *Times Like These*, their concordance becomes immediately apparent. The mine managers Sir Hugh Thomas, Henshaw and Webber emerge as textual critiques of a patriarchal 'dominance' which defines masculinity through the construction of hierarchy and the performance of power. The miners and Denis Shelton incarnate 'residual' forms of masculinity which 'are significant both in

⁶ James A. Davies, 'Kinds of Relating', p. 76.

⁷ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 121.

⁸ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 122.

⁹ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 122.

¹⁰ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 123.

themselves and what they reveal of the characteristics of the 'dominant'. The gender-defining practices of the miners, who significantly are never represented working underground as colliers, are positioned within a residual continuum of collaborative, homosocial pastoral. Denis Shelton, employed as a mining agent,¹¹ but the second son of a Berkshire landed family, who himself inherits the estate at the end of the novel is located, this chapter argues, within the tradition of eighteenth-century genteel patriarchy and 'politeness'.¹² Notably, the 'residual' masculinities of Shelton and Jenkinstown men are associated with cultural traditions extending beyond the sphere of heavy industry, Shelton by birth, the others by their collectivist pastoral activities, and they complement each other in their contrasts to the dominant hegemonic ethos. The figure of the ambitious businessman Broddam, who merits at most a passing reference in the small field of comment extant on the novel becomes, within this frame, an essential component of the text's gendered architecture. As an 'emergent' masculinity, he attempts to negotiate the challenges of evolutionary self-formation inherent in a class-based society. The figure of Broddam demonstrates that, as Williams shows, emergent identity is 'never only a matter of immediate practice (although it is also that); indeed it depends crucially on finding new forms or adaptations of forms'.¹³

Written a decade after the strike that impelled its creation, *Times Like These* is at once embedded in the historical process of material production and a personal commentary on it. The French theorist Pierre Macherey writes that novels are 'influenced by the formal function of the writer and by the problems of his individual

¹¹ A mining agent was a senior manager in charge of a group of collieries.

¹² Georgian 'politeness', John Brewer shows, was a civilising moral concept which, 'spoke for the generality of mankind — "the blanks of society" — seeking not to impose uniformity on society but to understand and celebrate its variety': *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 103. The humane Shelton finds himself locked into a role predicated on an unequal distribution of power and wealth where diversion from the dominant form of masculine definition is regarded as unacceptable.

¹³ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 126.

existence.’¹⁴ The interfusion of the formal and the personal in Macherey’s comment offers an approach to *Times Like These* where emotional cohesion and ideological consistency are not the sources of its value. A gender-specific reading appreciates the formal breadth of its masculine representation and the ‘problems’ animating the writer’s ‘individual existence’, his own ‘emergent’ identity as someone negotiating two culturally different worlds. It places the novel not only in its historical context but, using Williams’s tripartite paradigm, examines the competing energies in the narrative’s own construction of history. In other words the gendered tensions within *Times Like These* are activated by and reflect the very cultural tensions which bring it into being. As Macherey reminds us, ‘a book never arrives unaccompanied’.¹⁵

‘We’ve got to show the miners where they stand’: dominant masculine identity and ‘jungle law’

Times Like These critiques the discourses and ideologies of dominant industrial masculinity through gender-specific representations of three members of pit management: Sir Hugh Thomas, the chairman of directors; Henshaw, the Cwm colliery manager; and Webber, the under-manager who later replaces Henshaw. Having little time for the values associated with Sheltonian ‘politeness’, they share assumptions of the interconnectedness of power, decisiveness, agency and masculine identity. All three embody textual expressions of industrialised hegemony for whom the exercise of systemic, uncompromising control within the coalfield is integral to their perceptions of self. David L. Collinson and Jeff Hearn write of such figures that:

attempts to establish a stable and well-defined sense of masculine identity frequently involve defining oneself and one’s masculine/hierarchical difference, status and power through the subjective process of *identifying*

¹⁴ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, p. 53.

¹⁵ Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, p. 53.

with some men [...] while simultaneously *differentiating* themselves from others,¹⁶ (original italics).

None of these three characters is ever seen in the company of a woman, unlike Denis Shelton. And none is presented in a context outside his public role, Henshaw and Webber identifying with and disseminating Sir Hugh's patriarchal conceptions of power and pragmatism. However, although they exhibit common signifiers of patriarchal masculinity, the text is careful to individualise points of gendered departure in each one, and so constructs a broadly-framed critique of the behavioural norms functioning in a model of monolithic industrial patriarchy which both controls and empowers them.

Thoroughly interpellating both Henshaw and Webber into such a system of gender identity, the novel demonstrates how they enact its divisive contradictions. Differentiating themselves from the miners — who, Webber tells Shelton, are 'too pig-headed' (p. 76) to understand basic economics — they paradoxically include them in a common cause: 'We've all got to make sacrifices' (p. 75). Needless to say, the common cause is an appeal to an abstraction of Nationhood capable of rhetorical manipulation. Without such sacrifices Webber informs Shelton, 'the country'll lose' (p. 75), the 'country' at once incorporating the miners and their families in its predicament, as it simultaneously 'others' them as the enemy within. Henshaw and Webber's appeal to Nationhood features as a strategic rhetorical figure employed by agents of the state in later anglophone Welsh industrial novels. *Strike for a Kingdom's* proto-fascistic Inspector Evans (p. 129), for instance, and Adam Smith-Tudor's poisonous fustian (*Until Our Blood is Dry*, p. 96) are later fictional developments of the same cultural thread, where sacrifice is expected of those with least to give for the benefit of those with most to lose.

Whereas for Shelton 'some things are more important than figures', Henshaw's mantra that 'You can't get away from figures' (p. 74), is at once a

¹⁶ David L. Collinson and Jeff Hearn, 'Breaking the Silence: On Men, Masculinities and Managements', in *Men as Managers, Managers as Men*, ed. David L. Collinson and Jeff Hearn (London: SAGE, 1996), pp. 1-24 (p. 14).

declaration of his manly pragmatism and an exhibition of his reduction to mere functionality where, as Andrew Tolson states, 'a man is not seen as a human being [...] but as a unit in the cost of production regulated to maintain profit margins'.¹⁷ The text leaves overt criticism of Henshaw unmarked, exposing his limiting conceptual framework through his own discourse. Parading his manly resolution and implicitly contrasting it with what he regards as Shelton's laodicean 'politeness', he is unable to distinguish steadfastness from inflexibility, or to recognise any difference between large-scale warfare and an industrial dispute:

It's like the last war — it wouldn't matter a rap to me personally if fifty Archdukes were shot in different parts of Europe — I *shouldn't care much even if they were English* — but once I'd joined up, I went flat out to smash Jerry (p. 75, my italics).

So much, then, for his belief in national unity. Peter Middleton writes that 'modern men have suffered greatly in a series of wars generated by largely masculine codes of behaviour'.¹⁸ As the product of a patriarchal model where violence sanctioned by war elides effortlessly into his discourse regarding industrial relations, Henshaw predicates his masculinity on his unwavering intransigency without ever questioning the ethical or proportional principles underlying his pride in his own agency. In Henshaw's construction, *Times Like These* is less concerned with his own reductivism than with its implied consequences on the lives of those he manages.

Although Webber shares a repertoire of gender signifiers with Henshaw, the novel is careful to avoid replication by constructing him as a deviant psychology given licence by the diktat of patriarchal hierarchy. As David Leverenz comments, 'any intensified ideology of manhood is a compensatory response to fears of humiliation',¹⁹ and Webber illustrates the corrosive effects of such anxiety. His masculinity, like the more fully developed Elliott Bowles's in *Dark Edge*, is predicated

¹⁷ Andrew Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity* (London: Tavistock, 1977), p. 58.

¹⁸ Peter Middleton, *The Inward Gaze: Masculinity and Subjectivity in Modern Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 2.

¹⁹ David Leverenz, *Manhood and the American Renaissance* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 4.

on the pathological interfusion of power and sadism. Brutal in his dealings with the striking miners, he uses humiliation as a dramatic assertion of his own hegemony:

A ridiculous regulation of the dole authorities was that every collier had to go to the pit once a week and have a stamp on his card to the effect that he was genuinely seeking work and that there was no work for him [...] Webber's conduct was more than usually obnoxious on these occasions. Instead of making arrangements to give the men a speedy dismissal, he kept them loitering near the office, sometimes for an hour on end, without shelter and bitterly conscious that he was treating them so deliberately (p. 246).

Sir Hugh identifies in Webber 'a strong man, with none of Shelton's sentimentality and irresolution' (p. 287). Whereas Henshaw prides himself on what he regards as his masculine rationality, Webber's identity is enacted through the perverse display of power, and the masochistic pleasure he takes in 'the knowledge that the men hated him' (p. 287). However, the novel's declaration that 'Mastery was a sensation to him rather than a privilege' (p. 287) acknowledges an intellect not in control of itself, and capable of buttressing its own fear of humiliation only through the calculated humiliation of others. Sir Hugh Thomas's refusal to distinguish Webber's 'strength' from his socio-pathology is only one example of the newly-made knight's convenient moral elisions.

In the figure of Sir Hugh Thomas, *Times Like These* conflates two opposing perceptions of hegemonic masculine practice which dominated the Victorian period and whose residual influence lingered into the twentieth century. They are Spencerian social darwinism,²⁰ and the constitutive elements of the patriarchal 'man of character' (as opposed to the Georgian 'man of sentiment'). Stefan Collini sees the 'man of character' as embodying 'self-restraint, perseverance, strenuous effort, courage in the face of adversity', all of which have an 'intimate dependence on the

²⁰ Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) popularised Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection by finding an analogy with what happened in the world of business, commerce, industry and social organisation generally. It made a great impression on American writers like Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945), Hamlin Garland (1860-1940) and Jack London (1876-1916), but also influenced Thomas Hardy and George Eliot, see *George Eliot and Herbert Spencer: Feminism, Evolutionism and the Reconstruction of Gender*, Nancy L. Paxton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

prior notion of duty'.²¹ In Sir Hugh these two competing strands expose his hypocrisy through a power system that rationalises greed as moral obligation. Whereas for Henshaw, industrial relations exist in the same sphere as war, in Sir Hugh they are the residue of nineteenth-century social darwinism, one thread of which was the justification of a laissez-faire capitalism where the powerful dominate the weak as part of a natural and therefore amoral process. In the lexicon of Sir Hugh's predatory masculinity, 'it is necessary to smash the trade unions, and absolutely pulverise the miners' (p. 112), because it is 'jungle law, pure and simple' (p. 114). Within moments, however, the text shows how he cloaks his Spencerian 'survival of the fittest' in the casuistry of an abstract rationale. While his fundamental social darwinism necessarily regards moral principle as non-existent, his self-positioning requires that he adopt the pose of a patriarchal 'man of character' burdened by the demands of duty. Safely engirdled in his self-righteousness, he finds no difficulty in reformulating the base metal of his greed into the golden piety of unblemished moral responsibility and patriarchal patriotism, as one of 'those of us who feel we have a duty to the nation rather than to one class of it' (p. 112).

When the pits return to work after the strike and profits rise under the brutally repressive regime of Webber, 'Sir Hugh, a religious man, thanked gracious heaven' that the Cwm was becoming 'a model pit' (p. 287). In the figure of Sir Hugh Thomas, *Times Like These* here critiques not only a rapaciously greedy individual. Its target is the facility with which a dominant patriarchal culture manipulates a political theory of nature as an amoral phenomenon into the service of a divinely approved order. Without textually marking the difference between the two characters, *Times Like These* further positions Sir Hugh Thomas's expedient hypocrisy against Oliver Biesty's probity. When Oliver, a striking miner, reminds his wife of his belief in a fundamental moral obligation that, 'We been sent to do our duty, Polly' (p. 196), he puts principle above self interest, for which he is eventually sacked by Webber. For

²¹ Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists*, p. 100.

Sir Hugh, duty and greed conveniently align, and allow him, in Shelton's mind, to 'live like a prince twelve miles from the nearest colliery' (p. 187), careless of the conditions in which his miners work, while doubtless thanking heaven that he has done his duty.²²

Writing of how 'power operates in and through discourse', Judith Butler asks rhetorically: 'Is a community and history of such speakers not magically invoked at the moment in which the utterance is spoken?'²³ In speaking for himself, Sir Hugh speaks for both Henshaw and Webber, and for others who appear in later Welsh industrial novels like *Dark Edge* and *Until Our Blood is Dry*. In a hierarchical system of industrial organisation, Hugh Thomas incarnates the oppressive signifiers of the patriarchal alpha-male. Henshaw and Webber dutifully follow him, both of them appropriating and further circulating their master's aggressive discourse. The novel's forensic presentation of these three representatives of patriarchal masculinity identifies what Schoene-Harwood calls a 'kind of masculinity [that] endlessly produces and consumes "others" against which its superiority is defined'.²⁴ In the starkness of their representation, the novel provides a searing critique of the deformative rituals, both discursive and performative, of power-driven masculinity. In the miners and Shelton, the novel constructs 'residual' masculinities diametrically opposed to this reductive paradigm.

²² The attitude of Sir Hugh and Webber to capital and the workers is not dissimilar to that represented in early twentieth-century American novels such as Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906).

²³ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: The Politics of the Performative* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), p. 49.

²⁴ Berthold Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 56.

the shepherds reached for their crooks and sought their wandering flocks': residual identities and versions of pastoral

In his study of English fiction in the 1930s, Chris Hopkins devotes a chapter to Welsh pastoral in which he writes that 'Lewis Jones's *Cwmardy* (1937) and Richard Llewellyn's *How Green Was My Valley* (1939) both refer to the agricultural life which is replaced by South Wales industrialism',²⁵ but strangely he makes no mention either here or elsewhere of *Times Like These*, which pre-dates both novels. This section argues that pastoral is not only present in *Times Like These* but that, viewed through a gender-specific lens, it functions as a crucial semiosis, a strategy for valorising one discourse of masculinity by framing it as a juxtapositional critique of another.

Pastoral is an ideal mode for examining assumptions and conventions representing a continuum of practices defining somatic masculinity, for as Andrew V. Ettin reminds us, 'Pastoral society is predominantly male'.²⁶ In this respect, this section argues that the novel's explicit references to pastoral figures are used to establish a clear fissure between opposing definitions of masculinity, where 'an ability to be unconsciously creative and festive'²⁷ functions as a direct indictment of a dehumanising, reductive patriarchy. David James and Philip Tew may be seen extending Raymond Williams's view that the 'residual' remains active in the cultural process, when they argue that pastoral foregrounds 'archetypal patterns of behaviour so as to insist upon the importance of pattern and repetition in the order of things'.²⁸ As this section contends, pastoral in the novel is not only a vehicle

²⁵ Chris Hopkins, *English Fiction in the 1930s: Language, Genre, History* (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 63.

²⁶ Andrew V. Ettin, *Literature and the Pastoral* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 146.

²⁷ Hopkins, *English Fiction in the 1930s*, p. 66.

²⁸ David James and Philip Tew, *New Versions of Pastoral: Post-Romantic, Modern and Contemporary Responses to the Tradition* (Madison, WI: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009), p. 14.

celebrating a somatic, collaborative masculinity different from that of figures like Hugh Thomas, but in doing so it constructs performative spaces in which specific aspects of residual masculine practice may be located within a cultural continuity.

One of the notable features of *Times Like These* is the way gender differences are mapped onto such pastoral spaces. Pastoral tropes in the novel serve not only to distinguish two types of masculinity — the creatively pastoral and the reductively industrial — but to identify one of the defining elements of masculinity itself, where, as Michael Kimmel states, ‘Masculinity is a *homosocial* enactment’,²⁹ (original italics). In *Times Like These*, pastoral and its associated activities are inseparable from ‘homosocial enactment’. Because it is extrinsic to the pressures of mainstream industrial culture, pastoral in the novel expresses a masculinity where discourse centres on creative physical activity, homosocial leisure, banter and collective problem solving. The novel is strewn with examples: the several occasions when men and boys are at the swimming holes (pp. 33-35, 204-205, 208-209); men engaged in felling a large tree (pp. 44-51); strike meetings where ‘The men sat around three sides of a natural amphitheatre’ (p. 94); striking miners relaxing on the Common (pp. 186-190); men present at the Tip when Ben Fisher and Snooker Kelch fight each other over a girl (pp. 209-216). If men and women are present together — the Whit Monday festivities and the rugby match, for instance — the space is dominated by masculine agency.

Even the Biestys’ kitchen, which is the subject of scrupulous gendered mapping by the narrative voice, is ‘exactly what it was intended to be; it was honest, dignified, and a satisfactory setting for father and son’ (p. 18). Unlike *Cwmardy*, no use is made of traditionally male locations like the public house, where excessive alcohol might result in brawling, and the only reference to heavy drinking is to what happened at a festival fifty years earlier. Instead, homosocial gatherings occur out of

²⁹ Michael Kimmel, ‘Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity’, in *The Masculinities Reader*, ed. Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), pp. 266-287 (p. 275).

doors in a natural setting, often involve physical activity and manual dexterity, and are innocent, cordial and mutually supportive. Even the fight between Ben Fisher and Snooker Kelch is fought according to strictly controlled rules, and they are reconciled once it is over. The following paragraphs discuss in more detail the novel's strategy of locating masculinity within a long-established pastoral mode, and defends representation of that mode against adverse critical comment.

In his 1971 monograph on the pastoral, Peter V. Marinelli makes the important observation that pastoral innocence and human experience exist in a perpetual and unresolved dynamic: 'Like pastoral itself [...], the myth of the golden age arises when gold has only too clearly been discovered',³⁰ the gold in this novel's case being the rich seams of anthracite and bituminous coal that ran beneath the surface of the South Wales valleys.³¹ The harmony between nature and the human presence offers an implicit contrast with the ugly village, built without regard for its inhabitants, 'just where the prevailing south-west wind would carry their [the Cwm colliery shafts'] smoke towards the village' (p. 33). And one of the most distinctive features of the presentation of pastoral in *Times Like These* is what Hopkins calls, 'a continuing organic community (if not one which is unchallengeably so)'³² displayed in these gatherings.

Andrew V. Ettin observes that 'Rulership and even leadership are generally inimical to pastoralism',³³ and the novel's emphasis on masculinity performed through decorum, concord and restraint consistently distinguishes its harmonious pastoral modality from the combative patriarchy it creates in Sir Hugh Thomas, and the deviant hegemony of Webber. Pastoral simplicity intersects with Christian

³⁰ Peter V. Marinelli, *Pastoral* (London: Macmillan, 1971), p. 17.

³¹ Hywel Francis and David Smith observe that in the 1930s and earlier as a result of the intrusion of mining, 'the unnatural state of South Wales was stressed ("natural" was Welsh neo-pastoral)': *The Fed* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980), p. 39.

³² Chris Hopkins, *English Fiction in the 1930s*, p. 63.

³³ Andrew V. Ettin, *Literature and the Pastoral*, p. 166.

celebration after the Whit-Monday procession, for example, when ‘the shepherds reached for their crooks and sought their wandering flocks’ (p. 65). As the day wears on, ‘an innocent intoxication fermented in the veins of the adolescents’ (p. 65), but not even ‘the gloomiest elder frowned on so carefree a relation of the sexes’ (p. 65). The Whit-Monday festival is only one set-piece of pastoral affirmation, however. There is in the novel a carefully designed, consistently articulated representation of masculinities engaged in a variety of pastoral activities emphasising androcentric cordiality, communal activity and gender confirmation. They comprise principally: three episodes at swimming holes (pp. 33-35, 204-205, and 208-209), where the emphasis is on leisure articulated through the youthful, active body; older striking miners relaxing on the Common in a representation of pastoral *otium* (pp. 186-190); and work as a creative, collaborative enterprise in felling a tree for the appropriately named Theocritus Jones (pp. 44-51), whose very name signifies a textual determination to manoeuvre classical pastoral into a Welsh context.

The novel’s insistence on such a manoeuvre has been the subject of critical disapproval. James A. Davies finds the conjunction particularly unfortunate in its reference to a river lido known locally as the Horse Washings. The novel’s text reads: ‘To this new Horse Washings, as to Arden, many young men did flock every day, and fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world’ (p. 205). In Davies’s view, the close textual association of the Horse Washings and Arden, and a later reference to the Arcadian characteristics of the strike come ‘close to the mock heroic, the dangerously satirical’.³⁴ Stephen Knight concurs on the uncertain effect created throughout the novel ‘when the narrator uses classical imagery to describe the humble pleasures of the industrial environment’.³⁵ Neither commentator remarks how the pastoral mode is deeply embedded in the novel. This extends from the obviousness of a character called Theocritus, to the convocation of relaxing miners

³⁴ James A. Davies, ‘Kinds of Relating’, pp. 75-76.

³⁵ Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 84.

on the Common, the pastoral festivities on Whit Monday, or the association of the mischievous Ben Fisher with a male figure from Greek mythology associated, like Ben, with high spirits.

Davies and Knight imply that pastoral in *Times Like These* is a discrete mode of representation overlaid onto material that is topographically and discursively inappropriate. But any seeming dissonance between subject and mode is purely connotative and culturally constructed, a view of idealised pastoral inflected through the English Renaissance. Terry Gifford rightly identifies 'retreat and return' as a central dynamic of pastoral, but while in Renaissance and later English pastoral they are the constituents of an imaginative, aesthetic engagement with a literary artefact, a pleasing fabrication for the reader, in *Times Like These* they constitute a dynamic interfusion more central to the identities of the characters represented in the novel. As the text pointedly remarks, in the reality of home to which the young swimmers return after their retreat to the pleasures of the lido, there is 'no actual evidence of starvation, but that such a lack should need substantiation was significant' (p. 205).

Written for an educated elite, and appropriated and colonised by early modern English poetry, literary pastoral itself is littered with the relocation of classical pastoral into an English context: John Milton could situate Corydon and Thyrsis in an English landscape,³⁶ Andrew Marvell advises little T.C. not to upset Flora in an English garden,³⁷ and in *Thyrsis*, Matthew Arnold describes how he and Arthur Clough, roaming the Oxfordshire fields in the guise of Corydon and Thyrsis:

With the country-folk acquaintance made
By barn in threshing-time, by new-built rick.
Here, too, our shepherd-pipes we first assay'd.³⁸

³⁶ John Milton, 'L'Allegro', in *John Milton: Poems*, ed. B. A. Wright (London: J. M. Dent, 1962), p. 31, l. 83.

³⁷ Andrew Marvell, 'The Picture of Little T. C. in a Prospect of Flowers', in *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*, ed. Hugh MacDonal (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 36, l. 36.

³⁸ Matthew Arnold, 'Thyrsis', in *The Oxford Book of English Verse 1250-1918*, ed. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, [1900, new edition 1939] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, repr. 1979), p. 915, ll. 33-35.

Nothing so fancifully self-indulgent as Arnold's pastoral inhabits *Times Like These*. The metrics of the river lido where the miner's swim are scrupulously mapped: 'thirty yards long by twelve to fifteen yards wide with a maximum depth of five and a half feet' (pp. 204-5). And although the water runs clear because the strike has reduced its pollution, 'many of the hollows were known to contain tar' (p. 204); *et in Arcadia ego*. As Terry Gifford comments: 'Pastoral authors are inescapably of their own culture and its preoccupations',³⁹ and *Times Like These*, unconstrained by the formalised idealising of English pastoral poetry, makes use of pastoral's residual values of retreat and return to shape a distinctive Welsh form, grounding its masculinities in a realistic topography. Marinelli states that 'perfect felicity is never the subject of pastoral when it is truly serious, and complacency is not the feeling from which it arises'.⁴⁰ Indeed, rather than construct an idealized, escapist version as Matthew Arnold does, the novel offers a gendered, Welsh, working-class inscription of an enduring pastoral myth, and by doing so links the youth of Jenkinstown, beset by economic and political variables beyond their control, with the respite from care which pastoral has offered humanity through the ages. Myth here informs the 'real' present, for the text identifies through its lyrical prose, 'an overriding trajectory of nature as fecund, generative and transformative',⁴¹ captured by:

the soft swirling of bodies in the water, the soft pad of feet on turf, the crumble of brown soil, sappy chew of grass, the fly and leaf stippling the smooth river pools (p. 205).

Bodies in the water and on the banks, observing and being observed are central to the lido passages in *Times Like These*. David Leverenz makes two observations which illuminate the somatic representations of young masculinities at the lidos and helps explain the desexualised nature of the three gatherings: 'ideologies of

³⁹ Terry Gifford, *Pastoral* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 82.

⁴⁰ Peter V. Marinelli, *Pastoral*, p. 53.

⁴¹ David James and Philip Tew, *New Versions of Pastoral*, p. 14.

manhood', he states, 'have functioned primarily in relation to the gaze of male peers and male authority', and he regards homosociality as the means by which men construct their social roles in the eyes of other men, rather than being driven by 'homosexual panic or desire'.⁴²

Celebration of the male body is evident in the first lido episode (pp. 33-35), which is represented as an observed celebration of physical expression. The bodies of the young swimmers are naturalized — 'naked, glittering' and 'silver' — as they emerge from the coal-blackened water. 'Everyone there knew everyone else' (p. 34), and there is 'bawling and screaming of greeting' (p. 34) when others join. Anthony Easthope remarks of male banter that it 'works as a way of affirming the bond of love between men while appearing to deny it',⁴³ and this is evident in the way unspecified speakers display a strong sense of male fellowship: 'That's our 'Arry, on the grey 'orse! Go and put u shirt on u little rascal!' (p. 34). When the 'bloods' arrive at the Horse Washings and strip off to swim, their 'vitality [is] kindled anew, Anteus-like, at the touch of their bare feet on the grass by the river [and they] lark, horseplay, and dive like lunatics' (p. 35). Three significant details emerge here: their enjoyment is expressed through uninhibited physical ebullience; the recuperating effect of direct tactile contact with the grass; and the use of a classical figure, Antaeus, to position this recuperation within an unbroken, if challenged, pastoral continuum. That this reference is no mere attempt at what Davies calls 'juxtapositional dignity' is evident from the way the episode closes.⁴⁴ With a winning display of respect, on the arrival of their elders at the pond:

All the youngsters then left the pool, and sat bare or shirted, watching their particular heroes as their strongly-muscled bodies rolled under the coaly web and sweat spray (p. 35).

⁴² David Leverenz, 'The Last Man in America', p. 278.

⁴³ Anthony Easthope, *What a Man's Gotta Do* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 88.

⁴⁴ James A. Davies, 'Kinds of Relating', p. 76.

Until the last two phrases the description could be of a pastoral landscape by John Constable. In its blend of riotous fun and instinctive decorum it represents, through the creation of a Welsh pastoral, a vision of Welsh masculinity rescued, if only temporarily, from the physically destructive demands of capitalized labour. That these fine specimens of young manhood have no option but to swim in coal-polluted water, the text suggests, is an indictment of an industry, not a mockery of them. In this final scene, male bodies are the objects of an approving multiple gaze where the implied reader is invited into sympathetic collusion with the scene: the reader's gaze is generated through the narrative voice's gaze which creates the image of the boys gazing on the bodies of their heroes while themselves being 'bare or shirted'.

More specific celebration of identity created through the male physique occurs in the third swimming episode later in the novel (p. 209), when Ben Fisher emerges naked from the water to confront a clothed Snooker Kelch in a quarrel over a girl. Once again, the male body is subjected to close and approving observation. Their qualitative difference as men is represented solely through their contrasting physical appearance: 'Snooker rusty in brown, Ben glitteringly naked' (p. 209), the luminous masculinity of the one at variance with the dourness of the other. Definition of Ben's masculinity is provided through further physical representation:

His wicked, handsome face, strong white shoulders, and the curling black hair that covered his legs, thighs and lower belly, and thence ran in a thin tetter up the middle of his chest gave him an oddly faun-like appearance (p. 209).

What is significant here is Ben's upper body conformity to desirable masculine signifiers. But as Todd W. Reeser notes: 'discourse is central to the cultural inscription on the body and to the assumption of power on the body to create subjectivities',⁴⁵ and here Ben's physique is removed from the merely contingent and placed within a wider historical and cultural perspective. He is 'wicked' not in a theological context, but as an embodiment of lineal male roguishness. Both

⁴⁵ Todd W. Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 95.

physically and temperamentally, he is like a faun, so that, to paraphrase Reeser, Ben's faun-like body both locates him in a cultural tradition of pastoral and signifies his own mischievous subjectivity.

But the influence of pastoral in constructing 'residual' masculinity extends far beyond the activities of young men, whether they are engaged in boisterous fun or associated with mythical beings.

'It's a holiday': residual skills and the natural rhythms of labour

In Chapter XIV, set during the 1926 strike, the novel's emphasis is upon various, less strenuous kinds of leisure set in a pastoral context. Patrick Cullen writes that Arcadian pastoral:

takes as its ideal the *pastor felix* and the soft life of *otium*: correspondingly, it locates its characters in a landscape of varying degrees of idealisation [...] but at the same time vulnerable and precarious.⁴⁶

Times Like These subverts the notion both of the *pastor felix* — Sir Hugh Thomas, the mine owner, is no kindly shepherd — and the topographical idealisation of Arcadian pastoral is impossible: the fair country has already been raped. However, the text valorizes 'the soft life of *otium*' in a green space, which offers an alternative to a striving hegemonic masculinity, while acknowledging its ephemeral nature. The fact that the miners' leisure is enforced, and that they scarcely exist in a golden age functions textually as a critique of an economic regime which de-humanizes them and as testament to their capacity for delight in communal leisure. The opening pages of the chapter juxtapose two representations of masculine definition to make its point. The first is through the eyes of Sir Hugh, the male as dominant self-achiever, coercive and decisive: 'We've got to show the miners where they stand' (p. 187). This modulates almost immediately to a second scene, on the Common where the miners, by a semantic twist, are described as 'standing' for nothing, but instead

⁴⁶ Patrick Cullen, *Spenser, Marvell and Renaissance Pastoral* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 2.

are lying down and at ease; males as uncompetitive and gregarious, distracted by their conversation from 'the great roll of tree-pocked fields sprawling below them, the thousand greens that blocked the eyes in each direction' (p. 189).

In this invitingly pastoral context, narrow patriarchal prescriptions are suspended. The family men, 'with their wives' connivance and discreet encouragement took young children [to the Common] over the week-ends and later throughout the school holidays' (p. 187). Once on the Common, they 'would find a pleasant spot under a tree and stretch themselves, interminably yarning the same old stories' (p. 87). The picture is remarkably similar to Milton's tale-telling shepherds relaxing in hawthorn glades, although Milton's is a literary trope where Corydon and Thyrsis themselves are likely to pop up at any moment, whereas *Times Like These* offers pastoral embedded in a material reality. A sense of rapport runs through the entire passage. While spaces still define gender — the women are at home, the men at large — there is a mutually understood benefit to both; fathers engage with their children and mothers have some small respite from care. On the Common, 'the kiddies of the different households, banded together, played without undue noise at the safe little brooks that ran along most of the hollows' (p. 187). Dog walkers 'ramble along in leisurely fashion' (p. 188), before gathering to 'discuss the points of dogs' (p. 188). Even their dogs appear to join them in a 'harmony of spirit' (p. 188). Whereas in *Cwmardy*, strikes are rendered through representations of male confrontation, agency and violence in villages, here the focus is on a quite different portrayal of masculinity in a verdant setting.

However, as Theocritus's *Idylls* illustrate, manual work is not absent in the pastoral world.⁴⁷ In *Times Like These*, the tree-felling in Chapter III, overseen by the appropriately named Theocritus Jones, uses elements of pastoralism to offer an alternative to the capitalist ethic and its impact on male identity formed through work.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Theocritus, *Idylls*: 'The Reapers': Idyll X: 'Good workmen think of nothing but their job'; and the unsentimental 'Idyll XXI': 'It is poverty alone breeds craftsmanship/ Diophantus; she teaches men to work': *Greek Pastoral Poetry*, trans. Anthony Holden (London: Penguin, 1974), pp. 85, 118.

In an *al fresco* space, distinctive features of male bonding are evident: masculine self-definition through physical strength; manual dexterity; collaborative effort; problem-solving; and intergenerational banter.

Although it is only Luke who is asked to help fell the tree, it presents a problem which interests and leads to the eventual participation of Luke, Luke's grandfather Evan Thomas, Oliver Biesty, Charlie and Ike Jones, Ben Fisher and Spot Oakman. The responses of Evan and his wife to the task are interestingly gendered. Sarah Anne asks, 'What do they want to pull the tree down for? What harm do a tree do? [...] Who'll be happier for it if they do pull down that tree?' (p. 41). Evan, however, is 'concerned more with the practical side of the tree-felling' (pp. 41-42), the difference between them being woman constructed as instinctive protector of the environment, man as agent in its shaping.

The passage isolates key signifiers of co-operative masculinity manifested within the context of the unified group. Each man has his own opinion of the best way to complete the task, and their hard-won experience as sensible working men is evident in their all having come to the same conclusion independently. One of the recurring features of the text is the deference shown by males to their elders (Mary Biesty being a significant, gendered, exception). Ike is anxious to get started, but 'Out of deference to Oliver's seniority' (p. 46) he seeks his opinion first. Deference to Oliver springs from an instinctive decorum here; it is demanded elsewhere by someone like Sir Hugh Thomas. As Judith Butler observes of a speech act: 'It is not simply that [it] takes place within a practice, but that the act itself is a ritualised practice.'⁴⁸

Whereas boisterous homosociality defines the lido episodes, here the emphasis is on identity revealed through a residual form of non-mechanised male strength and dexterity. Watching as Oliver 'chopped so beautifully' (p. 48), the educated Theocritus, spectator not participant, is rather less of a man — 'an

⁴⁸ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, p. 51.

ineffectual help' (p. 47) — than the others, and a bystander when the tree is eventually pulled down. The text makes an unmarked connection regarding somatic masculinity here between the cerebral Theocritus and the upper-middle-class Shelton, neither of whom is engaged in physical work. They both commune imaginatively with unambiguous inscriptions of physical masculinity, Shelton with the powerful rugby player, Skuse, and Theocritus with the manually dextrous Oliver. At the rugby international, Shelton subjects 'the rolling of muscles through [Skuse's] torso' (p. 119) to his admiring gaze and for a moment, 'Skuse was Shelton' (p. 119), and, watching Oliver as he 'chopped so beautifully', Theocritus 'felt like crying out' (p. 48). When he picks up 'a spotless chip and rubbed it between his fingers', he seeks a fleeting identification with Oliver, and a tactile communion with a piece of uncontaminated nature (p. 48).

When Ben Fisher and Spot Oakman appear and help fell the tree, the text illustrates how homosocial banter acts as 'an example of masculine style'.⁴⁹ On this occasion it features as an intergenerational ritual allowing young men to mock the status of their elders within mutually understood and accepted boundaries. It is another example of how decorum governs the text's representation of pastoral masculinities. Within a male group of differing ages but shared values, Ben's irrepressible self-confidence is liberated so that prevailing norms of decorum may be waived. His breezy comment to Theocritus, his former teacher, 'Time you were back in school, ain't it? I reckon I'll have to send Inspector Breeze to whip u in' (p. 49) is modulated by the respectful way he addresses the schoolmaster as 'Mr Jones' both before making the remark and again a moment later. When he eventually departs, leaving 'these here others to clear up the light stuff' (p. 50), it is significant that he does so, 'lost amidst the trees' (p. 50) and singing. Both details locate his masculinity within a tradition of implied classical pastoral: fauns were woodland spirits, and Ben's similarity to these mischievous beings, as noted above, is textually

⁴⁹ Anthony Easthope, *What A Man's Gotta Do*, p. 87.

acknowledged later (p. 209) — and, like the exuberant young man that Ben is, any number of pastoral figures sing in Theocritus's *Idylls*.⁵⁰

The entire occasion is marked by a free giving of time, a demonstration of skill and an exhibition of working-class male homosocializing. Oliver's reluctance to leave the job half-done — 'We can't leave him like this, though' — is interrupted by an approving textual judgement, 'The idea of an untidy job was hateful to Oliver'. Only then is he allowed to complete his comment: 'He wants a bit of trimming, naturally' (p. 50). The contrast here with the novel's opening sentence illustrates how deeply the critique of mechanised labour is embedded in *Times Like These*. Work in this pastoral context finishes when the job is completed to the participants' satisfaction. At the start of the novel, the miners' night shift finishes promptly when the 5.30 a.m. hooter blows. As Marx states of this kind of constraining framework, work becomes 'not the satisfaction of a need, but only a *means* of satisfying other needs',⁵¹ (original italics). When thanked by Theocritus, Oliver's simple reply carries the weight of a cultural *modus vivendi*: 'Not at all. A fellow don't mind helping' (p. 51).

Times Like These takes key elements of classical and neo-classical pastoral and relocates them within a specifically, and seemingly unlikely, Welsh industrial context. In doing so, the text reveals the enduring robustness of pastoral, and the powerful alternative to industrialized patriarchal masculinity it incorporates. It is through the prism of pastoral that the narrative offers a critique of capitalist reductionism where money is given precedence over human fellowship, where a Sir Hugh can advise a Shelton to cheer for Ben Fisher at a rugby international, 'and then go back to the Cwm like a sensible fellow and see if you can knock sixpence off [his] wages' (p. 115). It is an ethic where 'a sensible fellow' lives at odds with himself. The text's respect for generosity of spirit and honest dealing embodied in the

⁵⁰ See, for example, Theocritus' *Idylls*: 'The Singing Match'; Idyll VI, 'The Second Singing Match'; Idyll VIII, 'The Third Singing Match' IX: Anthony Holden, in *Greek Pastoral Poetry*, pp. 71-73; pp. 78-82; pp. 83-84.

⁵¹ Karl Marx, 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, in Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1961), p. 98.

residual values of men like Oliver is evident, too, in its depiction of the socially superior Shelton, who finds Sir Hugh's advice 'simple brigandage' (p. 115). The son of a landed family, Shelton embodies a link not only with enduring pastoral values in the novel, but offers a typology of masculinity at odds with the cruder inscriptions personified by patriarchal despots like Sir Hugh Thomas.

'The real thing': residual politeness and the masculinity of Denis Shelton.

Stephen Knight notes that *Times Like These*, unusually for Welsh mining fiction, constructs in Denis Shelton 'a sympathetic figure from the manager class'.⁵² The source of this sympathy, Knight suggests, is Shelton's respect for the miners and his dislike of their treatment by Sir Hugh Thomas, the mine owner. But if this were all, there would be no need for Shelton to be a scion of a landed Berkshire family. As with the miners of Jenkinstown, he embodies a textually inscribed residue of 'certain experiences, meanings and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture'.⁵³ In Shelton's case it is the weight of a residual tradition of pre-industrial genteel patriarchy which, like pastoral, is inimical to the values of laissez-faire capitalism.

Katie Gramich notes that, 'One can see in the decision of some writers to focus on non-Welsh subjects an inspiration deriving from an academic or scholarly interest (such as Professor Gwyn Jones's interest in English Augustanism)',⁵⁴ and it is that interest in Augustanism that informs Shelton's construction. Indeed, Jones's scholarly interest predates his rise to a university chair. Significantly, in 1935, a year before the publication of *Times Like These*, he had published *Richard Savage*, a

⁵² Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales, Press, 2004), p. 83.

⁵³ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 122.

⁵⁴ Katie Gramich, 'Both In and Out of the Game: Welsh Writers in the British Dimension', p. 256.

fictionalized biography of the eighteenth-century poet, philanderer and claimant to noble descent, in which Alexander Pope appears as a character and James Thomson is called as a defence witness at Savage's trial. Helen Yallop states that 'The hegemonic form of masculinity extant in this period [was] the "polite gentleman"',⁵⁵ and Shelton's identity, manoeuvred into an industrial context, is based on the modes, manners and values of the 'polite gentleman'. It is, therefore, no coincidence that both Oliver Biesty (p. 273) and Sir Hugh Thomas (p. 274) recognise Shelton as a 'gentleman', but with widely differing appreciations of the term's semantics.

Michael Bunce has commented that there was an inter-war cultural affection, nostalgia even, for 'pre-industrialized ways of living [...] a world in which social relations were defined by a benign rural class system'.⁵⁶ He refers to the 'proliferation of books articles and radio programmes on English country life and heritage',⁵⁷ in which 'National character [...] became associated with ancient rural virtue'.⁵⁸ Shelton's construction certainly reflects aspects of a cultural inter-war *zeitgeist* noted by Bunce but, as a close examination of the novel shows, he is no incarnation of a nebulous, romanticised history. He is, in fact, a modernised representation of a non-idealised Augustan 'gentleman', a 'man of sentiment', of refined sensibility and moral consciousness, shaped and modulated to the needs of the narrative he inhabits. As Stefan Collini reminds us:

sentiment as a derogatory term is a nineteenth-century usage — the eighteenth century had known a more favourable sense — and manliness

⁵⁵ Helen Yallop, *Age and Identity in Eighteenth-Century England* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 108.

⁵⁶ Michael Bunce, *The Countryside Ideal: Anglo-American Images of Landscape* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 50.

⁵⁷ Bunce, *The Countryside Ideal*, p. 53.

⁵⁸ Bunce, *The Countryside Ideal*, p. 53. Bunce notes that *In Search of England* (1927) by H. V. Morton, 'a rural myth-maker of the first order', ran to 12 editions by 1936. He notes, too, the popularity of a romanticised view of country life in novels of the time by writers like Sheila Kaye-Smith, Hugh Walpole and Mary Webb.

expressed a deep, possibly in some cases a revealingly pathological, aversion to this trait.⁵⁹

In Stefan Collini's distinction between the 'Georgian' sentiment of Shelton and the 'Victorian' manliness of Sir Hugh Thomas lies the fulcrum on which their figures are posited. *Times Like These* is, of course, set in a post-Victorian period, but residual 'Victorian values' of self-improvement through competitive endeavour permeated British consciousness until well into the twentieth century, and were the political credo of at least one post-war prime minister.⁶⁰ These cultural and historical differences are the *données* from which their textual significance emerges. For instance, Sir Hugh Thomas exhibits the masculine characteristic of stern, pragmatic self-control when he declares he will cheer any collier of his who scores a try in the rugby international the next day, but asserts that 'when he walks off the field, he walks out of my heart' (p. 115). Shelton, by contrast, exhibits his 'sentimentality' when, at the same match, he 'hoped Brimble [his chauffeur] was already in, for they would be closing the gates soon' (p. 117). Out of sight is not out of mind for Shelton. The incidents, seemingly tangential to the mainstream events of the novel, are significant because they encapsulate two radically opposed practices of masculine definition. As John Brewer states, the qualities of Georgian sentiment and politeness were not regarded as connoting a vapid lack of masculinity. Rather, they were among the markers that 'saw human affections [feelings] rather than reason or judgement as the basis of moral life'.⁶¹ As a representative of a later age, Sir Hugh Thomas regards Shelton's 'sentimentality and irresolution' (p. 287) as markers of an effete manhood.

⁵⁹ Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists*, p. 186. In his Introduction, Collini notes that with very few exceptions, his study 'includes no women, and the use of a male pseudonym by one of these [George Eliot] and the "correct" married form by the other [Mrs Humphrey Ward] may hint at some reasons for this' (p. 3). It is, he suggests, another example of the male-as-norm.

⁶⁰ The re-emergence of residual 'Victorian values' in the late twentieth century after the post-war, one-nation consensus is a modern instance of Raymond Williams's point that 'dominant' cultures incorporate 'residual' values where they suit their ideological purpose.

⁶¹ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 114.

One of the principal components of Georgian politeness was agreeable conversation, ideally in surroundings which were, as John Brewer notes, 'unquestionably convivial'.⁶² *Times Like These* is assiduous in distinguishing Shelton's discourse from that of his more aggressive colleagues. Sir Hugh's language is characterized by its patriarchal, abrasive energy. And so when he tells Shelton that violence lies at the heart of industrial relations because violence is 'human nature, and you can't change that' (p. 114), he naturalises brutality as the defining male signifier, unaware of the irony of speaking to someone whose very masculinity contradicts him. R. W. Connell notes the defining dominance of such discourse: 'Far from being a deviation from the social order, it is in a significant sense an enforcement of it'.⁶³ Shelton's discourse is 'residually' more accommodating, as an exchange with Broddam illustrates. Emerging from a trying meeting in Cardiff, he bumps into Broddam and asks on impulse:

'Have a drink?'
 'Yes, I will. I've got time.'
 'Thing I never do actually — drink in the daytime.'
 'No more do I,' said Broddam, laughing.
 'Is that really so?'
 'Yes.' They both laughed. 'Let's make it tea or coffee, shall we?'
 'Every time.'
 They had tea at the Kardomah, rather below Shelton's usual style. 'Decent little place,' he commented. 'Nice brown sugar for coffee, eh?' (p. 139).

The contrast with Sir Hugh's forthright dominance is immediately evident. A mutually satisfying agreement to avoid alcohol and, significantly, to visit a coffee house instead,⁶⁴ is negotiated through collaboration, compliance, self-confession and humour so that neither participant loses manly face, while Shelton's compliment on the choice of café reveals his sense of decorum, combining honest restraint with nicely judged praise.

⁶² John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, p.103.

⁶³ R. W. Connell, *Gender & Power*, p. 107.

⁶⁴ As John Brewer notes, coffee houses in the eighteenth century were 'a permeable public institution where familiars and strangers could make polite conversation': *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 41.

Shelton's relaxing with Broddam in what for him is a *déclassé* space, where he enjoys himself enough to order a second cup of coffee, is only one example of the text's practice of distinguishing him from his colleagues whose masculinities are defined solely through their hierarchical professional performativity.⁶⁵ Once again, the difference extends beyond the text's validation of Shelton as an individual to his representative status. The post-Romantic/modern axis saw, Collini notes:

a significant shift away from eighteenth-century ideas of the moral and cultural primacy of leisure. For the Georgian gentleman, and thus for all those who aspired to that status, the most prized human qualities could only be developed in the enjoyment of 'society' in the older meaning of the term.⁶⁶

One of Shelton's defining characteristics in the text is that although he is present at meetings with Sir Hugh, Henshaw and Webber, and discusses his work with his wife, he is seldom depicted as being at work in a day-to-day sense before the strike. He is, however, seen in more relaxed environments, most often at home with his wife, Louise, but also at the theatre, at the rugby match, where he likes 'the feel of a gathering crowd' (p. 117), and, as above, in a café with Broddam. And driving past groups of striking miners on the main street of Jenkinstown, he 'would have enjoyed being able to mix among them for a while to hear their views' (p. 165).

A 'sociable man' in the Augustan sense of the term,⁶⁷ he is at once far removed from the miners of the South Wales valleys, and yet discursively aligned with them in seeing engagement with others extending beyond the confining practice of commercial and industrial enterprise. Two differing examples illustrate the point. The first concerns the unlikely pairing of Shelton and Snooker Kelch in one significant and illuminating respect. The latter half of Chapter XV is devoted to the bare-fist fight between Snooker Kelch and Ben Fisher. Equally matched, it is

⁶⁵ The colliery agent Adam Smith-Tudor in *Until Our Blood is Dry* is similarly presented only at work, as is the ambitious miners' representative Ceri Griffiths in *Dark Edge*. Denying them any degree of intimacy features as an implied critique of their hegemonic masculinities, where their identities are defined by hierarchy, power and agency.

⁶⁶ Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists*, p. 105.

⁶⁷ See John Brewer: coffee houses, for instance, became 'key places in creating new cultural communities', *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 3.

Snooker who mistakenly believes he has won, that Ben is 'out on his feet'. His response is telling: 'If Ben's out, I 'ont hit the poor buckler' (p. 215). Early in the following chapter, Shelton expresses his disapproval of the brutal treatment miners can expect when the strike fails: 'It goes against the grain to hit a man when he's down, Louise, and that's what we are going to do' (p. 218). When he presses Sir Hugh to show magnanimity, he is rebuffed: 'It's the word fools use for weakness' (p. 225). Juxtaposing the two responses to a defeated opponent, the text connects two male figures, separated by class demotic, but united in a residual code of decent behaviour, which has no place in the world of an industrial patriarch like Sir Hugh Thomas, where you 'look out for yourself [...] and let the other fellow go hang' (p. 138).

Equally unlikely unifying correspondences between Shelton and the impoverished, unemployed miner Luke Biesty further act as a binding agent in the novel, constructing characters separated by class, but diverging from male-empowered industrialised patriarchy. The intimacy with which Shelton relates to his wife Louise is of a piece with his 'sentimentality': 'His vanity was satisfied by his wife's perfection' (p. 239), while she believes 'He was a husband in a million' (p. 89). The text's discursive ennobling of Luke's devotion to Olive is equally effusive: 'Knights less tongue-tied have dedicated themselves to service without reward, but few more sincerely than he' (p. 141). Shelton's 'sentimental' devotion to Louise and Luke's knight-like wish to serve Olive contrast with that of the 'new-made knight' (p. 274) Sir Hugh Thomas, for whom the notion of service without reward is sheer folly.

Ben Knights states that, 'Intimacy is so threatening to the jealously bounded identity that the only way of coping with it is to retain intellectual and emotional distance even when physical intimacy is taking place'.⁶⁸ But in Shelton and Luke, *Times Like These* remarkably constructs two figures whose wives are not adjuncts to their lives, but inhere to form their complete identity. As so often in *Times Like These*,

⁶⁸ Ben Knights, *Writing Masculinities*, p. 127.

juxtaposed passages are used to identify thematic contrasts and correspondences. With Shelton and Luke they fuse both the emotional similarities and material differences between the two figures. After a visit to the theatre with his wife and daughter, where they had 'extremely good seats' (p. 239), Shelton and Louise retire 'to Louise's room very happy', the text implying that physical intimacy will follow (p. 240). Immediately following this passage, and set on the same evening, the text focuses on Luke and Olive, who walk home from the cinema 'their eightpence spent'. Lying in bed, 'they experienced a complete tenderness and joy in each other', as they chastely bond through small talk (p. 240).

Positioned to represent male values located within a modernized concept of the eighteenth-century gentleman, where 'politeness embodied an idea of what the true gentleman [...] should be',⁶⁹ Shelton incarnates a trenchant criticism of divisive patriarchal capitalism. Given to a belief in 'fair play, consideration, magnanimity', which Sir Hugh dismisses as 'irritating catch-words' (p. 275), he fails to perform a satisfactory modern masculinity. 'Conciliatory in spirit' (p. 74), Shelton understands that he 'wasn't the man for a job like this' (p. 89) in the pits, and knows that he is regarded with contempt by his fellow managers. And so he is manoeuvred by the events of the narrative into a personal and ideological impasse where the principles of private self conflict with expectations of public role. It is an impasse which confronts the figures of Len Roberts in *Cwmardy*, D. J. Williams in *Strike for a Kingdom* and Edwin Bowles in *Dark Edge*, whose masculinities it defines. Whereas they strive to negotiate their own resolutions, *Times Like These* resolves the problem for Shelton. In a piece of textual sleight-of-hand, Jim, Shelton's elder brother and owner of the estate, becomes Louise's 'god out of the machine' (p. 274), when the text activates what Raymond Williams calls 'the inheritance plot'.⁷⁰ Jim's timely

⁶⁹ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 100.

⁷⁰ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 176.

death, notably in Georgian Bath, enables her to escape from the valley she detests and allows Shelton:

to take over a fair-sized estate, on which they could live almost as well without salary as with salary at the Gate House. Besides, it was the sort of place they could always let (p. 274).

The significance of the device extends beyond simple plot resolution, however, for it re-connects Shelton with a space in which the 'residual' values of preindustrial patriarchy and pastoral retreat conflate to become 'dominant' values. The text demonstrates, however, that the values he embodies as a 'gentleman' influence the 'emergent' masculinity of Broddam.

Broddam: 'observing and learning' — and performing; emergent masculinity and the problematic of identity

Like Shelton, Broddam merits only a passing reference in James A. Davies's 1987 article 'Kinds of Relating', and none at all in his 2000 essay 'Two Strikes and You're Out' on representations of the 1926 and 1984 strikes in fiction,⁷¹ while in Tony Brown's appreciation of Gwyn Jones, he is simply 'a successful businessman'.⁷² This section argues that Broddam's presence is crucial to the formal patterning of masculinities in *Times Like These*. The striking miners, Denis Shelton and even the three hegemonic bosses are located within recognisable paradigms of cultural and historical practice and identity. This is not the case with Broddam, who embodies what Raymond Williams calls 'the complications of improvement'.⁷³ A dedicated self-improver inhabiting the more fluidly defined world of business and commerce, he is a study in the deracinated, emergent self. In Broddam, *Times Like These* articulates a version of the predicament of a modern man, lacking a centre, socially liminal, a

⁷¹ James A. Davies, "'Two Strikes and You're Out': 1926 and 1984 in Welsh Industrial Fiction", in *British Industrial Fictions*, ed. H. Gustav Klaus and Stephen Knight (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), pp. 137-147.

⁷² Tony Brown, 'Separate, different, individual', 22.

⁷³ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 117.

hybridised, anglicised figure, confident and successful in his business identity, secretive, and emotionally suppressed in his personal relations.

Broddam's business career reads like the trouble-free *cursus honorum* of the successful self-made man. The son of a Chepstow plumber, he has progressed from starting a small bus company in Jenkinstown and working as a driver himself alongside 'mechanics and men with bits of dribbled candle in their baskets' (p. 124), to controlling the Gridd County Services from Newport. By the end of the narrative, he will have moved to London to a senior managerial post in the London Pan-Centric Transport Board. As Shelton says, 'He must be a born business man, the way he's got on' (p. 111). Yet the novel's disparaging reference to his fellow 'mechanics and men' hints that Broddam's ambition to rise in business is accompanied by and arguably indivisible from his determination to rise in the class hierarchy.

As an ambitious figure, Broddam's cultural significance resonates beyond his relatively few appearances in the text. In this he is like his secretary, the ambitious Mary Biesty. But whereas the text consigns her, as a woman, to recognisably subordinated clerical roles and a clearly defined identity in a male-dominated world, the methodology of Broddam's construction differs from that of any other character in the novel. The constituents of his occluded, liminal self are offered in the text by veiled indirection. A seemingly innocuous detail of his birth county as Monmouthshire (as with Gwyn Jones himself), a county neither entirely Welsh nor English at the time, hints at a figure who himself occupies an undefined space. A brief exchange with his secretary, Mary, when he asks her if she would consider working in London, resonates with subtextual pointers regarding the problematic of self-improvement. Her excitement at the prospect does not surprise him, but:

'There are your people, of course', he warned, with the wisdom of his early days. 'How would you feel about it, Miss Biesty?'
'If I can have the job, I'll go, Mr Broddam!'
'Your people?' (p. 220).

His use of the high-status colloquialism 'people' rather than the more usual 'family'⁷⁴ insinuates into the text his ambition to climb the class ladder by appropriating the diction of the 'polite' class, a point discussed more fully in later paragraphs. Removal from his family and his background was, the text tantalisingly implies, not friction-free, and he has not forgotten its psychic abrasion, as his warning to Mary indicates. But while the text shares the insight with the reader, Broddam is unable to position his warning to her on a more personal level. In one respect, his formal restraint is at one with the times, but the text later implies that his fear of exposure springs from his insecure identity.

Raymond Williams writes that the 'emergent' in society 'depends crucially on finding new forms or adaptations of forms'.⁷⁵ As suggested earlier, Broddam adapts and adopts the traditional mode of the 'gentleman', expressed through speech and manners, as a means of anchoring what for him appears, in Anthony

Giddens's terms, as a 'consistent "mode of being" [that] relates future to past';⁷⁶ not his own past, but the past as defined by the notion of the 'gentleman' and embodied in the figure of Denis Shelton. Instead, he achieves only the quiet desperation of inauthenticity.

His acquaintance with the Sheltons is crucial in his strategy of self-formation. In his upward trajectory, he realises that 'the difficulty' lies in achieving acceptance into a higher social echelon, getting to know 'the sort of people who knew the sort of people he had little expectation of knowing' (p. 124). The astute and snobbish Louise Shelton recognises his ambition immediately: 'he was a man who, as he rose from one grade of society to another, always had his eyes upon the one above, observing and learning' (p. 116). For him, the acquaintance of the Sheltons, who belong to a

⁷⁴ The term 'people' in Caradoc Evans's *My People* (1915) signifies a collective with shared cultural assumptions and practices. It was also an English upperclass colloquialism for family, as Broddam clearly uses it here. See also John Mortimer, *Paradise Postponed* (London: Viking, 1985), p. 107.

⁷⁵ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p.124.

⁷⁶ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 48.

‘superior social layer’ (p. 124), is an invaluable resource for what Giddens calls ‘the appropriation of mediated information’.⁷⁷ They offer not only the tantalising prospect of entrée into a ‘superior social layer’, but crucially the opportunity to observe and strive to acquire the modes, manners and speech congruent with ‘polite’ behaviour. What *Times Like These* embeds in the figure of Broddam, however, is the conflict between authenticity and self-formation. Once again the text harks back to historical precedent. Whereas Shelton easily combines characteristics of Georgian ‘politeness’ and ‘sentiment’, the one a performative display of the civilised self, the other ‘a feeling whose value did not depend upon its being observed by others’, Broddam’s ‘politeness’ is a form of behaviour ‘intended to impress others rather than spontaneously generated’.⁷⁸

Fifty years after *Times Like These* was published, John Mortimer’s *Paradise Postponed* (1985) similarly exposed how deeply embedded was the continuing ‘soft power’ of class gradation in the ambitious figure of Leslie Titmuss, as he contends with the snobberies of young Conservatives.⁷⁹ Broddam’s trajectory is radically different from that of Titmuss, his character is not repellant as Titmuss’s, and his friends the Sheltons are more sympathetic. But the comparison is instructive because both he and Titmuss are in the business of self-transformation. For Titmuss, like Broddam, a career arc is inseparable from the acquisition of socially validated gender and linguistic signifiers, but his clumsy use of high-status discourse, like ‘awfully’ as in ‘awfully nice to meet you’, ‘a frightfully jolly party’, and ‘a fellow’ rather than a man or person, are greeted with snobbish mockery.⁸⁰

The text’s strategy in fashioning Broddam’s inauthentic masculinity acknowledges his constant anxiety about exposure. As Anthony Giddens notes, in

⁷⁷ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 188.

⁷⁸ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 117.

⁷⁹ John Mortimer, *Paradise Postponed*, p. 107.

⁸⁰ Mortimer, *Paradise Postponed*, pp. 106-109, for example.

the 'reflexive project of the self, the narrative of self-identity is inherently fragile',⁸¹ and Broddam 'feared to make himself look ridiculous, and so was wary' (p. 124). However, the novel dramatises that anxiety most notably not through his acquaintance with the Sheltons, where he has Denis Shelton's ease of manner to set the tone, nor with Mary Biesty where their respective work roles are defined, but with Mary Biesty when they meet by accident at Newport train station, he catching a train to London for Christmas, she returning home from her new job there (pp. 254-256). Aside from brief, suggestive incursions by the narrative voice, the passage is rendered in direct speech, so that the de-centred strands of Broddam's masculinity are both implied through discursive indirection and are textually incremental.

Mary is hardly a stranger to him, and their association with each other, the text tantalisingly suggests throughout, is not without a suppressed mutual attraction, thwarted by her gendered hesitation in making the first move, and his existential fear of exposure through commitment. He quickly observes with approval that her accent has 'improved' and that 'her clothes were more stylish and yet in good taste' (p. 255). Where she is concerned, he is a man who notices such things. But bereft of a suitable medium of informal discourse for such an occasion, which a Shelton would manage more assuredly, his only resource is staid formality as a means of defence. His stilted lexis has all the decorous signifiers appropriated later by a Leslie Titmuss. He exclaims, "Good heavens' on seeing Mary; it is 'Splendid!' that she likes it in London. He is impressively modest and painstakingly self-deprecating when she thanks him for help getting her the job there: 'It was very little to do, really. You are quite settled now, of course'. As it is Christmas, 'There are fearful crowds about'.

Broddam's employment of stylised discourse with high-status connotations is complemented by his over-punctilious manners at the same meeting. Mary Biesty is a strong-minded young woman, yet he treats her like the archetype of helpless maidenhood, taking protective control of the direction of the meeting. Because of the

⁸¹ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 185.

crowds, he will 'see that you get a seat all right' on the bus home. When he asks if she is being met, he immediately corrects himself for such presumption with 'Or am I being very rude to ask?' Assured that neither is the case, he politely insists that '[you] must let me get you a cup of coffee'. And afterwards, although Mary has been capable of boarding a train from London to Cardiff and dealing with 'fearful crowds' herself, 'He took her the short distance to the bus station' to get the bus to Jenkinstown. Once there, he performs for her the role of dominant male and assures her that 'You'll get home quite safely now', although she has expressed no anxiety about the matter.

Norman Fairclough argues that, 'having access to prestigious sorts of discourse and powerful subject positions enhances publicly acknowledged status and authority'.⁸² However, through Broddam's stilted sociolect, so different from the ease of Shelton's expression, the text constructs him as a de-centred masculinity aping a style that he feels confirms his status in a class-conscious society. However, as Raymond Williams observes of such performative modes: 'What they exclude may often be seen as the personal or the private'.⁸³ Even within the more regulated social decorums of the 1920s, Broddam's excessive formality indicates his need to control the interpersonal register of the meeting. But in keeping with its strategy throughout his construction, the text also offers veiled suggestions of the tensions between his protective wall of formality and the tug of his desire for greater intimacy. Mary's presence pleases him, but in inviting her for coffee he thinks that 'he was not acting wisely; but he dismissed it' (p. 255). When she hopes that he enjoys himself in London, what is little more than phatic communion 'rather pleased him' (p. 255), and when he bids her farewell, his effusive comment 'It's been very, very nice to meet you once more' (p. 256), indicates both the pleasure he finds in her company, and the hesitation he feels about the wisdom of meeting her again. Having seen her onto

⁸² Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 3rd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p. 90.

⁸³ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 125.

the bus, his self-control dominates, and 'she saw him turn at once towards the station', out of her sight and out of the novel.

As it does elsewhere, the text resorts to juxtaposition to make its gendered point. In the paragraph immediately following their farewells, Mary comes under the less complicated gaze of the bus conductor: 'Smart piece, he thought appreciatively' (p. 256). The switch defines two forms of masculinity through diverging narrative approaches: the interiorising of a minor, unnamed character, and a form of masculinity constructed through ambiguity and indirection to replicate for the reader the experience of reading Broddam's own repressed identity.

Broddam adds a significant dimension both to the forms of masculinity represented in *Times Like These* and the text as a study in the historical and cultural precariousness of emergent identity in South Wales. Acutely aware of the dangers involved in self-formation, he is a figure existing within an insecure negotiation of self, fearful of being 'found out'. Erich Fromm writes of the individual who 'adopts the kind of personality offered to him by cultural patterns',⁸⁴ and the pattern Broddam chooses is the English gentleman as represented in the text by Denis Shelton. But adoption is not the equivalent of assimilation. In Broddam, *Times Like These* unsentimentally constructs a bleak picture of the ambitious Anglo-Welshman, an emergent masculinity, seemingly confident but without a stabilised emotional identity, a simulacrum rather than a successful hybrid. It is a challenge Edwin Bowles will face in *Dark Edge*, a novel written sixty years later. As for Broddam, a Judith Butler comment positions him as a 'shadow' masculinity in which:

Practices of parody can serve to reengage and reconsolidate the very distinction between a privileged and naturalised gender configuration, and one that appears as derived, phantasmic and mimetic — a failed copy.⁸⁵

It is Shelton, we remember, whom Broddam regards as 'the real thing' (pp. 123-124).

⁸⁴ Erich Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom* (London: Routledge, 1960), p. 160: quoted by Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 191.

⁸⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 200.

Conclusion

This chapter has proposed that the qualified critical praise accorded *Times Like These* has resulted from reading the text as a fragmented industrial novel lacking passion and consistency. James A. Davies acknowledges that it has some fine episodes, but feels that it suffers from a 'lack of vision'.⁸⁶ A gender-specific approach, however, shifts the focus from the visionary to the representational, from the ideologically desired to the pragmatically observed. This chapter's analysis of Sir Hugh Thomas, Henshaw and Webber has addressed the novel's trenchant criticism of patriarchal masculinity as reductive, hypocritical and even pathologically disturbed. But a gender-specific study has also revealed a wider, historicised examination of South Wales masculinities during a decade characterised by paradoxes and contradictions, insecurity both individual and cultural, aspiration both individual and communal, industrial unrest and communal stability. The competing elements of the novel's discourse inscribe and reflect the differentiated masculine formations of the age in which it is set, but sets them in a historical perspective that both shapes and reflects the culture it presents. Pierre Macherey's view of the genesis of a text, that, 'it is a figure against a background of other formations, depending on them rather than contrasting with them'⁸⁷ is instructive in reading *Times Like These*. Its masculinities are formed not only within the particular circumstances of their own time, but embody modifications, adaptations and attempted assimilations of patterns of male identities, whether consciously selected or not, reaching from the past to inform the present.

Accordingly, this chapter has moved away from reading *Times Like These* premised on the expectation of a formalised text depicting masculinity through

⁸⁶ James A. Davies, 'Kinds of Relating', p. 74.

⁸⁷ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, p. 53.

industrial confrontation. Instead, it positioned the novel's diverging masculine discourses within a larger social frame of what Raymond Williams has called 'the complexity of a culture', where recognition of 'the internal dynamic relations of any actual process' is essential to its understanding.⁸⁸ Williams's terms for this process, the 'dominant', 'residual' and 'emergent', opened a pathway for this chapter in analysing how the masculinities in *Times Like These* expose profound differences in masculine construction, but have also shown how, within the dynamic of history, elements of the residual are incorporated into dominant and emergent masculinities, and how the residual in one context becomes the dominant or the emergent in another in an ongoing process of historical movement. And so, the chapter has shown how the 'residual' values of the past not only shape the aspirations of the 'emergent' businessman Broddam, but also of the dominant patriarch Sir Hugh Thomas, the 'new-made knight' (p. 274), whose contempt for Denis Shelton's 'residual' values does not reject the gloss of a 'residual' title. Equally, when Shelton returns to his country estate, the textual implication is that in a pastoral rather than industrial setting his 'residual' values have an opportunity to become 'dominant', if necessarily localised.

Because Shelton's presence in the novel has attracted little critical attention, the significance of his residually 'Georgian' function has passed largely unnoticed, but this chapter sees it as an essential element in the novel's gender representation. References to classical and Renaissance pastoral, however, have prompted criticism which this chapter has challenged. Taken together, Denis Shelton's neo-Georgian benevolent patriarchy and the miners' pastoral collectivism extend their textual function beyond a specific critique of industrial exploitation by representing them as forms of masculinity within lengthy historical traditions. In doing so, *Times Like These* adopts a doubly retrospective viewpoint. Written in the decade after the events it describes, it reaches further into the past for its animating ideas of two

⁸⁸ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 121.

differing though not oppositional forms of masculinity, the Georgian and the pastoral. Tempered by their historic positioning, they exhibit a stability of identity under constant challenge from the institutionalised hegemonies of Hugh Thomas, Henshaw and Webber, but of inestimable value in themselves. Shelton's disappearance from the novel does not inscribe the end of the values he embodies for they survive, if only as an aspiration, as part of Broddam's gender acquisition.

Times Like These's wide representation of class-based masculinities, inflected by its breadth of historical perspective, distinguishes it from Lewis Jones's *Cwmardy*, published a year later. Whereas *Times Like These* celebrates the physical masculinity of its pit workers through a pastoral continuum of collaborative endeavour, *Cwmardy* exposes the physical masculinity required of its pit workers as an exploited commodity in Jim Roberts, and as an example of a suffocating patriarchal paradigm in his physically feeble son. It is arguable that the juxtaposition of the novels' publications has privileged the immediate drama of one over the 'more distanced' voice of the other,⁸⁹ rather than celebrating by their very differences the rich historical complexities of Valleys' mining narratives, and the masculinities they encode.

⁸⁹ Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. 84.

Chapter Two

Genre and the Tribulations of Masculinity in *Cwmardy* (1937)

Introduction

Cwmardy's panoramic opening paragraph presents a motionless lone male resembling a 'Wild West desperado', whose eyes 'roam over the splendour of the mountain landscape', of which he seems ineluctably a part, as 'a soft breeze' plays on his manly chest.¹ Introduced by his colloquial alias, Big Jim, he is immediately positioned outside the conformities of 'civil servants and army authorities'. A slight change of perspective in the second paragraph discovers a small boy standing nearby, looking at him. This *tableau vivant* then gives way to cinematic action as the man turns, and spits 'a large mass of tobacco-stained saliva'. What does this uncouth spitting signify? — mere habit, contempt, a disregard for polite convention? In which unidentified landscape is this scene taking place? Who is Big Jim? The novel reveals him to be a Welsh miner. When his eyes roam the mountain, they seek re-connection with his distant past: 'the days long ago, when I did used to walk the fields of the North before I came down here to work in the pits' (p. 1). Meanwhile, the boy, his young son, strains his eyes wonderingly seaward, and 'vainly tried to magnify the black spots that dotted the ribbony gleam' of the waters (p. 2).

For a novel which, according to a critic like Carole Snee, privileges 'the shared experience of the collective life',² *Cwmardy*'s impressive opening focuses instead on the consciousness of two distinctive individuals. With enviable

¹ Lewis Jones, *Cwmardy* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1937; reissued 1978). All future references, unless otherwise stated, are to the 1978 edition.

² Carole Snee, 'Working-Class Literature or Proletarian Writing', in *Culture and Crisis in Britain in the 1930s*, ed. Jon Clark (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1974), pp. 165-191 (p. 182).

economy, the text emphasises their inner, unique selves, but also their shared sense of yearning. Despite his renegade appearance, the ‘pensively motionless’ (p. 1) Big Jim reflects wistfully on the freedom of a past recollected but irrecoverable, while Len hungers for wider prospects, both visual and imagined, expressed through his rapt fascination with an alluring distant horizon. ‘The desire to change places’, writes Jane Tompkins, ‘also signals a powerful need for self-transformation’,³ a need thwarted by the coercive power of industrial capitalism, economic exploitation and the mechanisation of the human. When the text returns the figures to their village, the perspective narrows further still as their bodies become irradiated by the ‘palpitating throb of the pit engines’ (p. 4). Like R. S. Thomas’s Cynddylan on his tractor, they then become ‘part of the machine’,⁴ as *Cwmardy* shifts its focus from the introspective, individual human to the corporately structured functionary. By doing so, the narrative prepares itself to examine how male characters are decentred, rendered emotionally intransitive and fragmented by an industrial capitalism whose ‘purpose,’ argues Steve Bodington, ‘is not a human purpose’.⁵

Published in the same year as *Cwmardy*, George Orwell’s *The Road to Wigan Pier* famously distinguishes coal mining from other work as ‘an almost superhuman job by the standard of an ordinary person’, and miners themselves as characterised by ‘their most noble bodies; wide shoulders, tapering to slender supple waists, and small pronounced buttocks and sinewy thighs’.⁶ In lauding miners’ exceptionalism, Orwell collectivises them into an iconic homogeneity centred on their bodies. For Raymond Williams, such generalising

³ Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 4.

⁴ R. S. Thomas, ‘Cynddylan on a Tractor’, *Selected Poems*, ed. Anthony Thwaite (London: J. M. Dent, 1996), p. 23.

⁵ Steve Bodington, ‘The Political Morality of Work’, in *The Achilles Heel Reader: Men, Sexual Politics and Socialism*, ed. Victor J. Seidler (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 176-182 (p. 178).

⁶ George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London: Penguin, 1986), pp.18-31 (p.18).

has an obverse face, where collectivised identity accommodates a 'political formula by means of which it seems possible to convert the majority of one's fellow human beings into masses'.⁷ *Cwmardy* challenges this humanly degrading 'political formula' by emphasising how the individual predicament of the working-class male is a subject worthy of intense fictional examination.⁸ Because *Cwmardy* is generally read, when it is read at all, as a doctrinal text, the literary merit required to effect this examination is largely marginalised.⁹ David Bell, for instance, regards it as his critical duty 'to explicate the doctrinal message of the novel'.¹⁰ This chapter begins from the premise that *Cwmardy* is the product of a novelist engaging through his own complex, fissured self with an economic enterprise requiring humanly reductive, individually corrosive and morally pernicious masculine conformity. It is a novel, as Aidan Byrne says, 'of loss and alienation rather than of transformation and settlement'.¹¹ The estrangement examined in this chapter is not the alienation of the worker from his work, but the male individual estranged from himself when confronted by the limiting paradigms of coercive gender definition.

Read through this optic, Jim Roberts is a victim, not a hero. *Cwmardy* examines how his fragile sense of superior 'otherness', nurtured by his experience as a soldier of Empire, requires the repression of his empathetic self so that he might continually demonstrate his difference from/superiority to other men. It is this need that governs his identity. Len Roberts sits at the opposite

⁷ Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (London: Penguin, 1961), pp. 289-290.

⁸ *Cwmardy*, for David Smith, reveals the external pressure on a community because it focuses 'so sharply on the local, on individuals and on the detail of their lives' — *Lewis Jones* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press on behalf of the Welsh Arts Council, 1982), p. 42.

⁹ Alyce von Rothkirch, for example, tentatively suggests that 'its quality as literature is [...] difficult to answer'. 'Liberty and the Party-Line: "Novelising" Working-class History in Lewis Jones's *Cwmardy* and *We Live* (1937 and 1939)', pp. 81-101 (p. 84).

¹⁰ David Bell, *Ardent Propaganda: Miners' Novels and Class Conflict 1929-1939* (Uppsala: Swedish Science Press, 1995) p. 96.

¹¹ Aidan Byrne, *Representations of Masculinity in Four 1930s Welsh Novels in English*, p. 107.

end of the masculine spectrum from his father. Physically frail, traumatised when young by the death of a sister for whom he felt a confused, transgressive love, he finds a public identity as a miners' representative that is incompatible with the novel's insistence on his passivity and 'temperamental unsociability' (p. 232). Experiencing alienation from the powerful forms of masculinity around him, beset by what *Cwmardy* tantalisingly describes as a never-satisfied 'vague emotional hunger' (p. 2), and a prey to his vivid, destabilising imagination, he self-deludingly believes he has fashioned himself into a stabilised class activist by the close of the novel. By distinguishing the two individuals so clearly, *Cwmardy* transcribes a gender arc exhibiting how thoroughly the co-ordinates of somatic masculinity are propagated, nurtured and percolated through a dominant patriarchal culture to the economic and organisational benefit of those who disseminate them and the individual detriment of those required to enact them.

Pierre Macherey's contention that a literary work is 'never entirely premeditated; or rather it is, but at several levels at once, without deriving monolithically from a unique and simple conception',¹² presents a frame for reading *Cwmardy* beyond the 'unique and simple conception' of the text's declared aim: 'to "novelise" [...] a phase of working-class history'.¹³ Instead, as this chapter argues, *Cwmardy* creates a hybrid form to which the generics of *Bildungsroman*, veiled autobiography, socio-political history, and family saga are manipulated and contribute in a dynamic, if fragmented, form. Furthermore, the novel recognises the power of metonymic suggestion in a realistic text, and maps symbolic significance onto key sites associated with Len's role as *Bildung*, as will be discussed later. John Docker states that 'Genres are open fields of possibility,

¹² Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, p. 41.

¹³ *Cwmardy*, 'Foreword', n. p.

not closed books of fixed discursive meaning',¹⁴ and it is *Cwmardy*'s willingness to engage with a diversity of genres in examining the Valleys' experience of industrial masculinity that generates its distinctive voice and its challenge to prevailing literary orthodoxies. It exposes two fallacies that Macherey argues bind 'literary criticism to ideology [...] the fallacy of the rules, the fallacy of harmony'.¹⁵ Two components of the novel's hybridity — its elements of veiled autobiography and its adaptation of the *Bildungsroman* — are central to this chapter's discussion of fissured masculinity in the novel as a whole and Len in particular, and are addressed in the following section.

'His eyes were soft with unshed tears': Diverging masculinities, converging sensibilities in Lewis Jones and Len Roberts

In the formal hybridising of *Cwmardy*, writes Rolf Meyn, 'proletarian fictional autobiography and proletarian *Bildungsroman* overlap'.¹⁶ While recognising the confluence of these two generic streams in Meyn's argument, this section maps a different perspective on their contribution to Len's masculine construction. In considering *Cwmardy* as fictionalised autobiography, Meyn places his emphasis on 'the close resemblance' of Lewis Jones to Len in their career trajectories where, somewhat fortuitously it would appear, Len's eventual death in Spain (in *We Live*) is 'almost prophetic' of Jones's own early death. Furthermore, Meyn continues, there is also 'some psychological connection between Jones's

¹⁴ John Docker, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 221.

¹⁵ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, p. 101.

¹⁶ Rolf Meyn, 'Lewis Jones's *Cwmardy* and *We Live*: Two Welsh Proletarian Novels in Transatlantic Perspective', in *British Industrial Fictions*, ed. H. Gustav Klaus and Stephen Knight (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000) pp. 124-136 (p. 128). Bert Coombe's *These Poor Hands: The Autobiography of a Miner Working in South Wales* is probably the best-known example of fictionalised autobiography emerging from the interwar South Wales Coalfield: (London: Victor Gollancz, 1939, repr. University of Wales Press, 2011). See also *B. L. Coombes*, Bill Jones and Chris Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), especially pp. 47-48.

illegitimacy and the familial structures in the novel'.¹⁷ Stephen Knight brings a different approach to *Cwmardy* as veiled autobiography. He detects features of the *roman à clef*, where 'the title *Cwmardy* has a general, even allegorical effect, referring to the mining town of Maerdy', and the characters are as symbolic as the title 'where 'Len has the role of Lewis Jones', and Ezra Jones seems 'to combine aspects of Mabon with Noah Rees'.¹⁸

Of more relevance to this chapter than identifying specific autobiographical patterns within the novel's carpet is Lewis Jones's interest in Len's complex, insecure masculinity. Following Freud, R. W. Connell writes that the 'sense of the fragility of adult masculinity [is] founded on the tragic encounter between desire and culture'.¹⁹ Len's tragic encounter between the 'desire' generated by his hypersensitive unsociability and the material impositions on him of his 'culture' are, this chapter argues, imaginatively generated elaborations and explorations of the same tensions between 'desire and culture', the inner and outer self that exist in Lewis Jones himself. It is in this arena that the depiction of Len as a form of autobiographical exposition becomes most fruitful, for it replaces the autobiographical novel as a series of detectable and determinate correspondences, with autobiography as contributing to a creatively expansive, fictional exploration of cultural coercion generated by personal experience. In the words of John Pikoulis, *Cwmardy* becomes 'a more complicated work than the reference to "novelising" life in Jones's preface might imply',²⁰ for as much as it is a novel of political commitment, it becomes also an enquiry, through the

¹⁷ Rolf Meyn, 'Lewis Jones's *Cwmardy* and *We Live*', p. 128.

¹⁸ Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. 86. William Abraham (1842 –1922), known by his bardic name 'Mabon', was an influential Welsh miners' leader. Noah Rees was a member of the Cambrian Combine Committee that led the miners in their 1910-1911 strikes against the Cambrian group of collieries.

¹⁹ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 12.

²⁰ John Pikoulis, 'Lewis Jones', in *Anglo-Welsh Review*, 74 (1983), 62-71 (p. 66).

characterisation of Len, into an extreme form of liminal, conflicted masculinity unusual, if not unique, in anglophone Welsh industrial fiction.

However, stating that Len is no simple mirror image of Lewis Jones is critical to reading *Cwmardy* as a creative novel. Readings privileging either its ideological or autobiographical axis undervalue its literary value. Len is no fictional *doppelgänger* of Jones, who was more gregarious than Len, and displayed an uncontroversially male ability to dominate public space.²¹ Unlike Len, he was something of ‘a man’s chap’,²² assiduously cultivating a bravura image of the rakishly engaging male. (A tantalisingly suggestive diary entry for 1930, for instance, records how he ‘Went on Randy’).²³ However, his masculine performativity co-existed with an expressive emotionalism of which unrestrained adult tears, similar to Len’s, were a visual and recurring feature.²⁴ The most striking aspect of Lewis Jones’s character according to his friend Billy Griffiths was not his carefully cultivated jauntiness, nor a conventionally masculine rationality expressed through abstract political dogma,²⁵ nor a dashing iconoclasm, but an acute sensibility. In an interview with Hywel Francis, Griffiths stated that Lewis Jones’s principal quality was:

love of people and compassion. I have seen Lewis [...] sitting down listening to two old people telling him about their troubles and tears running down his cheek.²⁶

²¹ Hywel Francis, ‘Foreword’, *Cwmardy* and *We Live*, Library of Wales series (Cardigan: Parthian, 2006): Jones, ‘enjoyed the company of men and women’, unpaginated.

²² John Pikoulis, ‘Lewis Jones’, 63.

²³ Lewis Jones’s diary entry, 1930, microfiche, South Wales Miners’ Library, University of Swansea.

²⁴ He was, Gwyn Thomas remarked, ‘like explosive in the mind’; cited by David Smith, *Lewis Jones*, p. 9.

²⁵ Ross Poole, for instance, argues that to be a masculine subject requires an intent ‘to aspire to the norms of rational thought and action’: ‘Modernity, Rationality and “the Masculine”’, in *Feminine/Masculine and Representation*, ed. Terry Threadgold and Anne Cranny-Francis (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), pp. 48-60 (p. 48).

²⁶ Billy Griffiths, interview with Hywel Francis, 1969, South Wales Miners’ Library, unpublished archive. Francis includes a longer section of the interview in his Foreword to the omnibus Library of Wales edition of *Cwmardy—We Live* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2006), n. p.

It is from the tensions peculiar to Lewis Jones's own masculinity, between eros and agape, Communist theory and humanist practice, passionate oratory and lachrymose sensibility, 'man's chap' and creative novelist — 'Writing was not a proper job for a man like him', declares Pikoulis²⁷ — that the fissured character of Len Roberts springs and which constitutes the novel's most intriguing autobiographical focus. To extend what Pikoulis states,²⁸ valuing *Cwmardy* as an historical document misplaces its achievement in creating a hypersensitive masculinity in an arena where mental and physical resilience were the expected and revered norms.

Such a focused, intense representation required a reformulation of the *Bildungsroman* which drives Len's narrative. The traditional *Bildungsroman* articulates the bourgeois conception of the autonomous figure, the 'emergent self', who progresses toward full self realisation through an exercise of the will. In *Cwmardy*, the overarching power of capitalism reduces, even obliterates individual autonomy so that individual uniqueness becomes irrelevant to the industrial process and progressive integration of self with self becomes virtually impossible. As the political theorist Steve Bodington states: 'Human individuality is "noise" disrupting the harmony of capital as organiser'.²⁹ In order to reinstate the tragedy of the unique individual amid such 'noise', *Cwmardy* utilises the *Bildungsroman*'s consoling assumption of individual progression toward fullness of self to expose it as a myth.

Susan Rubin Suleiman points out 'that we may define a story of apprenticeship (of *Bildung*) as two parallel transformations undergone by the protagonist: first, a transformation from *ignorance* (of self) to *knowledge* (of self); second, a transformation from *passivity* to *activity*', (original italics).

²⁷ John Pikoulis, "The Wounded Bard" — The Welsh Novel in English: Lewis Jones, Gwyn Jones, Emyr Humphreys', in *New Welsh Review*, 26 (1994), 22-34 (p. 25).

²⁸ Pikoulis, 'Lewis Jones', 66.

²⁹ Steve Bodington, 'The Political Morality of Work', p. 178.

Furthermore, 'the story of the apprenticeship ends on the threshold of a new life for the hero — which explains why in the traditional *Bildungsroman*, the hero is always a young man, often an adolescent'.³⁰ Rolf Meyn adds to this definition that in a proletarian *Bildungsroman* the protagonist's self-knowledge is 'never an end in itself, but part of a "totalising" truth in the form of political values'.³¹ The transformations of Zola's Étienne Lantier fit the paradigms that Suleiman and Meyn construct. Toward the close of *Germinal*, Étienne has acquired the self-knowledge, purposefulness, and all the achieved unity of the 'totalised' male:

He thought about himself, and knew that he was now strong, matured by his hard experience down the pit. His apprenticeship was over and he was going forth fully armed as a fighting missionary of the revolution, having declared war on society, for he had seen it and condemned it.³²

Len regards himself at the close of *Cwmardy* in much the same univocal way as Étienne. Having just displayed his proficiency in class warrior-speak on the mountain where his narrative began, he squeezes the arm of Mary Jones, his lover and political comrade, 'with a warm confidence' (p. 310), and looks to the future struggle. But Étienne and Len inhabit different forms of *Bildungsroman*. It is a form which, for Bakhtin, addresses 'problems of freedom and necessity'.³³ In Len's case, tensions of self-definition remain between passivity and action, subjective absence and objective presence, self-knowledge and self-ignorance which, unlike Étienne, he is unable to resolve. Central to these tensions is Len's perception of himself as a man.

³⁰ Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions: The Ideological Novel as a Literary Genre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 65.

³¹ Rolf Meyn, 'Lewis Jones's *Cwmardy* and *We Live*', p. 129.

³² Émile Zola, *Germinal*, trans. Leonard Tancock (London: Penguin, 1954, repr. 1983), p. 495.

³³ M. M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 24.

Len ‘at once felt himself a man’: Len Roberts and the chimerical pursuit of masculinity

Readings of Len Roberts frequently privilege the politically public over the sensitively personal. David Bell, for example, concedes of *Cwmardy* that ‘Len’s development as an individual in physical and emotional terms is also present but subordinate to the prime objective of the acquisition of the doctrine’.³⁴ Central to this ‘prime objective’, Bell explains, is the novel’s need ‘to constrain interpretation to a desired outcome’,³⁵ the ‘desired outcome’ being Len’s totalised progression toward political activism. Unlike Bell, Emma Smith focuses on Len as a problematised individual, but like him gives primacy to the novel’s ‘desired outcome’. For Smith, *Cwmardy* requires Len to ‘negotiate his way through a series of situations and relationships designed to threaten not only his productive activity as a political subject, but also his “masculinity”’, before he develops into ‘an ideal “masculine” autonomous political-subject’.³⁶ Len’s ‘journey’ in this reading travels towards an ideal masculinity and follows the direction of the traditional *Bildung* where he successfully nullifies his emotional turbulence to stand at the close as the emergent representative of a new dawn. Each of these critical positions privileges a teleological reading of the novel where the formal conventions of the text are as tightly regulated as the revolutionary ideology they espouse.

This section contends that Len’s masculinity is subject to an intertextual or hybrid construction of a kind that Susan Suleiman describes as ‘the coexistence of “several discourses” in a single (inter)textual space’. Recognising that such discourses can be conflictual, Suleiman explains that they ‘confront each other without cancelling each other out and without being integrated into a single

³⁴ David Bell, *Ardent Propaganda: Miners’ Novels and Class Conflict 1929-1939*, p. 93.

³⁵ Bell, Abstract, *Ardent Propaganda*, n.p.

³⁶ Emma Smith, *Masculinity in Welsh Writing in English*, pp. 25-26.

unified discourse'.³⁷ The confrontation in *Cwmardy* exists in its presentation of a Len Roberts who progresses toward political maturity and a Len Roberts who is a study in continuing psychic impairment. The latter is not a distraction from the former as Bell argues,³⁸ but a means of examining the repressive effect of a dominant patriarchal ideology on a complex individual driven by confused and inarticulate longing. Ambivalence is inscribed into Len's characterisation. *Cwmardy*, therefore, has two stories to tell of Len, two competing modal registers, and it is essential to the text's success that they have no means of integrating. John Pikoulis is one of a few critics to argue the case for the divided Len, one of whom is the 'golden-tongued' political subject, the other a disturbed, fragmented figure — sexually insecure, hypersensitive, and passive — 'who, if Jones were really writing a political novel, would be quite superfluous'.³⁹ Len's anguished attempts to cross from the margin of his passive self to the centre of the public stage and 'become a man' are persistently undermined by his inability to engage with, let alone accommodate, his debilitating sensibility. In dramatising so powerfully his sense of personal failure and his incapacity for self-reflection, *Cwmardy* critiques the capitalist commodification of the self into a unit of production through its universalised, 'depersonalised' conception of manhood.

Peter Middleton argues that Western norms of masculine identity prohibit self-interrogation by denying 'a language for such reflection'.⁴⁰ And so, for all Len's 'natural tendency to introspection' (p. 14), he is never represented as able to question adequately the uniqueness of his own emotional and psychic

³⁷ Susan Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions*, p. 43.

³⁸ David Bell, *Ardent Propaganda*, p. 93. See also Susan Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions*, pp. 149-150.

³⁹ See John Pikoulis, 'The Wounded Bard', 23.

⁴⁰ Peter Middleton, *The Inward Gaze: Masculinity and Subjectivity in Modern Culture*, p. 3.

complexity.⁴¹ He is angered and puzzled by Evan the Overman's son's refusal to marry Jane, his pregnant sister, and he 'pondered the problem of Jane' (p. 52); but he lacks the vocabulary to address his own incipiently transgressive feelings for her. Instead of internalising 'the problem' and recognising, even in an inchoate form, a potential rival in his affection for her and the complications that presents, he externalises it so that 'Evan bach' (p. 52) becomes associated instead with class exploitation: 'The hatred he felt for Evan the Overman's son slowly diffused itself into a hatred of all those classed as officials' (p. 53). The irony in his construction, therefore, is that while he is depicted as introverted, prevailing norms of masculinity provide no means for critical introspection of his own emotional sensitivity. The novel finally grants him a limited realisation that 'he was more of a nervous being than a consistently thinking individual' (p. 293), but this is very much a partial *anagnorisis*, arising from Ezra's comment, 'You see things as you desire them to be at the moment instead of as they actually are' (p. 293). Thought and feeling occupy different realms of individual consciousness in Len, but the novel's point here is that he is able to affirm the insight only by standing outside himself, through what Peter Middleton describes as 'the alienated form of [oneself] as the object of someone else's judgement'.⁴²

Andrew Tolson is less concerned than Middleton with the psychology of the divided self, but considers masculine identity with specific reference to industrial capitalism. Tolson notes that 'the qualities needed by the successful worker are closely related to those of the successful man', and he identifies 'physical strength or mechanical expertise or [...] ambition and competitiveness' as

⁴¹ The inability of male characters to engage with their emotions is a recurring trope in the Welsh industrial fiction. In *So Long, Hector Bebb*, Prince Saddler has no means of articulating his love of Hector, except vicariously through the language of comradeship in battle; and in *Until Our Blood is Dry*, Gwyn Pritchard's pride in his own rationalism disables any ability to understand his true feelings for his daughter.

⁴² Peter Middleton, *The Inward Gaze*, p. 116.

among the most notable qualities.⁴³ Of these, strength and expertise are evident in somatic performance, whereas ambition and competitiveness require inner, mental determination in the undeviated progression toward a fixed purpose. Len Roberts displays none of these attributes. He is even, as Pikoulis notes, a ‘reluctant politician, one who would much rather consult his own interests’.⁴⁴ Yet immersion into the coded fellowship of unified ‘manhood’ is the prize for which he is represented as striving throughout the novel, unable to question, despite his undoubted intelligence, the reasons for his demonstrable inability to be admitted to it, or noticing the irony that by striving to conform to the prevailing model he sustains the very capitalism he opposes.

Cwmardy states categorically that with Jane’s death came ‘the end of his boyhood’ (p. 67), but in which sense remains obscure, for Len remains persistently vexed by the adult world. The bipolarities of his individuality — political commitment and temperamental introversion — remain intransitive, the one progressive, the other static, so that his commitment to an emancipatory politics is not accompanied by a release from his enfeebling sensitivity. Having introduced the particular constituents of his young masculinity at the outset of the narrative, *Cwmardy* produces a series of structural continuities which position his reflexive sensibility against his progressive rationality from the point when he leaves school to work in the pit. Concentrating primarily on the representation of the ‘private’, troubled Len, the Len who subverts the *Bildungsroman*, the following paragraphs analyse how *Cwmardy* probes Len’s subjectivity to reveal how its defining characteristics remain constant from boyhood through to adulthood.⁴⁵

⁴³ Andrew Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity*, pp. 12-13.

⁴⁴ John Pikoulis, ‘The Wounded Bard’, 24.

⁴⁵ David Bell, by contrast, focuses on how ‘Len’s political education begins when he starts work’, through which he emerges as ‘a mature character’: *Ardent Propaganda*, p. 98.

At the funeral of the miners killed in the explosion (Chapter VI), the young Len is depicted as understandably, but excessively, emotional and confused. As his 'brain twirled in a vortex' (p. 104), he animates the pit into an ogre with an insatiable appetite for miners' bodies, and as so often when emotionally overcome, he is shown closing his eyes to abstract himself from a reality he cannot confront. Despite this traumatic experience, so alluring are the prevailing norms of masculine identity that he completely underestimates the lasting horror of the funeral, and the consequences of his flight from the disciplines of school to the harsher regime of work underground, a site for him of incontestable masculinity. This cultural naturalising of oppressive gender norms is evident as he publicises his intention of leaving school for the pit, and delights in becoming 'a hero' (p. 106), the man-to-be, to his schoolmates. As Judith Butler states, 'Universalist claims are based on a common or shared epistemological standpoint'⁴⁶ and, for Len, integration into a communal identity is represented as a desirable alternative to the depersonalisation and alienation he had experienced at school. But in its humanist insistence on individuality, *Cwmardy* immediately resists such an 'epistemological standpoint' and focuses on studying the idiosyncrasy of Len's distinctive subjectivity, as he 'conjured up for [his schoolmates] a romantic vista of what work meant' (p. 106). Monochrome reality, as so often with Len, conflicts with his own preference for the colour of romance, for abstraction from the material world into an idealised, imagined landscape.

Cwmardy erases such romantic vistas for its central character when he begins work. In a lengthy narrative exposition, it clinically exposes the brutally dehumanising nature of the labour required, and Len's own extreme physical and temperamental aversion to it. In an example of his recurring naivety, the narrative has him believe that the simple act of turning up for work will instigate

⁴⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 19.

an immediate 'instantiation of masculinity',⁴⁷ a status mysteriously conferred rather than performatively achieved. His receipt of his miner's lamp is, he believes, a ritualised moment of transfiguration, as he is convinced that he is progressing from innocence to experience, from junior to senior status, and 'at once felt himself a man' (p. 107, my italics). *Cwmardy* employs two strategies to disabuse him: his 'terror-stricken hysterical' weeping at the reality of mining which brings a reprimand from his father (p. 116); and the introduction of an enlarged referent of stabilised youthful masculinity in Will Evans.

Will Evans serves as a functional assemblage of confidently acquired phallic signifiers, an exaggeratedly constructed forerunner of Andrew Tolson's insight that 'working-class masculinity becomes a kind of "performance"' where, as he grows up, a boy 'develops a repertoire of stories, jokes and routines'.⁴⁸ Six months into his role, Will is already a strenuously self-promoting practitioner. When confronted by exhibitions of normative masculinity so removed from his own, Len naively takes the appearance for reality. Thoroughly credulous, he stares 'with admiration' (p. 117) as Will demonstrates his repertoire by swearing, blaspheming, spitting, using workplace jargon, and boasting of his prowess with pit ponies. And he responds 'amazedly' (p. 117), as he often does, when Will informs him that he intends buying his own horse. Len's self-positioning as the uncritical, imperceptive acolyte connotes his own lack of performative confidence. Whereas Will publicly mimics the masculinity he admires and will soon himself embody, the novel in a deft touch has Len, solitary among a crowd of miners, glance surreptitiously into 'every window' (p. 120) as he returns home, anxious to catch a glimpse of his coal-blackened self. His need to confirm repeatedly his desired identity is a telling moment of Lacanian apperception.

⁴⁷ See Nigel Edley and Margaret Wetherell, *Men in Perspective*: 'Work [for a boy] thus becomes seen as a privilege, an instantiation of masculinity', p. 103.

⁴⁸ Andrew Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity*, p. 43.

Ironically, the window simply reflects a surface, reassuring for Len but as insubstantial as the masculinity he craves, despite the coal dust on his face.

Cwmardy's examination of his unwanted alienation from his male peers and from the masculinity they embody continues in two examples occurring later in the text, and illustrates the continuity of his representation. In the first, the narrative once again uses Will Evans as the norm against whom Len is inspected, when he meets Will and three others on the mountain. Aidan Byrne makes the point that 'Jones's mountains remain oppressively masculine',⁴⁹ and, indeed, for Will and the others they are a site of determinate masculine action: they are hunters, intent on luring a sheep to a cave and killing it for food. However, for Len, as later discussion will show more fully, the mountain is associated with passive withdrawal from the intrusion of life's contingencies, and with confused memories of his sister Jane. As a correlative of his inner lack of direction, the text notes that, unlike the purposeful Will, he is 'wandering aimlessly' (p. 208) on the mountain, a recurring trope with Len, after a disagreement with Ezra, the union leader. The novel here starkly juxtaposes Will's progression from early mimic to authentic embodiment of physical masculinity alongside Len's arrested emotional development and continuing distracted unworldliness.

Despite the several visual clues of their intent before him, Len remains as naive as always: he 'had not the faintest idea' (p. 209) of what is going to happen until he sees the figure of the sheep. When Will rugby tackles it and cuts its throat, despite its pleading eyes, he demonstrates power and self-control when under the gaze of others. Len's reaction is predictably unique among those present, though reminiscent of his earlier 'sick giddiness' at work (p.

⁴⁹ Aidan Byrne, *Representations of Masculinity in Four 1930s Welsh Novels in English*, p. 120.

114).⁵⁰ Close to being sick, he feels 'faint, and sharp dazzles twirled before his eyes' (p. 210). The episode closes with an unembellished diegetic comment, rich in suggestive insinuation regarding Len's place in the male community. On their way down the mountain, 'they met other groups of men laden as they were' (p. 210). Will's group is therefore only one of several engaged in sheep rustling, leaving unstated but implied the conclusion that Len was not invited to join any of them.

His precarious selfhood, labile susceptibility to persuasion, sexual prudery and withdrawal from reality, are all given prominence later still when, persuaded against his better judgement by Ezra and Mary, he decides to enlist for military service in 1914 (pp. 262-263). Textual implication and direct statement combine to expose what Berthold Schoene-Harwood describes as 'a societal frame of *Bildung* under whose systemic pressure individuals aspire to become the men and women they ought to be'.⁵¹ Animating the entire episode is the repressive, naturalised agenda which demands conformity to 'the configurative standards of a societally acceptable masculinity'.⁵² It is an example, rarely commented on, of *Cwmardy*'s individually humanistic focus and requires detailed examination.

Len's humiliation when Mary declares, 'I wish I were a man and able to go' to war (p. 257) acknowledges epistemological gender binaries, but equally importantly accepts that masculinity is recognised and validated by a limited range of characteristics, central to which is participation in violence.⁵³ How limited these characteristics are and how inapplicable to Len become evident when he attempts to enlist. Just as he was impressed as a boy by young Will

⁵⁰ Ron Berry's Hector Bebb also kills a sheep for food but, unlike Will, even he 'lost true sight, everything fuzzy and Roman candles firing inside my chest', *So Long, Hector Bebb*, p. 194.

⁵¹ Berthold Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men*, p. 3.

⁵² Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men*, p. 3.

⁵³ See Peter Middleton, *The Inward Gaze*, p. 120.

Evans's boastful performativity in the pit, so he 'marvelled at [the] breezy nonchalance' (p. 262) of the young men queueing with him for a medical examination, unable to recognise in their careless repartee a displacement strategy for nervousness. He knows practically all of them but the text insists on his detachment. Kevin Devaney observes that, 'Nakedness is accepted by miners', but for Len it is an obstacle to be overcome.⁵⁴ Revolted by the nakedness of the other volunteers, and discomforted by their sexually suggestive banter, he hopes for some privacy before undressing. In another of its seemingly innocuous but highly significant encodings, *Cwmardy* constructs a passage where Len's fear of physical exposure competes with his fear of ridicule if he seeks privacy. Unable to resolve the dilemma he vacillates, is rendered acquiescent, and mutely accedes to stripping in public (p. 263).

The text intensifies its inspection of Len's marginalised masculinity when he is rejected for service on health grounds. Failure confers an identity which he is unable either to rationalise or oppose, and his setback modulates into trauma that modulates into retreat. Overwhelmed by 'a strong feeling of inferiority' (p. 263), he retires to bed, weeps, as he did on his first day at work, and constructs an alternative, romantic narrative as he did much earlier in his life, demonstrating what Middleton calls a Lacanian 'neediness of desire',⁵⁵ the need to desire the desire of the other. Seduced by the male 'glamour of war', he 'imagined himself performing valiant deeds that won Mary's approbation and the applause of all the people' (p. 263), so deeply entrenched in his social conditioning is the dominant model of gender identification, and so antithetical to his particular hypersensitivity.

⁵⁴ Kevin Devaney, 'Mining — A World Apart', in *The Achilles Heel Reader*, ed. Victor J. Seidler, pp.151-160 (p.154).

⁵⁵ Peter Middleton, *The Inward Gaze*, p. 122.

Graham Dawson notes that, 'Imagined entities are shot through with wish-fulfilling fantasies',⁵⁶ and in its acute analysis of Len's divided self *Cwmardy* represents how he remains a 'queer lad for his age' (p. 14), whatever his age. In his schizoid representation, he is both a serious political activist — a 'pretty big figure in the strike' (p. 273) to a police inspector — and an immature adult — 'just a boy groping for something you are not even yet aware of' (p. 234) to the perceptive Mary. Immobilized psychologically when under pressure, craving recognition yet morose and solitary, unable to control either his imagination or his emotions, offended by displays of robust homosociality, he continually exhibits his distance from the kind of male identity Ben Knights describes as 'naturally characterised by strong boundaries'.⁵⁷ For him, failure to comply with the dominant discourses of masculinity is to fail the test of manhood, to make him feel 'an outcast' (p. 263). Yet to pass the test, if that were possible, he would have to deny his individual complexity to fit a reductive cultural mould. *Cwmardy* refuses to provide a comforting resolution. Through Len's desire to enter the gravitational pull of normative masculinity and the torment he experiences in his liminality, the narrative dispenses with the *Bildungsroman* as a Meynian 'totalising' development toward self-realisation. Instead, it manipulates a bourgeois form to expose 'the autonomy of the individual self in the presentation of character'⁵⁸ as a consoling fiction, and Len Roberts stands as an acutely observed, individualised victim of a repressive socio-economic model.

In a moment of textual brilliance, *Cwmardy* provides a final reminder of how partial Len's progression from Suleiman's paradigm of '*ignorance* (of self) to *knowledge* (of self)' has been, how remote he is from a *Bildung* in the Étienne

⁵⁶ Graham Dawson, 'The Blond Bedouin', in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800*, ed. Michael Roper and John Tosh (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 113-144 (p. 119).

⁵⁷ Ben Knights, *Writing Masculinities* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 5.

⁵⁸ David Lodge, *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 26.

Lantier mould of 'strong boundaries'. Near the end of the narrative, *Cwmardy* returns to its opening landscape, this time with three figures — Len, Mary and Ezra — gazing down at the blighted valley. When 'A hooter from below sends its wailing note up the mountain. 'Len *started, as if the sound were strange to him*', (p. 308, my italics). For all his grasp of the doctrinal rhetoric he mouths a moment later, the outside world continues to be an abrupt, unfamiliar intrusion from which he remains temperamentally estranged. There is no need for textual interjection to explain where he was in his internalised landscape when he starts at the familiar sound of the hooter. It is enough that its 'wailing note' brings no such psycho-physical shocked response from Mary or Ezra. In a circular movement, the novel returns tantalisingly to the lingering 'vague emotional hunger that made him sad' (p. 2) in his childhood. His hunger then for the possibility of an alternative life unrealised and unrealisable, but hinted at as he glimpsed the distant sea remains so at the end.

This section has analysed the novel's representation of Len's continuing failure to acquire the performative constituents of the normative masculinity he desires, and has identified salient features of Len's psycho-emotional subjectivity. The following section develops the textual and literary strategies *Cwmardy* employs to extend its study of Len as a distinct, unique masculinity and therefore to deepen its critique of an industrial regime that demands conformity.

Len 'knew the mountain better than he knew his own mind': symbolic association in the construction of Len

The previous section focused on how *Cwmardy* presents Len's complex psychology persistently frustrating his desire to exhibit the characteristics and practices of normative masculinity. This section gives closer attention to the novel's methods of presenting that psychology. Orwell's essay on miners

focuses on their heroism, their almost superhuman strength, agility, skill, courage, work rate. He focuses exclusively on their bodies, but not their minds, still less their individual subjectivities.⁵⁹ Because critical attention has focused largely on *Cwmardy* as political doctrine, little attention has been given to the care with which it constructs the determining features of Len's damaged psyche.⁶⁰ By consigning Len to 'representative status',⁶¹ such readings marginalise the contribution *Cwmardy* makes in depicting the tormented subjectivity of a working-class male in a culture where gender conformity is expected. Through Len, *Cwmardy* implicitly challenges the assumption that psychological depth and emotional sensitivity are characteristics of bourgeois refinement only.⁶² As Raymond Williams argues, 'The conception of persons as masses springs, not from an inability to know them, but from an interpretation of them according to a formula'.⁶³ The culturally generated assumptions of miners as Orwellian supermen is one formulaic construction that compels a Len to live with demons he cannot contain or express. As this section contends, readings of *Cwmardy* that marginalise this aspect of Len's representation minimise the novel's power as both a social critique and as a serious work of fiction, fiction without the accompanying half-explanatory, half-apologetic descriptors of 'proletarian' or 'working-class'.

Generically, *Cwmardy* is usually positioned unproblematically within the realist novel form, a form that Carole Snee suggests is 'the most readily available mode of expression for writers not schooled within a literary

⁵⁹ George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, p. 18.

⁶⁰ Aidan Byrne makes a powerful case for reading Len in this humanistic way: *Representations of Masculinity in Four 1930s Welsh Novels in English*, pp. 119-126.

⁶¹ Emma Smith, *Masculinity in Welsh Writing in English*, p. 26, and David Bell, *Ardent Propaganda*, p. 94, for example.

⁶² David Bell, following Orwell, notes the middle-class reductive classification of the working class as, 'a source of humour, and therefore harmless, or a potential threat to the status of the middle-class, and therefore dangerous': *Ardent Propaganda*, p. 72.

⁶³ Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 292.

tradition'.⁶⁴ This section argues, by contrast, that *Cwmardy*'s inspection of Len as a marginalised masculinity often veers away from determinate realism toward experimental symbolic signification revealing, as Pikoulis suggests,⁶⁵ a literary imagination seeking freedom to explore a highly individual consciousness rather than remain within the more straitened form of the *roman à thèse*.⁶⁶ Len's displaced connection with empirical reality through his use of imaginative figuration is one method the novel uses, but so is an imbricated network of topographical tropes with gender connotations with which he becomes progressively associated, and through which his variance from normative masculinity is defined. The rest of this section examines these two methodologies, to suggest that while Lewis Jones might not have been 'schooled within a literary tradition', in constructing Len's masculinity he was no unsophisticated novice either.

As the previous section observed, throughout *Cwmardy* Len responds to the external world through the prism of figurative association. Although the text credits him with a 'vivid imagination', there has been little critical inspection of the influence this has on the construction of his character in general, or the nature of his masculinity in particular. Yet it is a recurring feature of his cognitive functioning, and signals his need for a retreat from a drab, oppressive reality and a re-engagement with it in a redefined, more sensuously imaginative formulation. The novel establishes this characteristic at the outset, and at this early stage of Len's development it identifies a mind creating a reality through free association. Returning from a mountain walk with his father, he comments that the swirling smoke eddies from the pit 'brought to his mind thoughts of the broth he had often seen his mother make' (p. 4). The simple analogy 'tickled Big

⁶⁴ Carole Snee, 'Working-Class Literature or Proletarian Writing', p. 167.

⁶⁵ John Pikoulis, 'The Wounded Bard', 24.

⁶⁶ See, for example, David Bell: 'The primary feature of a *roman à thèse* is that the role of the reader is strongly programmed': *Ardent Propaganda*, p. 35.

Jim' (p. 4), but already the text is implying a more than ornamental function to Len's configurations. In rapid succession, the mountain track leading to the pit becomes 'ashamed of its eventual destination' (p. 4); 'to his imaginative eyes' the rail tracks from the pithead resemble 'veins of quickly coursing blood' (p. 5); the whirlpools in the river 'do look like it is quarrelling with itself' (p. 6); and 'twinkling lights from the windows looked like far-away stars' (p. 9). Suresh Srivastva and Frank J. Barrett's argument that figurative language 'can communicate an emotional reality that lies just beyond our conscious awareness'⁶⁷ has a particular applicability to the presentation of Len's psychic and gender definition. From the start, *Cwmardy* is anxious to establish that his 'vague emotional hunger' (p. 2) is activated when sense stimuli become transformed into a more intense reality through his intuitive responsiveness and creative imagination.

As *Cwmardy* progresses Len's narrative, however, his imagination confronts him graphically with the brutal reality of his existence, and his figurations regarding the pit acquire, as Srivastva and Barrett phrase it, 'the resonance of possible associations and connotations [so that] a new contextual meaning is created'.⁶⁸ He constructs new contextual significances by animating the inanimate as he did when a boy. The pit becomes an 'inhuman monster' (p. 104) to him; underground roadways are imagined as the pit's 'knotted arteries', with men reduced to functionaries 'circulating in these like blood' (p. 219). And when the hooter sounds at the end of the novel, startling him back into the present, it is to figuration that he immediately falls to shape his reality: 'Hear the whip crack? I wonder if all those who respond to its lash tonight will come back up in the morning' (p. 309). Srivastva and Barrett contend that metaphorical

⁶⁷ Suresh Srivastva and Frank J. Barrett, 'The Transforming Nature of Metaphors in Group Development', in *Human Relations*, 41.1 (1988), 31-64 (p. 36).

⁶⁸ Srivastva and Barrett, 'The Transforming Nature of Metaphors in Group Development', 36.

associations 'are clues to the underlying paradigm of a given social system'.⁶⁹ Len's figurative responses to sense stimuli articulate a masculinity deviating from denotative masculine rationalism, but they offer him an alternative means of engaging with 'the underlying paradigm of a given social system'.

As the above examples illustrate, Len's connotative imagination is the filter through which he interprets the material world. But, as Peter Middleton points out, 'Masculinity has a vested interest in blocking unheroic, masculine self-analysis'.⁷⁰ *Cwmardy* recognises that the unheroic Len is denied the means to question the constituents of his own masculinity in a Valleys' culture predicated on gender binaries. And so instead it associates Len with a series of locations and experiences carrying a complex meshing of gendered significations denied cohesion. The novel at once acknowledges Len's heterosexuality, while imbuing him with emotive and psychic configurations traditionally coded as feminine.⁷¹ These configurations are articulated metonymically through the suggestive associations of his bed, the mountain, water, and various other forms of deliquescence. Individually, as will be seen, each of these has its own culturally generated dimensions, but they combine discursively to acquire accumulated resonance. Their recursion adds a level of suggestive significance which the text never formally acknowledges, but which contributes to the representation of Len's ambivalent gender formation. Each of the three tropes is associated with a network of feminized principles reflecting back on Len, and each is associated with his relationship with his sister Jane, and with Mary Jones.

The bed which Len and Jane share as brother and sister becomes in *Cwmardy* a site of multiple associations for Len, embracing passivity, security,

⁶⁹ Srivastva and Barrett, 'The Transforming Nature of Metaphors in Group Development', 60-61.

⁷⁰ Peter Middleton, *The Inward Gaze*, p. 230.

⁷¹ After Jane's death, when he dreams that she is still alive and he kisses her only to find he is actually kissing Evan the Overman's son, his rival, 'His body quivered with disgust', p. 62.

incipient sexual desire, womb-like regression, and repressed gender anxieties. Jane is five years older than Len — the text is imprecise about their actual ages, although she is sixteen or seventeen when she dies in childbirth. The novel focalises through Len what happens in the bed, and lends itself to a Freudian reading of Oedipal desire transferred from mother to older sister.⁷² As Len lies passive watching Jane undress, she becomes for him an elemental concretisation of two key female principles: fecund young womanhood and maternal affection. He is fascinated by her maturing body, especially, and significantly, the growth of her breasts, which he enjoys fondling. Following Freud, Ben Knights comments that:

The state of being male — so far from being self-contained and sure of itself — is actually a state of longing, for transformative contact with an object that would enhance and irradiate your being, assuaging all that sense of loneliness and lostness.⁷³

For Len, Jane is at once an object and a subject: a sexualised object of his masculine gaze and a subject of his own gender completion. When he ‘pressed the hot wick of the candle into the oily grease’ (p. 40), and a weeping Jane ‘drew his wavy head to her bosom, which he clasped with a loving tenderness’ and she takes care not to remove his hand, the text constructs a complex matrix of Freudian implications, conflating ‘dormant mother-love’ (p. 40), gender interdependence, innocent babes in the wood, and sexualized gratification.

From the outset, Jane is associated in Len’s mind with the mountain, itself invested with gender significance. As he watches her undressing, his ‘mind again traversed the mountains’ (p. 15), where he is able to wander liberated from the gender prescriptions prevailing in the valley below. Katie Gramich writes that in Welsh fiction ‘the hills are feminized, breast-like protuberances,

⁷² Transgressive desire is a recurring theme in Valleys industrial fiction. It is implied again in *Cwmardy* in Ezra’s feelings toward Mary; it results in the birth of a child in *Strike for a Kingdom*, and propels Gwyn Pritchard in *Until Our Blood is Dry* to seek sex from a girl no older than his daughter from whom he is estranged.

⁷³ Ben Knights, *Writing Masculinities*, pp. 28-29.

giving succour to sensitive males wounded by the brutal masculinity of their culture'.⁷⁴ In *Cwmardy*, the mountain is, among other things, a 'vast bed which nestled [young lovers'] bodies to its breast' (p. 170). It is no accident, then, that when he mourns Jane's death in childbirth he wanders aimlessly on the mountain, on which he lies and cries. Given the associations between Jane's breasts, Len's desire for tactile contact with them, and the mountain as both a mothering breast and a bed, bodily connection with the mountain becomes, at a deep level of psychic need, a communion with Jane herself. It is a site where he becomes both masculinised and feminized, desiring her, but also weeping and penetrated himself, 'pierced' (p. 67) by the coldness of dusk.

The connection between their shared bed and the mountain continues even after Jane's death as the means of presenting Len's gender definition. Daydreams and 'absences' function as indices of his need either to remove himself from the material world or to reformulate it, but it is through his anxious nightmares that the novel scrutinises most vividly the repressed complexity of his gendering. Fretful after a conversation with Ezra, for example, he seeks the consoling comfort of his bed, where thoughts of Mary, Ezra's daughter, run through his mind 'like a burning thread' (p. 224). The connection between Jane and Mary through a particular anatomical feature becomes apparent as he dreams:

that he and Mary were walking over the mountain hand in hand. He saw Jane waving to them, beckoning them on. They started to run, but Mary stumbled and fell. Stopping to pick her up, he saw her clasped in the arms of Evan the Overman's son, one breast hanging loose and flaccid through her blouse. Len moaned and tossed in his sleep as the dream gripped him (p. 224).

The impressionistic manifestations of the dream are brilliantly caught in a series of flashing, seemingly random images. But in the phantasmagoria of the dream, latent connections powerfully evoke suppressed aspects of Len's subjectivity

⁷⁴ Katie Gramich, 'Mountains and Mirrors', in *Planet*, 128 (1998), 70-75 (p. 70). Emma Smith makes a similar point with special reference to Jane in *Masculinity in Welsh Writing in English*, p. 36.

which his conscious mind is unable to articulate. The dream is at once wish-fulfilment — he and Mary are walking hand in hand — and horror story located on the mountain, a space connected in his mind more with Jane than Mary. In the unanchored state of the oneiric, subliminal associations reveal the deeply troubled state of Len's subjectivity. Jane's sudden appearance on the mountain coded as feminine indicates that the dream is about love, desire, rivalry and loss, the mountain representing Jane's body that Len desired and felt completion alongside. The sudden appearance of Evan the Overman's son, the father of Jane's dead child, with Mary 'clasped' in his arms, and the sight of Mary's breast conflate the iconography of Jane's seduction by Evan with anxieties about Mary, and fuse old, unresolved anxieties and hostilities with current insecurities. The verb 'clasped' both here and earlier when it was Len who 'clasped [Jane's bosom] with a loving tenderness' (p. 40) in bed after her seduction by Evan connotes the conflict and fear in Len's mind that Mary will be lost to him just as Jane was. There is nothing neutral about the site where this dream occurs. In appearing on the mountain, Evan invades a dream-space associated in Len's mind with what Jane represents for him, and in that space robs him of another woman. Just as Len's bed offers no assurance of escape from an intrusive world so, on the dream-mountain with its multiple signifiers, Len is confronted with a ghastly past replicated in the possibility of an empty future.

The text's forensic probing of Len's anxiety dreams evident here reverberates with gendered significance. 'A familiar theme in patriarchal ideology,' as R. W. Connell writes, 'is that men are rational while women are emotional'.⁷⁵ The novel has already challenged this conveniently patriarchal binary in a gender reversal where Len is 'more emotional than Mary [...] less

⁷⁵ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 164. See also Nigel Edley and Margaret Wetherell, *Men in Perspective*, p. 157.

inclined to critical analysis' (p. 224). His dream of Jane, Mary and their respective breasts (p. 224-225) offers powerful confirmation of his inability to control, through reason, the boundaries of his own subjectivity or to submit himself to critical analysis. Berthold Schoene-Harwood's comment that 'masculinity asserts itself at the expense of a man's inherent emotional and psychological complexity'⁷⁶ finds an illustration in Len's response to his dream. He awakens the next morning 'feeling heavy and lethargic, while his head throbbed painfully' (p. 225), but as the product of a masculinised culture he is unable consciously to turn his gaze inward and reflect upon his inner self. Instead, the text has him suppress his demons in the collectivised activities of the public space of work, where 'the main topic in the pits was the "federashon", as the men called it' (p. 225).

Yet with Len, as *Cwmardy* persists in revealing, 'the enemy within the masculine individual turns out to be his own femininity'.⁷⁷ To the lack of traditional phallic signifiers already attributed to him in its intricate system of meanings — passivity, sexual prudery, introversion, emotion — the novel repeatedly constructs his permeable self through associative images of delinquescence. Marianne DeKoven argues that in patriarchal iconography water is 'the feminine element par excellence [...] It is incapable of form, but is the necessary medium upon which form imprints itself'.⁷⁸ On more than a dozen occasions Len either weeps or is close to tears when emotion overwhelms him. Located in a liminal space when he daydreams, his mind 'floats' (p. 15, p. 115). He timidly kisses Mary with 'all his body melting into the caress' (p. 250). After a

⁷⁶ Berthold Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men*, p. 86.

⁷⁷ Anthony Easthope, *What a Man's Gotta Do*, p. 40.

⁷⁸ Marianne DeKoven, *Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 32. In a note, she writes 'There are, of course, exceptions - Poseidon comes readily to mind. Generally, bodies of water on earth, particularly oceans, lakes or ponds [...] lend themselves most readily to use as feminine iconography, rain to masculine', p. 224.

disagreement with her regarding the justification for war, he finds himself 'floating in a mental whirlpool' (p. 286).

From the outset, the sea holds a particular fascination for him. On a visit to the seaside, he experiences 'an aching urge to ride its crests and hollows' (p. 34), the embedded sexuality of the representation allusively suggesting the complexities in his gender definition. Just as earlier, he 'loved to impress his "photo"' on the impermanent snow by lying 'prostrate' on it (p. 18), so his wish 'to ride' the waves is at once positionally masculine relative to a female element. Yet immersion in the waves simultaneously offers a dissolving of gender boundaries, a complex psycho-physical state where traditional distinctions are at once recognised and negated.

In her valuable essay on *Cwmardy*, Emma Davies sees Len as representing 'the evolution of masculinity at the beginning of the twentieth century'.⁷⁹ But this section has argued that *Cwmardy*'s considerable literary achievement lies elsewhere. It takes an imaginative novelist, employing 'experimental fictional interventions',⁸⁰ rather than a political polemicist to reveal that there is no evolution in Len's capacity to engage with his emotional self. Rather, *Cwmardy* explores through Len how, in Berthold Schoene-Harwood's words, 'masculinity represents an imperative ideal of systemic perfection that obstructs rather than facilitates the liberation of the self'.⁸¹ What has changed over time is not an evolution of what men are like, as Davies suggests, but what they are allowed to be within the norms of a particular culture. It is society's willingness to begin dismantling gender imperatives that 'facilitates the liberation of the self', but any

⁷⁹ Emma Davies, "'He was a queer lad for his age...': The Crisis of Masculinity in Lewis Jones's *Cwmardy*", in *Welsh Writing in English*, ed. Tony Brown, *New Welsh Review*, 8 (2003), 29-45, (p. 43).

⁸⁰ Graham Holderness, 'Miners and the novel, from bourgeois to proletarian', in *The British Working-Class Novel in the Twentieth Century*, ed. J. M. Hawthorn (London: Edward Arnold, 1984), pp. 19-31 (p. 28).

⁸¹ Berthold Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men*, p. 4.

possibility of it happening — as begins to happen in *Until Our Blood is Dry* (2014) — comes too late for Len and, as the next section argues, much too late for Big Jim.

‘Have anybody ever seen Big Jim losing?’: Jim Roberts and the coercive imperatives of hegemonic masculinity.

Writing of a period of English literary history more than three centuries earlier than the version of Welsh mining history presented in *Cwmardy*, and within an entirely different social milieu, Stephen Greenblatt notes:

Whenever I focused sharply upon a moment of apparently autonomous self-fashioning, I found not an epiphany of identity freely chosen, but a cultural artifact. If there remained traces of free choice, the choice was among possibilities whose range was strictly delineated by the social and ideological system in force.⁸²

Greenblatt’s comments apply as much to the construction of the fictional miner Big Jim Roberts as to Edmund Spenser or Thomas Wyatt. This section examines how *Cwmardy* defines Jim Roberts through two working-class social systems — soldiering and mining. *Cwmardy* employs both of these fields to illustrate how his masculinity is shaped and approved by expansionist and capitalist ideologies above and beyond him — by the army in the service of Empire, and by the pits in the service of capital. Jim’s constant references to his service in the Boer War — the first appears as early as page 6 — have attracted little critical attention, but as later discussion shows they contribute significantly to the matrix of interweaving and often contradictory masculine practices through which he denies the ‘pensively motionless’ (p. 1), reflective self, introduced at the start of the novel and indicated in glimpses elsewhere.

Jim’s function in *Cwmardy* has seen him framed either as a contrast to the febrile Len or as an uncomplicated stereotype within a doctrinal text. For Carole

⁸² Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 256.

Snee, he and Siân⁸³ represent ‘all the finest attributes of the working class’.⁸⁴ Stephen Knight, in an illuminating discussion, sees him as a Rhondda version of ‘The Big Hower’, a folk-hero like the Canadian logger Paul Bunyan or the Australian drover, ‘The Man from Snowy River’.⁸⁵ For David Smith, he is ‘an entirely representative type’ who is often ‘insensitive to the needs and frailties of his immediate family’.⁸⁶ He might also share the same heroic space as Big Bad John, the miner from the 1961 song.⁸⁷ All of them embody physical strength, courage and work-based skill. All of them live in a man’s world. His representation is easily mocked, too. Writing of 1930s proletarian fiction, Valentine Cunningham observes that:

Nowhere does the Bigness cult run bigger than among these fictions. The Big Worker - almost the same Big Worker - pops up everywhere. It’s true that not quite *all* the big proletarians are actually called Jim.⁸⁸

The amused tone conveys fundamental misrepresentations. In areas of heavy industry, it is hardly surprising that a respect for ‘Bigness’, for the fineness of a strong, big male body should be evident. Furthermore, the Big Jim figure was a popular folk hero for the working classes in Britain, America and Australia. And as for his name, the character construct James Roberts in *Cwmardy* simply carries the two most popular boys’ names in the decade the novel was written. In *Cwmardy*, however, this most seemingly iconic representation of unified working-class masculinity is deconstructed in a series of individualizing contradictions. A better example of uncomplicated masculinity in *Cwmardy*

⁸³ Siân is given the name Shane in the 1937 and 1978 editions of *Cwmardy* in what was an attempt to anglicise her name for a wider readership. The 2006 Parthian omnibus edition of *Cwmardy* and *We Live* restores her name to its proper Welsh form. This thesis uses the 1978 text for general reference but follows the 2006 edition in spelling her name.

⁸⁴ Carole Snee, ‘Working-Class Literature or Proletarian Writing’, p. 183.

⁸⁵ Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. 86.

⁸⁶ David Smith, *Lewis Jones*, p. 44.

⁸⁷ Sung by the American entertainer Jimmy Dean.

⁸⁸ Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 310-311.

would be Bill Bristol whose *modus vivendi* is entirely straightforward: 'Without masters us cawn't have pits, without pits us cawn't have wages, and without wages us cawn't have beer and baccy and grub' (p. 14). In the company of men, as he is here, he defines himself purely through items of male consumption; his wife who will later mourn his death underground is not mentioned, nor is his child.

The text's methodology in constructing Jim is similar to that used for Len in that, as Pierre Macherey observed of realist fiction, 'it is the juxtaposition and conflict of several meanings [...]: this conflict is not resolved or absorbed but simply *displayed*'.⁸⁹ This may be seen in two broad but distinctive features of the novel. Michael Kimmel's point that 'Constructions of gender are relational'⁹⁰ is helpful in directing attention to the particular way the novel defines Jim's masculinity against women and men; or, rather, within a domestic space coded as feminine and public theatres coded as androcentric. As with Len, the intransitive elements of his identity are revealed side by side without much in the way of direct narrative comment; they are, in a Machereyan sense, 'simply displayed'. Yet the frequency with which this happens suggests that it is part of a narrative manoeuvre whose effect reveals fissures in Jim as a subject. He has been regarded as a simple, unified construction whose textual function is ideologically driven, and who provides a few smiles along the way. However, while he is not a psychologically complex creation like Len, the narrative method through which he is presented is far from straightforward. Whereas Len's story follows a linear progression, for example, Jim's intertwines with extra-textual experiences from his earlier life — his removal from North Wales and, particularly, his Boer War experience. The subtle textual effect is to connect his present behaviour with his formative past experience, to construct an identity

⁸⁹ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, p. 84.

⁹⁰ Michael Kimmel, *The Gendered Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 85.

from the outside. The residues of a masculinity shaped by an imperial ideology privileging power, control over others and an inability to self-interrogate remain with him, and manifest themselves in different forms, at different times and in different locations.

**‘Bah, boy’s money. I ‘ood be shamed to bring it home if I were you’:
masculinity, subjectivity, and domestic marginality**

Critical notice of Jim’s imperial soldiering has been confined largely to passing remarks, such as David Smith’s, ‘the ages of Len and his sister do not tally with Big Jim’s fighting the Boer War’.⁹¹ This section and the one that follows consider how the ideologies of Empire have contributed to and affected Jim’s fashioning of a dominant, emotionally repressed self. In an essay entitled ‘Domesticity and Manliness’, John Tosh argues that ‘The Empire beckoned young men in reaction against domesticity,’⁹² and *Cwmardy* presents Jim Roberts as one such figure.. Having joined the militia ‘just prior to Jane’s birth’, he volunteered for active service ‘immediately the Boer War was declared’ (p. 11). But in doing so, Jim not only reacted against domesticity; he fled from it into an enterprise whose controlling ideologies remain constitutive elements in his identity throughout the novel. His martial experience in the Boer War certainly helps him become a leader of striking miners in later conflicts with the police and soldiers, but one effect of his imperial adventures is to detach him not only from the physical space of his home, but from understanding his deep emotional connection to it. *Cwmardy* positions him as the titular head of a house within which he finds himself emotionally inadequate, a victim of social processes which, in Victor Seidler’s words, have ‘fostered an emotional alienation from life outside work,

⁹¹ David Smith, *Lewis Jones*, p. 42.

⁹² John Tosh, ‘Domesticity and Manliness’, in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 44-73 (p. 67).

from the home'.⁹³ And so, Sunny Bank is at once a domain to which he is intimately connected and from which he is emotionally estranged.

The most sustained example of his exclusion occurs when Jane gives birth to a stillborn child and dies herself. The bedroom where this occurs becomes an exclusion zone for him, a female enclosure occupied by Siân and her neighbour Mrs Thomas, who, as older women, have been initiated into the mysteries of childbirth. The Siân/Jane connection, which has already suggested a matrilineal succession, is strongly evoked here as Jim is relegated to the kitchen where his restless desperation, fuelled by an ignorance he cannot satisfy, finds expression in pointless movement.

In a series of tautly written physical actions, *Cwmardy* strips Jim of his masculine puissance and reduces him to helpless impotence. Michael E. McGill's view that 'there is no intimacy in most male friendships and none of what intimacy offers: solace and support'⁹⁴ is given graphic illustration, where upstairs in Sunny Bank Mrs Thomas offers Siân support and later solace. In the space of the kitchen coded as feminine, Jim has no company except a bewildered son. In a multilayered image, the text notes that Jim 'began a soft, regular swaying as though trying to soothe a child cradled in his arms' (p. 54). Craving the comfort of physical embrace, yet wishing also to offer it, his body pathetically attempts to provide it for itself, but cradling an imaginary child is a poor substitute for cradling his own daughter as she screams in pain in the bedroom above. Valentine Cunningham regards the episode as one instance among several of Lewis Jones's love of 'Deaths sudden, deaths gruesome'. But his judgement that '*Cwmardy* has Big Jim's young daughter dying most

⁹³ Victor J. Seidler, 'The Sexual Politics of Men's Work', in *The Achilles Heel Reader*, ed. Victor J. Seidler, pp. 125-139, (p. 128).

⁹⁴ Michael E. McGill, *The McGill Report on Male Intimacy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), p. 185. Cited in Middleton, *The Inward Gaze*, p. 121.

spectacularly'⁹⁵ surely sensationalises the scene. It is Jim's inarticulate agonies that are the focus of the text's concerns. Ensnared in an epistemological void of gender definition, he is unable to connect to himself, and lacks the means to reach out to others.

Jane Tompkins, in *West of Everything*, refers to Octavio Paz's definition of the *macho* as a 'hermetic being, closed up in himself'.⁹⁶ To verbalize one's feelings is to feminize them, and the narrative voice provides further telling evidence of Jim's exclusion from the drama happening upstairs and his unarticulated sense of his own helplessness. With the kindest of intentions, Siân instructs him to get ready for work, tacitly confirming his supernumerary status. He complies 'without a word' (p. 55):

His eyes were blind to the black bordered streaks that ran across the sky at the bottom of the valley [...] His ears were deaf to the loudly shrieking pit hooters that raped the early morning air with violent echoes. He paid no attention to their frenzied demand that he hurry to the pit. Imperceptibly his body melted into the silent, shadowy line of men that wound its way up the hill to the colliery (pp. 55-56).

Unable to express his own grief, it is the narrative voice that here powerfully communicates it for him, through images that reduce him psychologically to insentience and physically to insubstantiality.

Using a few deftly chosen comments on Jim's behaviour after Jane's death, *Cwmardy* illuminates the coercive influence of hegemonic masculinity on a sensibility that requires, as Peter Middleton states, the display of 'strength and invulnerability' and the 'suppression of feeling'.⁹⁷ Jim soon enacts 'the usual routines of his life' (p. 68) — drinking in the Boar's Head and fighting — in order to buttress his macho image. It is left once more to the narrative voice to articulate for him, in a telling litotes, a response he cannot acknowledge to himself or to others — 'the death of his daughter had shaken Big Jim' (p. 68). By

⁹⁵ Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties*, p. 310.

⁹⁶ Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything*, p. 56.

⁹⁷ Peter Middleton, *The Inward Gaze*, p. 121.

quickly reverting to his role in the public space of the Boar's Head, he demonstrates his apparent imperviousness to pain whether from loss of a daughter or from blows in a fight. The novel's taut representation of his earlier agonies, however, inscribes a different narrative and a different Jim.

That different Jim, an emotionally illiterate but instinctively sensitive individual, emerges several times in the novel. In an echo of the scene above, but occurring in a different space and in different circumstances, it is Jim who puts his arms 'gently beneath the poor mangled body' (p. 139) of Bill Bristol, fatally injured underground, and lays him down with the tenderness of a breast-feeding mother for her child. The ironic contrast with his separation from his dying daughter is powerful, but even here in his masculine world his tenderness must be internalised and redirected through the objectifying distance of banter: 'you will soon be all over the old 'ooman as strong as ever' (p. 139). Whether at home or at work, Jim is denied the full expression of a complex self, and by situating him frequently in public spaces, *Cwmardy* exposes the sustained pressure he feels to confirm the public image he has constructed, or has been allowed to construct as the iconic, stabilised hegemonic male.

'Anything but your home': Jim Roberts, identity, and the flight from domesticity

To regard Jim Roberts as a 'Big Hower' figure is to position him as a stabilised folk hero, an embodiment of a mythic masculinity that glorifies dangerous physical work and celebrates those who do it. But from the outset *Cwmardy* sees in Jim Roberts a confused and deracinated identity, and his strenuous masculine practice is less a demonstration of his stabilised self than a perpetual appeal for attention and gender validation.

John Beynon notes that 'the [colonial period] often equated being British with being English, as if the Welsh, Scottish and Irish did not exist'.⁹⁸ *Cwmardy* covertly exploits this cultural overlordship to expose how deeply saturated Jim Roberts is in the energising myth of imperial nostalgia and gender formation, and how destabilising the effect on his identity. As the novel opens, Jim is already a doubly displaced individual, displaced by distance from his home in North Wales and by ignorance from the long history of his new home in the south. He is further displaced by the legacy of imperial-imposed nationality for, although he has a 'poor grasp' (p. 94) of the language, he identifies himself as English. When it is the Germans in 1914 rather than the Boers who are 'othered', Jim unthinkingly declares that 'One Englishman [like him] be worth ten of the bleeders' (p. 252). Identity expressed through transnational absorption hints in his case at instability of self-identity, which *Cwmardy* continually expresses through Jim's various manifestations of hegemonic masculinity. But they unite in revealing his precarious sense of self and his fear of exposure or failure: 'Have anybody ever seen Big Jim losing?' (p. 39). It is a textual manoeuvre that sees Jim as a victim of imperialist and capitalist ideologies that are careless in their respect for human diversity or individual integrity, and for whom individuals like him are expendable.

Graham Dawson offers an insight into colonial masculinity that illuminates the construction of Jim Roberts as both product and continuing victim of imperial adventure. Dawson states that, 'As well as enabling the imagining of English-British adventurers as triumphant heroes in relation to various colonised "others", the Empire also seemed to furnish the real possibility of living out those

⁹⁸ John Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002), p. 37. In Jonathan Rutherford's *Forever England: Reflections on Masculinity and Empire* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1997), the Welsh, Irish and Scottish are so submerged into Englishness as to merit no separate mention. To be British in Rutherford's book is to be English.

imaginings in everyday experience'.⁹⁹ The masculine status given to the 'English-British' coloniser is one on which Jim builds his precarious identity. He explains to Len that it is only black miners who work in deep mines in South Africa, because 'us white men be the bosses' (p. 6). The absence of narrative direction makes Jim's imperception all the more telling, but by 'othering' black miners as inferior, Jim, who himself is little more than a lowly wage-slave of capital, self-deludingly incorporates himself into the imperial myth of white supremacy. *Cwmardy* here offers a powerful link between the alterity intrinsic to Imperialism and Jim's construction of his hegemonic self by his constant 'othering' of whoever is available. As John Tosh notes, hegemonic codes of manhood serve 'to strengthen the power and security of the governing class' but they apply 'not only to elites, but to subordinated classes' who seek power within those groups.¹⁰⁰ And so, in Jim's view, the local 'natives' like Dai Cannon, Bill Bristol, and the innumerable unnamed men with whom he fights and argues, are always restless, always embodying a challenge to him. Jim's image of himself is never subject to renegotiation, as he can never allow himself to be bettered. Even Bill Bristol's half-mocking remark underground that an official's lame excuse is 'like the battles Big Jim used to fight in the Boer War, always finishing miles further back than where they started' (p. 135) is met with the threat of immediate retaliation — 'Jim started to his feet at this insult' (p.135) — and is stopped only by the intervention of another workman. The insecure self-promoter can tolerate no ragging.

But Jim needs not only to dominate the public space through threats of physical coercion, but through his own self-mythologising — he frequently refers to himself as Big Jim in public — and through distinctive visual display. A body, as Judith Butler reminds us, is 'a signifying practice within a cultural field of

⁹⁹ Graham Dawson, 'The Blond Bedouin' (p. 120).

¹⁰⁰ John Tosh, 'Hegemonic Masculinity and the History of Gender', (p. 49).

gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality',¹⁰¹ and Jim's stiffened, bristling moustache — so different from Dai Cannon's 'drooping' specimen (p. 7) — not only blazons his sexual potency, but is a visual reminder of his military service. Between the 1860s and 1916, Queen's Regulations required soldiers to grow moustaches that were 'clipped and trimmed until they curved like sabres and bristled like bayonets' in order to enhance their warlike appearance.¹⁰² In retaining his moustache, Jim's formative military service is never far from his mind, nor intended to be far from the minds of others. Jim regards his military service as a 'source of masculine authority and a privileged arena of male activity'.¹⁰³ It is fundamental to his exclusionary masculine practice. And so, when he leads miners into a conflict with officials it is in the guise of the imperial warrior: 'Good Old Africa [...] the man who can fight Boers can fight blacklegs any day' (p. 166), and not surprisingly, when praised for his martial spirit, the text notes that 'he solemnly twirled the ends of his long moustache' (p. 167).

By giving pre-eminence to Jim's craving for attention, *Cwmardy* constructs him as a figure inherently self-contradictory; the antithesis of the stabilised male. Unprepared to concede dominion at any time to his fellow workers, contemptuous of 'bosses' (p. 165), and assertive of his own individuality, he nonetheless parades himself as a respectful product of military discipline, 'batman to an officer' (p. 11) — ironically, a servant of a servant of Empire. The masculinity he constructs is therefore context-dependent, determined by the opportunities offering greatest self-exhibition.

His defiant posture is represented, as earlier noted, at the outset of the novel when, in transnational mode, he constructs himself as an approximation of

¹⁰¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 189.

¹⁰² Piers Brendon, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire 1781-1997* (London: Vintage, 2008), p. 124.

¹⁰³ John Horne, 'The Age of Nation States and World Wars', in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, ed. Stefan Dudink, Karen Hornemann and John Tosh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 22-39, (p. 31).

the *hombre* figure of the American western. Anti-authority and undomesticated, the *hombre* was a renegade, 'a rough fellow, a tough',¹⁰⁴ for whom, as Jane Tompkins states, the open space of the American West 'seems to offer escape from the conditions of life in modern industrial society',¹⁰⁵ as the mountain does for Jim. In a few brisk sentences, *Cwmardy* contextualises him within this cultural domain. Implicitly hostile to convention, he lets his coat hang 'uncouthly' from his arm, and although he is 'known to civil servants and army authorities as James Roberts', he cultivates a less institutionalised identity through his alias, 'Big Jim' (p. 1). His bristling moustache gives him a 'fierce, reckless appearance' and he resembles 'a Wild-West desperado with the red silk scarf dangling loosely from his neck (p. 1).¹⁰⁶

Yet later in the novel, the different context of an industrial dispute constructs a different, though equally grandiloquent Jim when he volunteers to carry a note of truce to the police chief after a *mêlée*. Introducing himself proudly as an 'Old soldier. Served through the Boer War with the old 41st and proud of it' (p. 186), he acknowledges military hierarchy, stands to attention, addresses the uniformed policeman as 'sir' and salutes him twice. Savouring the distinction from his fellows conferred on him by this display, the irony evades him that he is saluting an agent of the state apparatus responsible for his economic

¹⁰⁴ *Dictionary of the American West*, ed. Winfred Blevins (Ware: Wordsworth, 1995), p. 118. *The Hard Hombre*, for instance, was a 1931 western, and the term still functioned as a descriptor in Paul Newman's *Hombre* in 1967.

¹⁰⁵ Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ The freedom and rugged masculinity associated with the American west is a recurring trope in Welsh writing in English. For example, it is there in *So Long, Hector Bebb* (1970), and occurs throughout Duncan Bush's *Glass Shot* (1991), where Stew Boyle dresses like a cowboy and considers his hair to be black like an Apache (London: Martin Secker and Warburg, 1991), p. 41. The influence of the American west and the western genre on the Welsh popular imagination can scarcely be exaggerated. Buffalo Bill Cody, for instance, brought his Wild West show twice to Cardiff (1891 and 1903) and to the Valleys towns of Aberdare and Ebbw Vale in 1903, among several other Welsh locations. America continues to fascinate the Valleys. As the character Ellie Evans says of the Valleys, in Rachel Trezise's, *Sixteen Shades of Crazy* (London: Blue Door, 2010), p. 211, 'America's already in the blood'.

exploitation. What matters more is the revival of 'His old war days' and his pleasure when 'the strikers made a clear path for him' (p. 186).

Jim as anti-authority *hombre*, and Jim as ex-imperial soldier proudly saluting a senior figure immediately exposes a rift in his own masculine definition between defiance of socially-established norms and compliance with military regulation. To cite Greenblatt once more, the choices available for self-definition are 'strictly delineated by the social and ideological system in force',¹⁰⁷ and whichever masculinity Jim chooses, anti-authority figure or uncritical son of Empire, to reject one culturally determined form is simply to accept another, even when they conflict. Commodification of the self, the novel implies, is intrinsic to the ideological forces that govern him.

Cwmardy powerfully articulates this phenomenon when Jim arrives home from war service in 1918. After visiting the Boar's Head he returns, drunk and boastful, to Sunny Bank and declares 'it's good to be home, mun', while 'his eyes roamed longingly over Siân's body' (p. 300). Having satisfied one need through drink, Jim commodifies Siân as there to provide a different form of satisfaction. However, in a graphic irony Jim is about to be further commodified himself. Mining has become mechanized since he left for the war. From being the 'best skilled man in the pit' (p. 13) Jim becomes subservient to the rhythms of the mechanised conveyor. He discovers that 'however much coal they put in, the conveyor was always empty when they turned to it again', and 'conversation became impossible in the tumult' (p. 305). Jim had been excited by the prospect of returning to work because that 'do make me feel as if I now be home real, mun' (p. 304). Instead, he discovers only the further alienation of a worker who 'at work [...] feels homeless'.¹⁰⁸ As a skilled miner, Jim faces not only

¹⁰⁷ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 256.

¹⁰⁸ Karl Marx, 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts', p. 98.

obsolescence in a new regime but, as the mechanised servant of a machine, the erosion of his status also. At least in the army he was a servant to a man.

In Jim Roberts, *Cwmardy* constructs an industrialized male alienated whether at home, at leisure, or at work. Subordinated at work, emotionally repressed at home, aggressive/defensive of his status at leisure, he exists in a state of perpetual non-realization of self. The novel provides glimpses of his capacity for emotional empathy — tears fill his eyes, for example, when a young man loses his arm underground (p. 308) — but the military discipline inculcated by the Empire and the ‘superman’ culture of the miner observed by Orwell — prohibit such public displays. In Jim Roberts, *Cwmardy* inscribes a masculinity, at once iconic and individual, always poised between a constant craving for self-affirmation through action and a constant threat of self-implosion through defeat. Perhaps Jim’s only salvation is that *Cwmardy* denies him clear-sighted awareness of it.

Conclusion

In this chapter *Cwmardy* has been examined through two of its principal characters in a narrative which is, in Macherey’s terms, ‘composed from a real diversity of elements which give it substance’.¹⁰⁹ As such, it is a far richer and subtler work than has generally been credited. Focusing on two differing forms of masculinity, this reading has argued that individual male identity, whether somatically powerful or psychically complex, is fractured under socio-economic patriarchal paradigms which promote monolithic gender inscription.

The confidence Len displays at the end of the novel conceals his temperamental inability to deal with the brutality of his working life. He acquires political *nous* as the narrative develops, but remains a divided subject to the end. Jim Roberts, rather than being the uncomplicated ‘Big Hewer’ of his usual

¹⁰⁹ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, p. 49..

representation, is a subject displaced from his home in North Wales and from his national identity by his service in an English/British imperialism. His dominant masculinity has been shaped by imperial ideologies of supremacy and is utilised by a capitalist economy until his magnificent body is 'thin, bent and slow' (p. 309).

To privilege doctrinal readings of *Cwmardy* is to make rigid what is a more pliant, subtle text. This chapter has shown that, despite the disclaimers in its Foreword, it is the work of an impressive imagination, as much as an acute demonstration of political theory. Artistically, it is energised by its probing imagination, its humanism, its subversion of the *Bildungsroman*, its construction of Len's masculinity through allusively suggestive symbolic association, and of Jim's through the enduring and damaging impact of his colonial past on his mining present. David Smith notes that in June 1933, Lewis Jones published 'The Pit Cage',¹¹⁰ a dramatic short story of a pit cage crashing two thousand feet to pit bottom, and he points out how Jones 'moves inside emotions to probe imaginatively rather than simply vent his savage indignation'.¹¹¹ Written by a man for whom what 'was more important than the politics [...] was the humanism and compassion',¹¹² *Cwmardy* continues this imaginative probing.

¹¹⁰ Emma Smith has a fine paragraph on this story: *Masculinity in Welsh Writing in English*, p. 30.

¹¹¹ David Smith, *Lewis Jones*, p. 27.

¹¹² Billy Griffiths on Lewis Jones, from his interview with Hywel Francis, 1969.

Chapter Three

Genre, Gender and Rewriting Valleys Masculinity in *Strike for a Kingdom* (1959)

Introduction

Strike for a Kingdom, published as an innocuous ‘whodunnit’, conducts through wit, comedy and sardonic mockery, a searing critique of the gender binaries essential to the functioning of patriarchal capitalism.¹ It announces its gendered framework from the outset. Whereas *Times Like These* opens with the march of miners’ boots in the early dawn as the men return from the night shift, and *Cwmardy* locates two male figures alone on a mountain, *Strike for a Kingdom* begins with a group of young children — all girls — playing a skipping game in a Cilhendre street. This chapter inspects how *Strike for a Kingdom* articulates a radical reconfiguring of Valleys culture in which the power structures that validate hegemonic masculine behaviour, embodied principally in a police inspector, are juxtaposed and critiqued alongside textually endorsed feminised and infantilised forms of masculinity in the striking miners.

Disapproving as Menna Gallie was of ‘the stridency of women’s lib’,² the discursive practice of the text, as later discussion shows, not only dissolves binary gender distinctions, but incorporates Cilhendre men, the police inspector apart, into a triad that privileges their similarities to children as well as women. Berthold Schoene-Harwood cites English novels published in the 1950s, like *Lord of the Flies* (1954) and *Room at the Top* (1959), and John Osborne’s play *Look Back in Anger* (1956), to argue that despite their innovation in form and

¹ Menna Gallie, *Strike for a Kingdom* [1959] (Dinas Powys: Honno, 2003 and 2011). All future references are to the Honno 2011 edition.

² Menna Gallie, from a talk given to Swansea University Women graduates, undated: Menna Gallie Archive, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, L1/16.

subject they are nonetheless ‘immersed in the straightjacketing gender ideology of post-war Britain’.³ It is a straitjacket from which *Strike for a Kingdom*, an unheralded anglophone Welsh novel published in the same decade, broke free.⁴ It is one of the novel’s most significant achievements that it pre-dates by some forty years an argument of John MacInnes’s, that “gender”, together with the terms masculinity and femininity, is an ideology people use in modern societies to imagine differences between men and women on the basis of their sex where in fact there are none’.⁵

Locating *Strike for a Kingdom* in the 1926 strike allows the novel to develop, with some comic exaggeration, an anthropology in which the constraints of performing patriarchal masculinity through work have been loosened.⁶ *Times Like These* had already hinted at such relaxing of gendered behaviour when the striking miners become carers of children playing on the Common, but this was a temporary arrangement. As later discussion will show, *Strike for a Kingdom* goes further still and maps an entire narrative where Cilhendre masculinity is, to adapt Susan Rowland’s comment, ‘the “other” of the dominant patriarchal structure’.⁷ In this way the novel’s discursive practice presents as alien to the Welsh communal *mores* the conventional notion of gender dualism and the structural masculinity which industrialised patriarchy promotes.

³ Berthold Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men*, p. 47.

⁴ Katie Gramich writes that Rhys Davies blurs ‘rigid gender divisions’, though ‘He does not seek to attack a narrow patriarchy’. This chapter argues that Menna Gallie also blurs gender divisions, but has a narrow patriarchy in her sights: Katie Gamich, ‘The Masquerade of Gender in the Stories of Rhys Davies’, p. 213.

⁵ John MacInnes, *The End of Masculinity* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998), p. 1.

⁶ For an account of the previously unthinkable ways traditional gender roles dissolved during the strike, see also Stephanie Ward, ‘The Life and Work of Menna Gallie: Llafur Welsh People’s History’, *History Workshop Journal*, 63. 1 (2007), pp. 369-371.

⁷ Susan Rowland, *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 16.

Evaluations of Welsh industrial fiction in English occluded the remarkable achievements of Menna Gallie, possibly because of her gender as she herself stated,⁸ until the efforts of scholars like Angela V. John, Stephen Knight, Katie Gramich, and Jane Aaron encouraged a re-consideration of *Strike for a Kingdom* and *The Small Mine*. Stephen Knight, for instance, comments that *Strike for a Kingdom* was ‘notably belittled’ by English reviewers on its publication in 1959.⁹ He cites as example the *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer who patronised Gallie’s gender and her nation and marginalised the novel’s setting in the 1926 strike: ‘Fresh and beguiling from the land of her fathers’, it was a novel that would ‘delight all those who take pleasure in the seedy skylarks of Mr Gwyn Thomas’s voters or who kindle to the elfland music of *bach* and *bachgen*’.¹⁰ A metropolitan elite which regarded Wales as quaint and safely commodified underestimated, in the case of this text, what this ‘elfland music’ constructed. Elizabeth Bayard, a contemporary American reviewer, not hampered by an embedded cultural superiority, offered a more acute judgement. Amidst the whodunnit element of the novel, the death of a despised colliery manager, she recognised that ‘beneath its local colour, the humour and the mystery runs an impassioned defence of the misjudged, mistreated coal miner’.¹¹ Stephen Knight praises her development of both the genre and gender of the Welsh industrial novel:

Gallie’s novels are less politically unfocused and a good deal more formally structured than are [Jack] Jones’s. They interpret the effects of political action in social contexts and, while one of her strengths is her representation of a range of credible women characters who are involved

⁸ Menna Gallie, Address to Swansea Writers’ Group, undated, though possibly 1989, Menna Gallie archive (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales), L1/16.

⁹ Stephen Knight, ‘A New Enormous Music’, p. 75.

¹⁰ Cited by Knight, ‘A New Enormous Music’ p. 75.

¹¹ Review by Elizabeth Bayard, *Saturday Review*, January 16th, 1960: Menna Gallie Archive, L4/1.

in social and political life, she also realises clearly the forces of the material world that act upon them.¹²

The following pages examine how the novel's hybridised interplay of form, gender and politics constructs a more richly problematic text than Knight's summary has room to address.

Making use of Menna Gallie's archive, this chapter examines *Strike for a Kingdom* through the following perspectives: Gallie's management of the crime novel format; the discursive infantilising and feminising of Cilhendre masculinity; the novel's presentation of matriarchal harmony and patriarchal discord angled through the figures of D. J. Williams and John Nixon; and its critique of the power structures sustaining hegemonic masculinity in the figure of Inspector Ernest Evans. But any discussion of *Strike for a Kingdom* must begin by examining closely Gallie's formal massaging of the whodunnit, the generic conduit through which its politicised and gendered viewpoint is channelled.

'a novel which disguised itself as a thriller': *Strike for a Kingdom* and the manipulation of genre

In his chapter 'Improvisation, Structure and Necessity', Pierre Macherey states that:

The writer, as the producer of the text, does not manufacture the materials with which he works. Neither does he stumble across them as spontaneously available wandering fragments, useful in the building of any sort of edifice; they are not neutral transparent components which have the grace to vanish, to disappear into the totality they contribute to.¹³

Instead, a text is implicated in a 'history of forms' where it is not necessarily 'consonant with a model that is determined independently of it'.¹⁴ Macherey here offers a helpful threshold for approaching *Strike for a Kingdom* as a narrative existing by a creative tension with the generic form through which it is transmitted. Gill Plain

¹² Stephen Knight, 'A New Enormous Music', p. 76.

¹³ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, pp. 41-42.

¹⁴ Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, p. 42.

develops such a view with particular regard to crime novels by seeing an inevitable friction between generic form and narrative content in those crime writers who wish to address socio-political-economic matters. Such texts ask whether 'radical characterisation and plot construction will inevitably be undermined by the constraints of generic form: namely, closure, resolution, and restoration of order'.¹⁵ Her observation identifies the difficulties facing a novel like *Strike for a Kingdom*. Set in the 1926 strike, a period of industrial unrest in Wales unparalleled until the 1984-85 strike, and transmitting its narrative through a form popular with a middle-class readership, any 'closure, resolution and restoration of order' the text achieves is likely to be circumscribed. In *Strike for a Kingdom*, careful negotiation — and a cautious narrative voice — are required to situate a politically-charged narrative within the socially conservative form of the English mid-century whodunnit, as well as to assure the implied conservative reader that there was no politically subversive impetus behind the strike.¹⁶ Certainly, locating a whodunnit giving primacy to a Welsh working-class community of striking miners posed considerable challenges to the text's composition and publication, and led Gallie to declare categorically in the novel that 'they were not Marxists out to destroy Capitalism' (p. 13).¹⁷

The whodunnit plot of *Strike for a Kingdom* models itself loosely on a form of crime fiction known as the clue-puzzle, whose pre-eminent exponent was Agatha

¹⁵ Gill Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction: Gender, Sexuality and the Body*, p. 89.

¹⁶ In 'The Miner's Lamp', Dr Ben Curtis discusses how from the early decades of last century 'South Wales miners and their union, the SWMF ("the Fed"), acquired a reputation as socialist radicals', www.walesonline.co.uk, (9. 05. 2013), n. p. It was a reputation which persisted for much of the century, and which runs through Margot Heinemann's 1960's novel *The Adventurers*, set in the decade after the end of the World War II.

¹⁷ In the context of the times, this blunt narrative declaration was understandable. *Strike for a Kingdom* was written during the mid-to-late 1950s and published at the end of a decade which saw hostility to communism reach the point of hysteria in America in the McCarthy 'witch-hunts'. Britain, too, had its fears of communist infiltration into the Establishment with the exposure of Soviet spies like Klaus Fuchs, Guy Burgess, John Cairncross, and Donald Maclean. The perception of a Communist threat was not confined to members of a Cambridge-educated elite. In South Wales, Will Paynter, a Communist, was elected President of the South Wales Miners' Federation in 1951, succeeding Alf Davies, another communist, prolonging the reputation of South Wales as a centre of extremist left-wing militancy; and in 1959, the year *Strike for a Kingdom* was published, Paynter became General Secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers.

Christie. In clue-puzzle crime novels, readers are invited to collaborate, even compete, with the investigators in solving the mystery without themselves ever being fundamentally challenged.¹⁸ Referencing Barthes's two different forms of textual reading, however, Gill Plain notes that while a genre narrative like a crime novel presupposes a *lisible* reading — fast and superficial to reach closure — when such a text is subjected to close *scriptible* scrutiny what appears to offer an unambiguous surface reveals 'unimagined potentialities'.¹⁹ *Strike for a Kingdom* benefits from just such a bifocal reading. Employing disarming humour and the pleasure of problem solving, it contests the generic conventions it simultaneously employs by encoding a searching critique of a dominant economic and gender ideology. In this respect, the clue-puzzle form of *Strike for a Kingdom* itself becomes a sustained alibi, a protestation of innocence that hides a guilty secret.

Clue-puzzle crime novels were prominent in the interwar years, but continued to enjoy popularity beyond that period. While not forming a homogenous group, they employed what Stephen Knight describes as 'a coherent set of practices which were shared [...] by most of the writers then at work',²⁰ and anticipated by readers who had bought into the format. Gallie, then, entered a field of literary endeavour in which the components of the genre were, to adapt Macherey, not neutrally transparent and conveniently dissoluble; they were ideologically laden and culturally conformist. Julian Symonds notes, for example, that in the interwar years of crime fiction, 'the General Strike of 1926 never took place, trade unions did not exist, and when sympathy was expressed for the poor it was not for the unemployed but for those struggling along on a fixed inherited income'.²¹ Modifications to the genre, such as a

¹⁸ See Stephen Knight, *Crime Fiction 1800-2000*, p. 91.

¹⁹ Gill Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, p. 90.

²⁰ Stephen Knight, 'The Golden Age', in *Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, ed. Martin Priestman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 77-94 (p. 77). The term 'Golden Age' is attributed broadly to whodunnits written between the wars, though as Stephen Knight and others comment, the form remained popular and influential long after.

²¹ Julian Symonds, *Bloody Murder* (Harmondsworth, London: Viking, 1985), p. 96.

greater engagement with social process, occurred during the 1950s, but the prevailing cultural ethos of both genre and reader remained bourgeois. It is the challenge facing *Strike for a Kingdom* to manoeuvre a working-class, political narrative into the infrastructure of a socially conservative form which will be analysed in this section. Reference will be made to individual masculinities, but priority is given to the oblique means by which a criticism of a male-created, dominant value system is manoeuvred into the text.

Gallie suggests in her archive that her choice of the 'thriller' was pragmatic, for it enhanced her chances of publication.²² Marginalised from the male-dominated tradition of industrial narrative, and anxious 'to get [her] foot in the door, to get [herself] a publisher',²³ she felt the whodunnit offered an opportunity to write a form of industrial narrative by other means. The whodunnit comprised a popular sub-genre in which women authors were well represented in a business Gallie otherwise felt was dominated by men. However, as previously noted, situating a narrative set in the 1926 strike in a form like the clue-puzzle mystery required careful negotiation of consumer expectations. John Scaggs, for example, emphasises that:

In the case of mystery and detective fiction, it is the home-owning bourgeois reading public whose interest it is to see the dominant social order of which they are a part maintained, and their stake in it protected.²⁴

As though acknowledging such constraints, *Strike for a Kingdom* constructs a sphere of activity where recognisable features of the clue-puzzle format reassuringly appear, as discussed below, and where Welsh miners are

²² Angela V. John states it is unlikely that Menna Gallie's decision to write a crime novel emerged from her own reading in the genre and her wish to contribute to it. Professor John says that, to the best of her recollection, Menna Gallie 'tended to immerse herself more in the classics than in contemporary fiction'. Email correspondence with Angela V. John, 13 December, 2014.

²³ See Menna Gallie Archive, talk to Swansea Women Graduates, undated, though probably delivered in 1970 or 1971. L1/16. In a review of David Lodge's memoir, *Quite a Good Time to Be Born: A Memoir: 1935-1975*, D. J. Taylor remarks: 'it was not enough for a 1950s writer to have merit: he or she had to fit in with the critical strait-jacketings of the day': *Guardian Review*, January 17th, 2015, p. 6.

²⁴ John Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 45.

unthreateningly interpellated into compliance with the belief-systems and hierarchies of a dominant moral, religious and social order.

The secluded country house of English clue-puzzle fiction functions as a metonym for what Knight calls 'a southern-English high-bourgeois world'.²⁵ In other words, it is emblematic of patriarchal capitalism, an embedded class system and recognisable gender stereotypes. In *Strike for a Kingdom*, Cilhendre, a cocooned mining community, replaces the country house and maps a physical landscape viewed through the comforting lens of romantic fiction:

Cilhendre was a little huddle of pigeon-coloured houses following the curves of the River Tawe, which plaited its way among them, with the road and railway for company. The sun polished the walls of the houses. They were built of river stones, lavender grey, cloud grey, sea grey, pink and purple. One side of the valley faced the sun and was golden and pink in the warmth. The hills on the other side were in deep shadow, deeply blue (p. 5).

Its soft palette with no hint of coal dust contrasts with the brutally industrialised landscapes of Jenkinstown and Cwmardy. In Cilhendre, nature and industry, river, road and rail keep each other company in good fellowship. Its harmonised topography belies a Welsh industrial novel, and its tonal colouring functions as a metonym for the feminised construction of Welsh miners. Vastly different from the country house in status, it is nonetheless a locus of closely interconnected characters in a relatively confined area. Its working-class residents are positioned centrally in the narrative rather than cast as peripheral functionaries, but they offer no threat to Scaggs's 'home-owning bourgeois reading public'. In Barthes' terms it appears to promise a consolingly straightforward '*lisible*' narrative.

If *Strike for a Kingdom* constructs a functioning working-class alternative to the bourgeois country house, it faced a sterner challenge in aligning its political stance with the cultural constraints embedded in the generic form. Dennis Porter explains that:

Works in the genre always take a stand in defence of the established societal order [...] And the cause of such generic 'conservatism' is to be found in the

²⁵ Stephen Knight, 'The Golden Age', p. 82.

first place at the level of the structure of the action. Like all popular literary genres [...] detective stories combine what might be called deep ideological constants with surface ideological variables.²⁶

In *Strike for a Kingdom*, a deep ideological constant of the crime novel — progression toward resolution, the restitution of social/moral order and return to a culturally accepted, bourgeois normality — co-exists alongside a particularised ideological variable: the transgressive eruption of an unresolved General Strike that challenges the social order enshrined in that ideology. There is, in other words, a potential conflict at a fundamental level of textuality between the necessities of the form, which valorises the socio-political status quo, and the requirements of the content, which challenge it. For Gallie, still seared by childhood memories of the strike thirty years after it ended, there was nothing of the ‘surface’ regarding her choice of temporal location. In 1961, she stated: ‘When I wrote [*Strike for a Kingdom*] I was trying to take part in that strike, that fight [...] here was my contribution [...] here was I taking soup at last with the other children’.²⁷

Gallie’s strategy to present if not harmonise the novel’s competing elements was to leaven seriousness with parodic humour, to construct emasculated miners who offer no threat to the status quo, and to allow the strike to recede progressively into the textual undergrowth as the narrative progresses. By foregrounding the investigation over the strike in the second half, the narrative offers the prospect of cathartic closure when the crime is solved. And this is what apparently happens: Cilhendre returns to its daily routines having ‘accepted all that had happened’ (p. 156). At Gwen Evans’s funeral service, the mourners are collectively vitalised by hymn singing; and at home, the poet/miner D. J. Williams feels a poem ‘bubbling

²⁶ Cited by Gill Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, p. 88.

²⁷ Menna Gallie Archive, talk to Neath Townswomen’s Guild, June 1961, L1/16. As a local craftsman, Gallie’s father was not on strike and therefore she was ineligible for communal meals with other children at the soup kitchen.

within' (p. 160). Normality, it seems, is restored through a healing kinetic and creative energy commensurate with Porter's 'defence of the established societal order'.²⁸

Yet the hybrid nature of the narrative contests any easy, univocal resolution. Closure is only provisionally satisfying, for the larger social transgression, the strike, remains unresolved and unresolvable within the frame of the narrative. As the novel progresses toward decoding the clue-puzzle, echoes of disruption are manoeuvred into the text to give a modernist sense of incompleteness, rather than what Plain describes as a generically expected 'mode of textuality designed to comfort and reassure'.²⁹ On a *lisible* reading, the final chapter offers just this consolation.

However, in three sequential episodes the text refuses to construct unambiguously satisfying closure. Returning from Gwen Evans's funeral, the mourners, who are predominantly male,³⁰ feel that an 'inner need was satisfied, the opium of the poor was a powerful drug, and they left the chapel refreshed and belonging and reassured for the time' (p. 157). The indirect reference to Marx and the inference that their contentment is a temporary drug-induced detachment from reality 'for the time' insinuates not closure, but continuation of rupture into a temporal space reaching beyond 'the time' and therefore beyond the text. This episode is followed immediately by a form of curtain-lecture confrontation between Jack Look-Out and his wife in which she scolds him publicly and beats him over his head with her broom before she returns to the domestic space of the house, and he retires to the male haven of the pub. The comic trope of the bullied husband has a lineage going back to Chaucer and earlier, and can be read here as incarnating nothing more than a farcical reversal of gender power. Read more deeply into the semiotics of the text, however, the episode illustrates once again its encoding of critique

²⁸ Cited by Gill Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, p. 88.

²⁹ Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, p. 247.

³⁰ Jack Look-Out had been to the funeral but not his wife, John Nixon but not his mother, who sent a wreath, Maggie Black Horse sent a dozen bottles of stout for the grieving mothers but did not attend the funeral, and the emotion and tears of the funeral service would have more than satisfied Liz and Rita Manager had they been there.

through humour. The restoration of a pre-crime social equilibrium — the staple of crime fiction — is referenced here not through reconciliation, but through a cameo of marital disharmony. In a text where conventional marriage is a contested site, humour does not deflect and diminish the impact of marriage as something to be joylessly endured, but rather magnifies it as such and reflects it back. The marital unit, a fundamental principle of patriarchy, is exposed once more as a source of continuing, unresolved attrition.

From domestic fissure, the text moves to 'the sanctuary' (p. 27) of D. J. Williams's kitchen. Yet even here closure is ambiguous. Feeling 'released and relaxed' (p. 159), and poised at the moment of poetic creation, he reaches for his pen and paper, confident that the 'poem was coming' (p. 160). But the one line he inscribes, and on which the novel ends, 'Earthbound and slothful, barely venturing forth....', constructs only images of hesitancy, torpor and confinement. And the dots concluding the novel are semiotically paradoxical; they suggest continuance rather than stasis, but also leave D. J. Williams, like the figures on Keats's urn, incapable of progression or resolution. The best his life can offer, it seems, is the conundrum of a satisfaction suspended in an eternal moment of incompleteness. Taken together, these three linked though differing episodes encode an alternative closure. They map an environment where the future is uncertain, contentment is provisional and marital conflict is a micro-version of a patriarchal system signified by continuing industrial strife.

In a comment which is particularly apposite to *Strike for a Kingdom*, Pierre Macherey writes that 'literary texts make a novel use of language and ideology [...] by wresting them in a new direction and conscripting them into a project peculiar to them alone'.³¹ *Strike for a Kingdom* conscripts a popular bourgeois sub-genre into representing a de-politicised Welsh mining masculinity, rendering it sympathetic and harmless, and using such devices to embed within the narrative a powerful social

³¹ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, p. 52.

and gender critique. The extent to which this was a conscious intention may be inferred from Gallie's admission that *Strike for a Kingdom* 'disguised itself as a thriller',³² a disguise so successful that it was joint runner-up in 1959 for the later renamed Golden Dagger Award of the Crime Writers' Association of Great Britain.

'My first and obvious novel, the inevitable one': writing politics and gender in *Strike for a Kingdom*

The previous section focused principally on the generic conventions of the whodunnit which Menna Gallie exploited, manipulated and subverted in writing *Strike for a Kingdom*. Making extensive use of her archival material, this section shifts attention to identify the interplay of personal and cultural influences which contributed toward the representation of masculinities in *Strike for a Kingdom*, arising out of her growing frustration with the position of women in society. She describes herself as being politically left wing, seared by memories of the 1926 strike, a woman who 'wrote with a Welsh accent',³³ and who became influenced by the 'women's lib' movement in her mid-thirties. It was a *cursus honorum*, she felt, that offered more challenges than opportunities to the budding writer.

Moving to two different cultures, first England and then Northern Ireland, provided her with the critical distance necessary to review her relationship with Wales. During her stay in Staffordshire between 1950 and 1954, while her husband taught at what is now Keele University, her hostility toward a dominant form of Valleys masculinity began to crystallise.³⁴ She records that:

³² Menna Gallie Archive, talk given to Swansea Writers' Group, L1/16.

³³ Menna Gallie Archive, talk given to Swansea Writers' Group, L1/16.

³⁴ Gallie notes that, at Keele, 'I lifted Wales off my shoulders': Menna Gallie Archive, undated talk to Swansea Writers' Group L1/16.

It needed England to indicate to me the boredom, the irritation, the need to smack down the rugger type. Their inherent fascism hadn't actually struck me then.³⁵

The metonymic 'rugger type' here signifies a form of hegemonic masculinity posited on demonstrable heterosexuality, gender discrimination, public display of a signifying physique, and the assertion of self through power. Lynne Segal notes how in such archetypes, the male 'self-object must be tirelessly promoted'³⁶ by demonstrations of control in order to sustain its sense of self, and, more subtly, discloses the pressures these normative paradigms exert on failure to comply with such a dominant model. R. W. Connell, too, argues that such masculinity is constitutively unstable, requiring constant rehabilitation through performance in a public space.³⁷ For Menna Gallie, it is the imperative to perform macho masculinity that enacts its 'fascism'. In *Strike for a Kingdom*, 'the need to smack [it] down' becomes a pivotal feature of the text's discourse, most directly, as later discussion will show, in the form of Inspector Ernest Evans.

If Menna Gallie's residence in England helped clarify her attitude to a dominant male stereotype, it was in Northern Ireland that she began to inspect critically her own status as a Welsh woman. In 1954, she moved to Belfast where her husband had become a professor at Queen's University, and it was during this period that several currents in her life converged to propel her towards writing. Living outside Belfast, she records how her nearest neighbour, Viscountess Bangor, 'took us up'.³⁸ The attitude implied in the phrase, together with Gallie's pointed understatement that 'the gentry are not ideal informal friends',³⁹ suggests that the

³⁵ Menna Gallie Archive, talk given to Swansea Writers' Group, L1/16. Angela V. John remarks that Menna Gallie 'always carefully denied that she was a feminist': 'Introduction', *Strike for a Kingdom*, p. x.

³⁶ Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion* (London: Virago, 1990), p. 125.

³⁷ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, pp. 54-55.

³⁸ Menna Gallie Archive, talk given to Swansea Writers' Group, L1/16.

³⁹ Gallie, talk given to Swansea Writers' Group.

relationship of patronage was not congenial to her. Initially lonely and socially isolated, she records that her hours of solitude led her to writing *Strike for a Kingdom*. Two influences contributed to the form that writing took which this section will discuss: her developing awareness of gender as a form of cultural definition and inhibition, and her memories of the 1926 strike. Compelled to write about the strike by what she describes as ‘a belated shot at solidarity’, and confronted by a tradition of male-authored industrial fiction, Menna Gallie later explained that writing *Strike for a Kingdom* as a ‘thriller’ was an attempt ‘to get my foot in the door, to get myself a publisher’.⁴⁰

Initially ill-at-ease in her surroundings and positioned in a subaltern role as the wife of an academic, she writes that ‘it was then that the full force of women’s lib struck me’.⁴¹ The draft title of *Strike for a Kingdom* taken from *Gwalia Deserta* — ‘Say the Pink Bells’⁴² — indicates that Menna Gallie used the colour connotations of pink and ‘pinko’ to endow her narrative with a self-consciously gendered, and political, awareness. Its use of ‘pink’ — a colour coded as feminine — suggests also a more allusive approach to ‘women’s lib’ than the emerging second-wave feminism was to construct. But her literary practice certainly suggests an unswerving commitment to fundamental gender debate. Although denying any allegiance to ideological feminism, in *Strike for a Kingdom* Gallie strikingly ventures beyond gender equality to gender similarity mediated through a narrative voice which regards men’s behaviour and structures of feeling as indistinguishable from women’s or from children’s. And if she was critical of aspects of second-wave feminism, it was not through gender timidity, but because she felt that it was ideologically hidebound.

⁴⁰ Menna Gallie Archive, talk given to Neath Townswomen’s Guild, 1961, L1/16.

⁴¹ Menna Gallie Archive, talk given to Swansea Writers’ Group, L1/16.

⁴² See Idris Davies, ‘Gwalia Deserta XV’, *The Collected Poems of Idris Davies*, ed. Islwyn Jenkins (Llandysul: Gomerian Press, 1990), pp. 34-35.

In a talk given in the early 1970s, Gallie revealed her coolness toward what she regarded as the more insistent aspects of second-wave feminism: 'I'm not much of a one for the stridency of woman's lib', and added provocatively, 'Indeed, I find my bra the most comforting of my garments'.⁴³ And in her 1970 review of *The Female Eunuch* published in the *Cambridge Review*, Gallie took uncompromising issue with Germaine Greer for what she felt was Greer's Manichaeian premise that 'Man is the enemy; so is the family and so is marriage'.⁴⁴ Yet if neither man nor the family was the enemy for Gallie, she was herself no uncritical advocate of the regulatory conventions of marriage, as she forcefully states in the same review:

I'd like to suggest that what is wrong with marriage — as we know it — is the word adultery and the insistence on monogamy. We have a duty not to leave the feminist revolt to Miss Greer's chums with cliteromania, but to try and get a general acceptance of the fact, which even British Law has sanctioned, that adultery is not the end of marriage, for either sex. We must come to terms honestly with sexual pleasure, within marriage or outside it, for sex is one of our few physical joys. ⁴⁵

Written into the narrative discourse of *Strike for a Kingdom* eleven years before this review is the barrenness of conventional marriage which incorporates men as well as women into its victimhood. Trapped into marriage by a feigned pregnancy, Jack Look-Out observes his wife, and 'wondered at himself that he had ever been brought to marry her' (p. 9). Yet marriage ensnares women also. Jess Jeffries' adultery is treated sympathetically in the text. She sleeps with the colliery manager not only because 'The money was lovely for the children', but because, rather like Polly Garter, she is generous-hearted, and 'it was a pity for the poor man and she liked to do a favour when she could' (pp. 11-12). Monogamy suppresses her autonomy. Notwithstanding her motives, the repressive formalities of social convention generate her 'greatest terror' (p. 102), that the chapel deacons, male custodians and enforcers

⁴³ Menna Gallie talk to Swansea Women Graduates, undated but probably given in the early 1970s, L 1/16.

⁴⁴ Menna Gallie, 'For God's sake hold your tongue and let me love', *Cambridge Review*, 92. 2199, (1970), 49-50 (p. 50).

⁴⁵ 'For God's sake hold your tongue and let me love', p. 50.

of female respectability, will publicly ostracise her. Even when adultery is not countenanced, the textual import is that marriage either coerces women into living with men they either despise, like Mrs Nixon, or by whom they are cowed like Mrs Evans. Overhearing the normatively angry tones of her police inspector husband in a telephone conversation in her 'milk-and-water kitchen', she shrinks and 'grew smaller, out of sight' (p. 127). It is significant that both Mrs Nixon and Mrs Evans are married to prototypically dominant, domineering men, incarnations of patriarchal empowerment who incur textual disapproval. By contrast, the text's two loving inter-gender relationships diverge significantly from this fractious matrimonial model: D. J. Williams's with his mother is framed within a mother/child perspective; and the consanguineous love of Gerwin and Gwen Evans, which the text strongly implies but never fully explicates is physically incestuous.⁴⁶ Referring to a trope in American crime fiction, Gillian Plain writes that: 'Transgressive desire is always disruptive and potentially dangerous'.⁴⁷ *Strike for a Kingdom* daringly implies that in a flawed marital landscape transgressive desire may also be both fruitful and pardonable, if eventually tragic.

In the text's discursive landscape, marital discord is only one consequence of existing gender orthodoxies. Attacking such orthodoxies, Judith Butler writes ironically that, 'Discrete genders are part of what "humanises" individuals within contemporary society'.⁴⁸ Whereas Butler's critique of such 'humanising' exists primarily within a tradition of psychological and philosophical enquiry, *Strike for a Kingdom* is more implicitly political and anthropological in its critique. An insight by the cultural anthropologist Gayle Rubin helps contextualise and clarify gender representation in *Strike for a Kingdom*. Rubin comments that:

⁴⁶ See also Stephen Knight, 'Welsh Industrial Fiction by Women', in *British Industrial Fictions*, ed. H. Gustav Klaus and Stephen Knight (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), pp. 163-180 (p. 169); and Virgilia Peterson, in 'Herald Tribune', February 7th, 1960 — Gerwin, 'her too-loving brother': Menna Gallie Archive, L4/1.

⁴⁷ Gill Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, p. 100.

⁴⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 190.

Men and women are, of course, different. But they are not as different as day and night, earth and sky [...] In fact, from the standpoint of nature, men and women are closer to each other than either is to anything else. [...] The idea that men and women are more different from each other than they are from anything else must come from somewhere other than nature.⁴⁹

The 'somewhere other than nature' from where gender polarities are constructed in *Strike for a Kingdom* is a form of patriarchal capitalism through which polarities are naturalised as the *sine qua non* of social hierarchies and gender differentiation. Running counter to such differentiation, the text inductively represents the natural similarities existing between men and women, and men and children, thereby implicitly challenging the boundaries, both gender and generational, that patriarchy establishes and regulates. As the following sections argue, within this ethnographic context the fictional representation of Valleys masculinities is radically reformulated.

**'Young Wilkins picked his way like a girl'; 'armed like Boy Scouts':
feminising and infantilising masculinity in *Strike for a Kingdom***

The threat that Inspector Evans feels the striking miners pose to social equilibrium is demolished in *Strike for a Kingdom* by its emphasis on the miners' harmlessness and fundamental decency. The most flagrant violator of the law in the novel is arguably Elwyn Jeffries who had been 'up before the Bench for poaching salmon' (p. 77). Against the hyper-masculine solipsism of the Inspector, *Strike for a Kingdom* constructs a community where Cilhendre men are rendered innocuous through a discursive strategy that feminises and infantilises them. By de-activating the striking miners, the transgression that motors the plot is confined to the suspicious deaths of the colliery manager David Nixon and a baby. This textual strategy therefore places the novel comfortably in one context, the generic, where the clue-puzzle crime novel does not overtly contest prevailing social structures. It also places the novel in another context — the subversively gendered — where socially entrenched

⁴⁹ Gayle Rubin, 'The Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex', pp. 179-180.

patriarchal assumptions regarding masculinity and male rites of passage into adulthood are challenged. Angela V. John astutely notes that '*Strike for a Kingdom* is not as focused on women's lives as *The Small Mine* and *Travels with a Duchess*'.⁵⁰ This section takes her comment further to argue that the novel is focused on a radical re-directing of Valleys industrial fiction by challenging the very status of the iconic Welsh male. In doing so, the novel contests an anglicised model of masculine performativity, influenced by the ideologies of Empire and capitalism, and embodied in Inspector Evans's robust masculinity.

The terminology available to discuss the feminising of men necessarily requires using language which is ideologically loaded. As Frank Lentricchia comments, there is 'no linguistically uncontaminated route to radical change'.⁵¹ Simply to use terms like 'feminine' or 'femininity' invites interrogation of their semantics. In discussing the feminising of men in *Strike for a Kingdom*, the following sections accept the cultural 'contamination' of such terms, but use them as a means of examining the text's challenge of the gender assumptions they encode.

Cora Kaplan argues that among the problematics of defining femininity is the way feminine behaviour in men 'varies from supposed excesses of feeling to passivity to a degree of nurturance thought inappropriate to Anglo-Saxon masculinity'.⁵² Kaplan does not state if the terms Anglo-Saxon and British are synonyms in her lexicon, but it is a conflation contested by many Welsh critics.

Kirtsi Bohata, for instance, argues that:

the position of Wales within the British Empire and the United Kingdom was not, and is not, coterminous with that of England. In Wales, we may find that the proportions in which we have been and are colonial, imperialist and post-colonial [...] are subtly and sometimes significantly different from those of other countries of the UK and the rest of Europe.⁵³

⁵⁰ Angela V. John, 'Introduction', *Strike for a Kingdom*, p. xii.

⁵¹ Frank Lentricchia, *Criticism and Social Change* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 35.

⁵² David Glover and Cora Kaplin, *Genders* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 3.

⁵³ Kirsti Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 5.

However, Kaplan's terms are helpful in distinguishing a dominant anglicised model of masculinity from a divergent model, which it 'others' by feminising it.⁵⁴ In *Strike for a Kingdom*, the three characteristics Kaplan identifies as 'supposed excesses' of such inappropriate masculinity — emotion, passivity and nurturance — are valorised and embodied in D. J. Williams and Gerwin Evans, both Welsh members of that incontestable 'masculine' occupation, coal-mining. The text therefore incorporates signifiers into its Welsh normative masculinities at variance with dominant Anglo-Saxon modalities. The figures of D. J. Williams and Gerwin Evans are the two principal representatives of this divergent form — Williams's relationship with the emotionally distressed Gerwin Evans is nurturing throughout — but the text also reveals ordinary policemen displaying what Kaplan calls 'supposed female virtues of social sympathy and nurturance'.⁵⁵

After the confrontation between police and miners on the common, for example, when they are freed from their Inspector's pathological love of violence, the police 'organised cups of tea for the men, *sorry* for the bruises and *feeling responsible*', (p. 64, my italics). The sergeant takes the bewildered Glanddylan Price 'on one side and *begged* him not to worry', (my italics). A sentence resonating with significance states that away from the Inspector, 'the policemen won back their manhood and their humanity' (p. 64). Contrary to the hegemonic model identified by Kaplan, manhood here is signified by tolerance, compassion and sympathy. The text's premise that the police recover not only their manhood but their broader humanity implies that demonstrations of macho violence are a perversion of their own indigenous culture thrust on them by a dominant, alien

⁵⁴ Kaplan is not alone in arguably conflating the terms British and 'Anglo-Saxon' in gender studies. John Beynon notes how 'British (and in particular "English") masculinity was generally held to be superior to other "races": *Masculinities and Culture*, p. 29. And in his discussion of how Enoch Powell's 'version of Britain's island story' in the 1960s 'proclaimed his vision of England', Jonathan Rutherford feels no need to point out the narrow nationalism of Powell's inflammatory rhetoric: *Forever England: Reflections on Masculinity and Empire* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1997), pp.125, 124.

⁵⁵ Cora Kaplan, *Genders*, p. 5.

model — embodied in the inspector — which serves the functioning of an industrialised, patriarchal economy.

Susan Rowland notes that patriarchy valorises agency and heroism in men,⁵⁶ but in *Strike for a Kingdom* it is passivity and pusillanimity which govern most male structures of feeling individually and *en masse*. D. J. Williams, himself an uneasy hybrid of striking miner and establishment J. P., is never far from experiencing fear of authority. Despite the front he puts on, 'inside [he] was afraid of the bobbies' (p. 18) and the centrally conferred power they embody. The protest march itself is constructed as an act of quiet despair, and confronted by the police on the common the miners are afraid of them (p. 58). The police, as a corpus, reciprocate, being 'themselves as frightened as women' and 'all of them [were] terrified of the Inspector' (p. 58). When they are ordered by their militaristic inspector to charge the miners, the nurturing instincts of the narrative voice are revealed: 'they, poor frightened things, did as they were told' (p. 58). In its extensive use of fear of discovery, fear of violence, and fear of authority as discursive tropes through which male behaviour is represented, the text mobilises a serious critique of the social construction which activates and promotes fear, and the gender model which nominates 'excesses of feeling' as 'unmanly'.⁵⁷

Even when not focused on emotional similarities between men and women, the narrative contextualises male behaviour within a female discourse. These figures are distributed throughout the narrative across a wide range of characters. The minor figure P. C. Wilkins, for example, 'picked his way like a girl in high heels up to the door of the cottage' (p. 73) of the Town Cryer, and P. C. Thomas draws comfort from buttoning up his uniform 'as a woman does from

⁵⁶ Susan Rowland, *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell*, p. 16.

⁵⁷ See Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), pp. 144-146.

her corset' (p. 127). For the most part, these figures are unproblematic rhetorical analogies which contribute progressively to diluting normative gender boundaries. However, there is a marked occasion when the narrative proposes a visual, and more semiotically layered representation of gender fluidity: the cross-dressing of the footballers and Moc Cow-and-Gate at the carnival, where Moc sports a small raffia skirt, a necklace of four large bones, and a large pair of directoire-style knickers (p. 15), while the footballers are dressed in feather boas, skirts, stockings, suspenders and underwear (p. 15). Through them the text offers a carnivalesque expression of gender hybridity which is circulated in less exaggerated form throughout the entire narrative.

The transgressive appearance of these characters encodes two semiotic possibilities. On one level, it conceives the carnival as no more than 'a bit of a spree' (p. 14), as Glanddylan Price calls it, an innocent example of the text's seemingly unproblematic comic mode. When examined through a gendered lens, however, and situated amidst the subversion of the hegemonic model apparent elsewhere, it acquires a more textually resonant function. In Judith Butler's opinion, gender impersonation 'subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space' and mocks 'the notion of a true gender identity'.⁵⁸ At the Cilhendre carnival, parodic cross-dressing critiques gender dualism by hybridising the two traditionally differentiated genders in a comic visual format. Carnival cross-dressing fashions a liberating opportunity to perform an alternative gendered identity, one where, as G. G. Bolich observes, ludic transgression may pass unquestioned:

Cross-dressing as *social* play — consequences shared with others — offers an important safety-valve opening by Carnival to relieve cultural pressure. But it may do more. Such play, by showing the fluidity and

⁵⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 186.

artificiality of things like gender role expectations, may make them easier to endure on re-entering the mundane world.⁵⁹

Bolich acknowledges that gendered performance is artificial and implies in his closing sentence that binary definitions of gender are unnatural and repressive. However, whereas Bolich sees carnival cross-dressing as a temporary release from mundane gender formation, for Judith Butler physical semiotics inscribe a more abiding problematic. She closes an essay on gender construction with the comment that if gender is mistaken for a 'natural or linguistic given', the cultural field will be expanded bodily 'through subversive performances of various kinds'.⁶⁰ Positioned within a community where patriarchally mandated gender difference applies, cross-dressing at the Cilhendre carnival functions as a semiotically disruptive performance. It is a distilled subversive example, of which the entire narrative is a larger inscription, modulated by prevailing temporal and cultural influences but resulting in a significant gender hybridising. In such a community, both Moc and the footballers take pains to confirm their male credentials within a traditionally gendered schema, Moc as a tribal African who chases children with his wooden spear, and the footballers who behave like roaring boys. Yet their appearance, albeit comically exaggerated, inevitably qualifies the gender purity of their actions.

What emerges from the text's feminising discourse is not only a re-writing of the Welsh industrial novel, but the differentiating of a model of hierarchical masculinity from a localised, collaborative form where genders converge. The economic and cultural power of the former model seeks to interpellate the Cilhendre miners into the subject status appropriate to its ideology, but as the feminised narrative voice implicitly insists this is an alien model. As if to emphasise the extent to which

⁵⁹ G. G. Bolich, *Cross-dressing in Context*, Vol. 4 (Raleigh, NC: Psyche's Press, 2008), p. 117.

⁶⁰ Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', in *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, ed. Sue-Ellen Chase (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), pp. 270-282 (p. 282).

Cilhendre masculinity deviates from the macho miner stereotype, where progression into work is heralded as a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood, as *Cwmardy's* Len Roberts thinks it is, the text aligns male behaviour not only with women but with boys. It is worth re-iterating that the effect is not a ridiculing of male immaturity. As the following paragraphs show, the lens through which the narrative juvenilises the miners is bi-focal. It both penetrates and embraces.

Menna Gallie identified such a perspective in herself when, speaking on behalf of women generally, she suggested that 'Our husbands and lovers are our babies even when they are pretend lords'.⁶¹ *Strike for a Kingdom* extends the idea metonymically from husbands and lovers to oppressed miners by adopting a protectively maternal narrative voice when presenting the boy in the man. In this respect, it constructs a markedly different masculinity from, say, the crime novels of Joseph Hansen, where Gill Plain sees 'a fundamental binary division between men and boys'.⁶² *Strike for a Kingdom* does not separate the men from the boys, the sheep from the goats, but draws them into the conspectus of a unified gender realignment.

Stephen Knight remarks that many Welsh male writers in English deal 'with a boy'. He attributes this gendered feature principally to 'the isolation and powerlessness the authors feel', leading them to 'find an objective correlative in a character subject to forces beyond personal control'.⁶³ *Strike for a Kingdom* also deals with a boy, John Nixon, as the next section shows, but as a Welsh female writer in English Menna Gallie appears more interested in the multivalent significations of the terms 'boy' and 'boys' in defining Cilhendre masculinity than in

⁶¹ Menna Gallie Archive, talk to Swansea University Women Graduates, L1/16.

⁶² Gill Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, p. 112.

⁶³ Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. 28. Leslie A. Fielder has noted the way 'the "boyish" theme recurs with especial regularity in American fiction', although he associates it, as in James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*, with escape and adventure: *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1984), pp. 181-182.

finding a correlative for her own social displacement. David S. Gutterman addresses the semantics of the term 'boy' when he writes that:

it is useful to conceive words like *boy* not as nouns but rather as adjectives, that describe a subject. By doing so one can more easily and deeply appreciate the contingency of the meanings attached to the word *boy*. Being a boy is different in cultures/families/contexts and will mean different things to individuals as they grow older'.⁶⁴

Some forty years before Gutterman's article, *Strike for a Kingdom* extends the word's cultural possibilities in a peculiarly Welsh context to show how the term can 'mean different things to individuals as they grow older'.

Within the demotic of the South Wales coalfield, 'boys' is not exclusively an age-specific term; rather, it is a figure of egalitarian familiarity commonly used by men of other men. However, its function in *Strike for a Kingdom* is more context-dependent, where it is appropriated by the narrative voice in three different ways: as a literal nominator — the young John Nixon is 'a good, superior boy' (p. 122); as a colloquial nominator — the police sergeant is 'a good boy' (p. 64); and as a descriptor to signify the man-as-child — Elwyn Jeffries's legs hang 'like a boy's' over his bed (p. 60). These different significations are then conflated with the text's frequent mimetic use of the term: D. J. Williams, for example, gently reprimands two plotting miners to 'Stop it now, boys' and 'Don't indeed, boys' (p. 131), where the word signifies communality and a shared system of values. Given that the novel was published in London for distribution to an Anglo-centric readership, the term's semantics differ on how the word is read. On one level, it presents the striking miners as lacking the autonomy and agency of 'adult' masculinity, and thereby functions textually to reassure a socially conservative crime novel readership. On another level, it encodes a masculinity where to refer to fellow men as boys is not to

⁶⁴ David S. Gutterman, 'Postmodernism and the Interrogation of Masculinity', in *The Masculinities Reader*, ed. Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), pp. 56-71 (p. 59).

insult them — as in the southern states of America⁶⁵ — but to liberate an age-related term and incorporate it into a signifier of age-unrelated sodality. The effect is not only to construct a divergent form of Valleys masculinity from the anglicised, competitive, hierarchical paradigm, but to subvert the fundamental structural principle of the *Bildungsroman* that ‘men’ are different from ‘boys’.

Ben Knights argues that in Western cultures the adult male child ‘is the structural opposite of the autonomous and authoritative identity towards which the male is expected to aspire’.⁶⁶ Knights here acknowledges a binary division between men and boys which *Strike for a Kingdom* does not recognise. The ‘adult male child’ for Knights is ‘the man who refuses to grow up’,⁶⁷ who refuses to negotiate the rite of passage into adulthood. But Cilhendre men are not examples of stunted evolution. They do not aspire to ‘autonomous and authoritative identity’ like Inspector Evans, because the novel constructs them as products of an indigenous culture at variance with the competitive, materialistic ethos which governs the conditions of their work.

Dispensing with male-generated notions of rites of passage, what Jonathan Rutherford calls ‘a cultural pathology’,⁶⁸ the text elaborates a continuity between childhood and adulthood by easing the miners’ signifying positions along an unbroken temporal continuum from babyhood to boyhood, from infant dependency to schoolboy performativity, and thence to adulthood. Early in the narrative two male characters, Moc Cow-and-Gate and Gerwin Evans, are discursively infantilised. Both are like babies: Moc resembles the Royal Baby

⁶⁵ For a discussion of the ethnic/racial problematics of the term in an American fictional context, see Gill Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, pp. 109-117.

⁶⁶ Ben Knights, *Writing Masculinities*, p. 148.

⁶⁷ Knights, *Writing Masculinities*, p. 148.

⁶⁸ Jonathan Rutherford, *Forever England*, p. 21.

used in a Cow-and-Gate promotion as 'the food for royal babies' (p. 15),⁶⁹ and Gerwin Evans acts like one (p. 27). Later, a troubled D. J. Williams is 'like a child feeling sick on the little horses in the fair' (p. 57). Further still along the continuum, an anxious mine official is told by a colleague that the Manager won't eat him (p. 127), as though he is an ogre from a fairy tale. The imaginative landscape of two mischievous miners is defined by 'the *Wizard*' (p. 131), a boys' comic, and colliery officials searching for clues are like Boy Scouts who 'set off in couples to play detective' (p. 143). The effect of such a strategy is dramatic if understated. Adult masculinity in *Cilhendre* becomes part of an organic progression where the child, if not father to the man, may be seen in the man.

Whereas feminised tropes in *Strike for a Kingdom* are articulated through diegesis only, offering an omniscient corrective to a hegemonic model, juvenile tropes are more deeply integrated into the textual fabric, so that the female narrative voice merely reflects the normalised discursive practices of the miners themselves. Pierre Macherey remarks that a novel 'cannot say everything at once; its scattered discourse is its only means of uniting and gathering what it has to say'.⁷⁰ Distributed throughout *Strike for a Kingdom*, such scattered discourse unites in a consistent vision of gender and developmental fluidity oppressed by an alien model of structural masculinity. However, the text goes further in anatomising the consequences of such a model through two seemingly different character constructs, D. J. Williams and John Nixon.

⁶⁹ *Strike for a Kingdom* is anticipating events here for the Cow-and-Gate royal baby slogan did not appear until 1930.

⁷⁰ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, p. 99.

**‘only one thing would deliver him — talking to his mother’:
matriarchal harmony and patriarchal discord in *Strike for a Kingdom***

The previous section analysed how, by attaching gendered rhetorical figures to characters, the text dissolves the boundaries between women, men and children established as a norm in a patriarchal order, central to which, as Todd W. Reeser suggests, is the coming-of-age ritual where a boy becomes a man as he passes through various symbolic and non-symbolic processes.⁷¹ The ‘natural’ evolutionary development from boyhood to manhood implicit in this model, where a differentiated form of completed being emerges as though from a quiescent chrysalis, is everywhere treated as a myth in *Strike for a Kingdom*. Its rejection of a coming-of-age paradigm is generic as well as gendered. Generically, the crime novel’s limited time-frame where detection, rather than the *Bildungsroman*’s gradual evolution of the protagonist into manhood, motivates and accelerates the plot, allows *Strike for a Kingdom* to inspect, within a tightly-regulated temporal schema, two male figures of differing ages who share common structures of feeling. It conceives its critique of patriarchal binaries and boy/man distinction by aligning a patriarchal but dysfunctional family unit — John Nixon’s — alongside a formally unbalanced but successfully functioning matriarchal unit — D. J. Williams’s.

In a novel populated by comically rendered characters, the text’s discursive seriousness in constructing both Williams and John Nixon is a measure of its engagement with gender dynamics. Separated by age, associates, social position and experience they have no reason to come into contact with each other, nor do they. And while the thoughtful, considerate D. J. Williams is a narrative cynosure, John Nixon exists on its periphery. Indeed, in terms of narrative necessity, there is little reason for his presence at all. However, when

⁷¹ Todd. W. Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory*, p. 13.

the text is read through what Gill Plain calls an 'observation of gender',⁷² its typology changes, and what appears marginal in the plot of a crime novel moves nearer its gendered centre. John Nixon functions as a composite youth, sometimes seemingly in early adolescence, sometimes seemingly older — old enough at least to represent his family at Gwen Evans's funeral. However, as an exemplar of the structural gender model, he incarnates the problematic of the boy-as-embryonic-man, embodying opposing constituents of traditional gender identity — masculine and feminine — which puzzle and trouble him.⁷³ The challenges he faces of being male attract him, but conflict with his stereotypically feminised characteristics. These are revealed in several ways: temperamentally, in his artistic passivity; somatically, in his 'delicate neck like a flower on a stalk' (p. 40); and semiotically, in his habit of tossing his hair like a girl. He therefore not only complements the man-as-boy, feminised construction implicit in the conception of D. J. Williams, but his presence furthers the text's hostility to what Gayle Rubin calls 'the straightjacket of gender'.⁷⁴

The correspondences and differences between Williams and Nixon, as in so much else in this text, are achieved by insinuations, implications and allusive connections. They are neither signposted by the narrative voice through dialogue, nor probed extensively through interior examination of the character's psychology. However, several significant features emerge, among the most defining being the relationship each has with his mother, for D. J. Williams is very much his mother's son. Although an adult, he remains 'afraid of plenty' (p. 131), and has experienced no rite of passage where he feels himself

⁷² Gill Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, p. 90.

⁷³ Katie Gramich has an interesting paragraph on the interstitial gendering of boyhood in Rhys Davies's short stories where, "the boy" may represent that third gender possibility which has continually fascinated writers as diverse as Théophile Gautier and Jeanette Winterson: 'The Masquerade of Gender in the Stories of Rhys Davies', p. 209.

⁷⁴ Gayle Rubin, 'The Traffic in Women', p. 200.

comfortably initiated into the status of 'manhood', and its accompanying normative displays.

Conspicuously, aside from the shadowy figure of Gerwin Evans's widowed mother, to whom the bachelor Gerwin himself is 'devoted' (p. 21), Ann Williams and Mrs Nixon are the only two women in the text with sons, and they are sons who lack the traditional markers of anglicised normative masculinity. In what Barthes calls 'a significant absence',⁷⁵ whereas the investigation of Nixon senior's suspicious death animates the entire narrative and he remains a significant, but paradoxically often-mentioned, absence throughout, Williams senior is never mentioned. His significant absence could easily have been accounted for by accidental death underground, premature death through industrial illness, desertion of his family, or emigration owing to unemployment. However, no explanation is given for his non-appearance, and so for the purposes of the narrative it is as though he has never existed. Yet his absence speaks loudly, for this lacuna facilitates the text's construction of an adult male, D. J. Williams, untouched by domestic patriarchal example, emotionally dependent on and consequently feminised by a strong maternal influence, existing within a prevailing industrial ethos which is male engendered, male dominated and therefore alien to him.

Ann Williams's influence upon her unmarried son is implied throughout *Strike for a Kingdom*. It is in the domestic space of the home she has created that he feels secure:

anchored to the dresser, the corner cupboard, the kitchen table with its red plush cloth and the settle by the fire with a red paisley cushion to match the stockings on the legs of the table (p. 24).

The power of the leading verb and the markedly feminised coding of the furniture, not least in the primness of stockings on the table legs, function as

⁷⁵ Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), p. 77.

metonyms for his own feminised sensibility, and generate his feeling of a secure selfhood in this feminised space. By disposition, he is attracted toward home, and away from the world of public affairs as when, subject to ‘frenzied thoughts’ at the scene of the manager’s death, he knows that ‘only one thing would deliver him — talking to his mother, hearing her sanity. He’d put it all behind him until he got home’ (p. 22).

The text further demonstrates his desire to withdraw from a world of male agency by constructing him as a poet of a particular type. For him, poetry is not a vehicle for confronting the inequities of an industrialised landscape, as it is for a real-life Idris Davies. Writing constitutes for Williams what Frank Lentricchia calls a ‘haven for an isolated aesthetic pleasure’,⁷⁶ an escape from contingent reality into what the narrative identifies as a ‘sheltered poetry world’ (p. 83). It functions in the text as an intangible corollary to the material objects which anchor him to the home he shares with his mother, an imaginative space in which he feels settled. Notably, the novel explicates the feminising connection between his home, his poetry and his mother when, in the coded space of a quiet kitchen and engaged in writing a poem, ‘his mother’s presence was for him part of the silence’ (p. 160).

Spared the intrusive influence of a father, and never growing away from his mother, D. J. Williams has not, in patriarchal terms, achieved masculine autonomy, and therefore has never fully entered the symbolic order of normative manhood that the text criticises in Nixon senior and mocks in the police inspector. The Freudian progression outlined by Michael Kimmel, which requires ‘devaluing all things feminine — including girls, his mother, femininity, and, of course, *all emotions associated with femininity*’⁷⁷, (my italics) — has passed him by. But through what Kimmel calls ‘emotions associated with femininity’, *Strike*

⁷⁶ Frank Lentricchia, *Criticism and Social Change*, p. 25.

⁷⁷ Michael S. Kimmel, *The Gendered Society*, p. 76.

for a Kingdom valorises in D. J. Williams a distinctive form of Valleys masculinity. As if to emphasise its approval of Williams, within the generic context of the crime novel, the text manipulates its denouement to give him precedence over the police inspector. It is the reflective, poetic D. J. Williams, not the blustering, vain policeman, who solves the crime first. Williams's local knowledge, his intelligence and capacity for lateral thought connect clues that establish Gerwin Evans as the culprit. It is Williams who astutely associates the smell of fish in a cap with three trout Gerwin had placed in his cap on the protest march. And it is Williams who fears, correctly, that when a desperate Gerwin steals explosives, he intends to kill himself rather than harm others.

In John Nixon, the text constructs a boy who is temperamentally close to D. J. Williams, but damaged by the circumstances of his upbringing. As the confused product of a patriarchal paradigm, he seeks an identity which reconciles the competing impulses of his female-coded temperament and his male-coded libido. Whereas D. J. Williams seeks refuge from the world in his poetry, the young John Nixon wonders whether his own irritability can be 'attributed to his artistic temperament' (p. 40). Although he assumes 'a poetic unworldliness' (p. 40), he is not so much a poseur as a young individual suffering an existential crisis of identity in his attempt to align his temperamental disposition with his perceived gendered role as a male. At his father's funeral, for instance, he was 'the male lead and did not know his lines' (p. 136). Like D. J. Williams, he is devoted to his mother, but he is problematised by being 'his father's son, fretworked by his mother' (p. 41). Like D. J. Williams, too, his disposition leads him to interpret the world at a remove, through an artistic perspective, either painting, as when his interpretation of the assembled miners is refracted through Rembrandt (p. 49), or when the weeping maids at his father's funeral provoke in him a question from *Hamlet* (p. 137).

However, whereas Williams's feminine-coded masculinity is safely anchored in a home without another male presence, for John Nixon his father's philandering has offered an enticing model of dominance and pleasure outside the domestic sphere. Within the home, the patriarch's 'beastliness' (p. 41) which repels Mrs Nixon repels her devoted son also, but his father's hegemonic 'othering' and commodifying of women excites him too, as a model of 'true' manhood. For John Nixon, sexuality and gender are not so much 'accomplished in the family' as Kimmel states,⁷⁸ as problematised within it, for they bring him into confrontation with two conflicting modes of his own gender development.

Strike for a Kingdom aligns D. J. Williams and John Nixon, then, as two male figures who share temperamental affinities, despite their differing ages, but who are the products of differing family trajectories. D. J. Williams has escaped the myth of the *Bildung's* progression into normative masculinity. As for John Nixon, *Strike for a Kingdom* manipulates the compressed time-scheme of the crime novel to suggest that there will be no rite of passage into unproblematic manhood for him. The text leaves him as it leaves Williams, arrested in a moment of time, but whereas for Williams in his quiet kitchen there is at least the possibility that 'It would be alright' (p. 160), John Nixon is not so fortunate. After his attendance at Gwen Evans's funeral where, unlike the 'mumbo-jumbo for his father' he 'was moved almost beyond bearing' (p. 157), the text leaves him arrested in a temporal space, 'furious with his own illogicality' (p. 157), and granted no narrative path to resolution.

Raymond Stephens suggests that while Menna Gallie's representation of communal life is powerful, she is 'less successful in conveying private or inward states of mind or heart'.⁷⁹ This section has argued that in *Strike for a Kingdom*,

⁷⁸ Michael Kimmel, *The Gendered Society*, p. 69.

⁷⁹ Raymond Stephens, 'The Novelist and Community: Menna Gallie', *The Anglo-Welsh Review*, 14. 34 (1964-1965), 52-65 (p. 53).

limited as it is by its generic form where extensive interiorising is not part of the convention, such inward states are conveyed by insinuation and implication. In representing the different domestic arrangements of D. J. Williams and John Nixon, it succeeds in aligning two seemingly divergent characters into a radical critique of patriarchy within a familial ambit. The figure of Inspector Evans extends the novel's critique from the domestic sphere to patriarchy as the repressively dominant public model.

‘Damn strikers. We ought to shoot a few of them’: bifocal reading and the construction of Inspector Evans

Inspector Evans differs in kind and function from the classical detective, the ‘omniscient investigator’ who, Gill Plain notes, ‘enters an enclosed environment’ and exposes the malefactor ‘with surgical precision’.⁸⁰ Instead, he seems set for comic deflation from his first appearance when, intent on consoling Mrs Nixon on her loss, he arrives clumsily, ‘with a noise like falling biscuit tins’ and, in a manner reminiscent of Dickens’s Mr Bounderby, as ‘full as a balloon of his own esteem’ (p. 41).⁸¹ As an exaggerated construction of hyper-masculine presence, Evans is positioned in the comic sphere of the persistently self-promoting, self-ignorant subject teetering always on the brink of humiliating exposure. And so it proves on this occasion, as the icily rational Mrs Nixon refuses to play the role of the submissive grieving widow he has assigned her, tires of his hamfisted, emotional blathering and informs him that, regarding her husband, ‘It might be better if I acquaint you with some facts, not, mark you, suppositions’ (p. 45). On a straightforward reading, Evans’s function appears to rest on the humour to be extracted from how this ‘bladder of lard’ (p. 118) strives to solve the clue-puzzles and expose the culprit.

⁸⁰ Gill Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, p. 4.

⁸¹ Bounderby is, ‘A man with a pervading appearance on him of being inflated like a balloon and ready to start’: Charles Dickens, [1854] *Hard Times*, ed. Kate Flint (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 20.

Strike for a Kingdom advances this impression by constructing him via a gendered intertextual collage of recognisably vainglorious comic males, all of them unable to contain their unmerited but unstanchable egos. He is not only a solipsistic Bounderby, but he incorporates aspects of Kenneth Grahame's pompous Mr Toad, too, in his devotion to his motor car. Like Toad, he is 'not very sure of the gears' (p. 50) and deafens pedestrians by 'playing tunes on the rubber ball of the horn' (p. 78). Later, on losing his dignity when a tree branch dislodges his helmet, he resembles a prickly Oliver Hardy to P. C. Thomas's hapless Stan Laurel, as he attempts 'to blame Thomas for the mishap' (p. 89) in 'Here's another nice mess you've gotten me into' vein. Later still, he is a conceitedly complacent Dogberry to P. C. Thomas's inept Verges. Both Evans and Dogberry make claims regarding their singular prowess that are markedly at odds with their investigative practice, Dogberry that he benefits from the 'Gifts that God Gives',⁸² while Evans states that the Nixon case 'is serious, but, thank God, I'm in charge' (p. 129).

As Julian Symonds remarks, the growing numbers of post-war, middle-class female readers required 'books that would reinforce their own view of the world and society — long, untroubling "library novels", light romances, detective stories'.⁸³ And by deflating Evans's hegemonic male pomposity, incompetence and vanity through such easily recognisable comic tropes, *Strike for a Kingdom* appears to offer just such a *lisible*, 'untroubling' reading experience, safely lodged within a recognisable clue-puzzle format, where each appearance of the Inspector promises another reassuringly diverting mishap.

However, as Gill Plain reminds us, crime novels are 'not quite as straightforward as they might initially appear',⁸⁴ and the presence of an

⁸² 'Much Ado About Nothing', *The Arden Shakespeare*, ed. A.R. Humphreys (London: Methuen, 1981), III.v.41.

⁸³ Julian Symonds, *Bloody Murder* (London: Viking, 1985), p. 86.

⁸⁴ Gill Plain, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*, p. 90.

overweening senior policeman, ‘a representative of the law’ (p. 156) in a Welsh novel set during a miners’ strike, illustrates the point. The fixed, exaggerated characteristics that construct him as ripe for comic puncturing in one context, position him also as a grotesquely recognisable agent of state-approved oppression in a Valleys industrial context, where, in his view, all strikers are ‘rioters’ (p. 116). This, more *scriptable*, reading shifts the animating force behind Evans’s construction from the formulaic clue-puzzle novel with its emphasis on plot, to Evans as a statement embodying Menna Gallie’s gendered desire ‘to smack down the rigger type’ of masculinity and to expiate memories of her own ‘dramatic, possibly traumatic, experience’ of the strike.⁸⁵

M. Wynn Thomas writes of the Welsh novel that: ‘One of the ways of re-introducing the nation to its own history is through providing it with conscientiously historical but compelling imaginative fictions’.⁸⁶ In this respect, what a mid-century, middle-class English consumer of crime novels in 1959 may read as an ‘untroubling’ temporal and spatial distancing of transgressive events safely transported to a 1926 Welsh village becomes, in the context of Valleys industrial fiction, a text based on personal recollection investigating a troubled history of social disquiet and the politically-mandated power systems that, literally, policed it. It is present in Evans’s insistence that the strike is ‘a disgrace’, engineered by men whose moral turpitude must be punished because they ‘won’t do their work properly’ (p. 119). Read this way, his reductive orthodoxy places him in the narrative continuum of coercive masculinity performed through institutionalised, hierarchical office that had already darkened characters like Hugh Thomas, Henshaw, Webber and Lord Cwmardy, and would reappear later in the century as part of the Welsh industrial experience in the deviant policeman Elliott Bowles in *Dark Edge* (1997), and later still in the silky machiavel Adam Smith-Tudor in *Until Our Blood is Dry* (2014).

⁸⁵ Menna Gallie Archive, talk to Swansea Writers’ Group, L1/16.

⁸⁶ M. Wynn Thomas, Afterword to Emyr Humphreys’s *A Toy Epic*, p. 144.

Evans is an interloper into the Cilhendre community. *Strike for a Kingdom* distinguishes him by manner, ideology and remoteness from the gentler norms of Cilhendre masculinity, in particular that of D. J. Williams, and this severance enables a powerful critique of his narcissistic, authoritarian, and alien gendering. Understanding little of the community over which he has jurisdiction — he fails to see why Joe Everynight, a father of twelve, is so called (p. 118) — he enacts the divergent value systems, prejudices and practices of a dominant and gendered power bloc removed from but controlling of indigenous Cilhendre masculinity. His official role disguises his atavistic compulsion to dominate others by clothing itself in the mantle of a civilising economic and moral imperative: ‘Think what this strike is costing the country, and our Empire’ (p. 129). Appeals to an abstract higher cause as a strategic mechanism for securing an existing power balance had already appeared in *Times Like These* (p. 87), when Webber informs Shelton that miners must be brought into line or ‘the country’ll lose’, and reappears in Adam Smith-Tudor’s apocalyptic declaration in *Until Our Blood is Dry* (p. 96), that: ‘We are hovering on the edge of anarchy’. *Strike for a Kingdom*’s representation of Evans as a mordantly comic figure does not detract from his also being, within the tradition of Valleys fiction, read as a willing agent of a formalised hierarchy, inimical to the collectivised traditions of industrial South Wales.

As his narrative unfolds, his obsessive belief that ‘What we need is discipline’ (p. 129) constructs him as a disturbing study of how the power of patriarchal authority exploits his proto-fascistic disposition and reciprocates by legitimising his own narcissism. The term ‘fascist’ requires careful use, but it is a term Menna Gallie deliberately employs in her archive when she denotes the ‘inherent fascism’ of a particular kind of Welsh institutionalised masculinity she represented in Evans. For R. W. Connell, fascism promotes debased forms of masculinity based on alterity, irrationality ‘and the unrestrained violence of the

frontline soldier'.⁸⁷ As the novel makes clear, suppression through violence is not incidental to Evans's construction. It permeates his very discourse, leading to an extraordinary confusion of his public role and private sentiments. When Mrs Nixon, who is chilled by his adversarial impulses, advises him not to antagonise villagers in his investigation as, 'These are difficult times and some of the good people are almost desperate', he replies apoplectically, 'Good people did you say? Damn strikers. We ought to shoot a few of them to show who's boss around here' (p. 47). Significantly, too, whereas Mrs Nixon's comment on the 'good people' is not gendered, the police inspector's response is. In his patriarchally-perceived world, women scarcely merit notice. The text, however, makes its own subtly gendered point here, where the female is not only more compassionate than the male, but brings a finer understanding of the delicate relationship between authority and community.

But Evans's inflammatory comment on shooting striking miners reverberates beyond the crime-puzzle confines of *Strike for a Kingdom* to engage with the larger narrative of industrial relations in Wales, and the violent suppression of dissent. As if to emphasise its point, the novel has Evans repeat his view later — 'We need the soldiers here to teach a few of them a lesson' (p. 129). Such remarks stir echoes, no matter how ill-founded on fact, of soldiers opening fire on striking Welsh miners in Tonypandy in 1910, and anticipate the violent engagement between striking miners and militarised mounted policemen in the 1984 miners' strike, as extreme examples of 'othering' those who challenge a dominant orthodoxy. Writing of such a practice, the historian John Horne argues that 'The positive attributes of national masculine ideals', which Inspector Evans sees himself as embodying, are 'matched by the negative figures of the internal and external enemy — who might be pictured either as

⁸⁷ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 193.

female or as a derided or feared type of masculinity'.⁸⁸ His phrase referring to an internal enemy bleakly echoes, whether inadvertently or not, the sentiments of a British Prime Minister regarding striking miners, and embraces Evans's own viewpoint that: 'This would be Russia if these colliers had half a chance' (p. 129).

Enclosed within the seemingly safe parameters of the clue-puzzle novel, Evans's outbursts cited above can be read as examples of his temperamental and comically outrageous irascibility. Within the corpus of South Wales fiction, however, his representation as a sardonically rendered figure does not detract from his also being read as a willing agent of a formalised metropolitan hierarchy inimical to the social organisation of the industrialised Valleys. *Strike for a Kingdom* deftly makes this point through the fate of a distraught Gerwin Evans, whose crime, given that he acted under provocation and a threat of blackmail, was arguably manslaughter not murder. In an extraordinarily direct paragraph in the closing chapter, *Strike for a Kingdom* passes its own judgement on Inspector Evans, and connects him unequivocally with the male-dominated, inhumanely abstract processes of law, compromised as they are between justice and power, compassion and revenge. Only 'half satisfied' by Gerwin's suicide:

He was muttering imprecations and meaningless clichés about cheating the hangman, defeating justice, breaking the law, as though he, representing the law, had more claim to Gerwin's poor body than the man had himself. As though in some obscure, obscene way, a bloodless institution, a man-framed body of Government decrees, a tangle of codes and codicils, had become an entity with claims and a will of its own (p. 156).

Gerwin is accordingly and conveniently found guilty of murder. In this way, *Strike for a Kingdom* connects the prejudices of an intemperate, vengeful police inspector to a male-constructed 'tangle of codes and codicils' (p.156) to subvert

⁸⁸ John Horne, 'The Age of Nation States and World Wars' p. 29.

one of the basic principles of the crime novel: that 'the detective in fiction embodies a promise of individual justice under the law'.⁸⁹

Conclusion

Writing to Glyn Jones in 1968 on the publication of *The Dragon has Two Tongues*, Menna Gallie states, 'to think that you've actually mentioned my writing in it has me in rapturous incredulity. I think of myself as a very humble entertainer'.⁹⁰ Reading *Strike for a Kingdom* from a gender-specific perspective, this chapter has argued that, entertaining though it undoubtedly is, it constitutes a brilliant re-directing in both genre and gender of the tradition of male-authored industrial fiction. *Strike for a Kingdom* reassures crime fiction readers that the strikers offer no real threat to the social status quo, while constructing alternative forms of Welsh mining masculinity which simultaneously provide a withering gendered critique of a dominant hegemonic form.

As this chapter has argued, in the less abrasive versions of masculinity that *Strike for a Kingdom* constructs, the binary gender definitions insisted upon by patriarchy dissolve into a conspectus of humanity where gender commonality rather than difference is emphasised. Because such commonality embraces children also, the traditionally conceived rite of passage from boyhood to manhood essential to patriarchy is contested in the figure of D. J. Williams and problematised in the figure of John Nixon. The most settled domestic arrangement in the text is that of a mother and her unmarried son, to whom she remains guide and counsellor, and on whom, in his limited autonomous development, he emotionally depends. Where a patriarchal model is presented in the Nixons, the feral masculinity of the father collides with the bourgeois femininity of the mother resulting in the son's gender confusion.

⁸⁹ Susan Rowland, *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell*, p. 46.

⁹⁰ Menna Gallie Archive, A12/7.

In 1970, Ron Berry produced a novel diametrically opposed to the gentle masculinities of *Strike for a Kingdom*. In *So Long, Hector Bebb*, the protagonist is constructed as statement of iconic, virile masculinity to whose passing the novel itself is a requiem.

Chapter Four

Genre and the Embodied Male in *So Long, Hector Bebb* (1970)

Introduction

In its form and focus, Ron Berry's *So Long, Hector Bebb* diverges radically from the three novels so far examined. In this narrative, there are no collieries or miners, traditional Valleys industries are moribund, and the communality they bred has withered.¹ And while R. W. Connell maintains that for men, 'Marriage, fatherhood and community life often involve extensive compromises with women',² this view has little traction in a text where there is no wider community, fatherhood scarcely features, and inter-gender relationships are sclerotic.

Connell's view that 'definitions of masculinity are deeply enmeshed in the history of institutions and of economic structures' is evident in industrial novels like *Cwmardy* and *Times Like These*.³ By 1970, however, it was not only Valleys institutions and the economic and patriarchal structures regulating them that were under threat from mine closures and unemployment.⁴ So, too, was cultural uncertainty about what masculinity actually was. Second-wave feminism travelled across the Atlantic to challenge further the assumptions of institutionalised patriarchy. And what Lynne Segal perceives as, 'the mild domestication of men, represented as more home-based (if not more house-

¹ *So Long, Hector Bebb* [1970] (Cardigan: Parthian, 2006). All future references are to the Parthian edition.

² R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 79.

³ Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 29.

⁴ In 1960, there were 106,000 South Wales miners; by 1970 there were 60,000.

trained)⁵ further contributed to a perceived 'crisis of masculinity'.⁶ This chapter focuses on the composition of one Welsh character in a novel that evolved into an expression of defiance against these infusions of cultural change.

Hector Bebb is an eponymous figure of unambiguously raw, unsocialised, elite manhood, the kind Christopher E. Forth argues is a 'violent yet rejuvenating alternative to an inauthentic life devoted to politeness, consumption and appearances'.⁷ In the first half of *So Long, Hector Bebb*, Hector stands as a representative of 'warrior potential' in the male body. It is on such a premise that the novel rejects in Hector the convention of a masculinity constructed through the systemic patriarchy of the mining Valleys, though that culture's love of boxing is textually commemorated.⁸ Sarah Morse astutely notes that the boxing agent, Abe Pearson, 'occupies a position analogous to that of the exploitative colliery owner, and the boxers echo the position of the colliers',⁹ but this is the case only with boxers like Bump Tanner and Len Jules, over whom he exerts a controlling authority. Although Hector Bebb exists in this culture of exploitative patriarchy, he himself is untouched by its contingencies.

Instead, this chapter proposes that Hector Bebb is fashioned through the intertextualities of 'mythic realism'.¹⁰ That is, Berry's novel draws upon the deep

⁵ Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion*, p. 13.

⁶ Anthony Clare, for example, believes that 'phallic man, authoritative, dominant, assertive — man in control not merely of himself but of woman — is starting to die, and now the question is whether a new man will emerge phoenix-like in his place or whether man himself will become largely redundant': Anthony Clare, *On Men: Masculinity in Crisis* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2000), p. 9.

⁷ Christopher E. Forth, *Masculinity and the Modern West: Gender, Civilisation and the Body* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 229.

⁸ Ron Berry himself was a 'good boxer': cited by Leighton Andrews, in Foreword to *Flame and Slag* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2012), pp. viii-ix.

⁹ Sarah Morse, "'Maimed Individuals": The Significance of the Body in *So Long, Hector Bebb* (1970)', p. 276.

¹⁰ A term M. Wynn Thomas has used when writing of Emyr Humphreys, in which myth enriches and suggests a deep-rooted continuity of human experience in an otherwise realistic text. In Berry's novel, the term indicates how Hector Bebb is at once a gifted Valleys boxer and a lineal descendant of heroic masculinities: 'The Relentlessness of Emyr Humphreys', *New Welsh Review*, 13 (1991), 37-40, (p. 39).

structure of *agonistic* mythic archetypes, formulated initially around Hector's early career as a boxer, with its male-validated associations of heroic valour. But the chapter also argues that besides its mythic *agonists*, *So Long, Hector Bebb* absorbs two other mythologised tropes that both animate and enrich the cultural nexus from which he is constructed. Previous studies have acknowledged the influence of the cowboy figure of the American Western in his construction,¹¹ which this chapter notes and extends. But the chapter subordinates it to an examination of Hector Bebb as an incarnation of a modern 'wild man' during his time living on the hills. It is through the trope of the wild man, the chapter contends, that the novel confronts most dramatically the interface between instinct and intellect, violence and conscience in hyper-masculinity where, as Dorothy Yamamoto observes, 'the membrane between humanness and otherness is frighteningly permeable'.¹² These figurations in *So Long, Hector Bebb* celebrate, problematise and finally, in Hector's death, constitute both a protest against and a threnody for the passing of an iconic Valleys masculinity, exalted by historical precedent, and embedded in mythic paradigms.

Narrated by fourteen differentiated voices, and comprising fifty three 'chapters' with no diegetic intervention to validate, explain or modify what characters think of themselves or others, the novel passed through several drafts before it emerged in its final form as a sophisticated, contrapuntal text. Having no panoptic narrator, it is an interlocked series of personal histories which construct competing gender ideologies. Providing the narrative with an organising focus is Hector Bebb himself. Clarification of details and events given by one character often comes only later through the voice of another, each voice participating in and refracting the narrative's forward movement. The

¹¹ Emma Smith, for instance, writes that Hector Bebb might be seen as 'the harmonica-playing, horse-riding hero who finds true peace swaggering around on the south Wales hillsides': *Masculinity in Welsh Writing in English*, p. 143.

¹² Dorothy Yamamoto, *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2000), p. 10.

consequence is that while *So Long, Hector Bebb* foregrounds the male body as a site distinguishing man from man and men from women, it paradoxically does so through a series of interlinked, but disembodied 'voices'.

The novel is set in the Rhondda valleys and the hills above where, as Gareth Jones writes, 'boxing was the sport which most stirred the blood of the locals'.¹³ Like that other iconic Valleys figure, the miner, the boxer was emblematic of courage, agency, manual skill, dexterity, and pride in the body. Indeed, within Valleys culture, the terms 'boxing' and 'mining' are interchangeable in Kasia Boddy's view that, 'To evoke boxing is always to dissociate oneself from the sentimental, the refined, the feminine'.¹⁴ However, boxing is also, crucially, an arena of male definition that celebrates violence as essential to its practice. As Varda Burstyn writes, of all sports it is only boxing where 'lawful sanctioned violence (heroism) is distinguished from unlawful violence (villainy) along rules established by cultural conventions and practised on a large scale by men as a gender'.¹⁵ In the resulting paradox, the controlled violence Hector Bebb displays in the ring is celebrated and rewarded as 'heroism'; a momentary loss of control, when he accidentally kills his wife's lover under considerable provocation, is judged to be 'villainy', and he becomes a fugitive. Submerged within the discourse of the text is the problematic of how boxing, like warfare, requires the highly-trained, potentially lethal male body to act intuitively and violently in one context and with restraint and reflection in another when in both the very self is facing violation.

Making extensive use of archival material, this chapter focuses on the novel's strategies in constructing this iconic figure. It illustrates how Hector Bebb's final legendary status was achieved and developed only as draft of the

¹³ Gareth Jones, *The Boxers of Wales: Rhondda* (Cardiff: St David's Press, 2012), p. vi.

¹⁴ Kasia Boddy, *Boxing: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion, 2009), p. 391.

¹⁵ Varda Burstyn, *The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics and the Culture of Sport* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 166.

entire novel succeeded draft throughout the 1960s. The first section focuses on how the novel's 'mythic realism' constructs Hector Bebb's distinctive masculinity as a boxer through a deeply patterned assemblage of heroic and contemporary cultural archetypes and paradigms that contest notions of the socially domesticated, patriarchally-confined male. This is followed by a section focusing on two aspects of Hector's distinctive embodiment: his effortless fusion of thought and action as a boxer; and his attitude toward women, in a novel where misogyny is rife. In the final section, the chapter examines Hector's trajectory when he leads a solitary, precarious existence in the wild. Here, the novel's perspective shifts from Hector Bebb as peerless *agonist* to representations of Hector's alterity, angled through the American cowboy and the 'wild man'. By progressively detaching Hector Bebb from even the most skeletal community, the text sidelines patriarchy as a form of social organisation, and probes more starkly the interface between 'nature' and 'civilisation', the animal and the human.

'The man is exceptional, Jane': Hector Bebb and paradigms of the hero warrior.

'There are no heroes here', writes Craig Austin in his short appreciation of *So Long, Hector Bebb*.¹⁶ This section argues that, on the contrary, it is precisely as a hero, in a paradigmatic, mythopoeic, tragic sense, that Hector Bebb is constructed. Combining consummate finesse, indomitable spirit, physical courage, and a doomed trajectory, Hector's development into such an elite figure emerged incrementally and with deliberation as draft of the novel succeeded draft.¹⁷

¹⁶ Craig Austin, 'Great Welsh Novels Revisited: *So Long, Hector Bebb*', Wales Arts Review, www.walesartsreview.org, (10/11/2016), n.p.

¹⁷ Austin, too, writes of Hector as 'ultimately doomed': 'Great Welsh Novels Revisited'.

Ian Watt, in *The Rise of the Novel*, notes the power of mythic archetypes to embody 'an *arete* and a *hubris*, an exceptional prowess and a vitiating excess, in spheres of action that are particularly important in our culture'.¹⁸ *So Long, Hector Bebb* may be positioned within a similar trajectory of anglophone Welsh fiction, where 'our culture' is specifically a Valleys culture in which boxing was a high-status sphere of action. As the novel insists, when judged from a male perspective Hector Bebb is a form of incarnated masculinity that transcends its times. When an example of elite manhood appears in 'the here and now', Christopher E. Forth remarks, 'it must bear the residual traces of these other times and places'.¹⁹ This section positions Hector Bebb's career within the mythic narrative arc of *arete* and *hubris*, represented through the confluence of success and disaster, when a momentary loss of control redirects him into a future of progressive isolation. But this is not the Hector Bebb of the novel's early drafts.

The text's form and ethos were drastically re-fashioned throughout the 1960s to habituate Hector Bebb within the mythos of heroic masculinity. The novel was recast from a form of melodramatic social realism into one that fuses realism with a collage of mythic prototypes that enrich its surface narrative. The first complete draft of the novel,²⁰ undated and handwritten though probably composed in the early 1960s, chronicles through the alternating voices of Hector Bebb and his trainer Sammy John the intertwining fortunes of both figures. Hector Bebb begins as an unhappily married patriarch, whose wife Ethel is given to drink and religion. His successful career as a boxer allows him to live a life of material comfort, and to place his son Dilwyn, who has polio, in a private

¹⁸ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), pp. 88-89.

¹⁹ Christopher E. Forth, *Masculinity in the Modern West*, p. 10.

²⁰ Ron Berry Archive, WWE/1/1/3/1, University of Swansea. The archive contains six drafts of the text, the last draft, WWE/1/1/3/6, being very close to the final version with a few corrections and additions.

school. Various setbacks, including his willingness to engage in match-fixing, leave him needing money to send Dilwyn to Lourdes, and he becomes a minor criminal. His accomplice kills a girl during a bungled robbery, and is later hanged. Wanted by the police, Hector flees, and visits each of his three sisters who reject him. He seeks refuge on the moors before Prince Jenkin Saddler discovers him close to death, rescues him and helps him to the extent of arranging plastic surgery in London.²¹ Hector returns to work in his locality, is recognised despite his surgery, flees again and falls to his death while being pursued. Neither Jane Evass nor Emlyn Winton, central to the novel's final version, appears in this version.

As may be deduced from the outline above, Hector Bebb is located within a sphere of material self-improvement, troubling family relationships, and a sensationalised trajectory, all of which, with the exception of his unsatisfactory marriage, are expunged from later drafts. The minutiae of his home life and the lengthy time-span of the action (signified in these drafts by his greying hair) conspire to deny him his legendary status of the final draft, where the turn in his fortunes is compressed and dramatic. Instead of slow decline, there is the abrupt and tragic *peripeteia* of his accidental killing of his wife Millie's lover, Emlyn Winton, the day after winning the British middleweight title. From being 'One of your Rolls Royce fighters' (p. 21) he becomes an outlaw. From being a compromised failure in an early draft, he is progressively transformed into a mythopoeic tragic hero, an emblematic *figure* of embodied masculinity.

Daniel G. Williams suggests that Hector's trajectory is one where, 'the prizefighter becomes a yokel',²² but Hector is never merely a prizefighter, nor

²¹ In this draft, WWE/1/1/3/1, Prince Saddler's lover, Mrs Mainwaring, gives £100 towards Hector's surgery. She is removed from later drafts and Prince's more complex relationship with Jane Evass begins to emerge.

²² Daniel G. Williams, *Wales Unchained: Literature, Politics and Identity in the American Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015), p. 46.

does he later become 'a country bumpkin'.²³ The Hector Bebb of Berry's final inscription follows a broad but recognisable mythic trajectory of neglect, integration, initiation, emergence as an exemplary model of an admired manhood, followed by exclusion from a social and legal framework to which he cannot be reconciled. In death, his rare distinction attracts continued devotion. Writing of the hero, Lord Raglan in 1936 pointed out that heroes are often conceived in atypical circumstances, sometimes adulterously, sometimes by deception, and may even be of undetermined paternity.²⁴ Hector Bebb's parentage is unusual. He is possibly conceived out of wedlock, neglected by his mother and abandoned by his father, 'something Bebb' who, in the suggestive trope of an elemental force of nature, 'came and vanished from Cymmer town like a piece of weather' (p. 10).²⁵ In keeping with Raglan's pattern of heroic development, we are told nothing of Hector's early childhood. He is taken in and fostered by Sammy and Sue John who, in the text's final draft, have no children of their own.²⁶ Sammy becomes not only Hector's surrogate father — he 'dotes on him' (p. 104) — but also his mentor. Like the archetypal hero figure, Hector is separated from female influence. Sue John's maternally protective attitude to Hector — 'You look after the boy', she urges Sammy (p. 11) — withers until 'she'd have trampled over Hector in the gutter' (p. 11), as Sammy initiates him into the ways of ultra-manhood through boxing. Relocated into the space of the boxing gymnasium with its male values of competition, somatic power and aggression, Hector is distinguished from his fellows by his enthusiasm for the

²³ 'Yokel' as defined in the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973, repr. 1974), vol. II, p. 2591.

²⁴ Lord Raglan, *The Hero* (London: Methuen, 1936), p. 179.

²⁵ Through Sammy's meteorological simile, the text teasingly hints at an extra-real agency fathering Hector. Zeus, we remember, came to Danaë as a golden shower and fathered Perseus on her.

²⁶ In an early handwritten script of the novel, Sue and Sammy adopt a son.

disciplines of training, preparation and contest. It quickly becomes evident that he incarnates a remarkable form of unified masculinity.

In Hector Bebb, ratiocination combines with intuition and utter self-belief. As Sammy quickly realises of Hector, 'He revelled. Pure single-mindedness, fighting his one and only love' (p. 10). On his first visit to the White Hart gymnasium, the young Hector displays the innate proficiency marking out the hero figure when he knocks unconscious with two deadly blows the experienced Len Jules, who 'sat there like a man sleeping' (p. 15). Almost concurrent with his greatest success, having won the British middleweight title through a feat of controlled aggression, Hector breaks the law and flees. His expulsion from an enclosed world in which he is pre-eminent echoes Raglan's paradigm that the hero 'loses favour with the gods [...] and is driven from the throne and city'.²⁷ And finally, Hector Bebb suffers an early death not, as Lord Raglan accords many heroes, 'at the top of a hill', but from a fatal fall down one.²⁸

Lord Raglan observes that the hero is revered after death.²⁹ While *So Long, Hector Bebb* secularises religious iconography, respect bordering on reverence is inflected through two differing though connected topologies.³⁰ The first, communicated through Bella Pearson's narrative, reveals the chasm existing between male and female evaluation of Hector. For Bella, with her aspirations to bourgeois respectability, Hector was simply uncivilised: 'One of the lowest of the low, therefore who cares?' (p. 241). Her husband, Hector's manager, the invariably unsentimental Abe, feels compelled to undertake a secular pilgrimage to 'take a last look' (p. 241) at Hector's remarkable body. Gathering together

²⁷ Lord Raglan. *The Hero*, p. 180.

²⁸ Raglan, *The Hero*, p. 180.

²⁹ Raglan, *The Hero*, p. 180.

³⁰ Barbara Prys-Williams also detects a similar elegiac and reverential quality in Berry's autobiography, *History is What You Live*, which she regards as 'a secular requiem': *Twentieth-Century Autobiography: Writing Wales in English* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 82.

Hector's associates, he visits Tosteg, views the body, weeps, and salutes Hector's memory by uncharacteristic generosity later in Tommy Wills's pub.

In the second topology, communicated through Sammy John, Prince Saddler insists that he and Sammy brave the bitter weather to visit the site where Hector died. Raglan notes that the dead hero 'has one or more holy sepulchres',³¹ and Sammy's severely pragmatic approach to the visit contrasts with the quasi-religious experience it is for Prince. The text has already implied Prince's reverential attitude to Hector when he wagers generously on him to win a fight, with the simple words, 'I have faith' (p. 75), and for Prince the visit becomes 'a pilgrimage' (p. 259) to hallowed ground. Despite Sammy's feeling that it was the most 'futile trip I've ever undertaken' (p. 259), even he finds that it requires the mandate of religious discourse adequately to express his own feelings. He believes that if the world ends and boxing begins again with strangely mutant contestants, 'some junior monk will tote [Hector's] credit' (p. 259) by carrying a signed, mass-produced photograph of Hector as a relic which survived the conflagration. The final phrasing of this reflection is significant, for it underwent delicate honing in the novel's re-drafting. The first draft offers the anaemic assurance that if, after a global calamity, boxing begins again 'from scratch [...] they'll still remember Hector Bebb'.³² In a later draft, the photograph is added as an iconographic 'relic', and the vague pronoun 'they' is changed to a typewritten 'some fanatic'. Presumably because of its pejorative associations, 'fanatic' is later erased and the handwritten phrase 'junior monk' with its favourable connotations of homage and veneration inserted instead.³³ The eschatological breadth of the image, together with Sammy's view that Prince 'had the look of a man expecting to be saved' (p. 259), combine to lodge Hector

³¹ Lord Raglan, *The Hero*, p. 180.

³² Ron Berry Archive, WWE/1/1/3/1.

³³ Ron Berry Archive, WWE/1/1/3/4.

Bebb securely within the pantheon of heroic figures, the memory of whom carries a redemptive promise.

Within this broad architectural design of the fated hero, the text defines Hector through references to more specific *agonistic* iconographies. Varda Burstyn observes that sport bases itself in 'archaic residual values associated with the highly differentiated, ranked gender order of tribal male warrior culture'.³⁴ Having Prince conceive Hector as a reincarnated 'warrior' and a 'gladiator', the novel creates a symbolic and metaphoric pattern aligning him with a 'male warrior culture', where the lethal male body represents the apex of masculine definition. Hector Bebb is 'Born for action' (p. 9), an *agonistic* male for whom somatic passivity is a psychological itch he can express only through a physiological figure: it 'hurts worse than a pasting' (p. 9). Tommy Wills, by contrast, brings a distinct pragmatism to his career as a boxer. Fixed as he is into a pattern of patriarchal conformity, boxing for him is a means to an end; he fights in order to 'put up the bond' (p. 81) on a pub when he retires.

Joyce Carol Oates recognises the alluring but menacing status of the boxer, who inhabits a world where 'Values are reversed, evaginated'. A boxer, she writes, is 'valued not for his humanity but for being a "killer"'.³⁵ The fictional Sammy John provides a similar insight into the boxer's ambiguous status. When he assesses the young Hector as 'a killer' (p. 11), he is identifying Hector's singular aptitude for conflict in a figurative compliment that becomes a proleptic truth connecting him once more to his mythical namesake. The veneration of the boxer as an exemplar of warrior manhood, as killer, exists in western culture

³⁴ Varda Burstyn, *The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics and the Culture of Sport*, p. 166.

³⁵ Joyce Carol Oates, *On Boxing*, p. 74.

from the *Odyssey*³⁶ and the *Aeneid*,³⁷ and enables the text to conflate Hector as boxer with Hector as mythic and mythologised hero. Even his gamesmanship against Mel Carpenter, when he responds to Carpenter's having a strip of wire in his glove by biting him on his shoulder, is legitimised by classical precedent. As Tom Winnifrith remarks, 'there is not in Homer the belief that behaving well somehow wins matches and battles'.³⁸

However, Hector Bebb's mythical lineage extends beyond antiquity. Several of the characters in *So Long, Hector Bebb* have names that echo more recent real-life or fictional representations of the male as heroic *agon*. Clearly, one has to be cautious in associating Hector of Cymmer with Hector of Troy, but in thus naming its protagonist, the text incorporates Hector Bebb into the mythical literary tradition of the fated warrior hero, while also associating him through a phonic chiming with the real-life American boxer Harry Greb. As a middleweight boxer like Hector Bebb, Harry Greb was the world champion between 1923-1926. While Hector Bebb suffers a damaging cut above his eye as the result of a foul blow from Mel Carpenter, Greb actually lost the sight in his right eye for a similar reason. As so often with those who become heroes, his early death, like Hector's, enhanced his iconic renown. A recent article reaches quite naturally for the same descriptor that Prince employs for Hector when it appraises Greb as 'the most formidable warrior in boxing history'.³⁹

³⁶ In Book XVIII of *The Odyssey*, for example, when Odysseus boxes with the boastful Irus he, 'smashed in the bones so that the red blood gushed through his mouth': Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. E. V. Rieu (London: Penguin, 1948), p. 278.

³⁷ In Book V of *The Aeneid*, the ponderous but skilled Entellus boxes against the younger, swifter Dares, punching him 'With left and right alike, no pause, no rest./ As thick and fast as hail, drumming on roofs/In a big storm, were the old hero's blows/With both hands battering and spinning Dares': Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (London: Penguin, 1985), ll. 593-596.

³⁸ Cited By Kasia Boddy, *Boxing: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion, 2009), p. 11.

³⁹ Bob Mee, 'When Harry Greb dished out one of boxing history's most savage beatings', *Boxing News*, boxingnewsonline.net, (22.10.2016), n. p.

But suggestive nominal insinuations extend beyond Hector Bebb, although they all serve to burnish his reputation. In Bernard Malamud's novel *The Natural* (1952), based loosely on the Fisher King myth, the hero Roy Hobbs ousts Bump Baily from his pre-eminent role as the baseball star of the New York Knights. In a piece of intertextual legerdemain, *So Long, Hector Bebb* introduces a parallel when a character called Jerome 'Bump' Wilkinson-Tanner in early drafts of *So Long, Hector Bebb* acquires in later drafts a significant name change into the star boxer Bernard Bump Tanner, who is defeated by Hector. Like Roy Hobbs, Hector Bebb is both a fated hero and 'a natural' (p. 54), who also has a manager called Sam. More prosaically, but also indicative of the novel's intertextuality is the naming of Tommy Wills, a boxer also defeated by Hector, whose name echoes Harry Wills, the legendary American 'Black Panther'. Even a minor character like Vic Crane was originally called Soldier Crane, arguably after Ernest Hemingway's boxer Soldier Bartlett.⁴⁰ The cumulative significance of such resonances implies a subtle narrative strategy. The figures that orbit around Hector Bebb in the novel secure his pre-eminence within a fictional constellation, but they also amplify his allure by their nominal connection to extra-textual embodiments of virile masculinity.

Freely sourcing mythic archetypes and paradigms in designing Hector Bebb's sheer alterity, the novel tantalisingly infuses a seemingly prosaic incident with an undercurrent of resonating extra-realism. In preparation for Hector's championship title contest, an odd-job builder, an 'old sioni craftsman, genuine as silver money' (p. 73),⁴¹ assembles a practice ring for him. The builder, who is not named but is nonetheless endowed with unimpeachable integrity, does not appear in early drafts of the novel and when he does later, he does not address

⁴⁰ See Hemingway's short story 'Fifty Grand', in *Men Without Women* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975).

⁴¹ When not capitalised, 'sioni' is a Valleys colloquialism for a workman.

Hector. But as draft succeeded draft he acquires a strangely seer-like presence. Finally, in Sammy's account, the builder comments that Prince Saddler, of whom he has already heard, is 'Something extra special', but he then turns to address Hector:

'though you got a touch of it in you too, boyo.' He stroked his hand on Hector's chest then he went bobbing down the lane from Cwmbryn, toolbag humping his back. We never saw him again (p. 74).

His *ad hominem* judgement and his stroking of Hector's chest — as though tactile contact confers a benediction and confirms an insight — contrasts the shrewdness of his perception with the clumsiness of his gait as he bobs down the lane, leaving without a farewell. The paragraph's closing sentence is at once factual and teasingly suggestive. There is no practical reason why the builder's departure should attract Sammy's comment, but in doing so it generates a *frisson* in Sammy himself, where the realism of the occasion melds with the mythic paradigm of the old stranger who appears, impresses, pronounces and vanishes. It is appropriate that this incident is articulated by Sammy for he, too, recognises 'something extra special' in Hector. Speaking of himself and Sue, he acknowledges that: 'We're like a couple of adverts. No matter what, you've got to find the real, stick by whatever's real. Hector Bebb, he's real' (pp. 11-12).

What Sammy recognises in the manufactured contentment of his own domestic life, and what the jobbing builder divines is that Hector Bebb incarnates a distilled masculinity unable to acculturate itself to the prescriptions and social nuances of a post-industrial, domesticated, sterile culture. Hector Bebb lives what he is because he can live no other way. By constructing him within the broad paradigms of the hero/warrior, the novel locates him within the mythos of *agonistic* masculinity, the warrior male living both inside and outside his time. The following pages examine how this distinctive gendering is presented through two further attributes in the novel: his pre-eminent gifts as a boxer and his attitude to women.

Hector Bebb: 'Unique. Very, very unique'

Hector Bebb's integrated self incorporates two cherished qualities of masculine definition: a physique and psychology acutely suited to the rigours of extreme action and performance. A helpful distinction between this fictional representation of physical hegemony and a real-life equivalent is apparent in an interview R. W. Connell conducted with Steve Donoghue, an Australian champion surfer whose 'job is to be an iron man and to market himself as a sports personality'. Donoghue comments on the enormous personal sacrifices required to achieve and maintain such an exemplary 'iron man' status: 'it is a pretty disciplined sort of life. It's like being in jail'.⁴² Connell remarks elsewhere on the irony that 'the bodily-reflexive practice that constructs Steve's hegemonic masculinity also undermines hegemonic masculinity'.⁴³

So Long, Hector Bebb constructs Hector as a boxer on a different, fully-integrated model of hegemonic masculinity. Unlike Donoghue, who incarcerates himself in a job as an iron man in order to market himself as a product, Hector Bebb shows no interest in material self-advancement, though Bump Tanner is convinced that 'Hector's mug would sell shirts, socks, beer, anything. You name it, anything for men' (p. 107). Significantly, it also places him outside a constraining system of patriarchal capitalism, for Donoghue's pragmatically functional incarceration contrasts radically with the liberation that boxing gives Hector Bebb for self-realisation. For him, a hard-fought contest is: 'A great fight. The inside of my smeller like a nutmeg grater. Two shiners. Ears like burnt cobs' (p. 27). Christopher E. Forth writes that boxing, 'foregrounds pain and violence as repressed male experiences that are at once cathartic, therapeutic and

⁴² R. W. Connell, 'An Iron Man', p. 85.

⁴³ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 63.

empowering'.⁴⁴ The complex psycho-physiological process Forth describes, where pain experienced through violent action is exhilarating, distinguishes Hector's form of masculinity from his more pedestrian colleagues, and enables the text to connect him once more to the elite masculinities of the warrior and the gladiator.

Hector's response to pain leads the prosaic Abe Pearson to regard him as a 'high grade machine' (p. 22), an object to be utilised, but to do so is to mechanise his complex natural functioning. Sammy's observation that Hector is 'all fighter, pure and simple as a bird flying' (p. 17), by contrast, emphasises Hector's inherent integration of form, action and purpose. In a text where bodily hexis is so prominent, Hector's distinguishes him even from other boxers at the White Hart where they train. Sue John and Bella Pearson frequently use the generic and degrading term 'animal' of him, while Millie and Prince are more specific. Millie twice refers to him as a 'panther' (pp. 36, 37) in the ring, 'stalking', 'always on the go'. And when Prince Saddler first startles Hector on a training run, Hector 'jinked off like a surprised wolf' (p. 58). The two references combine to define key aspects of the innate predatory masculinity emanating from Hector Bebb, both in the ring and later on the hills: feline power, sinuous grace, and lupine associations with the untamed wilderness.

Dai Smith writes that 'the raw edge of boxing can never be completely overcome since it is this which lies at the heart of it',⁴⁵ and it is in 'the raw edge' that Hector excels. He is dismissive of exhibitionism as it detracts from the discipline needed in a fight. When Bump Tanner, as a gesture of self-assertion, 'swings a downward clip at the speedball' (p. 5) after Hector has bested him

⁴⁴ Christopher E. Forth, *Masculinity in the Modern West*, p. 230.

⁴⁵ Dai Smith, 'Focal Heroes: A Welsh Fighting Class', in *Sport and the Working Class in Modern Britain*, ed. Richard Holt (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 198-217 (p. 200).

despite not boxing for a year, Hector's response is 'It's laughable'. The test comes in a 'scrap' which Hector has subtly provoked:

I'm out to put him away. Two short hooks sink in down below. Bump's feet widened for his right hand swinger. He'll never learn. I felt it dying like a flap of rag against my neck. Then Bump took four hard shots. Three lefts and a right, real hooks sent from the shoulder (p. 32).

In this compact passage, the text assembles a sequence of signifiers indicating Hector's particular combination of qualities: ruthless determination, technical proficiency, tactical awareness and contempt, as Bump's failed swinger, 'like a flap of rag', leaves him exposed to the clinical finesse of 'four hard shots'. After the fight, Hector carries on training — 'medicine ball, speedball, skipping' (p. 33); Bump is off training for ten days. Hector's judgement of Bump reveals his own self-focused cathexis: 'He can't ever go where I'm set on reaching in this game' (p. 33).

Christopher E. Forth suggests that, along with grace and harmony of form, 'Bravery, strength, endurance and sexual potency figure prominently in most lists of ideal male bodily attributes',⁴⁶ all of which the text confers on Hector Bebb, except the last. Indeed, the novel goes out of its way to make this clear. Abe Pearson believes him to be 'cool in the goolies' (p. 23), and Millie compares her 'panther' in the ring to 'a little cock robin' (p. 91) in bed. But in *So Long, Hector Bebb*, sexual potency becomes an attribute directed toward lesser characters, promiscuous users and abusers of women like Vic Crane, Emlyn Winton and Bump Tanner. Sarah Morse suggests that, 'Although Hector implies that his masculine energies are directed into his boxing career, the matter of his sexless nature is ambiguous'.⁴⁷ Rather, it can be argued that the text constructs in Hector Bebb a singular version of hegemonic masculinity which is largely detached from sexuality. And what Morse calls 'the question of [Hector's] sexual

⁴⁶ Christopher E. Forth, *Masculinity in the Modern West*, p. 8.

⁴⁷ Sarah Morse, "'Maimed Individuals': The Significance of the Body in *So Long, Hector Bebb* (1970)", pp. 281-282.

orientation'⁴⁸ is a means of defining rather than questioning this phenomenon. Sammy John's comment that before the fight with Jesse Markham, Hector 'slept like a saint' (p. 74) makes a surprising but illuminating connection between two seemingly conflicting modes of male being, the spiritually ordained and physically embodied. In this regard, Joyce Carol Oates makes the pertinent observation that boxing is: 'a unique, closed self-referential world, obliquely akin to those severe religions, in which the individual is both "free" and "determined"'.⁴⁹

It is the paradox of freedom achieved through constraint that constructs Hector Bebb's singular mode of being. Obliquely akin to a saint he, too, is engaged in the single-minded pursuit of unity of self through unity of purpose. It is, as even the severely pragmatic Abe Pearson recognises, 'a gift from on high', making Hector an elite example, one of those who 'don't come often' (p. 24). Men like Emlyn Winton, the barman and Millie's lover, however, do come often. Commenting on his 'clucks and tishes' (p. 45), and the way he 'wiggled his fingers through his gorgeous locks' (p. 46), Sammy John dismisses him contemptuously as 'a genuine sack of lard' (p. 45). But Sammy's curt judgement extends beyond Winton's physical slackness. In a novel in which the hardened, stoical male body is centralised, 'the fat belly [on a man becomes] the symbol of a feminine "surrender"',⁵⁰ and Emlyn Winton's flab consigns him to the gender-coded realm of pampered indulgence. Lacking the physical hardness of heroic manhood present in Hector Bebb, he embodies in the novel a more readily-understood, effete ladies' man masculinity that bolsters its own status through social niceties and sexual conquest.

⁴⁸ Sarah Morse, 'Maimed Individuals', p. 282.

⁴⁹ Joyce Carol Oates, *On Boxing*, p. 13. Writing of the heavyweight boxer Rocky Marciano, she observes that he 'trained with the most monastic devotion', focusing unremittingly on his opponent 'as the cloistered monk or nun chooses by an act of fanatical will to "see" only God', pp. 28-29.

⁵⁰ Christopher E. Forth, *Masculinity in the Modern West*, p. 206.

The novel, however, defines Hector Bebb not through success with women, but through the heroic conquest of men. Virtually every action exhibits his self-actualising through preparation and performance. Millie complains, for example, that he even darted 'his fists across the table during meals, catching flies for boxing practice' (p. 90).⁵¹ Hector's marriage fails not because he feels threatened and so abuses Millie, but because he fails to appreciate her craving for a man who makes 'a girl melt like butter' (p. 90). He recognises that 'she was left out in the cold a bit', but believes that she 'preferred herself that way' (p. 70). She admits that 'at home there's no danger in him' (p. 37), unlike Abe, who sadistically stubs out his cigar on his wife's thigh (p. 134) to demonstrate his dominance. Hector's difficulty in establishing intimate relationships with women recurs later when his relationship with Doreen Evass also fails. He realises that 'we were as different as salt and sugar. Me and Doreen were foreigners' (p. 167). Within the larger context of the novel, this episode is less an observation of Hector's laodicean sexuality than another instance of a fundamental gender incompatibility that drives much of the narrative.

For the boxer, writes Joyce Carol Oates, 'The Opponent is always male'.⁵² This is not entirely the case in Berry's novel, where Hector Bebb is differentiated from his misogynistic associates who systematically use, abuse and degrade women. Hector's discourse is generally distinguished from his associates by its comparative mildness. He thinks well of Sue John, who is 'solid as gold' (p. 7), and despite Jane Evass's hostility, he regards her 'as one of the best you could wish to meet' (p. 140). To boxers like Bump Tanner, Len Jules and Vic Crane, however, women are objects of desire as a genus, but dangerously seductive opponents as a gender. Both Bump Tanner and Len Jules employ the same

⁵¹ A likely reference to a scene from the western *The Magnificent Seven*, dir. John Sturges (1960) where the ageing gunfighter Lee (Robert Vaughn) tests his reaction time by snatching at three flies on a table.

⁵² Joyce Carol Oates, *On Boxing*, p. 72.

scabrous discourse when they speak of Millie. To Bump, she is 'the genuine pox-doctor's daughter through and through' (p. 108), and to Len she 'flasht her old twat inna Transport Caff. Millie an' her big greesy minj' (p. 128). The venom behind these offensive remarks requires re-evaluation when Millie's own monologues construct her as chronically depressive, a needy, confused figure who seeks consolation through religion, drink and sex. But misogyny extends beyond Abe Pearson's boxing stable to Abe himself, whose loathing of women encompasses not only Bella, but women generally. When Sammy needs an eight-letter word for 'courtesan' to complete his crossword Abe suggests 'Cunt-hook' (p. 87). In these figures, the embedded male urge to dominate women engenders a paradox where desire conflicts with disgust at what it desires. So *Long, Hector Bebb*, navigates Hector along a different channel, thereby distinguishing him once more from the commonplace masculinities by whom he is surrounded.

In *So Long, Hector Bebb*, boxing is a vehicle mobilising aspects of a potent masculinity validated by myth and sanctioned by the cultural imprimatur of the Valleys. However, while boxing seeks to legitimise a male propensity for violence through regulated action (sometimes unsuccessfully as the fight with Mel Carpenter shows), for over half of the novel Hector Bebb is not a boxer at all. Once the text removes him from Cymmer and from Bryn Farm, it allows for a probing of manhood detached from the constraints that social order and sporting discipline endeavour to apply. And in a form where the *agonistic* male is represented through other cultural inscriptions.

'Like a wild man of the woods'; 'like a wanderer out of the Bible': Hector Bebb and the 'thinking savage'

This chapter has so far identified the energising subtext of mythical and mythologised hegemonic and *agonistic* paradigms shaping Hector Bebb's

composition, and noted key features such as his integrated self as a boxer, and his attitude to women that further distinguish him from his less gifted contemporaries. In its closing sections, the novel subordinates Hector the *agonistic* hero to Hector the solitary figure, isolated both physically and temperamentally on the fringes of civilisation. As Christopher E. Forth has observed, 'tensions between polish and primitivity, brawn and brain, and activity and sedentariness have complicated representations of masculinity in the twentieth century',⁵³ and it is these tensions, present in perceptions of Hector Bebb throughout the text, that are foregrounded in the final third of the novel.

Structurally, the narrative progressively drives Hector Bebb from a social world limited to boxing to a narrower world with Prince Saddler at Bryn farm, and later with Doreen, to a male-defined domain on the hills above Tosteg. In this last space, the novel interrogates through Hector Bebb, what it is that remains of an elite manhood when the residual complications of social obligation fall away. This final trajectory of Hector Bebb's narrative is both actual and symbolic, and deeply personal to Berry himself. In an undated, unpublished essay, he writes that:

I felt drawn to the wilderness. Extremity manures the soul. The day by day imperatives of being civilised, are less significant when confronted by oneself under a weight of sky.⁵⁴

Whereas in *Cwmardy* and *Times Like These*, green spaces function in opposition to exploitative industrialisation, affording recuperation and relaxation, *So Long*, *Hector Bebb* adopts a more ambivalent interpretation of Welsh pastoral, where the hills overlooking the Valleys offer a threat as well as an embrace, an inhospitable otherness 'under a weight of sky' as well as a consoling return to nature. The dialogue with the self, generated by the

⁵³ Christopher E. Forth, *Masculinity in The Modern West*, p. 219.

⁵⁴ Ron Berry, 'A Necessary Kind of Love', an unpublished essay, a copy of which was given to me by his daughter, Dr Lesley Berry.

extremity of the wilderness that Berry refers to, permeates the novel's examination of Hector Bebb's masculinity on the hills.

Mark Glancy's observation that it was through the western that, 'generations of Britons became acquainted with American folklore, history and myth'⁵⁵ is supported by Ron Berry's own acknowledgement that American cultural influences 'were an essential part of my growing up'.⁵⁶ The American western, projecting 'true' masculinity as stoical, laconic, individuated, and existing on the fringes of a confining patriarchal society, had already nourished Welsh conceptions of manhood, as we have seen in Big Jim Roberts in *Cwmardy*. Increasing television ownership in the postwar years further disseminated this model by giving ready access to a stream of made-for-television westerns broadcast when *So Long, Hector Bebb* was progressing through its various drafts.⁵⁷ The macho liminality cowboys represented, located in a spacious, non-industrialised topography, found a ready acceptance among miners living in confined Welsh valleys, for whom the moors surrounding them were the closest they would come to untrammelled nature. Berry's novel seizes on this paradigm, but strips away its romanticised associations of golden sunsets, expansive plains, distant horizons, and unhampered freedom.

Instead, the text uses the figure of the cowboy as a tool for shaping a subtle but significant modification in Hector Bebb's composition. Prior to his forced exile on the hills, the amalgam of intertextual mythic archetypes of his construction had been woven implicitly into the texture of the discourse, but these archetypes had not functioned as desired models of self-definition to

⁵⁵ Mark Glancy, *Hollywood and the Americanisation of Britain: from the 1920s to the Present* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2014), p. 212.

⁵⁶ Ron Berry, undated audiotape interview with Dai Smith: 'My influences were American authors, English authors', University of Swansea Miners' Library. My transcription.

⁵⁷ Glancy notes that: 'after the Hollywood studios sold their back catalogues of films (in the late 1950s), high profile westerns were showcased as "classics" for television viewing': *Hollywood and the Americanisation of Britain: from the 1920s to the Present*, p. 213.

which Hector Bebb himself had aspired. Hector, the peerless boxer and Prince Saddler's 'warrior', required no external referents. Notably, he dismisses Prince's flattering references to him as 'yarns from the war' (p. 150), and his status as iconic male is confirmed when he retrieves a mallard Prince has shot by plunging without hesitation into an icy lake too cold for the dog. Overcome with admiration, Price exults in this unproblematic and exemplary exhibition of 'a man matched to his environment' (p. 151).

However, when the novel removes Hector Bebb from virtually all human contact on the hills, and turns its lens unsentimentally on his unaccommodated masculinity, it dismisses Prince's easy elision as romantic idealisation. Instead, it provokes in Hector a direct confrontation not only with where he is, but who he is. Forced to re-evaluate his own ontological definition, the previously self-focalised Hector finds for the first time that he requires models of liminal masculinity through which to address his own new identity. Significantly, the two models he chooses when *in extremis* are the mythic American cowboy; and later, as his future prospects become yet more precarious, another hypertrophic male, the mythic wild man.

References to Hector Bebb's enthusiasm for western novels, films and song are strewn throughout the novel, and serve to align him indirectly with a culture that, as Jane Tompkins states, 'focuses exclusively on what men do'.⁵⁸ But when Hector is cast adrift on the hills, he is for the first time not entirely sure 'what men do'; or more specifically what a man would do in his position. To provide himself with a new *modus operandi*, he actively and self-consciously constructs himself through the prism of Western archetypes. And so he imaginatively re-contextualises the hills above Pont Fawr as 'Bow and arrow country, [...] as pictured in Western stories' (p. 190). When wet, chilled and disconsolate on his first night alone, he asks himself, 'What would a cowboy

⁵⁸ Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything*, p. 41.

do?’ His response, ‘Pull his slicker over himself and stick it out till daylight’ (p. 173), gratefully acknowledges not only the cowboy’s stoicism, but illustrates the extent of his own imaginative immersion in a cowboy identity through his use of a western idiom for rainwear.⁵⁹ When the rain stops and he finds shelter, he builds a fire, enjoys a meal, and entertains himself with Western tunes like ‘Ghost riders in the sky’ (p. 173). Hector’s masculinity is in no way vitiated by this development, for as Jane Tompkins explains of the cowboy, while ‘nature’s wildness and hardness test his strength and will and intelligence, they also give him solace and repose’.⁶⁰ Hector’s vicarious identification with this liminal western figure offers the same solace and repose, and it marks a new development in someone previously ‘born for action’ (p. 9). But in its unsparing scrutiny of an elite masculinity thrust back entirely on its resources, *So Long, Hector Bebb* introduces another, much older and more problematic representation of liminal masculinity than the celluloid cowboy.

Just as the hills in *So Long, Hector Bebb* project a tension between natural wildness, the depleted remains of an industrial past and an encroaching commercialised afforestation, so the novel positions Hector himself as occupying a transitional space between ‘nature’ and ‘civilisation’. It is small surprise, then, that in his final manifestation, *So Long, Hector Bebb* situates him in another mythic tradition, the wild man, although it contests the celluloid version of Tarzan that Hector initially embraces. Berry’s wild man both anticipates by twenty years and critiques Robert Bly’s theory of the regenerative power of the ‘deep masculine’ seeking liberation. Bly’s ‘deep masculine’ attempts to square the existential conundrum of masculine definition by proposing that ‘The Wild Man is not opposed to civilisation; but he’s not

⁵⁹ *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, II: ‘U.S., a waterproof coat, 1884’, p. 2018.

⁶⁰ Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything*, p. 81.

completely contained by it either'.⁶¹ Bly's comforting equivocation that wildness is a salubrious recovery of manhood that has been smothered by the consolations and comforts of a domestic civility is remote from *So Long, Hector Bebb*. For Hector Bebb, living wild is no modernist, middle-class project. It is not a bracingly therapeutic lifestyle choice, still less an opportunity 'to write poetry and go out and sit by the ocean'.⁶² It is a desperate escape from the law, and from literal incarceration by a figure who is a 'super claustrophobic case' (p. 171). It requires a direct and sometimes shocking confrontation with the self, where hunger can drive one to a form of violence that is fundamentally destabilising rather than regenerative. It is by utilising the manifold possibilities inherent in the wild man myth that the novel examines the complex amalgam of intuition and intellect, frenzy and cognition, volition and reflection in a physically hegemonic subject when placed *in extremis*.

When Tommy Wills sees a shabby Hector Bebb, whom he does not recognise, begging outside his pub, he associates him with 'the wild man of the woods [...] rotten, all hair, beard down to his chest' (p. 179), hirsuteness being a signifier of the wild man's uncivilised existence.⁶³ But a little later Tommy also sees him paradoxically as another kind of wild man, 'like a wanderer out of the Bible' (pp. 179-180). The dual optic through which Tommy views Hector both as degenerate sub-human and a John the Baptist-like itinerant holy man identifies incompatible spheres of being represented by the wild man: the one traditionally a prey to ungovernable passion, the other a calibrated commitment to reflection

⁶¹ Robert Bly, *Iron John* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 2004), p. 8. Christopher E. Forth feels that Bly's attempt to reconcile these discordant features makes it 'difficult to see this kind of man as anything other than fundamentally unstable': *Masculinity in the Modern West*, p. 226. And R. W. Connell is of the opinion that Bly offered 'a therapy for masculinity' that incorporated an 'eclectic symbolism and search for archetypes, and media attention to the oddities of his movement (beating on drums, pretending to be warriors)': *Masculinities*, p. 209.

⁶² Bly, *Iron John*, p. 6.

⁶³ Roger Bartra, *Wild Men in the Looking Glass*, trans. Carl T. Berrisford (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994). Bartra sees the wild man as 'white, bearded, with an abundant head of hair', p. 88.

and asceticism. In a similar vein, Dorothy Yamamoto sees the wild man as a liminal figure who, 'Poised between two worlds, [...] brings to a head questions about the dividing line between animals and humans, and the distinctiveness of human identity'.⁶⁴ Her paradigm provides a route into the novel's questioning of the 'animal' and the 'human' in a figure like Hector Bebb, and the extent to which they are inclusive terms.

Throughout the novel, Hector has been 'poised between two worlds', between two incompatible, gendered perceptions by others of his manhood, as 'no more than a trained animal' (p. 65) to Bella Pearson, and 'a single-minded genius' (p. 213) to Sammy John. Having established through Tommy Wills how the wild man generates ambivalent responses to the 'other', the novel further confronts the composition of Hector Bebb's masculinity by aligning him with two, more recent though equally incompatible, embodiments of this mythic archetype: the wild man as domesticated hunter-gatherer, and the warrior 'ape-man', Tarzan.⁶⁵ Both figures encode vastly influential, though differing perceptions of untrammelled masculinity through which Hector Bebb's final incarnation is represented. Yamamoto's 'dividing line between humans and animals' becomes a permeable tissue, allowing the text to interrogate Hector as a figure who is unable to habituate himself to a feminine-coded version of 'civilisation', but on whom living in the wild has a paradoxically domesticating effect.

Interestingly, both Jane Tompkins writing on the cowboy and Roger Bartra on the wild man reach similar conclusions on one surprising aspect of the relationships between these figures and the landscape they inhabit that connect

⁶⁴ Dorothy Yamamoto, *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature*, p. 144.

⁶⁵ Christopher E. Forth writes that Tarzan, 'experienced a resurgence in popularity in the early 1960s', the decade when *So Long, Hector Bebb* was written: *Masculinity in the Modern World*, p. 219. Between 1950 and 1966, thirteen Tarzan films were released. And John Pikoulis notes that, 'as a young man, Berry was what he calls a "Shoni Tarzan": 'Word-of-mouth cultures cease in cemeteries', in *New Welsh Review*, 34 (1996), 9-15 (p. 9).

them to Hector Bebb. Tompkins notes that although the cowboy's engagement with landscape initially involves fear and uncertainty, 'the landscape has ultimately a domesticating effect',⁶⁶ and Bartra contends that the mythical 'European wild man' is also 'the allegory of a domestic life in a wild context'.⁶⁷ Significantly, Bartra is referring here not to Hector Bebb, but to Robinson Crusoe. The hills above Tosteg have little in common with Crusoe's remote island, and Hector has the opportunity to pay infrequent, though risky, visits to the village. However, key aspects of Defoe's archetype are apparent in Berry's also, which point to a domesticating of Hector's virile masculinity. Like Crusoe, though in a lower acquisitive register, Hector makes calculated use of the products of civilisation, like brattice, a mandrel shaft, a shovel blade, shoes and stolen overcoats, so that the colliery winding-house on the hills becomes 'my home, funnily enough already my home' (p. 196). Whereas Crusoe finds green limes 'very wholesome' and lays in quantities of grapes and lemons,⁶⁸ Hector, acutely aware of his physiological need for roughage, builds up 'a store of veg supplies from allotments' (pp. 219-220). Both figures find humour in their precarious positions. If Crusoe in his goat-skin clothing, 'could not but smile at the notion of my travelling through Yorkshire [...] in such a dress',⁶⁹ Hector in his wild man beard 'felt tempted to laugh in [Tommy Wills's] face' (p. 218) at being unrecognised outside The Lion pub. And whereas Crusoe records salvaging 'bread, rice, three Dutch cheeses, five pieces of dried goat's flesh';⁷⁰ Hector, with an unmarked irony, refers to himself as 'concentrating like a housewife' (p.

⁶⁶ Jane Tompkins. *West of Everything*, p. 81.

⁶⁷ Roger Bartra, *The Artificial Savage: Modern Myths of the Wild Man*, trans. Christopher Follett (Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997). Bartra distinguishes between the 'European wild man' and the 'savage': 'The former belongs to a Western myth with a long history; the latter is used to people "discovered" and colonised by modern Europe', pp. 165, 164.

⁶⁸ Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* [1729] (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 97.

⁶⁹ Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, p. 145.

⁷⁰ Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, p. 45.

196) as he composes a list of essential goods. His domesticity that had featured in a very early draft,⁷¹ but been scrupulously excised from later versions so as not to compromise his masculinity, is reintroduced in the final text in a topographically wild, culturally marginalised context where, despite his domesticating simile, he is freed from feminine-coded associations of housekeeping.

However, although Hector might domestically systematise his life on the hills, unrestrained violent action becomes a prerequisite of his very survival. Emma Smith suggests that ‘incidents where Hector is at one with nature purposely romanticise such savagery’,⁷² but there is little romanticising when, weak with hunger, he drinks the hot blood of a sheep he has killed. As he prepares his assault on the unsuspecting creature, he once again requires a model of behaviour, and this time chooses Tarzan (p. 193), a figure famous for his dauntingly impressive physical feats. In an image that amalgamates the wild and the civilised male, Hector declares that as part of his preparation for attack, he ‘shoved Doreen’s bread knife in my belt like Tarzan’ (p. 193), although Tarzan’s chosen weapon, we remember, was a long hunting-knife. It is a daring image because at the risk of mocking Hector — and after all, Hector Bebb must use whatever weapon he has to hand — the text’s focus here is implicitly on the interface of the primitive and civilised, violence and restraint, the hunting knife and the bread knife in shaping masculine definition.

The episode where Hector Bebb kills the ewe and her lamb merits close examination, not least because it reveals how the Americanised model of jungle hypermasculinity embodied in Tarzan fails him. Roger Bartra notes that the figure of Tarzan is ‘the result of a peculiar metamorphosis of the myth of the wild

⁷¹ Ron Berry Archive, WWE/1/1/3/1. Angered by his wife Ethel’s continuing neglect of their son, Dilwyn — she ‘produced plates of cakes nigh every meal’ (p. 87) — Hector cooks for him.

⁷² Emma Smith, *Masculinity in Welsh Writing in English*, p. 143.

man'. It succeeds, he continues, because it resolves or displaces various 'uncomfortable aspects not readily adaptable to the requirements of imperialist culture'.⁷³ But the 'uncomfortable aspects' of male violence and their place in male identity, and therefore in civilised society, are exactly what *So Long, Hector Bebb* directly confronts.

Starving though Hector Bebb is, when he sights the ewe he resists the temptation of a search for birds' eggs, and, like Tarzan, he exercises his cognitive faculties and disciplines himself to patience, for the ewe means the deferred gratification of 'a big meal' (p. 194). When the assault comes, however, the novel contests celluloid representation of a Tarzan-like life of primordial manhood, and internalises Hector's own experience to construct more radically how the human and the animal, the cognitive and the instinctive coalesce in moments of desperation.⁷⁴ In a remarkable rhetorical attempt to re-create the experience rather than merely describe what happens, Hector's discourse becomes impressionistic: it is allusive here, precise there, subjective and objective, graphic and mundane, a series of internalised sense impressions fusing with fleeting moments of objectified awareness. Before Hector's assault, the novel focuses on his monochromatic, cerebral self-objectification: '*Think, Hector, use your wits*', (original italics). When he acts, however, the experience is a blur of kaleidoscopic, ever shifting data:

I lost true sight, everything fuzzy and Roman candles firing inside my chest. Strength came in spasms, although I robbed myself, the lamb bleating, bleating, tormenting my mind. Blood splashed over my trousers. Heavy drops of rain began to fall. By and by dead lamb, unconscious ewe, me straddled over her, both of us quite still. She wiggled. I outed her again (p. 194).

⁷³ Roger Bartra, *The Artificial Savage*, p. 268.

⁷⁴ The complexity of Hector's masculinity here contrasts with that of the stabilised Will Evans, who also kills a sheep on the hills above Cwmardy, *Cwmardy* pp. 209-210. There the incident is focalised through a horror-struck Len Roberts, and Will, a hegemonic contrast to the febrile Len, is decisive and seemingly unaffected by his actions.

Emma Davies judges this to be ‘a fusion of the twin desires of sex and death, reconfigured by Berry as an orgasmic reclamation of (male) self’.⁷⁵ However, it is possible to see the experience less as a moment of ecstatic reclamation than a loss of ‘true sight’, a moment of frightening self-erasure in a figure like Hector for whom self-discipline has been a defining characteristic. Freud reminds us that ‘fright’ is different from ‘fear’ because:

Fear requires a definite object of which to be afraid. ‘Fright’, however, is the name we give to the state a person gets into when he has run into danger without being prepared for it; it emphasises the factor of surprise.⁷⁶

Throughout the novel Hector fears nothing, but here, for all his attempted modelling on Tarzan, the ‘danger’ he runs into is a frightening encounter with an aspect of himself rare in his previous experience. Desperate beyond measure as he is for food, the clinical control he displayed when he dispatched Bump Tanner with ‘Three lefts and a right, real hooks sent from the shoulder’ (p. 32) deserts him. His insight, ‘although I robbed myself’ becomes an aposiopesis arguably referring not to the strength he wasted, but to his horrified recognition that his violent paroxysms caused the lamb’s terror. From being a heroic pugilist, he becomes a violator of innocence. In this critical instance, *So Long, Hector Bebb* distils the instantaneous and dynamic interaction between passion and conscience, action and self-scrutiny in moments of extreme mental activity. When his judgement returns, he feels that he has committed a transgressive act and buries the lamb — ‘only bits left of him, poor mite’ (p. 196) — in an act of reparation. As a boxer, Hector accepted the need to ‘Disregard sentiment’ (p. 9). As part of his narrative trajectory, he finds himself surprisingly susceptible to it, but also susceptible to ‘fright’, a very different ‘factor of surprise’.

⁷⁵ Emma Davies “*Manufacturing Men*”: *Literary Masculinities in Industrial Welsh Writing in English*, (unpublished MA thesis, University of Swansea, 2001), p. 34.

⁷⁶ Sigmund Freud, ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’, in *Penguin Freud Library* 15 vols, trans. James Strachey, ed. Angela Richards (London: Penguin, 1984), vol. 11, pp. 275-338 (p. 282).

In this final phase of Hector Bebb's construction, then, the novel inflects his masculinity through characteristics present in representations of the cowboy and the wild man. Together, they illustrate aspects of Hector Bebb's unimpeachable masculinity as continuities of masculine definition present in the earlier stages of his construction. However, whereas the cowboy's very title implies a form of nurturing within a socially organised, agrarian framework, in the figure of the wild man the novel pushes Hector Bebb to the very edge of barely functioning cognitive manhood. When, later, he kills a dog 'Under some mad impulse' with 'two bangs against a rock' (p. 219), and later still secretly visits Sammy John and Tommy Wills, the contrast between glossy celluloid primordialism and a grimmer fictional reality is shocking. Prince's Hector, who 'jinked off like a surprised wolf' (p. 58) in his prime, has now become 'a tired fox' (p. 228). Sammy notes that the 'Flesh folds on [Hector's] neck were seamed with blackheads, sunken flesh all-over dingy, speckled like dirty meat dripping' (p. 228). He is 'gnawed down in his spirit' (p. 230). In a text so focused on manhood inflected through somatic display, these are telling indicators, dismissing as casuistry Robert Bly's recommendation to contemporary manhood that 'The aim is not to *be* the Wild Man, but to be *in touch with* the Wild Man',⁷⁷ (original italics). Hector Bebb wishes neither to 'be' a wild man nor to venture on a project to get 'in touch' with one. He both is one and is not, poised as he is between two worlds of instinct and restraint throughout the novel. Subsisting in a natural space, whose own existence is threatened by the insidious advance of commercial afforestation, Hector Bebb's form of highly individualised masculinity — somatically defined, *agonistic*, violent, but not without conscience — cannot habituate itself to the novel's norms of effeminising civility. As a wanted man, and a wild man, there can be only one, fatal, end to his trajectory.

⁷⁷ Robert Bly, *Iron John*, p. 227.

Conclusion

Joyce Carol Oates regards boxing as ‘the defeat of “civilisation” by something so elemental and primitive it cannot be named’.⁷⁸ She concludes that, ‘In the brightly lit ring, man is *in extremis*, performing an atavistic rite or *agon*’,⁷⁹ (original italics). However, as this chapter has noted, Hector Bebb’s masculinity is, by its very nature, invariably *in extremis*, whether performing atavistic rites in the boxing ring, generating antipathy in women like Bella Pearson, Jane Evass and Sue John, plunging into a freezing lake, or killing sheep and dogs for food. The oppositional principles present in boxing — the elemental versus the civilised, the hierarchical versus the egalitarian, the individual versus the communal, male versus female — insinuate themselves throughout the entire novel.

Accordingly, this chapter has focused on how *So Long, Hector Bebb* uses boxing and its associated language of mythic warriors and primitives to prime what Oates describes elsewhere as ‘a distillation of the masculine world’.⁸⁰ To do so, the chapter has analysed how, in constructing Hector Bebb, the novel marginalises the social concerns and practices of the industrial novel and its patriarchal structures. Instead, it employs a form of mythic realism, positioning him in depleted Valleys locations at a loosely defined point in their post-industrial history, and constructs him through a lineage of mythic and mythologised figures, from heroic *agonists* to cowboys to wild men. What they all embody is an unrefined, unsocialised authenticity that distinguishes them from their fellows, and is both inimical and incomprehensible to women. Hector

⁷⁸ Joyce Carol Oates, *On Boxing*, p. 75.

⁷⁹ Oates, *On Boxing*, p 116.

⁸⁰ Oates, *On Boxing*, p. 74.

is a site where, as Christopher E. Forth observes: 'manhood and civilisation necessarily exist in a state of tension'.⁸¹

Referencing early drafts of the novel, and Lord Raglan's study of the hero, this chapter's first section examined how Hector Bebb's character is formulated through a recognisable mythic trajectory of the tragic hero figure. Within this broad pattern, the chapter studied how Hector's mythic status as an exemplary masculine *agon* is substantiated by Prince Saddler's conception of him as a warrior and a gladiator, and is further enhanced by the novel's employment of suggestive names to connect him with a world of mythic or real-life embodiments of hyper-masculinity. The section that followed focused on two attributes that distinguish Hector from the confraternity of White Hart boxers and others: his extraordinary fusion of animal grace and lethal intention, and his relative reluctance to adopt the viciously misogynistic discourse of his fellow boxers. The novel's recurring preoccupation with oppositional perceptions of Hector's masculinity as either uncivilised or innately authentic was scrutinised in the chapter's final section through two culturally influential manifestations: the figure of the American cowboy and, more extensively, the wild man.

As an embodiment of highly attuned somatic masculinity, Hector Bebb, like all heroically tragic figures, is both the agent and the victim of his own actions, and like all heroically tragic figures he faces his death without complaint or fear. As he lies fatally injured from his fall, his final monologue becomes a dialogue with himself expressed through stream-of-consciousness:

It must have been instinct saying 'turn your head there's blood coming out from your mouth take it easy let go a bit at a time just let go slowly this is it this is it let go slowly this is it man let go for Christ's sake let go. Now go' (pp. 256-257).

⁸¹ Christopher E. Forth, *Masculinity in the Modern West*, p. 231.

The poet and critic Henri-Frédéric Amiel thought himself ‘too much of a woman’ and nursed a dream ‘to be a man just once before death [...] to make my delicateness, my character, my style a bit more *brutal*, to *masculinize* myself and to *virilise* myself’,⁸² (original italics). Within its strictly gendered dimorphism, *So Long, Hector Bebb* creates in Hector Bebb a figure not needing to ‘*virilise*’ himself, for he naturally embodies an exemplary, though problematic, manhood in all its complex functioning. The implication behind his final instruction, ‘Now go’, asserts that death will not take him; it is he who has chosen the moment when he commits himself to dying. As when he was a boxer, in confinement he finds freedom *So Long, Hector Bebb* constructs his passing as the passing of a cherished paradigm of Valleys hyper-virility, to which the novel itself serves as a memorial, a script insisting that although it has passed it is not forgotten.

⁸² Henri-Frédéric Amiel (1821-1881): cited by Christopher E. Forth, *Masculinity and the Modern West*, p. 141.

Chapter Five

Patriarchy, Power and Politics: Masculinities in *Dark Edge* (1997) and *Until Our Blood is Dry* (2014)

Introduction

Roger Granelli's *Dark Edge* (1997) and Kit Habianic's *Until Our Blood is Dry* (2014), two novels set in the 1984-85 miners' strike, reformulate the representation of masculinities in Welsh mining fiction.¹ The principal characters in each novel emerge from a narrative tradition of Valleys industrial conflict, even as they negotiate the contemporary challenges of a neoliberal government intent on generating a competitive enterprise culture. As Huw Beynon and Peter McMyllor explain, the strike was far more than an industrial dispute: 'From the beginning [Margaret] Thatcher had been anxious to break the old consensus [...] The old class compromises were not for her, neither were collective forms of life, and relationships'.² This chapter examines how *Dark Edge* and *Until Our Blood is Dry* scrutinise the impact of this form of cultural imperialism on Valleys male self definition.

In each novel, the strike is presented as a Manichaeian struggle between the dark forces of an authoritarian right-wing government, and Valleys men and women struggling to secure their livelihood. *Dark Edge* presents this polarity through its two principal male characters, the 'thuggish, even sociopathic, policeman'³ Elliott Bowles, whose personal antagonism toward his half-brother, the striking miner Edwin, replicates the larger national conflict. *Until Our Blood is Dry* works on a broader canvas of two families, where Gwyn Pritchard, a non-

¹ Roger Granelli, *Dark Edge* (Bridgend: Seren, 1997). All future references are to this edition. Kit Habianic, *Until Our Blood is Dry* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2014). All future references are to this edition.

² Huw Beynon and Peter McMyllor, 'Decisive Power: The New Tory State against the Miners', in *Digging Deeper*, ed. Huw Beynon (London: Verso, 1985), pp. 29-45 (p. 33).

³ Stephen Knight, 'A New Enormous Music', p. 84.

striking colliery overman, seeks to exercise a sternly patriarchal control over his wife Carol and daughter Helen, in contrast to the more cerebral, family-orientated striker Iwan Jones, who literally embraces his wife Angela and son Simon. Patriarchy, politics and power, both domestic and national, activate the narratives of each text and interfuse to varying degrees in constructing these differing masculinities. Each character constitutes a normative masculinity, but each text illustrates that within such an abstraction there are, as Valleys mining fiction graphically demonstrates, 'ultimately as many varieties of masculinity as there are men'.⁴

Although Elliott Bowles (*Dark Edge*) and Gwyn Pritchard (*Until Our Blood*) inhabit different novels and inscribe different narrative arcs, they are both studies in a deviant form of masculinity. Christopher Lasch informs us that 'Every age develops its own peculiar forms of pathology',⁵ and the peculiar form visited upon Gwyn and Elliott is a narcissism exacerbated by the strike, and expressed through their authoritarian and violent behaviour.⁶ The first section of this chapter, therefore, identifies key structural similarities between these two characters, but then examines them separately as differentiated studies of what Bethan Benwell defines as 'Masculinity as Power Project'.⁷ A similar structure is employed in examining Edwin Bowles (*Dark Edge*) and Iwan Jones (*Until Our Blood*). Discussion of their construction begins by identifying points of similarity before moving on to analyse separately their diverging narratives: the bachelor

⁴ John MacInnes, 'The Crisis of Masculinity and the Politics of Identity', in *The Masculinities Reader*, ed. Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), pp. 311-329 (p. 324).

⁵ Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1979), p. 41.

⁶ Narcissism as a disorder is defined by Anthony Giddens as 'a preoccupation with the self which prevents the individual from establishing valid boundaries between self and external worlds': *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), p. 170.

⁷ Bethan Benwell, 'Introduction', to *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines*, ed. Bethan Benwell (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 6-29 (p. 8).

Edwin inscribes a form of *Bildung* hero, for whom the strike leads to radical self-inspection, and the promise of personal development; while the committed husband and father, Iwan, although no 1980s 'new man', is a figure who posits his 'relationships with women and children on the basis of equality'.⁸

Because *Dark Edge* describes itself as 'a Cain and Abel scenario enacted in a backward Welsh valley' (p. 180), and builds its text on the alternating narratives of Elliott and Edwin, the closing two sections of this chapter examine masculinities from the more spacious *Until Our Blood is Dry* only. The first of these analyses the interplay of power and politics in the professional/managerial roles of the Coal Board's pro-government senior manager Adam Smith-Tudor, and Ystrad's Labour M. P., Harry Cross. Adapting Benwell's 'Masculinity as Power Project' to the particularities of these characters, the section illustrates how their individual representations reflect the unequal distribution of power between right-wing and left-wing politics, and government and miners in the strike.

The final section focuses on the novel's acute and explicit presentation of a homosexual relationship between Matt Price, a striking miner, and Siggy, a hairdresser. Writing seven years before the miners' strike, Andrew Tolson observed that: 'The extent to which definitions of gender interpenetrate attitudes to "work" is not often fully understood'.⁹ Through Siggy and Matt, *Until Our Blood is Dry* interrogates not only the coercive interpenetration of gender coding through employment roles, but goes a step further than Tolson to question the very validity of gender coding itself.

⁸ Jonathan Rutherford, 'Preface', to *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines*, ed. Bethan Benwell (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 1-5 (p. 2).

⁹ Andrew Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity*, p. 48.

‘Anything to ease the vice which clamped his brain’: masculinity as pathology in *Dark Edge* and *Until Our Blood is Dry*

The policeman Elliott Bowles in *Dark Edge* and the non-striker Gwyn Pritchard in *Until Our Blood is Dry* present differentiated studies of pathological narcissism as the performance of power, of which neoliberal ideology itself is conceived as an incipiently destructive manifestation. Lynne Segal observes that recourse to violence is often attributable to men’s ‘threatened loss of dominance, status and privileges’,¹⁰ and Gwyn Pritchard and Elliott Bowles respond similarly to differing forms of lost status. Gwyn, the non-striking minor pit official, loses proprietorial influence over ‘his lads’ (*Until Our Blood* p. 5) who are on strike, and Elliott, seduced by the neoliberal promise of limitless horizons, experiences psychic outrage after being rebuffed by his lover, because he believed that ‘everything and everyone would fall into his lap’ (*Dark Edge* p. 87). Frustrated in their accustomed roles of authoritarian, entitled males, both characters attempt to recuperate their status through brutality toward their wives.

Earlier novels examined in this thesis had been more circumspect in depicting male-on-female aggression. The hyper-masculine Big Jim Roberts in *Cwmardy*, for instance, likes nothing better than a punch-up involving other men, but is easily quelled at home by Siân; in *Times Like These*, the stern patriarch Oliver Biesty resents his daughter Mary’s determination to be her own woman but, unlike Gwyn Pritchard with the feisty Helen, he never beats her; and Elwyn Jeffries in *Strike for a Kingdom* partly blames himself for Jess’s adultery. *Dark Edge* and *Until Our Blood is Dry* position their more graphic representation of male coercion within the valences of a brutal power struggle played out on the national stage and replicated in the patriarchal home.

¹⁰ Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion*, p. 255.

Anthony Giddens argues that in late-capitalist individualistic society, ‘the erasure of tradition and the emergence of “lifestyle” both contribute to obsessive-compulsive behaviour and poor health, both mental and physical’.¹¹ *Until Our Blood is Dry* and *Dark Edge* offer striking examples of Giddens’s paradigm. For Gwyn Pritchard, the strike represents a destabilising threat to a traditional patriarchal hegemony and, misled by management into believing that his pit has a future, he strives to return other miners to work. Isolated by the insurgent energies of the strike, he finds his authority domestically and socially neutered, with a consequent erosion of his mental stability.¹² Equally damaging, however, Elliott Bowles’s wholesale endorsement of neoliberal value systems, that in his view emphasise material acquisition and status as indices of human worth, lead him to the point of psychic breakdown. Both figures exist in a transformed political universe where, in George Monbiot’s scathing judgement, ‘What counts is to win. The rest is collateral damage’.¹³ Both figures become part of the collateral damage to which they subscribe. Whether retrospectively patriarchal in Gwyn Pritchard’s case, or an example of the delusional privileged self as in Elliott Bowles’s, the texts inscribe two narcissistic masculinities predicated on seamless displays of power, control and domination that the strike exposes as inherently precarious and pathologically inclined.

The impact of their childhood on their adult development is pronounced, but is exhibited through different narrative techniques. In *Dark Edge*, the unrestrained licence accorded to Elliott’s police activity during the strike further distorts his sense of a privileged self encouraged as a child by his mother, so that any setback to his ego in his private life results in self-justification through intimidation of his wife: ‘he sensed [Susan’s] fear. He liked it’ (*Dark Edge* p.

¹¹ Anthony Giddens, *Europe in the Global Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 137.

¹² See Anthony Clare, *On Men: Masculinity in Crisis* pp. 69, 85 for discussions on the crises of identity some men experience when work no longer defines them.

¹³ George Monbiot, *How Did We Get Into This Mess?* (London: Verso, 2016), p. 10.

159). His narcissism is validated by a figure he regards as his ego-ideal, the Prime Minister, who, like him, 'had no time for losers' (*Dark Edge* p. 18). Gwyn's narcissism, as later discussion shows, is textually more complex. Brutalised by his father, his inner turmoil is foregrounded so that, as Liz Jones notes, although he is 'destructive and cruel [...] ultimately he is tragic and pathetic'.¹⁴ Like Elliott, he believes in rigid lines of gender demarcation — 'the deal was that Carol [his wife] kept things nice' (*Until Our Blood* p. 14) — but he is activated by an obstinate sense of social mission, to save the pit, where his affirmation of infallible rightness degenerates into an obsessive-compulsive isolation as the strike deepens. Anthony Giddens, following Freud, writes that, 'Under the impact of narcissism, intimate relations as well as broader connections with the social world tend to have inherently destructive aspects'.¹⁵ This is true of Elliott and Gwyn, although their construction differs and requires separate treatment.

Dark Edge fashions Elliott Bowles as an authoritarian narcissist positioned in a political arena that exploits such a pathology, but which is itself infected by it. Richard John Evans in his review of *Dark Edge* regards Elliott's construction as artistically flawed and politically compromised because by making him 'a psychotic thug, the text prevents any real exploration of the role of the police in the strike'.¹⁶ But *Dark Edge* is not a dispassionate analysis of government strategy. Elliott's narrative may be framed within a form of *roman à thèse*, which is, Susan Rubin Suleiman informs us:

a novel written in the realistic mode (that is, based on an aesthetic of verisimilitude and representation) which signifies itself to the reader as primarily didactic in intent.¹⁷

¹⁴ Liz Jones, review of *Until Our Blood is Dry*, in *Planet*, 216 (2014), 157-156 (p. 157).

¹⁵ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, p. 170.

¹⁶ Richard John Evans, review of *Dark Edge*, in *New Welsh Review*, 40 (1998), 88-89 (p. 89).

¹⁷ Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions: The Ideological Novel as a Literary Genre*, p. 7.

Reading Elliott Bowles's construction, therefore, requires an awareness of the correspondences between his individual actions and the text's larger design. In his case, it is the correlation between his brutality as a power-obsessed patriarch and law officer, and the brutality of a government that licenses him to knock miners on the head with impunity. Stripped of textual subtlety, markedly dialectical in its heavy patterning, and animated by hostility to a political philosophy that promises material success but delivers Elliott's mental instability and physical paralysis, Elliott's narrative follows a teleological arc where he becomes part of Monbiot's 'collateral damage'.

The novel presents him from the outset as an arrogant, psychologically damaged character with an alpha-male body, finding a congruity between his own incipient pathology and an atavistic political orthodoxy. By concentrating on Elliott's public role as a policemen, Evans's review sidelines Elliott the patriarch, the husband and father. He not only 'pushes Susan around verbally and physically'¹⁸ as Evans states. He punches her to unconsciousness, cracks her ribs and rapes her.

With his 'broad, erect frame tapering to a fit waist and athletic legs' (*Dark Edge* p. 5), good looks (*Dark Edge* p. 137), and luxurious moustache, a signifier, as with *Cwmardy's* Big Jim Roberts, of impressive virility, Elliott Bowles is a beneficiary of the physical clichés of iconic masculinity. But the text exposes his 'mucho hombre'¹⁹ physique as semiotically misleading. Instead of the rugged individualism connoted by such hypertrophy, Elliott is seduced by commodifying surfaces. The 'touch of gel' keeping his swept-back black hair in place (*Dark Edge* p. 5) implies a consciously-wrought objectification, confirmed by his habit of inspecting himself approvingly in mirrors. Through such figures, *Dark Edge*

¹⁸ Richard John Evans, review of *Dark Edge*, 88.

¹⁹ See Roger Horrocks, *Male Myths and Icons; Masculinity in Popular Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), p. 18.

constructs Elliott Bowles as a child of his neoliberal time, obsessed with identity through status enhancement and appearance, and propelled by an insatiable desire to have it all, 'power, money and women' (*Dark Edge* p. 87).

Elliott's identity is predicated on what Jonathan Rutherford sees as 'the two contradictory forces of the consumer market and the ethic of self-realisation',²⁰ on which neoliberal capitalism itself is predicated. In a political milieu in which, 'We are called upon to invent our own identities',²¹ Elliott's recently acquired house on a new estate overlooking the valley is the initial step in his self-transformation. But *Dark Edge* pitilessly exposes Elliott's ambition as unthinking commodification, for his house is less an authentic home than a conventional cultural text on which he seeks to write 'his new identity' (*Dark Edge* p. 7). Mass-produced objects like televisions and videos — he had been 'the first person on the estate to have a video' (*Dark Edge* p. 7) — function primarily as semiotically-charged acquisitions intended to articulate his superior self. The fake horse brasses and flintlocks, designed to connote a gendered, stabilised, historical continuity, further manifest his commodification, while the small garden is itself a derivative 'miniature version of a country estate' (*Dark Edge* p. 7). Lacking warmth, intimacy, idiosyncrasy, or individuality, Elliott's house becomes an objective correlative of his own inauthentic alpha-masculinity, and the 'lifestyle' commodification of self required by the market economy.

In a different context, *Dark Edge* might have cast Elliott as a more sympathetically rendered victim of a deviously exploitative political dogma. However, he is an enthusiastic participant in its promotion, not least in the opportunities it offers for self-gratification through physical brutality. Thankful that 'Thatcher had shown him the way forward [that] opportunities were there to be grasped, if one had the bottle' (*Dark Edge* p. 18), he becomes a restless

²⁰ Jonathan Rutherford, 'Preface', *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines*, p. 3.

²¹ Rutherford, 'Preface', *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines*, p. 2.

series of self-approving signifiers detached from personal or social commitment, where his identity becomes what Judith Butler calls, 'an enacted fantasy'.²² Locking him into his narcissism, with his 'amazingly inflated idea of his powers' (*Dark Edge* p. 46), *Dark Edge* constructs him as a paradigm of the decentred subject.

The text emphasises how Elliott's 'omnipotent fantasies of the privileged self',²³ are fostered by his role during the strike, where as an arm of the state he is 'showered [...] with money' (*Dark Edge* p. 18). But *Dark Edge* suggests that in the politically-endorsed paradigm of winners and losers of which he uncritically approves, Elliott has rather less 'bottle' than he self-deludingly believes. When confronting poorly protected pickets as a member of an aggressive police force, he favours 'the massed actions of strike breaking' where there is safety in superior numbers, over 'one-to-one confrontations' (*Dark Edge* p. 80) which he strives to avoid. Craving success, he narcissistically internalises every corporate success as his own 'personal victory' (*Dark Edge* p. 12). And lacking the critical inward gaze to a pathological degree, he fails to examine what this signifies, with catastrophic effects on his self-validation.

'The narcissist,' writes Christopher Lasch, 'feels consumed by his own appetites',²⁴ and *Dark Edge* inscribes Elliott's sense of narcissistic entitlement, and his more limited capacity to satisfy his appetite, through an episode where his swaggering machismo is pierced and deflated. Significantly, the incident does not occur on the picket lines where he can deflect blame onto others, but in a confrontation he seeks with his former lover, Lisa. Outraged by her note daring to end their affair, he is met by Lisa and her new, potentially aggressive, partner, Ken. When he is confronted one-to-one by 'a powerful, streetwise

²² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 185.

²³ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 172.

²⁴ Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, p. 202.

opponent' (*Dark Edge* p. 79), Elliott's sense of coercive entitlement dissipates. Mocked by Ken, whose gin bottle threatens to become an offensive weapon, and dismissed by Lisa with the advice to 'Get real' (*Dark Edge* p. 81), he is stripped of his pretensions and humiliated as a 'loser'. Having predicated his identity on abandoning his wife and children, and seamlessly colonising the future with Lisa, Elliott experiences a traumatic affront to his peacock vanity: 'No cow did this to him' (*Dark Edge* p. 48). Through his response to this setback, *Dark Edge* illustrates his inability to engage in self-assessment. Instead, he externalises the problem and projects himself as victim rather than agent: 'His brother's punch had started off his run of bad luck, since then Lisa had fucked him up and his wife had gone through some weird character change' (*Dark Edge* p. 115). From this point, his narrative trajectory becomes less one of upward mobility as of self-justifying recuperation through power of his former patriarchal self.

Dark Edge constructs his humiliation as transformative if not self illuminating. 'Hegemony', writes Homi K. Bhabha, 'requires iteration and alterity to be effective',²⁵ and incapable as he is of 'getting real', Elliott becomes a study of pathological rehabilitation by the manic coercion of others, most particularly his wife Susan, but also his half-brother Edwin, and all striking miners. As Edwin and the more militant strikers pose a genuine physical challenge, Elliott's increasingly threatening behaviour toward a vulnerable Susan is a Freudian displacement of his failure to respond to Lisa's rejection and Ken's aggression. Because he has 'always ruled the roost with her' (*Dark Edge* p. 115), Susan, as a woman, conveniently embodies every negative against which he can reconstruct his unquestioned gender superiority as a patriarch. In his deluded thinking, power and violence become arms of patriarchal justice, and so when

²⁵ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 29.

he punches her and breaks her rib, he tells himself it 'had been necessary' in order to 'get [his] point across' (*Dark Edge* p. 128).

By formulating Elliott's brutal response toward Susan as a justifiable strategy rather than a violent impulse, *Dark Edge* connects the domestically pathological, where his psychological derangement is signified by the continual 'pounding in his head' (*Dark Edge* p. 159), with its critique of physical coercion as a political strategy against the striking miners. As the text states, 'Men like Elliott operated with impunity under these conditions' (*Dark Edge* p. 12). To emphasise this link, the novel connects their common pathology through two causally juxtaposed episodes (*Dark Edge* pp. 159-161). In the first, Elliott is among last-minute reinforcements called on to confront local miners. Licensed to storm 'into his fellow villagers', and gratified that they 'knew who was knocking them senseless', he convinces himself that 'he was still the captain of his ship'. In the second episode, he returns home exhilarated and empowered. Christopher E. Forth writes that, 'Muscles have become male fashion accessories in the cult of appearances',²⁶ and *Dark Edge* once more identifies key features of Elliott's narcissism exhibited through a self-improving somatic scrutiny. Inspecting himself in the full-length mirror, he promises to 'tone up his muscles', but nonetheless 'flexed them and smiled at himself' (*Dark Edge* p. 159). Through his threatening remark to Susan that, 'All that action [has] made me feel randy', the novel explicitly connects patriarchal and political brutality, as he savagely rapes her and gouges her face in a sadistic display of power, correlative to his authorised savagery as an officer of the law.

Catherine Merriman complains that the narrative voice in *Dark Edge* is too didactic, so that Elliott is virtually 'flatten[ed] [...] almost permanently to the page'.²⁷ While this 'flatness' in the novel's verbal texture might offend a

²⁶ Christopher E. Forth, *Masculinity in the Modern West*, p. 220.

²⁷ Catherine Merriman, review of *Dark Edge*, in *Planet*, 131 (1998), 104-105 (p. 105).

Forsterian aesthetic, to dismiss Elliott as 'unbelievable',²⁸ as Merriman, does is to situate him mistakenly in the tradition of classic realism. Instead, reading Elliott's narrative as a *roman à thèse* acknowledges the parameters within which he is constructed, so that he becomes a representative of a deviant form of masculinity nurtured by, and an agent of, a morally deficient political ideology. As represented in the novel, it is an ideology that condemns domestic violence, but endorses the physical coercion of striking miners in a political universe where 'the most cutting insult is "loser"',²⁹ and where the ends justify the means.

The generic form of *Until Our Blood is Dry* allows for a more subtle presentation of psychic complexity in Gwyn Pritchard's masculinity than is necessary in *Dark Edge*'s cautionary tale of Elliott Bowles. When asked her reasons for choosing the novel's form, Kit Habianic replied: 'I made no conscious choices. It was all about writing a story that sank into me and wouldn't let go'.³⁰ Conscious choice or not, *Until Our Blood is Dry* locates itself through its title within a continuum of Valleys industrial fiction,³¹ and also skilfully adapts an earlier form of Valleys fiction described by Raymond Williams as 'the story of a family', or in this case two families at loggerheads with each other.³² But unlike Elliott Bowles, Gwyn Pritchard is not constructed as a simple antagonist to the other characters. As Liz Jones astutely notes, he is a figure 'trapped in a latter-day Greek tragedy of misplaced loyalties and feuds'.³³ Jones might also have added that he is trapped most destructively within the

²⁸ Merriman, review of *Dark Edge*, 105.

²⁹ George Monbiot, *How Did We Get into This Mess?*, p.11.

³⁰ Kit Habianic, 'Getting to Know ...Kit Habianic', interview with Lorraine Mace and Maureen Vincent-Northam, in *The Writer's ABC Checklist*, www.accentpress.co.uk/the-writers-abc-checklist, (20. 08. 2014), n. p.

³¹ From Idris Davies's *Gwalia Deserta*: 'And we shall remember 1926 until our blood is dry': *Collected Poems of Idris Davies*, p. 30.

³² Raymond Williams, 'The Welsh Industrial Novel', p. 13.

³³ Liz Jones, review of *Until Our Blood is Dry*, 157.

pathology of his own psyche. Her reference to Greek tragedy is apposite, however, for Gwyn embodies in less mythical form emphatic features of destructive, narcissistic compulsion located within a sphere of abnormal familial and civil strife, where he is 'helpless to stop loneliness closing in over him' (*Until Our Blood* p. 250). The novel interrogates through Gwyn the correspondences between his frustrated male agency in the public sphere and his coercive patriarchy at home. But it also problematises his narcissism, for while it propels him to anger, cruelty and self-disgust, the narrative's free indirect discourse constructs a perverse heroism, an insistent attempt to live by his own deluded self-belief. By making him a victim of managerial/political expediency and a victim of his own ego, the text interweaves the political with the personal, the communal with the individual, and the strike with the family.

Until Our Blood is Dry connects the aetiology of Gwyn's narcissism to childhood, though the circumstances generating it are different from Elliott Bowles's. Elliott's indulged childhood left him prey to an inflated sense of his own entitlement. Gwyn's narcissism springs from a pledge that after being beaten by a drunken father, 'no-one would make him powerless again' (*Until Our Blood* p. 196). The novel examines how this resolution is internalised into a pathological need to dominate others. 'The libido that has been withdrawn from the external world has been directed to the ego', writes Freud, 'and thus gives rise to an attitude which may be called narcissism'.³⁴ Gwyn myopically positions himself as the reference point on which exterior phenomena converge, a point where egoism melds with possessiveness.

Structurally, the text presents Gwyn's failure to negotiate his self-definition by critiquing two typologies of his patriarchal mindset: Gwyn as domestic patriarch, and Gwyn as colliery overman demanding compliance from 'his men' (*Until Our Blood* p. 4). Both position him in the dominant role, a role to which he feels

³⁴ See Sigmund Freud, 'On Narcissism', *Penguin Freud Library*, vol. 11, p. 67.

entitled by gender, custom and experience. As Anthony Giddens notes: 'Narcissism relates outside events to the needs and desires of the self, asking only "what this means to me"'.³⁵ For Gwyn, miners are 'his lads'; the pit is 'his pit'; and when the men vote to strike, they do so for no other reason than 'to spite me' (*Until Our Blood* p. 55). Like Connell's representative authoritarian male, when he is at home Gwyn is unable to empathise with his wife and daughter.³⁶ Keeping them both at an emotional remove is a demonstration to them of his inviolate, hegemonic self. He thus denies them individuality, consigning them instead to gender categories by addressing them antonomastically, so that Carol is merely 'woman' and Helen is invariably 'that girl'.

Until Our Blood is Dry examines in Gwyn Pritchard the psychic collision of this empowered authoritarianism as colliery overman and patriarch, and his subaltern position as a factotum used to help break the strike. As Stephen Whitehead observes: 'what appears to be a subordinated masculinity in one site always has the potential to be a hegemonic masculinity in another'.³⁷ These conflicting roles at a time of momentous social and political upheaval enable the text to critique traditional patriarchy, and expose as a fiction male autonomy within a capitalist patriarchal structure. Under such a polity, Anthony Giddens argues, 'the individual experiences feelings of powerlessness in relation to a diverse and large-scale social universe'.³⁸ In Gwyn's case, by becoming a strike-breaker, he cedes control to dominant senior management in the form of Adam Smith-Tudor, who regards him as no more than a dispensable functionary in a ruthless contest for power. Short-term submission to Smith-Tudor, Gwyn feels, offers the prospect of long-term security for the pit, and a small but craved status

³⁵ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 171.

³⁶ R. W. Connell, 'a masculinity particularly involved in the maintenance of patriarchy', *Masculinities*, p. 18.

³⁷ Stephen Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities*, p. 94.

³⁸ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 191.

enhancement of a desk job: 'as dreams went that wasn't much to ask' (*Until Our Blood* p. 23). The narrative reveals the ruinous psychic energy released by this *quid pro quo* most dramatically in the dissolution of his family.

Representing a model of patriarchy on the brink of obsolescence, overwhelmed by generational and cultural changes, Gwyn adheres to a strict paradigm of gender binaries in which expressions of affection are regarded as feminine. Emotional intimacy is out of the question. His patriarchy is posited on the assumption that Carol should be the grateful beneficiary of his largesse, but should never forget that she is a subordinate possession: '*This is my house, that is my money, you are my wife*', (*Until Our Blood* p. 242, original italics). When she violates the conditions of her status by neglecting housework, she 'needed telling again' (*Until Our Blood* p. 14), and when she dares intervene with questions about his work he is contemptuous: 'She was clueless, his wife' (*Until Our Blood* p. 23). Initially, he exhibits only verbally his contempt for her. That has been the paradigm of their marriage until the strike disrupts as illusory his apparent ego equilibrium posited on authority. When this happens, as Anthony Giddens states: 'human powers are experienced as forces emanating from an objectified social environment'.³⁹

The narrative discloses how Gwyn attempts to combat his increasing impotence by retreating further into an ego-ideal of sequestered self-righteousness, but it refuses to demonise him. Instead, it clinically exposes how the challenges to his gender-legitimised authority provoke an unremitting stubbornness he defines as principle. His view that 'the country's females' are getting 'too assertive by half' (*Until Our Blood* p. 160) is similar to Elliott's, and like Elliott, Gwyn's cruelty is an exercise in displaced frustration. His daughter Helen realises, even as he beats her, that this 'wasn't about her, not really, but about everything else that had riled her dad these last few months' (*Until Our*

³⁹ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 191.

Blood p. 106). Instead, he persistently exonerates himself from responsibility for his actions by displacing the blame onto others. This feature extends across a spectrum from the relatively trivial to the unjustifiable as his pathology becomes more pronounced. When he forgets Carol's birthday, it is her fault for not reminding him (*Until Our Blood* p. 195). More disturbingly, in a furious quarrel with her, when 'Rage crashed through him in waves', and he is powerless to stop himself hitting 'her again and again', it was 'Her fault for pushing him to the limit' (*Until Our Blood* p. 243).

In his review of *Until Our Blood is Dry*, Dylan Moore argues that he finds it difficult to care for Gwyn.⁴⁰ But the novel resists constructing him as a crude exemplar of brutal masculinity. Instead, he is a site of competing psychological tensions, a magnified form of what Peter Middleton calls 'discrete islands of subjectivity',⁴¹ and particularly so after he is diagnosed as suffering from progressive massive fibrosis — black lung. His terminal illness precipitates his need to be reconciled to Helen, yet the narrative discloses the unbridgeable gulf between his conflicting selves: 'A man had his pride. It fell to the girl to meet him half way' (*Until Our Blood* p. 236). Male narcissism and paternal love are here separated in the subjectivity of Middleton's discrete islands, and render Gwyn impotent. Intractably self-righteousness, he is killed by Dai Dumbells who heaves a headstone from a cemetery onto a minibus in which he is travelling to continue his work as a strike-breaker.

This discussion on Gwyn's masculinity has argued that he is resolute to the point of mania in believing that he is an inviolate agent. The workings of his psychological necessity are shaped by a childhood over which he had no control, and determine his future as he comes into conflict with his community, which is itself in conflict with a macroeconomic system intent on destroying it. As his

⁴⁰ Dylan Moore, review of *Until Our Blood is Dry*, *Wales Arts Review* 10, www.walesartsreview.org, (22. 05. 2014), n. p.

⁴¹ Peter Middleton, *The Inward Gaze*, p. 152.

authority, the principal marker of his repressive masculinity, is progressively stripped away, his narcissism remains his identifying principle and eventually undoes him. While the novel exposes the destructive potency of his ego, it also seeks to understand his pathology and to locate it within cultural and political determinants beyond his control. He is no tragic hero of the kind that has a flawed grandeur reaching a moment of self-illumination. But from a gendered reading he emerges as both a tragic victim and perpetrator of a patriarchal model which accords men pre-eminence, while denying them integration of self and the means of critical self-evaluation.

Gwyn Pritchard and Elliott Bowles are both products of dysfunctional patriarchies and themselves replicate that dysfunction in their own families. Their limited empathy for others is revealed as a pathology expressing itself through aggression which, as Lacan states, is 'the correlative tendency of a mode of identification that we call narcissistic'.⁴² Their recourse to domestic violence expresses their contempt for women as their axiomatic status as men is challenged by them. Within *Dark Edge's* schema of the *roman à thèse*, Elliott's crippling injuries from the fight he provokes with Edwin, and his anticipated early death signify the neurotic impulse behind the fabled emancipation of self promised by neoliberalism. Gwyn's death is different. In his review, Dylan Moore argues that *Until Our Blood is Dry* is 'light on metaphorical and symbolic significance',⁴³ but Gwyn's death resonates with suggestive power. With the strike lost and the pit, like him, under terminal threat, it inscribes the passing of a Welsh narrative masculinity based on conservative patriarchy and the 'heroic' miner extending back to Oliver Biesty and Big Jim Roberts.

⁴² Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 18.

⁴³ Dylan Moore, review of *Until Our Blood is Dry*.

‘To broaden his horizons without denying his roots’: emergent and residual masculinity in *Dark Edge* and *Until Our Blood is Dry*

Structurally, each text counterbalances its representation of a pathological masculinity with a less deviant form in the self-aware but existentially thwarted miner in Edwin Bowles of *Dark Edge*, and the stabilised masculinity of Iwan Jones in *Until Our Blood is Dry*. Their divergent narrative biographies require separate analysis later in this section, but one striking feature of their gender definition connects them not only with each other, but with a recurring constituent in earlier Welsh mining novels: the cerebral, unionised, literate miner. Reading confers competences of insight, judgement and evaluation as union officials on both figures — as a striking miner, for instance, Iwan is ‘the brains of the outfit’ (*Until Our Blood* p. 72) — but importantly it also operates as a metonym for a more self-disciplined form of gender coding. Edwin is a self-effacing ‘reader’ (*Dark Edge* p. 35), and the ‘bookish’ Iwan (*Until Our Blood* p. 9) copes with his wife Angela’s frustrated outbursts without regarding them as assaults on his masculinity. From the outset, he displays a stabilised self-definition, fearing that the strike is doomed, but bound by loyalty to his kind. Edwin’s identity is more problematised. The strike breaks a routine into which he had fallen, making him dissatisfied with himself but unfitted to envision a compelling future. Until the arrival of Kathryn Peters, a London academic examining women’s roles in the strike, he hovers between loyalty to what he considers an unsustainable future, and an incapacity to translate his intellectual frustration into purposeful agency.

Whereas Gwyn Pritchard and Elliott Bowles’s narcissism locks them into immovable pathologies exacerbated by the strike, and Iwan Jones’s textual function is to embody an equipoise already achieved, Edwin is the only male in either text to offer the promise of emergent personal development in response to fundamental socio-historical change. This section argues that *Dark Edge* transcribes his particular progression through a subdivision of the *Bildungsroman*

genre, one that Bakhtin considers ‘the most significant’ of them all. It illustrates, Bakhtin argues, how ‘man’s individual emergence is inseparably linked to historical emergence’; that is, the world in which the protagonist emerges into selfhood is not ‘the immobile background of the world, ready-made and basically quite stable’.⁴⁴ Instead, the *Bildungsroman* hero is no longer within an epoch, but at a transition point where ‘it is as though the very *foundations* of the world are changing’,⁴⁵ (original italics). *Dark Edge* positions Edwin precisely at a stage of Welsh history where the epoch of postwar welfare capitalism recedes before the onset of neoliberal hegemony. Within a Bakhtinian paradigm, his response to this radical change determines his identity as a *Bildungsroman* protagonist. The text thus addresses through him how recurring motifs of patriarchy in Welsh mining fiction, impinging on hybrid identity and nationhood, communal versus individual value systems, and industrial versus natural landscape are contextualised and challenged.

Shy like Len Roberts in *Cwmardy* and withdrawn like D. J. Williams in *Strike for a Kingdom*, Edwin exists initially in a liminal space between dutiful community engagement and bookish withdrawal. In a mining culture where normative masculinity is equated with agency in the public arena, Edwin initially seeks a ready-made identity in the exclusively male N.U.M. (*Dark Edge* p. 33), whose collectivist values he internalises ‘like a catechism and believed them’ (*Dark Edge* p. 20). Channelled thus into a life of pre-ordained, hegemonically gendered activities and outcomes, he finds himself constrained by the very collectivism that gave him an identity. Doubting the strike’s success but committed to the struggle as a union official, he ‘assumed his delegate role’ (*Dark Edge* p. 20) by articulating

⁴⁴ M. M. Bakhtin, ‘The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel)’, in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), pp. 10-59 (p. 23).

⁴⁵ Bakhtin, ‘The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism’, pp. 23-24.

reassuring mantras he no longer believes in, but is emotionally reluctant to abandon.

Prior to Kathryn Peters's arrival from London, *Dark Edge* manoeuvres Edwin through a series of episodes demonstrating his existential stasis. Most significantly, he commits himself to action on behalf of his fated union where the oppressive continuities of performative masculinity expected of union activists mobilise and then confine him, exposing his differences from his fellows. Tactically astute, he has the idea of occupying cranes at Port Talbot to prevent imported coal being distributed, but in taking action he is hampered by his acrophobia and his fear that 'all external weaknesses were pounced on by miners' (*Dark Edge* p. 83). *Dark Edge* emphasises here the constraining nature of performative masculinity which requires a seamless exhibition of self-control and self-expression. Submitting to his acrophobia, Edwin is violently sick, much to the satisfaction of Ronnie Jenkins, a manifestation of posturing masculinity who regards Edwin's cerebral approach to industrial conflict as weakness. But the text also inscribes a subtler representation of Edwin's difference from his fellows. When the sympathetic Tom Davies comments that the autumn weather is striking chill on top of the cranes, Edwin responds by quoting from Keats's 'To Autumn': 'Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness' (*Dark Edge* p. 86). As with D. J. Williams, poetry offers him at once a fleeting escape from contingent reality and an engagement with a continuum of human experience in which that reality is both contextualised and localised. Anxious to avoid embarrassment to a puzzled Tom and to himself, however, Edwin passes off his remark as a simple wish that he had access to some fruit.

Dark Edge redirects Edwin's demonstrable failure as a potent strike leader by calibrating his emergence into a new form of masculinity, and fashions this *Bildung* within the space of two significant walks he takes on the hills above his village. Within the text's strategic organisation, the walks serve key formal and

*chronotopic*⁴⁶ functions in Edwin's self-expansion. The first, (*Dark Edge* pp.104-5), significantly taken the day before Kathryn Peters arrives, formally prefigures his final walk on the hills (*Dark Edge* pp. 184-6) after her departure, when he decides to learn Welsh, to travel to London to study and, perhaps, advance his tentative hope of a closer friendship with her. *Chronotopically*, striding along 'the spine of the ridge' (*Dark Edge* p. 104) and later 'stepping over the backbone of his land' (*Dark Edge* p. 185), Edwin reconnects with his sense of nationhood. On the hills, he experiences time as visible in space, and space as a repository of time and cultural history. As Kirsti Bohata notes, Welsh culture invests 'familiar landscape with enormous emotional and, often, political importance'.⁴⁷ In Edwin's development from existential stasis to an evolution which yet honours the past, the hills act as *chronotopes* of a Welsh history and identity, immune to, and chronologically more spacious than, the temporalities of the strike and the politics behind it.

By the close of the narrative, the hills have acquired resonances for him significantly beyond the 'affinity' (*Dark Edge* p. 105) he felt earlier. Homi K. Bhabha reminds us that remembering 'is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present'.⁴⁸ Edwin's dismembered past incorporates the trauma of a 'war which had encompassed his family, politics and creed of living' (*Dark Edge* p. 185). On the hills, remembering his past enables Edwin to contextualise his present, to 're-member' the constituent features of his subjectivity and construct a future. The text expresses his *chronotopic* engagement with Wales, quickened by the Englishwoman Kathryn, as a quasi-religious communion with 'his land':

⁴⁶ 'Chronotope' is a term coined by Bakhtin for 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature', M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 85.

⁴⁷ Kirsti Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited*, p. 80.

⁴⁸ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 63.

All its tortured history lay under his feet. He wanted to take the solitude of the hillside into his hands, crumple it into a ball and eat it. Such was his addiction and sense of oneness with the spirit of the place (*Dark Edge* p. 185).⁴⁹

And 'the place' is 'Wales, not just "the valley"' (*Dark Edge* p. 185). Investing landscape with a numinous quality, *Dark Edge* addresses in Edwin an emergent form of Welsh identity. It will acknowledge its hybridity by re-communion with Wales's enduring history symbolised by the hills, but will be characterised unapologetically by confident national affiliation (Edwin intends to learn Welsh), not provincial nostalgia (he will travel to study in London). In *Times Like These*, the strong-minded Mary Biesty is anxious to slough off her Welshness when she moves to London, and Broddam notes approvingly when he meets her that 'her accent was already *better*' (*Times* p. 254, my italics). By contrast, in what Homi K. Bhabha calls 'the importance of the hybrid moment',⁵⁰ Edwin Bowles will attempt to 'broaden his horizons without denying his roots' (*Dark Edge* p. 186).

Form and narration coalesce here. Bakhtin writes that in the *Bildungsroman* the emerging man 'enters into a completely new, *spatial* sphere of historical existence',⁵¹ (original italics). In projecting a post-industrial Welsh identity through Edwin, *Dark Edge* constructs a narrative where spatial borders both metaphorical and literal, personal and social are crossed and re-crossed. Whereas James A. Davies feels that Edwin's intention merely 'gestures at Welsh and Welshness',⁵² Jane Aaron and M. Wynn Thomas see him as 'Energised by this nationalistic

⁴⁹ There are no clear references to the American western in *Dark Edge*, but Edwin's quasi-religious response to landscape bears a remarkable similarity to the hero of Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902), and arguably suggests how deeply embedded in the Valleys imagination were Western images of freedom, yearning and self-transformation. Wister's hero states, for example: 'Often when I have camped here, it has made me want to become the ground, become the water, become the trees, mix with the whole thing. Not know myself from it. Never unmix again': Owen Wister, *The Virginian: A Horseman of the Plains* (New York: Dover Thrift Edition, 2006), p. 267.

⁵⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 28.

⁵¹ M. M. Bakhtin, 'The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism', p. 24.

⁵² James A. Davies, 'Two Strikes and You're Out', p. 146.

conscious-raising'.⁵³ Given the *Bildungsroman's* focus on individual development, *Dark Edge* cannot offer a generalised prescription for a new form of social organisation. Its aim is more limited. And in any case, after the trauma the Valleys have suffered any prescription at this stage is inevitably an inchoate blend of hope, anticipation and anxiety. However, as with Keith in Christopher Meredith's *Shifts* (1988), space/place, history, nationality and language combine in Edwin as markers combining a past with a future. Significantly, *Dark Edge* does not echo Luke Biesty's despairing nihilism that 'Everything do seem so useless, somehow', which closes *Times Like These* (*Times* p. 319), and on which Davies believes there has been no advance in subsequent anglophone Welsh mining novels.

Implicit in *Dark Edge's* construction of Edwin is a reconfigured model of Welsh working-class masculinity. His 'hybrid moment' on the hills conceives an empowered identity at once indisputably Welsh and transculturally cosmopolitan, a dynamic of emergence that is in 'a continual process of border crossing [that] allows for a recognition of multiple points of identification'.⁵⁴ *Strike for a Kingdom*, like *Dark Edge*, concludes with a bachelor miner poised at a moment of creation. But whereas for D. J. Williams, the text trails his poem away into ambiguous stasis, Edwin Bowles's regeneration, realised symbolically on the hills, energises him as he strides toward a horizon open to possibilities, 'Looking forward to Christmas' (*Dark Edge* p. 186).

Until Our Blood is Dry constructs a different trajectory for Iwan Jones. His unwavering involvement as a committed strike activist consolidates his masculine credentials. But it is through his representation as a stabilised husband and father that the text encodes a manifest development in Valleys mining fiction. Stephen

⁵³ M. Wynn Thomas and Jane Aaron, 'Pulling You Through the Changes', in *A Guide to Welsh Literature: Vol VII, Welsh Writing in English*, ed. M. Wynn Thomas, pp. 278-309 (p. 295).

⁵⁴ Charlotte Williams, 'I going away, I going home', cited by Kirsti Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited*, p. 27.

Whitehead has commented that in late modern society, 'men can and do experience family life in ways that are far removed from [...] those experienced by their fathers and grandfathers'.⁵⁵ Following Whitehead, this section approaches Iwan as an engagement by a female narrative voice with contemporary cultural discourses impinging on the representation of 'masculine' men. Because this engagement is woven into the text's discursive fabric rather than being foregrounded through any self-conscious stance on Iwan's part, its Machereyan 'silence' has the effect of naturalising Iwan's representation rather than flagging it as a polemical declaration.⁵⁶

Marriage in the novels examined so far, whether Luke Biesty's placid adoration of Olive in *Times Like These* or the dysfunctional patriarchy in marriage in *Strike for a Kingdom*, has assumed dualistic gendered role definition. In late modernity, Anthony Giddens declares, marriage, 'unlike its traditional predecessor, depends on enduring voluntary commitment' because, 'The social environment in which marital relationships are formed and sustained has become disturbing and unsettling'.⁵⁷ Iwan's and Angela's marriage is positioned within such a social environment. *Until Our Blood is Dry* does not dissolve their gender differences but repositions them within the dynamics of a complex relationship where traditional boundaries are crossed, and antagonisms are contained within a tacit, if sometimes exasperated, mutual commitment.

To facilitate this representation, the novel incorporates into Iwan attributes associated with the 'new man' which became a feature of the cultural discourse of the 1980s when the novel is set. Rosalind Gill sees the 'new man' as a figure who is 'generally characterised as sensitive, emotionally aware, respectful of women,

⁵⁵ Stephen Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities*, p. 153.

⁵⁶ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, p. 87.

⁵⁷ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 176.

and egalitarian in its outlook'.⁵⁸ However, Gill suggests that the emergence of the 'new man' in the 1980s was as much a result of 'discourses or cultural repertoires' as of fundamental changes in masculinity.⁵⁹ But *Until Our Blood is Dry* does not construct Iwan as a self-consciously aware representative of such a phenomenon, and demonstrably avoids the narcissism that Gill associates with some definitions of 'the new man'.⁶⁰ Gill's brief taxonomy, however, offers insights useful for an analysis of Iwan's domestic relationships where he occupies a different fictional space from the paranoid, emotionally suppressed patriarchy of Gwyn Pritchard.

Whereas Gwyn subsists on take-away meals when his wife leaves him, Iwan prepares a family meal and discusses the ingredients enthusiastically with his astonished daughter-in-law, Helen, Gwyn's daughter (*Until Our Blood* p. 168). And in contrast to Gwyn's contempt for women, Iwan works alongside the women's support group gathering garden produce (*Until Our Blood* pp. 176-177). Most significantly, whereas Carol Pritchard vainly attempts to accommodate Gwyn's temper, in Iwan's marriage to the tempestuous Welsh-Italian Angela it is he who accommodates hers. Yet he is not constructed as a *tabula rasa* on which Angela imprints her formidable identity. Instead, *Until Our Blood is Dry* incorporates his domestic activities as a feature of his secure masculinity, through which it challenges the 'universalising framework' of traditional binary constructions.⁶¹ The novel facilitates this examination of a committed but often volatile relationship by constructing Angela as both an entrepreneurial café-owner, and a wife and mother dedicated to her family. A born business-woman, she is a shrewd negotiator,

⁵⁸ See Rosalind Gill, 'Power and the Production of Subjects: A Genealogy of the New Man and the New Lad', in *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines*, ed. Bethan Benwell (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 34-56 (p. 37). John Beynon believes that in the new man, 'elements from both the nurturer and the narcissist strands have been scrambled together' and need to be unscrambled: *Masculinities and Culture* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002), p. 99.

⁵⁹ Gill, 'Power and the Production of Subjects', p. 39.

⁶⁰ Gill, 'Power and the Production of Subjects', p. 37.

⁶¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 51.

supplementing the family's limited income by supplying home-made pasta to a Cardiff restaurant owner, securing a deal where 'she'd undercut his regular supplier' (*Until Our Blood* p. 267). The text therefore provides Angela with an extra-domestic view of reality, where financial pragmatics govern her decisions. As such, she has a status, a rationale and a voice to which Iwan must respond, and it is through the nature of his response that the text examines his masculinity in a domestic context.

Although their marriage broadly subscribes to the theoretical parameters of traditional gender difference, the text subverts them within the practicalities of a singular but deeply committed relationship. As Giddens states, 'Intimacy has its own reflexivity and its own forms of internally referential order'.⁶² The internally referential order in *Until Our Blood is Dry* centres on the conflict between Iwan's 'masculine' allegiance to abstract political principle embodied by the strike — he had 'never crossed a picket line in [his] life' (*Until Our Blood* p. 41) — and Angela's 'female' emphasis on the practicalities of domestic survival: 'Is gonna ruin the family, the strike' (*Until Our Blood* p. 109).

Angela's protestations lead to furious disagreement and arguments, but Iwan never questions her right to do so, still less threatens violence. The text implies a relationship where he and Angela exchange roles, however disputatious, as *primus inter pares*. Angela sometimes dominates, as when she calls 'a family summit' to announce her unilateral decision to close the café because the strike has rendered it uneconomic (*Until Our Blood* pp. 208-209). Iwan's protestations that they wait until spring are brushed aside: 'Short of a fucking miracle, Iwan Simon Peter Jones, is what will be different, come the spring?'. Later, when Iwan refuses to return early to work in return for a bonus (*Until Our Blood* p. 213), the positions are reversed. Her impatient outburst causes his eyes to harden: 'Angela

⁶² Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 6.

had pushed him too far now' (*Until Our Blood* p. 211), and it is he who brooks no challenge.

When provoked by women, figures like Gwyn Pritchard and Elliott Bowles are quickly pushed too far. When some men have their dominance challenged, writes Lynne Segal, they 'may resort more to violence in their attempt to shore up a sense of masculine identity'. Significantly, she continues, 'Others, however may not'.⁶³ In the furious argument between Angela and Iwan that follows his refusal to accept a management bribe, *Until Our Blood is Dry* takes Segal's view a stage further, to a significant reversal of traditional gender roles when a frustrated Angela physically assaults Iwan. Simon hears but does not need to see 'the sound of flesh striking flesh' to explain to Helen, 'It's not dad did the hitting' (*Until Our Blood* p. 213). By closing the chapter on this striking remark, without a laboured explanation of why Simon immediately knows who is hitting whom, the novel neatly closes the episode. But when Helen later glimpses Iwan and Angela, they are wrapped lovingly in each other's arms (*Until Our Blood* p. 287).

Demonstrations of tender physical affection between men and women are rare in the Valleys novels so far examined, and so the significance of Helen's fleeting glance is crucial in framing Iwan and Angela's relationship. Anthony Clare writes that the demands of work remain 'impervious to demands for family-friendly policies that would enable the more personal and domestic aspects of being male to flourish'.⁶⁴ Iwan Jones emerges as a remarkable counter to this view. What Helen sees is that Angela's volatility is an aspect of her temperament that Iwan understands and accommodates within the context of a deep regard for her. If Angela is a new form of woman in her entrepreneurial independence, Iwan is a form of new man, for whom the exercise of crude patriarchal power has no place in

⁶³ Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion*, p. 269.

⁶⁴ Anthony Clare, *On Men*, p. 135.

a marriage. It is an example of his emotional intelligence that enables him to adopt the role of confidant and advisor to his son.

The close relationship between Iwan and Simon is constructed inferentially. Simon follows Iwan in his left-wing politics and in his engagement with serious reading: Iwan reads 'his tall, pink newspaper or some tome from the library' (*Until Our Blood* p. 307), and Simon reads Camus' *The Plague* (*Until Our Blood* p. 67).⁶⁵ But the novel extends their relationship beyond the shaping influence Iwan has had upon his son. Stephen Whitehead is of the view that:

given the rigidly masculinist conditions of family life that have historically underpinned Western societies, one might conclude that many men are creating, through negotiation with children and partners, new and more positive ways of relating to families and fatherhood.⁶⁶

Gwyn Pritchard and Elliott Bowles represent obvious fictional deviations from Whitehead's provisional model, but it is the characterisation of Oliver Biesty in *Times Like These* that provides a more revealing contrast to Iwan, for Oliver, too, is a caring, dutiful father to his son, Luke. However, their discursive relationship is based on predominantly factual and denotative exchanges. They speak of work, the strike, and employment prospects thereafter, but both maintain an emotional distance, and seldom look 'squarely into each other's eyes' (*Times* p. 20). When a bereft Luke leaves the hospital after his wife Olive has died, a distraught Oliver is portrayed as a victim of his own emotional repression, and can only mutter an inadequate, 'All right! All right! Come on now, boyo' (*Times* p. 307) by way of consolation. The chapter then closes, as though to save him further embarrassment. Peter Middleton observes that men hide their feelings for fear of others gaining power over them,⁶⁷ but the point here is that Oliver, bound as he is

⁶⁵ Iwan is frequently described reading 'his tall pink newspaper', Given that Scrapper is 'A communist like his dad' (*Until Our Blood* p. 42), 'pink' here probably identifies it as *The Morning Star*.

⁶⁶ Stephen Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities*, pp.152-153.

⁶⁷ Peter Middleton, *The Inward Gaze*, p. 121.

within the rigidly masculinist conditions of his culture, has no discourse of paternal intimacy available to him. *Until Our Blood is Dry* represents in Iwan a gender evolution where, as a paternal 'father' rather than a patriarchal 'father-figure', he is able to engage in a less formalised bond with his son than Oliver with Luke.

This generational and cultural shift is implied in moments of intimacy between Iwan and Simon ('Scrapper'). As the two prepare for Simon's wedding to Helen, Iwan's closeness to Simon is the unstated motor activating the scene. Simon's complaint that he 'Can't be doing wi' this bloody tie, Dad' (*Until Our Blood* p. 120), is a coded expression of anxiety reaching beyond the merely practical. Recognising that Simon's comment is less about the intricacies of knotting a tie than nerves about his forthcoming marriage, Iwan immediately offers support by identifying jokingly with his son: 'You and me both, lad [...] A badge of slavery, the tie', where the constrictions of the tie encode the time-honoured male complaint that marriage is 'a badge of slavery'. But he proceeds to knot his son's tie for him, before modulating the tone. As with so much in the portrait of this relationship, narrative significance lies in discursive undertones. Unlike Oliver Biesty, Iwan has no hesitation in making eye-contact. Fixing Simon with his 'ice-grey eyes', he asks:

'You sure you're ready for this, son?'
Scrapper remembered Debbie's wet hair and slick brown skin and shook himself. 'Course.'
Iwan gripped his shoulders. 'You get to do this once in your life, lad.'
'But Mam said —'
'To hell with what your mam said. The girl's young. You both are.' (*Until Our Blood* p. 120).

Iwan's opening question is no conventional platitude, nor does it represent hostility to marriage. It intimates a backstory of which he is fully aware, and which Simon's sensual memories of a former lover confirm for the reader. Iwan's response implies that he has immediately read the meaning of Simon's bodily reaction. Informal intimacy has progressed into paternal responsibility as he makes physical contact with his son. Facing him squarely, he issues what is at once a warning and implied support should Simon decide to go no further. Dismissing Angela's insistence on

marriage so brusquely is untypical of Iwan, but in promoting principle over financial expedience — Angela argues that ‘If they marry the DHSS’ll give Simon £9.20 a week’ (*Until Our Blood* p. 109) — it replicates his principled refusal of a bribe to return to work, while also offering Simon the emotional support of a father.

While Iwan Jones and Edwin Bowles share similar functions in their respective texts — to contrast with deviant forms of masculinity expressed through coercion — they also encode commonalities in their gender definition echoing earlier socio-fictive tropes. Cerebral rather than demonstratively physical, together they celebrate a Welsh mining masculinity, embodied in characters like Len Roberts and D. J. Williams, that diverges from the ‘macho’ image outlined by Deirdre Beddoe.⁶⁸ But Edwin’s retiring individualism and Iwan’s intellectual collectivism, qualities emphasised at the close of each text, construct two different futures as Welsh mining becomes an historical not a living narrative. Edwin once believed that ‘the affairs of his workmates could be enough’ (*Dark Edge* p. 185), but discovers they are not. Unmarried, he seeks a future both Welsh and cosmopolitan, where his masculinity is not defined solely against the accretions of a collectivist mining culture. Iwan, conversely, is positioned within such a marginalised cultural domain. Homi K. Bhabha asks ‘Is there a poetics of the “interstitial” community? How does it name itself, author its agency?’⁶⁹ When the strike fails, *Until Our Blood is Dry* has Iwan author his own agency by marching back to work ‘with his butties, stoic in his donkey jacket and helmet’ (*Until Our Blood* p. 333). His integration of self within community is a political act of passive resistance to a neoliberal economic paradigm demanding, ‘the homogeneity of the imagined community of the nation’.⁷⁰ The text sets his stoicism against a bleak future, signified graphically by crows blackening the sky as they leave the valley

⁶⁸ Deidre Beddoe, in ‘Images of Welsh Women’: ‘Wales [...] is a land of coalminers, rugby players and male voice choirs’, p. 227.

⁶⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 231.

⁷⁰ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 230.

and fly toward the sun, but his stoicism also signifies a tacit rejection of what Bhabha calls 'the grand globalising narrative of capital'.⁷¹

'Reckon that rabble would be grateful?': masculinity, discourse and the management of power in *Until Our Blood is Dry*

The 1980s style of management has been characterised as 'masculine, abrasive and highly autocratic'.⁷² *Until Our Blood is Dry* positions Iwan Jones's probity against forms of masculinity existing in a sphere of professional management activity, where power, politics, narcissistic vanity and ambition are the signifiers of their gendered definition. They comprise principally Adam Smith-Tudor, 'the Coal Board's most senior man in South Wales' (p. 324), and the flatulent Labour M. P. Harry Cross, who confers to his own advantage with the pro-government journalist James Hackett, but has 'not spoken to the men in twelve months' (p. 331). The contrast between Smith-Tudor's ideologically purposeful masculinity and Cross's conflicted ineffectual posturing replicates at the level of individual representation the larger dynamic of powerful government versus compromised opposition in an industrial dispute which is the site of a radical socio-economic experiment. Sympathetic to this political *zeitgeist*, Smith-Tudor constructs a coherent if limited and narcissistic identity; Cross, as a representative of a moribund opposition, flounders in self-contradiction. Two bureaucrats from London, Henshall and Turnbull, who arrive armed with documents and 'dressed like undertakers in fine dark wool suits' (p. 278) to pronounce on the future of Blackthorn Colliery further the text's exposure of the powerful depersonalising forces facing the striking miners.

⁷¹ Homi K Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 230.

⁷² See David L. Collinson and Jeff Hearn, 'Breaking the Silence: On Men, Masculinities and Managements', p. 3.

None of these is a principal character in the narrative, but they cumulatively project identities through a form of discourse consigning its practitioners, especially Smith-Tudor and Cross, to respective hegemonic or subordinate masculine definition. Norman Fairclough has pointed out that, as part of its political practice, neoliberal thinkers ‘problematized and de-constructed the discourse of their political opponents and attempted to impose their own re-structuring’.⁷³ Through its portrayal of Cross and Smith-Tudor, *Until Our Blood is Dry* examines how such colonising of discourse ‘naturalised’ a politically-freighted ideology as universal. This section proposes that to do so, it appropriates a form of discourse Ross Poole defines as ‘instrumental rationality’, which selects from a range of possible actions, ‘that action which on the best evidence available is most likely to achieve a given end’.⁷⁴ Significantly, with regard to *Until Our Blood is Dry*, instrumental rationality is concerned ‘above all with efficiency’, and is most clearly represented in the male-dominated ‘marketplace, the labour process and capitalist accounting procedures’.⁷⁵ In *Until Our Blood is Dry*, it functions as a strategic practice of ‘othering’ the miners as incoherent zealots driven by prejudice.

The novel critiques each of these characters by confining him within his own self-advancing, professional space. Constructing them as functionaries does not reduce them to clumsily conceived caricatures, however. Instead, it further exposes the reductive impetus of an economic paradigm that sidelines the human complexity explored elsewhere in the narrative. Denied any subjective depth by the text, these characters are activated by a monolithic ideology where identity is formulated through a public display of dominance. And so, none of them is seen in other than a publicly constituted role where, in the pursuit of self-realisation, they practise what Ross Poole describes as ‘separation from particular individuals,

⁷³ Norman Fairclough, [1989] *Language and Power*, 3rd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p. 184.

⁷⁴ Ross Poole, ‘Modernity, Rationality and “The Masculine”’ p. 50.

⁷⁵ Poole, ‘Modernity, Rationality and “The Masculine”’, p. 50.

relationships and activities',⁷⁶ a form of narcissism. In a speech to government supporters, Smith-Tudor, intoxicated by his own rhetoric, 'seemed to gaze right through the assembled men' (p. 97); for James Hackett, the television journalist, the strike is merely an opportunity 'to make a name for himself' (p. 40). And Henshall and Turnbull reveal the convoluted interpenetrations of prejudice, contempt, power, and sadism of their hegemonic masculinities by applying such abstractions as Poole's 'capitalist accounting procedures' to the future of Blackthorn colliery (pp. 278-282). None of them is portrayed at leisure and, in a significant Machereyan silence, the text never mentions their families.

Poole contends that, 'The internal constraint on instrumental action is the voice of morality',⁷⁷ but as they are discursively perceived as ambitious constructions, serving or responding to an amoral political discourse, none of them is given an ethical dimension. Instead, they function in spheres of expedient representation where ends justify means, and where, in Ross Poole's terms, they are 'concerned with profit maximisation'.⁷⁸ Christopher Lasch identifies the need in such figures, 'to promote and defend the system of corporate capitalism from which they — the managers and professionals who operate the system — derive most of the benefits'.⁷⁹ And so Smith-Tudor, for whom the discourse of power is the ultimate gender signifier, manipulates and betrays Gwyn Pritchard over the future of Blackthorn colliery, and then abandons him 'with a jaunty bounce to his gait' (p. 282).

But while Smith-Tudor exhibits the "macho" management style' of the 1980s⁸⁰ — he publicly humiliates Albright, Blackthorn's manager, for instance, by

⁷⁶ Ross Poole, 'Modernity, Rationality and "The Masculine"', p. 54.

⁷⁷ Poole, 'Modernity, Rationality and "The Masculine"', p. 54.

⁷⁸ Poole, 'Modernity, Rationality and "The Masculine"', p. 52.

⁷⁹ Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, p. 222.

⁸⁰ See David L. Collinson and Jeff Hearn, 'Breaking the Silence: On Men, Masculinities and Managements', p. 3.

sarcastically addressing him as ‘sonny’ (p. 280) — he is far more than an abrasive, two-dimensional bully. While the text never inscribes a thumbnail sketch of his distinguishing features, the resonating effect of unmarked signifiers construct him as a potent masculinity attuned to the callous *zeitgeist*, but not crudely defined by it. He shares his first two names, for example, with the eighteenth-century founder of free-market economics, and his hyphenated and hybrid Anglo-Welsh surname implies a secure bourgeois lineage, as do his ‘fruity baritone’ (p. 65) and social élan. Sometimes autocratic, he is capable of projecting a softer form of power when occasion demands. In the company of ‘key players’ hostile to the strike, for example, he:

navigate[s] the room, a galleon in full sail. Approached each man in turn, addressed him by name. A smile, a lofty pat on the shoulder and off he sailed to his next target (pp. 97-98).

While the text makes no overt comparison between the two characters, Turnbull’s showy ‘platinum cufflinks [and] outsized platinum watch’ (p. 278) act as metonyms of an easily identified neoliberal arriviste against the more spacious, and therefore more dangerous, range of discursive accomplishments it grants Smith-Tudor.

Prominent among these accomplishments is his ability to articulate a version of the strike where political ideology is transformed, through what Norman Fairclough calls the ‘hidden power’ of discourse,⁸¹ into an incontrovertible representation of a totalised rationale. It occurs in a speech Smith-Tudor gives (pp. 96-97) that rewards close examination, not least because it communicates how his dominant masculinity and the government’s hegemonic discourse function symbiotically, each conferring benefit upon the other. The text’s strategy in constructing his speech is to allow the assumptions, contradictions and partisan ideology implicit in his discourse to pass unmarked, in keeping with its practice elsewhere, so that assertion, prejudice and connotative attribution are successfully manicured into universalised ethical ‘fact’.

⁸¹ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, p. 78.

Adopting a stance of instrumental rationality, where he represents what Raymond Williams describes as the ‘apparently disinterested criteria’ of management,⁸² Smith-Tudor positions the government as the custodian of national stability and moral integrity confronting apocalyptic forces whose intent is to ‘destroy the coal industry and sabotage Britain’s manufacturing base’. As if this behaviour of the miners is not irresponsible enough, Smith-Tudor warns that they are also utterly devoid of civic responsibility (which he barely recognises himself), for they are recklessly ‘causing violence and criminal damage [so that] we are hovering on the edge of anarchy’. Because ‘These people will stop at nothing to get their way’, they must be stopped, ‘By whatever means’ (p. 96) including, it would paradoxically appear, a more powerful but entirely acceptable form of violence.

Much of Smith-Tudor’s hyperbole criticising the miners, the kind Frank Lentricchia calls ‘rhetoricopolitical activity’, is ironically equally applicable to the government on whose behalf he speaks.⁸³ His claim, for example, that the miners’ leaders are ‘dangerous agitators whose agenda has nothing to do with coal’ (p. 96), when lifted from the context in which it is spoken, could be attributed to a government for whom the strike is a tactic in its strategy of radical social reformulation. But, as Smith-Tudor’s speech demonstrates, by controlling context, ‘discourse types actually appear to lose their ideological character’ and become naturalised,⁸⁴ so that aggressive collective action by the dominant power is framed as an example of instrumental efficiency, a patriarchal rationale for the common benefit, whereas collective action by unionised labour is a riotous assembly.

It is the harmonious co-existence of self with a ‘structure of understandings that successfully claims normative status’ that facilitates Smith-Tudor’s

⁸² See Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (London: Fontana, 1990), p. 191.

⁸³ Frank Lentricchia, *Criticism and Social Change*, p. 150.

⁸⁴ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, p. 113.

performative hegemony.⁸⁵ In his case, the dance and the dancer fuse into a seamless whole through which the text projects the unified power of state apparatus. Smith-Tudor thus becomes the text's discursive complement to the collective physical dominance unleashed on the miners by a well-resourced police force. Alongside him, the Labour M. P., Harry Cross, emerges in a few brief episodes as a diminished masculinity, a simulacrum of Smith-Tudor's effortless performativity. Cross presents a paradox where his insatiable desire to construct himself as a charismatic figure conflicts with his lack of rhetorical or behavioural substantiality, and so he attracts only ridicule and opprobrium: he is 'old Double-Cross' (p. 331) to Smith-Tudor's 'Winston bloody Churchill' (p. 97). Rhetorically, his televised speech on the day the defeated miners return to work is an amalgam of casuistry and blather: it is 'a slap in the face for the Tory government [...] a triumph for common sense [...] a moral victory....' (p. 331), requiring the activist Helen to restrain a friend from physically assaulting him. It is the closest the narrative comes to bitter satire.

The text ruthlessly deconstructs his pretensions to be regarded as a significant performer in the political arena. David Howell has criticised the policy of miners' representatives in the strike and the lexis through which the policy was transmitted:

Hostages [were] given to prevailing sentiments about strikes, about pickets and police, about the proper scope for political agitation. Definitions [were] accepted which disadvantage[d] a socialist cause.⁸⁶

In his café tête-à-tête with the pro-government journalist James Hackett, the symbolic order into which the text incorporates Cross is virtually indistinguishable from Smith-Tudor's. He does not so much accept definitions damaging to the

⁸⁵ Alan Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), p. 34.

⁸⁶ David Howell, "'Where's Ramsey McKinnock?'" Labour Leadership and the Miners', in *Digging Deeper*, pp.181-198 (p. 197). See also James Thomas, "'Taffy was a Welshman, Taffy was a Thief": Anti-Welshness, the Press and Neil Kinnock', in *Llafur*, 7. 2 (1997), 95-108.

miners' cause as couch them in the sophistry of the ideological right. Attempting to demonstrate a finely tuned political wisdom, he approvingly, and wrongly, depicts Helen as a member of the struggling *petits bourgeois*: she is one of 'The little people. The small hardworking businesses that the unions threaten to destroy' (p. 154), casually abandoning the unionised miners he represents. Cross's fear of the consequences if Labour's 'hard left' (p. 154) triumphs in the strike compounds his political equivocation, for he is myopically unconcerned by the prospect of a triumphalist 'hard right' government if it does not. In a revealing moment later in the novel, Henshall, a London-based N. C. B. bureaucrat, expresses delight that the 'union is buckling', and he uses the term 'loony left' (p. 282) as a universal nominator. The text makes no overt connection between the similarity of their views, but Cross's language confirms his supine acceptance of a dominant political discourse: what Bakhtin regards as 'language conceived as ideologically saturated, as a world view, even as a concrete opinion.'⁸⁷

Wendy Holloway has argued that: 'depending on their anxieties, defences and statuses, men project parts of themselves on to others of different categories in order to present themselves as living up to a masculine ideal'.⁸⁸ Cross has strenuously appropriated distinguishing features like 'a snooty tilt to his large square head' (p. 153), a well-fed body and a context-specific, managerial double-breasted suit (p. 331),⁸⁹ to separate himself from his poorly-clothed, ill-nourished constituents. However, with particular regard to male 'anxieties, defences and statuses', Holloway continues by arguing that: 'The main recipient of these

⁸⁷ M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 271.

⁸⁸ Wendy Holloway, 'Masters and Men in the Transition from Factory Hands to Sentimental Workers', in *Men as Managers, Managers as Men*, ed. David L. Collinson and Jeff Hearn, pp. 25-42 (p. 29).

⁸⁹ Collinson and Hearn note that 'business suits appear to have a transnational significance': 'Breaking the Silence: On Men, Masculinities and Managements', in *Men and Managers, Managers as Men*, p. 11. In *Until Our Blood is Dry*, they have a cultural significance also. The text's reference to the suits worn by Cross, Henshall and Turnbull links Cross with metropolitan 'power dressers' rather than with his constituents.

projections is “woman”⁹⁰. To complete its demolition of Cross, the novel dismisses him as ‘a right sleaze’ (p. 153), with Helen, a woman young enough to be his daughter, as the less than impressed recipient of his projected masculinity. At work in the café, when she asks what she can get him his response is lubriciously suggestive: “Hmm”, his eyes travelled along her legs. “How about a coffee. To start with” (p. 153). Later, confusing prurience with charisma, he addresses her as ‘sweetheart’ and grabs her hand tightly between ‘two damp palms’ (p. 154).

In Cross’s construction, the combination of sweaty nympholepsy, political charlatanism, and personal vanity resists any alternative reading of his illegitimacy as a miners’ representative. Whereas *Until Our Blood is Dry* portrays Smith-Tudor as heartless, it acknowledges the impressive range of discourses he brings to his manipulation of others. Ross Poole’s view expressed earlier that instrumental rationality treats ‘all desires as having a right to gratification’ and is concerned ‘above all with efficiency’,⁹¹ neatly illustrates the difference between the two characters. While Smith-Tudor has successfully mastered the various codes of discourse through which neoliberal ideology can efficiently be disseminated as rationally disinterested, the text portrays Cross as having barely learnt to read them, still less offer a rebuttal.

‘You and him. Together. Like boyfriend and girlfriend’: the fear of ‘being what I please’ in *Until Our Blood is Dry*.⁹²

In their respective texts, the cerebral Iwan Jones and Edwin Bowles represent diversions rather than subversions of ‘heroic’ mining masculinity, for they both are unambiguously built on heterosexual models. By introducing as a sub-narrative a homosexual relationship between Matt Price, a miner, and Sigg, a hairdresser,

⁹⁰ Wendy Holloway, ‘Masters and Men in the Transition from Factory Hands to Sentimental Workers’, p. 29.

⁹¹ Ross Poole, ‘Modernity, Rationality and the “Masculine”’, p. 50.

⁹² Thom Gunn, ‘Sense’, *Collected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), p. 54.

Until Our Blood is Dry extends its gendered repertoire into an area previously unexplored so directly in Valleys mining fiction. John Sam Jones in *Welsh Boys Too* (2000) had already examined the male gay scene in Wales, but his short fictions are located largely in non-industrialised settings.⁹³

In an essay written before the publication of *Until Our Blood is Dry*, Jane Aaron and M. Wynn Thomas applaud such confident post-devolution literary representations as Jones's of a 'minority culture previously cocooned in [...] heterosexual space', which has led to 'differences in sexual [...] orientation [...] being more openly acknowledged in a more heterogeneous Welsh culture'.⁹⁴ However, in *Until Our Blood is Dry*, set in a mining community in 1984-85, the implications behind such differences are not so much openly acknowledged as not even thought to exist there. Helen's response, for instance, when she stumbles upon Matt and Siggy *in flagrante* is one of incredulity: 'Two men together? In Ystrad? Was that possible?' (p. 287). Siggy's and Matt's voices are therefore the voices of a marginality in a community already economically marginalised by the strike.

Ian M. Harris observes that 'Male behaviour is strongly influenced by gender role messages men receive from their social environments',⁹⁵ and the differing social environments of Matt and Siggy are fundamental to their perceived gender construction. *Until Our Blood is Dry* inspects their representation through their differing occupations, particularly Matt Price's, and the larger assumptions regarding distinct and unequivocal gender binaries associated with those occupations. As Terry Threadgold argues: 'What is valued in patriarchy is not masculinity (gender) but male masculinity. The issue is not gender, but sexual

⁹³ John Sam Jones, *Welsh Boys Too* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2000).

⁹⁴ M. Wynn Thomas and Jane Aaron, 'Pulling You Through the Changes', p. 305.

⁹⁵ Ian M. Harris, *Messages Men Hear: Constructing Masculinities* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1995), p. 1.

difference'.⁹⁶ In the fictional Ystrad of the text, hairdressing and mining lie at two ends of a cultural spectrum of masculinity, in which hairdressing is a 'feminised' occupation stereotypically attractive to gay men, and mining is the epitome of a working-class 'male masculinity'. And so, when Gwyn Pritchard sees Matt leave Siggy's flat early one morning, he concludes immediately and correctly that Matt is gay because he associates with Siggy, who must be gay by virtue of his occupation (p. 75). To Gwyn's mind, there can be no other reason for their connection.

Male hairdressers, research suggests, are no more likely to be gay than men in many other occupations.⁹⁷ However, constructing Siggy as a gay hairdresser enables *Until Our Blood is Dry* to interrogate the relationships between gender and sexual orientation and between occupation and gender stereotyping, and to expose normatively constructed gender formations as being, in Butler's terms, 'the illusion of symmetrical difference'.⁹⁸ Robinson, Hall and Hockey note that in the predominantly female world of male hairdressers there is a "hairdressing culture" [which] might have manifested itself in personal styles of dress and hair'.⁹⁹ Siggy, with his carefully styled hair and iconoclastic wardrobe, has acquired several signifiers identifying him as part of such a culture, and therefore as being feminised in Ystrad's closed system of gender thought.

As Lynne Segal points out, however, 'gay sexuality offers further confirmation of the ambiguity, even ultimately the unintelligibility, of mapping

⁹⁶ Terry Threadgold, 'Introduction', *Feminine/Masculine and Representation*, ed. Terry Threadgold and Anne Cranny-Francis (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), pp. 1-35 (p. 31).

⁹⁷ See Robinson, Hall and Hockey 'Masculinities, Sexualities and the Limits of Subversion: Being a Man in Hairdressing', in *Men and Masculinities*, 14.1 (2011), 31-50: the article notes 'the tenacity of associations between hairdressing, femininity and homosexuality and their "problematic" place in the schemes generated by hegemonic masculinity', p. 46.

⁹⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 140.

⁹⁹ Robinson, Hall and Hockey 'Masculinities, Sexualities and the Limits of Subversion: Being a Man in Hairdressing', p. 38.

active/passive onto masculine/feminine',¹⁰⁰ and on Siggy's first appearance the text deftly illustrates the limitations of oppositional gendered descriptors. The complementary toning of his scarf and eye colour, his dark blond hair 'with highlighted curls' and the careful draping of his scarf, evident when at work in his salon, semiotically accord with a stereotyped effeminacy (p. 185).¹⁰¹ Yet the text dispels such easy categorising, for traditional gender coding through the body is reversed. It is Siggy who is physically 'strapping' (p. 287), while Matt is 'Ferretty' (p. 287). And whereas Matt avoids violence, it is Siggy who is potentially aggressive. When Helen surprises him as she stumbles clumsily into his salon and he is momentarily unaware of her gender, his instinctive response is to turn and raise his scissors 'like a weapon' (p. 185). Later in the scene, his 'stern gaze trawling from her boots to her hair' indicates cool evaluation, authority, and an assured sense of self. In melding traditionally-coded masculine and feminine attributes, Siggy heralds in Welsh mining fiction a subversion of the trope where the confident expression of self is a feature of the confident heterosexual male.

However, subversion of traditional gender roles in the figure of Siggy extends beyond his appearance and manner into his non-hierarchical, non-possessive love of Matt. Michael Kimmel's argument that 'gay relationships are more egalitarian'¹⁰² is apparent in an exchange Siggy has with Helen. Believing that her husband Simon is unfaithful, she asks Siggy what he would do in her place. His responses illuminate the text's interrogation of a system of associations regarding power and heterosexual, hegemonic masculinity:

'Who cares if it is just sex.'
'But if he loved you, why go somewhere else?'

¹⁰⁰ Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion*, p. 151.

¹⁰¹ As Tim Edwards, for instance, points out: 'The equation of fashion with the feminine, with the not masculine, with the effeminate, as well as with the homosexual, remains a chain of socially constructed and perpetuated links that are decidedly difficult to overcome': *Men in the Mirror: Men's Fashion, Masculinity and Consumer Society* (London: Cassell, 1997), p. 4.

¹⁰² Michael Kimmel, *The Gendered Society*, p. 237.

'Women,' he sighed. 'I hear the same thing, all day long. *'If he loved me, he would. If he loved me, he wouldn't.* Men are simple creatures, *schatzi*. It is never as complicated as you think' (p. 309, original italics).

Siggy's macaronic response simultaneously disrupts the Gwyn Pritchard patriarchal, power-based model of marriage, and also presents an alternative to the more nuanced model represented through Iwan Jones, where fidelity is a *sine qua non* of a close relationship. The text further problematises conventional gendering by having Siggy downgrade men to the status of 'simple creatures' while nonetheless sighing patronisingly over women's delusions of romantic love, itself a male construct.

Siggy, therefore, occupies a space where he confidently creates a hybridised allo-identity, combining culturally feminised signifiers like waxed, highlighted hair and eyebrows, with a donkey jacket like Iwan's, and a flying helmet: 'Part fighter pilot; part ghost of miners past' (p. 307). Paradoxically, it is a site where he exercises a form of male hegemony over women by working for them. But as he is freed from the homosocialising constraints of mining masculinity unlike Matt, macho performativity is not expected of him.

Matt's sexual orientation is discursively more problematic. His occupation enables the text to decouple conventionally perceived associations of gayness and femininity,¹⁰³ but being a gay miner represents for him an irreconcilable hybridity. Kevin Devaney, a former miner himself, provides a valuable insight into a dilemma like Matt's when he writes that 'Homosexuality is not acknowledged in mining'. It is not acknowledged, he suggests, not because miners are homophobic, but because in their cultural ambience heterosexuality is simply assumed.¹⁰⁴ *Until Our Blood is Dry*, therefore, places Matt in a cruel double bind when it confronts him with two potentially destructive choices generated by the strike: either he maintains his gendered pretence by acceding to Gwyn Pritchard's blackmail, and therefore

¹⁰³ See R. W. Connell, 'from the point of view of hegemonic masculinity, gayness is easily assimilated to femininity': *Masculinities*, p. 78.

¹⁰⁴ Kevin Devaney, 'Mining — a World Apart', p. 157.

definitively betrays his community by strike-breaking; or he accepts the uncertain consequences of what exposure might bring. By placing him in this impossible position, the text demonstrates the coercive power of gendered expectation within an occupational paradigm. His desperate attempt to maintain the pretence of gender 'integrity' and conceal his difference from 'the boys' (p. 179) supersedes everything. In doing so, he condemns himself simultaneously to ostracism as a traitor, and to continuing personal fracture.

In constructing this fracture, the text employs a different narrative methodology from that used in the figure of Gwyn Pritchard. Whereas Gwyn is examined through recourse to free indirect style, so that the narrative voice is, in Bakhtin's terms, 'simultaneously represented and representing',¹⁰⁵ the narrative voice removes itself from Matt's subjectivity, making him an object of detached scrutiny. By distributing details of his biography throughout the narrative, but declining to clarify them, by withholding information that may or may not relate to his homosexuality, and by denying the reader access to his consciousness, *Until Our Blood is Dry* both creates and replicates the challenge of subjective incoherence Matt faces in accepting the semiotics of his own gendering. Faced with such lacunae and textual indirection, the task of comprehending his troubled masculinity requires that, in Macherey's words, 'we investigate the silence'.¹⁰⁶ Matt is recently divorced, for example (p. 28), but though no reasons are disclosed the fact resonates with significance alongside other biographical data. And when he arrives late at Simon's wedding, shamefaced and shaken having been beaten-up, there is 'something shifty, something more than guilt about losing the ring' (p. 130), about him, but the text colludes with his mumbled reticence beyond his claim that the 'Fella didn't give a name' (p. 127). Yet within the context of Matt's representation, such incidents echo through the text to construct a picture of

¹⁰⁵ M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 45.

¹⁰⁶ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, p. 86.

personal anguish, confusion, fear, and difference. It is Sigg, given a choric function, who offers a terse clarification of Matt's predicament: 'Matthew does not tell the truth about himself' (p. 309). The implied reason is clear. As the text demonstrates, the weight of a culture resting on the patriarchally sustained myth of the macho miner presupposes heterosexuality.

Through Matt's construction, the text exposes as oppressive the conventions of a social ethos in which heterosexuality has been naturalised as normative. Pierre Macherey's question on the meaning of the textually unspoken — 'to what extent is dissimulation a way of speaking?'¹⁰⁷ — can be modified in Matt's case to examine his public display as a defensive shield designed to deflect attention. Living a perpetual lie, Matt camouflages his sexual orientation in a performance of exaggerated heterosexual promiscuity. The text reveals it to be a continuous dissimulation speaking of his unshakeable dread of exposure. Claiming to have 'conquests from Monmouth to Milford Haven' (p. 29), his construction utilises pronounced masculinised discourse that sexually objectifies women: "It's St David's Day soon," he said. "I'm off to find myself a nice young lady. Gonna drag her up the allotments, show her my leek'" (pp. 33-34). And when young women join the picket line, it is he who is the most demonstratively sexist: 'Quick chorus of *Get Yer Tits Out*, eh, lads?' (p. 90). Because, as Devaney says, homosexuality is largely unacknowledged by miners, Matt's scripted display of extravagant heterosexuality raises no suspicion among his workmates; the text thereby reveals the extent to which the objectifying of women is normative in Ystrad's male culture. It is a woman, Debbie Power, who speculates whether, in Macherey's terms, the 'speech' of Matt's rampant sexism is, in fact, 'dissimulation'. Briefly puzzled by his offensive comments, she remarks that 'For a bloke reckons he's a ladies' man, he don't like women at all' (p. 90), but in the activity of the

¹⁰⁷ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, p. 86.

picket the significance of her comment is lost on her associates, though not on the implied reader.

Discursive presentation of Matt extends beyond his own existential dilemma to deconstruct one of the pillars of hegemonic masculine definition: that gayness is 'the repository of whatever is expelled from hegemonic masculinity'.¹⁰⁸ As a gay miner, Matt is discursively used to expose the masculine semiotics to which he appears to subscribe as culturally defined codes rather than transcendent signifiers. As Berthold Schoene-Harwood argues: 'closeted gay men's performative expertise in maintaining their straight camouflage indirectly draws attention to traditional masculinity as an artificial, author(is)ed script'.¹⁰⁹ There is, of course, a risk that the repetition of such scripts underwrites them rather than exposes their artificiality. However, in constructing Matt Price through his occupation, *Until Our Blood is Dry* at least extends Schoene-Harwood's paradigm by overlaying the construction of Matt as *faux*-heterosexual with Matt as a valid member of an occupation defined by rugged masculinity facing quotidian danger. Ian M. Harris avers that 'in general [gay men] fit the same characteristics as other men',¹¹⁰ and this is clearly implied in the narrative. Prior to the opening of the novel, Matt and Simon have narrowly escaped a fall underground which killed a fellow miner. The text communicates the traumatic experience as recalled by Simon:

the warning creak of the rocks, the eerie silence that filled the chamber before the roof caved in, the memory of rubble biting his skin as he scrabbled to free himself and Matt (p. 29).

And referencing Matt's expertise in this most 'manly' of occupations, the text further questions the artificial scripts of masculinity:

Everything [Simon] knew about mining he had learned from Matt Price: the difference between the moaning of rocks settling into position and the rumble of rocks about to drop. How to hold a pickaxe and hold his drink (p. 172).

¹⁰⁸ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 78.

¹⁰⁹ Berthold Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men*, p. 174.

¹¹⁰ Ian M. Harris, *Messages Men Hear: Constructing Masculinities*, p. 3.

Except for his sexual orientation, then, Matt demonstrates qualities that are associated with heteronormative masculinity and valorised in his culture. To adapt Katie Gramich's Whitmanesque phrase, he is 'both in and out of the game'.¹¹¹ Through his construction, the text addresses, by implication rather than direct confrontation, both the ambiguities and inadequacies of ingrained gender semiotics, and the oppressive power of Threadgold's 'male masculinity' which has him 'scared to tell the truth about himself' (p. 333). *Until our Blood is Dry* presents Matt as a double victim of the strike: he is not only a tragic casualty of an industrial dispute like the other figures in the text, but a casualty also of what Terry Threadgold calls 'the persistencies of malestream knowledges'¹¹² regarding gender practices.

The 'heterogeneous Welsh culture'¹¹³ that Aaron and Thomas argue has emerged in post-devolution Wales is yet to appear in the public consciousness of Ystrad, but the text implicitly suggests that Ystrad is potentially more pluralistic than Matt thinks. There is no mention of homophobic attitudes to Siggy. Helen is surprised when she stumbles on Matt and Siggy together, but she is not judgmental and feels no need to disseminate the information; and when Simon pleads with Matt to return to work, his assurance that 'every last one of the boys would welcome you back with open arms' (p. 173) appears unconditional. They are small but significant details in a text whose indirect narrative method confers significance on just such details. However, they are too small to register on Matt's consciousness and he and Siggy leave Ystrad to go somewhere 'no-one knows us' (p. 333). Through their trajectory, *Until Our Blood is Dry* inscribes a new development in the theme of migration in the

¹¹¹ Katie Gramich, 'Both in and Out of the Game: Welsh Writers and the British Dimension', p. 255.

¹¹² Terry Threadgold, 'Introduction', *Feminine/Masculine and Representation*, p. 4.

¹¹³ M. Wynn Thomas and Jane Aaron, 'Pulling You Through the Changes', p. 305.

Welsh novel. Unlike Ben Fisher, Mary Biesty and Edwin Bowles, who seek either financial reward or personal development or both by leaving their valley, Matt and Siggy simply wish for anonymity.

Conclusion

One of the problems of examining masculinity, Rosalind Gill tells us, is ‘the tendency to think in rather static terms, with a kind of one-size-fits-all notion of masculine identity’.¹¹⁴ Writing in 1996 of the effect the 1984-85 miners’ strike had on South Wales, Ned Thomas provided an example of what she meant, when he observed that, among other things, it created ‘a crisis of identity for those whose self-image was based on the industrial culture of the mining areas’.¹¹⁵ Using the interplay of patriarchy, politics and power as a structural model, this chapter has shown that within the fictional spaces of *Dark Edge* and *Until Our Blood is Dry* there is no composite, uniform ‘crisis of identity’. In both narratives, an abstract term becomes a particularised, individualised reality in the bullying Elliott Bowles, the tormented authoritarian Gwyn Pritchard, the slippery politician Harry Cross and the gay miner Matt Price. And it is a challenge that is met and overcome in figures as diverse as the rejuvenated Edwin Bowles, the collectivist Iwan Jones, and the gay hairdresser Siggy.

This chapter has examined the diverging masculinities of Edwin and Elliott Bowles in *Dark Edge* through their presence in a hybrid novel in which Elliott’s decline into psychic disorder is transmitted through a form of *roman à thèse*, and Edwin’s emergent self through a form of Bakhtinian *Bildungsroman*. The mutual antagonism of the half-brothers, one a policeman, the other a striking

¹¹⁴ Rosalind Gill, ‘Power and the Production of Subjects: A Genealogy of the New Man and the New Lad’, p. 39.

¹¹⁵ Ned Thomas, ‘Wales’, in *The Oxford Guide to Contemporary World Literature*, ed. John Sturrock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 432-446 (p. 444) .

miner, mirrors the larger antipathies of the strike itself. With regard to *Until Our Blood is the Dry*, the chapter has focused in Gwyn Pritchard and Iwan Jones on two radically contrasting forms of masculinity, each responding to challenges both personal and ideological. As the structure of this chapter suggests, however, the performance of masculinity as power-based narcissism in Elliott and Gwyn, and the probity of Edwin and Iwan across the two texts are as striking as the individualised contrasts between the pairs of characters within their respective narratives. While the effect is to generate an overarching impression of Valleys masculinity under threat, their particular biographies elucidate how profound social disruption affects different individuals in different ways.

The wider narrative space of *Until Our Blood is Dry* mobilised interrogations of two other arenas of male construction which the chapter then examined. Focusing on politics and power in the confident hegemony of Adam Smith-Tudor, it demonstrates how a power/knowledge nexus enables government representatives to colonise and normalise a form of rhetoric suited to their own strategies. By contrast, although the politically compromised Labour M. P. Harry Cross appropriates the dress, manner and lexis of the self-assured managerial male, they serve only to define him as derivatively subaltern.

This chapter examined finally the gay relationship between the miner Matt Price and the hairdresser Siggy. John MacInnes asks: 'under what historical conditions did men and women come to believe that masculinity exists?'.¹¹⁶ It is a strikingly provocative question. In Matt and Siggy, gender is coded through an employment status that is itself a product of cultural manipulation. Like MacInnes, *Until Our Blood is Dry* ponders the same existential question.

¹¹⁶ John MacInnes, *The End of Masculinity*, p. 77.

Conclusion

This thesis opened with Beatrix Campbell's declaration that miners and boxers are among a select group comprising 'real men'.¹ Her *Wigan Pier Revisited* (1984) is both an homage to George Orwell's *Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) and a feminist point of departure, yet her view of 'real men' as stabilised and essentialised in the hypertrophic body is, nearly fifty years after Orwell's essay, remarkably similar to his. In more florid terms than Campbell's, Orwell wrote that coal-face workers in pits have bodies like 'hammered iron statues' and 'arms and belly muscles of steel'.² The dates of these two publications — 1937 and 1984 — have resonated in this thesis, for the first saw the publication of *Cwmardy*, and the second (a date for ever associated with Orwell), a strike that corroded the metallic bodies of his miners and swept them into the rust-belt of history. Yet, intriguingly for the purposes of this thesis, when seeking a figure to fix the miner's body as impenetrably statuesque, Orwell describes it as 'a sort of grimy caryatid'.³ His impermeable male, then, is presented through a sculpted female form combining physical grace with effortless strength that supports a dependent 'other'. His reference, whether intentional or not, implies that there is rather more to gender than patriarchally conceived binary distinctions suggest. This thesis has devoted itself to just such an enquiry.

Its gender-specific reading of six anglophone Valleys novels has consigned 'hammered iron' versions of 'real men' to the realm of myth, no less powerful for that, but certainly not representative either. Mythic icons sustain egos, presume that the virile body encodes inherent qualities that are peculiarly male, help define a culture, and elevate the routinely mundane into the insistent heroic. Every nation needs its heroes even if, like Hector Bebb, their individual passing is also a threnody for the

¹ Beatrix Campbell, *Wigan Pier Revisited: Poverty and Politics in the 80s*, p. 98.

² George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* [1937] (London: Penguin, 1986), pp. 18-31 (pp.18, 31).

³ Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, p. 18.

passing of an era. By contrast, the achievement of five of these novels lies elsewhere. Emerging from the cultures in which they were written, they engage with the psyches, the insecurities, the performativities, the sheer differences of bodily form, and the individualities of a male working class that inhabits those bodies. The novels challenge, as has this thesis, the collectivisingly general by scrutinising the individualisingly particular. Not even the iron body of the patriarchal Jim Roberts, when analysed, has connoted a will of steel. Within the foregoing pages, it is only Hector Bebb, a boxer, who qualifies initially as one of Campbell's stabilised 'real men', who is 'hammered iron' both in mind and body, and even his raw masculinity is eventually problematised when he is forced to live as a wild man on the hills.

However, as the thesis has shown, Hector Bebb is an icon, a figure modelled into a Welsh hyper-masculinity from different cultural materials than the characters in the other novels. Whereas they are shaped by a Valleys patriarchal system, he is an embodiment of manhood assembled from mythopoeic archetypes. Consequently, Hector passes through his narrative trajectory unaffected by the tawdry day-to-day practices of the exploiting pit boss, though his manager is as conniving as any of them, or the patriarchal anomalies visited on the exploited miner. But elsewhere, the cultural exaltation of the Valleys miner as a norm of heroic, patriarchal masculinity formed by his culture, tells only part of the story, to which this theorised, gender-specific reading has offered an alternative narrative.

The thesis has contended that individually and collectively the novels expose the industrially enshrined axioms of patriarchal masculinity to be manipulative fictions. It is a view of masculinity that wrote gender instability into the Valleys male psyche. Promulgating gender as binary and men as hegemonic, patriarchal masculinity posited a theoretically pleasing congruity between a male-formulated, hierarchical model of industrial patriarchy and a male-formulated hierarchical model of familial authority. What it achieved in actual practice, as these novels exhibit, was a template where instability at the macro-level of socio-economic organisation was

replicated in the micro-level of individual male identity, as men were required to square a vexing existential circle. In terms of practice, they were subordinated, dispensable and dependent figures within the power/knowledge nexus of industrial capitalism. In theory, they were alchemically transformed into authoritative, stabilised patriarchs behind the front doors of their terrace houses. The consequent disruption, disaffection, violence, and immiseration — both individual and collective — this flawed model produced has featured in all five of the mining novels examined.

The texts comprising this thesis are all, in a sense, historical novels of a particular kind. None of them is strictly autobiographical, yet each novel is a personal recollection of and a memorial to each writer's own lived-through times created as a historicised narrative moment. To this perspective of the viewpoint from which they were written may be added another: the viewpoint from which they may be read. One of the discoveries of the thesis, when the texts are read in diachronic sequence, has been how acutely they speak to an evolution of masculine presentation throughout the twentieth century, where changing perceptions of masculinity co-exist with enduring and recurring characteristics that bind the novels into a distinctively Valleys canon. The effect is that the connection between an examination of masculinity and the passing of time can appear complex and disjointed. Iterative tropes, such as the cerebral miner, the bachelor, the political activist, the eastward migrant, the ruthless manager, the compromised patriarch, and, more structurally, the dysfunctional marriage, the immiserated household, and the pervading hostility to institutional authority have spoken to the recognition of a shared history and a communal network of cultural practices and values. But the diachronic overview of the thesis has also disclosed representations of Valleys masculinities responding to shifting inter-gender dynamics consequent on changing social patterns, especially feminism in *Strike for a Kingdom*, *Dark Edge* and *Until Our Blood is Dry*.

A diachronic reading of the novels has additionally revealed how narratives either neglected or safely categorised as 'industrial novels', or as the most

‘successful of all Welsh boxing novels’⁴ in the case of *So Long, Hector Bebb*, connect to transnational inscriptions of masculinity. Parochial as these novels might appear to the jaded metropolitan eye, they are parochial only in a topographical sense. It would be perverse not to acknowledge the influence of England on hybridised Welsh masculine identity, of which the Anglo-imperialism of Big Jim Roberts in *Cwmardy* and Inspector Evans of *Strike for a Kingdom* are notable examples. But Valleys’ fiction draws sustenance from sources far beyond England’s occluding shadow. The rugged masculinities of the American West offered a fantasy of liberation from the class-based fetters of English colonialism to the conflicted Jim Roberts. Gwyn Jones’s biophilic Welsh working-class masculinities — his exuberant young swimmers, for example — are overtly positioned within a tradition of classical and neo-classical pastoral models, while his heartless exploiters of labour would not be out of place in the work American of social realists like Upton Sinclair. Ron Berry constructs an iconic Welsh masculinity in Hector Bebb through embedded references to mythic paradigms from the Old World to the New World, from antiquity to modernity, and positions his narrative within a contrapuntal text that is carried by the stream of European intertextual modernism. And elements of Greek tragedy are perceptible in *Until Our Blood is Dry*, where Gwyn Pritchard, isolated by his own narcissism, is a doomed character with no possibility of redemption, confronted by his own mortality, and a plaything of an Olympian Adam Smith-Tudor.

However, the principal energies of this thesis have gone into the synchronic examination of masculinities in individual texts. Apart from *Cwmardy* and *So Long, Hector Bebb*, none of them has attracted close, sustained study, let alone theorised readings of masculine representation. This thesis has aimed to add fresh impetus to critical inspections of the two novels that have, and to demonstrate that the other four novels together present

⁴ Daniel G. Williams, *Wales Unchained: Literature, Politics and Identity in the American Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015), p. 45.

an extraordinary breadth of masculine representation, each one of them offering a fruitful source of critical enquiry. The methodology of this study has accordingly been intentionally eclectic. Central to its approach has been the work of Stephen Knight, Katie Gramich, Dai Smith and others in contextualising anglophone Welsh fiction as a distinctive body of work. Gender theorists, especially R. W. Connell, whose argument that 'hegemonic masculinity' seeks to address 'the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy',⁵ and Judith Butler's gender as 'the stylised repetition of acts',⁶ helped formulate a theorised approach to masculinity through which that body of work has been read. As cultural and literary theorists, Raymond Williams's insights into how power shapes consciousness, and Pierre Macherey's 'establishing that absence around which a real complexity is knit',⁷ contributed enormously to the methods by which this thesis examined how masculinity is transmitted through these novels.

Macherey's view that 'the fallacy of rules'⁸ can establish preconceptions regarding literary achievement has been apparent in the critical reception of Gwyn Jones's neglected *Times Like These*. Generally located within the orbit of the industrial novel, and as a consequence judged as at best lacking the requisite political passion of *Cwmardy*, and at worst afflicted by incoherence, the novel has been read from a different perspective in this thesis. Using Raymond Williams's structural paradigm of how dominant, residual and emergent energies interact and conflict in patterns of social organisation and development, the chapter approached masculinity in *Times Like These* from a social rather than an exclusively industrial perspective. This thesis has detected in the novel how the crude manipulation of power by dominant male figures determined to maintain an oppressively patriarchal

⁵ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 77.

⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 191.

⁷ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, p. 101.

⁸ Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, p. 101.

status quo is set structurally against the residual values both of the striking miners, transmitted through homosocial pastoral paradigms and, remarkably, the neo-Augustan civility of an English gentleman/mining agent, Denis Shelton, who in turn acts as a model for the emergent, socially aspirational businessman Broddam. As this thesis has argued, *Times Like These* responds to a gender-specific reading aligning it with Williams's view that, 'The relations between cultural, political and economic institutions are themselves very complex'.⁹ The novel's hostility to the corporate exploitation of individuals, its celebration of traditional values, its understanding that the instability of exploitative capitalism undermines the very patriarchal structures on which it rests, and its modernist, decentred construction of Broddam as an ambitious, rootless figure wandering between two worlds, help embed paradigms of male definition that are recognisable throughout twentieth-century Valleys fiction.

Whereas *Times Like These* has attracted little sustained critical attention, Lewis Jones's *Cwmardy* has been the subject of debate both inside and outside Wales. Strenuous efforts have been made to incorporate it into the canon of proletarian fiction, where doctrine takes precedence over novelistic technique.¹⁰ The chapter on *Cwmardy* in this thesis has challenged this assumption with another: that its humanism overrides its dogma. Despite the novel's collective title, the chapter has demonstrated how it privileges the narrative trajectory of two fragmented individuals: Big Jim Roberts, whose formidable but conflicted masculinity was shaped by the imperial adventure in South Africa, and his activist son Len, born into a role for which he is not temperamentally suited, and who is afflicted throughout by psychological instability and physical infirmity. Intriguingly, as the thesis makes clear, abstract dogma is opposed by sentient humanism in the novel's representation of

⁹ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 117.

¹⁰ David Bell, for example, argues that 'Len's progress to the attainment of the "correct" ideological position [in *Cwmardy*] is essentially linear and uncomplicated. He moves from ignorance to knowledge, from passivity to action, successfully facing the trials of initiation with no deviation and surprisingly little doubt': *Ardent Propaganda*, p. 105.

Len as its *Bildung* hero. As a gender-specific reading has shown, the *Bildung* hero's teleological progression to maturity, enlightenment and resolution is exposed in Len Roberts as a consoling myth. In doing so, the novel not only undermines the assumptions of the *Bildungsroman* as a bourgeois form, but also questions, at a deeper level, the compatibility of individual temperament and ideological necessity.

For all their differences, *Times Like These* and *Cwmardy* create fictions where patriarchy is the dominant structure, and where strong-minded female characters like Mary Biesty and Mary Jones display characteristics of self-realisation and organisational aptitude traditionally associated with male gendering. Menna Gallie's remarkable *Strike for a Kingdom*, written thirty years later, but set in the 1926 miners' strike, ingeniously reverses this paradigm. An emerging regard for Gallie's fiction has directed itself toward her interest in feminism through the prominence she accords female characters.¹¹ But this thesis has argued for the first time that the characterisation of striking miners in her seemingly innocuous whodunnit anticipates by some forty years an approach that regards masculinity itself as an ideology rather than a substance.¹² Cloaked by the novel's wit and humour, this radical reconfiguration has a markedly political dimension also. As this study has revealed, her easily intimidated, engagingly homosocial, egalitarian miners represent a Welsh masculinity radically different from the self-promoting police inspector, whose Anglo-imperial authoritarianism is consistently satirised.

Yet only eleven years later, in 1970, a novel appeared that constructed a diametrically opposed conception of Valleys masculinity. Ron Berry's *So Long, Hector Bebb* postulates in its protagonist, a primal, 'essentialised' male. The chapter on Hector Bebb has examined him as both boxer and wild man, standing in heroic opposition to a cultural and feminised drift intent on marketing an emasculated,

¹¹ In her Foreword to Gallie's *The Small Mine*, for instance, Jane Aaron notes that: 'for all its apparent focus on the world of male work, this novel is also centrally concerned with exploring the pressures which impeded the social development of the women of the coal-mining community as well as its men': *The Small Mine* (Dinas Powys: Honno, 2000), p. vii.

¹² See John MacInnes, for example, *The End of Masculinity*, p. 1.

cowed form of inauthentic masculinity, in an age when as Lynne Segal says, 'Tough guys were on their way out'.¹³ The methodology in analysing Hector Bebb has been to regard him as an intertextual amalgam of mythopoeically realised forms through which the novel seeks to recuperate masculinity as distinct from, and even incompatible with, femininity. In Hector, the novel scrutinises the complex and problematic interface between reason and instinct, restraint and violence, the civilised and the primitive in an 'essentialised' masculinity.

As the final chapter of this thesis has shown, the convulsions of the 1984-85 miners' strike, as presented in Roger Granelli's *Dark Edge* and Kit Habianic's *Until Our Blood is Dry*, released energies that challenged individual self-identity and social practice, and revealed traditional patriarchy and mining to be coterminous in the Valleys. In addition to its obvious political/industrial implications, the strike in both novels functions as one of Anthony Giddens's 'disembedding mechanisms'.¹⁴ It is an agent of profound social change, requiring male characters to negotiate or be overwhelmed by a torrent of discourses questioning their status, their power, their understandings and, with the strike lost, their very utility. The more spacious form of *Until Our Blood is Dry* has enabled also a study of government power through the manipulation of discourse, and a subtle examination through a gay relationship between a miner and hairdresser of how patriarchy in the Valleys of the 1980s facilitated repressive gender stereotyping through occupation.

Even though the Valleys are among the most densely populated and socially hybridised areas of Wales, and are arguably the one area instantly recognised — nationally and internationally — by a single noun, the study of masculine representation in its fictions is still an emerging line of enquiry. This thesis has made no claims to comprehensive authority; Rhys Davies and Gwyn Thomas, for instance

¹³ Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion*, p. 4.

¹⁴ A term Giddens uses to describe 'mechanisms which prise social relations free from the hold of specific locales, re-combining them across wide time-space distances': Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 2.

—who have already attracted significant critical attention — have made way for less well-known writers of the Valleys’ industrial experiences. But by focusing its attention on the Valleys’ narrow channels, represented through six anglophone novels over a distinctive, even convulsive, period of time, it has approached and responded to two matters. Synchronically, how each novel, of itself, addresses the destabilising paradoxes behind a Valleys masculinity predicated on the patriarchal performance of power. And diachronically, when read as a corpus, how culturally embedded patterns of masculine definition recur in the novels over time, and the extent to which the ‘disembedding mechanisms’ of social change throughout this period result in modifications of masculine behaviour and self-perception.

Giddens’s handy phrase also has a personal application regarding self-perception. Despite forty years of teaching literature in English, and having lived and been educated in the Valleys until my late teens, I had no idea seven years ago that any of these writers, let alone their novels, existed. To someone living outside Wales, they were, to adapt Ned Thomas’s phrase, ‘an undergrowth of authors’,¹⁵ not readily detectable from the manicured paths of mainstream U.K. culture. *So Long, Hector Bebb*, which I read first and consider one of the great post-war novels, and then *Cwmardy*, opened a door on Welsh experiences that were instantly recognisable and memorably communicated. Further reading merely confirmed my initial response, and led to this thesis. Masculine representations in these six novels are a small but significant strand of the continuing narrative of the Valleys. They tell an extraordinary story of fortitude, exploitation, resilience, resistance and humanity, one that deserves to be read and celebrated in Wales and beyond.

¹⁵ Ned Thomas, ‘Parallels and Paradigms’, in *A Guide to Welsh Literature: Vol VII, Welsh Writing in English*, ed. M. Wynn Thomas (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 310-326 (p. 319).

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