

**Nationalism and Welsh Writing in Comparative  
Contexts, 1925 - 1966**

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This thesis is submitted to Cardiff University in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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*Summary*

This thesis focuses on Welsh writing in English of the mid-twentieth century, examining it comparatively alongside Welsh-language writing, as well as some examples of contemporary work from Ireland and Scotland. It takes 1925 as its starting point, the year in which Plaid (Genedlaethol) Cymru was founded, and ends in 1966, when Gwynfor Evans became its first Member of Parliament, essentially legitimizing it as a mainstream political party. It is argued, with particular reference to the roughly similar position of Scottish Nationalism and writing at this time, and the effect that the foundation of the Irish Free State had on Irish writing, that during this transitional period in which Welsh Nationalism was not represented in Parliament, Nationalism was expressed most prominently in literature. It is concluded, through a thematic survey which incorporates writers from a range of ideological positions, that writers not usually considered to be supportive of Nationalism, and occasionally thought of as hostile towards it, actually express ideas which are broadly sympathetic to the Nationalist cause, and that expressions of sympathy with Nationalism are far stronger and more numerous in Welsh writing in English during this period than has previously been accepted.

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*Introduction and Survey of the Field: Nationalism and Welsh Writing in  
Comparative Contexts*

For much of its existence, questions have been raised regarding the ‘true’ nature of organized Welsh Nationalism. Formed in 1925, Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru (the Welsh National Party), later renamed Plaid Cymru, had in its earliest incarnation more in common with later cultural groups such as Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (the Welsh Language Society) than with other political parties of the time. In its first years, Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru was concerned in the main with matters pertaining to cultural Nationalism, such as the future stability of the Welsh language. Indeed, a study of the party’s early manifestos reveals some surprising facts, such as that ‘only in 1931 was self-rule embodied in the Party’s list of official aims.’<sup>1</sup> It could be argued that this cultural emphasis was due in part to the literary interests common to those Welsh-speakers who founded the party, or joined shortly afterwards. Prominent early members included such notable figures as author and editor Lewis Valentine, short-story writers D. J. Williams and Kate Roberts, and, perhaps most notably, Saunders Lewis, who was a poet, novelist and playwright, and also held the post of lecturer in Welsh at the University College of Wales, Swansea at the time the party was founded.

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Wyn Jones, *Rhoi Cymru'n Gyntaf: Syniadaeth Plaid Cymru, Cyfrol 1* [*Putting Wales First: The Ideology of Plaid Cymru, Volume 1*] (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 66. Original Welsh-language source: ‘dim ond yn 1931 yr ymgorfforwyd hunanlywodraeth yn rhestr amcanion swyddogol y Blaid.’ Note: with the exception of poetry, which will be quoted in the original Welsh, all Welsh-language sources will be translated into English in the body of the thesis, with the original wording provided in a footnote.

These cultural characteristics are by no means exclusive to the architects of

Welsh Nationalism alone, for, as Miroslav Hroch has asserted:

[t]he beginning of every national revival is marked by a passionate concern on the part of a group of individuals, usually intellectuals, for the study of the language, the culture, the history of the oppressed nationality.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, Richard Wyn Jones has suggested that ‘Scholars, and more specifically, academics in the Humanities: historians, linguists, literary experts, archaeologists, collectors of folk literature, sociologists, anthropologists, and so on, set the foundation for the national narrative, as it were.’<sup>3</sup> This idea is expanded upon in Simon Brooks’s

*Dan Lygaid y Gestapo [In the Eyes of the Gestapo]* (2004), in which it is claimed that:

Twentieth-century Wales was a country in which civil society was weak. It did not possess an assembly or a parliament, the circulation of its national press was limited, Welsh jurisprudence did not exist and any native economic institutions were rare. A situation such as this is not uncommon in ‘peripheral’ countries such as Wales. The resulting lack of such institutions limits discussion in the Welsh language of government, legal matters, economics - indeed, all of those things that are counted as official discourses of the large states.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>Jones, *Rhoi Cymru'n Gyntaf*, pp. 32 - 33. Original Welsh-language source: ‘Ysgolheigion, ac yn fwy penodol, efrydwyr y Dyniaethau, yn haneswyr, ieithegwyr, arbenigwyr llenyddol, archeolegwyr, casglwyr llên gwerin, cymdeithasegwyr, anthropolegwyr, ac yn y blaen, sy'n gosod sylfeini'r naratif cenedlaethol, fel petai.’

<sup>4</sup>Simon Brooks, *Dan Lygaid y Gestapo* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 29. Original Welsh-language source: ‘Roedd Cymru'r ugeinfed ganrif yn wlad yr oedd ei chymdeithas sifil yn wan. Nid oedd ganddi na chynulliad na senedd, roedd cylchrediad ei gwasg genedlaethol yn gyfyng, nid oedd cyfreitheg Gymreig yn bodoli a phrin iawn oedd unrhyw sefydliadau economaidd brodorol. Nid yw sefyllfa o'r fath yn anghyffredin mewn gwledydd “ymylol” fel Cymru. Canlyniad diffyg sefydliadau o'r fath yw cyfyngu ar drafodaeth yn yr iaith genedlaethol am lywodraeth, cyfreitheg, economeg - yn wir, yr holl bethau hynny a gyfrifir yn ddisgwrs swyddogol y gwladwriaethau mawrion.’



This lack of any substantial civil framework in Welsh society leads Brooks to assert that ‘Literature was the official discourse of Welsh-speaking Wales, and literary criticism was the metaphorical parliament in which it was discussed by the “*werin*”.’<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, theoretical texts which engage with Welsh Nationalist politics alone, avoiding comment on the culture which contributed to its growth, are rare. Most authors who write on Welsh Nationalism during this period recognize the key role of culture within it. D. Hywel Davies in *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925 - 1945* (1983), for example, acknowledges the influence of Yeats, Synge and Shaw on Welsh Nationalists in Aberystwyth before 1925,<sup>6</sup> and Richard Wyn Jones emphasizes the connection between literature and politics in Wales; he asks rhetorically: ‘. . . who would doubt that the influence of Saunders Lewis’s literary work was immeasurably great on generations of Nationalists.’<sup>7</sup> This fusion of culture and politics is clearly shown in Ned Thomas’s *The Welsh Extremist* (1973), purportedly an examination of the Welsh Nationalist movement up to the date of its publication. Great emphasis is placed by Thomas on the role of literature within that movement, as he states that writers, and Welsh writers in particular, ‘rarely keep out of politics when there are really important things to be decided.’<sup>8</sup> As well as commenting directly on the nature of Welsh Nationalism, Thomas spends much of the text examining the representations of Nationalism within Welsh writing, including analyses of the work of Gwenallt, Saunders Lewis, Kate Roberts and Idris Davies, among others. Despite this great

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<sup>5</sup>Brooks, *Dan Lygaid y Gestapo*, p. 30. Original Welsh-language source: ‘Llenyddiaeth oedd disgwrs swyddogol y Gymru Gymraeg, a beirniadaeth lenyddol oedd y senedd drosiadol lle y cyfarfyddai’r “*werin*” i’w thrafod.’

<sup>6</sup>D. Hywel Davies, *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925 - 1945* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1983), p. 24.

<sup>7</sup>Jones, *Rhoi Cymru’n Gyntaf*, p. 56.

<sup>8</sup>Ned Thomas, *The Welsh Extremist* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 1991), p. 12.

number of Nationalist authors, Thomas does concede that in some ‘Anglo-Welsh’ writing, ‘Wales has become the prelapsarian childhood land, where children are forever eating home-made scones before warm fires while kindly grandmothers scurry around the sanded slate floor.’<sup>9</sup> While this comment is an exaggeration, it does reveal Thomas’s dissatisfaction with idealized, sanitized portrayals of Wales which refuse to engage with its political complexities. For Thomas, Welsh writing needs to be political in order to be effective, sounding ‘the note of desperation that is also the note of heroism, and the assertion of a set of values that has been developed in a history of resistance . . .’<sup>10</sup>

In *The Dragon Has Two Tongues* (1968), another key text in the development of critical approaches to Welsh writing in English, Glyn Jones does not place quite the same emphasis on Nationalist politics, despite the text as a whole hinging on the separation between Welsh and English-language writing. At its close, Jones warns:

Nationalism can give a man a new strength of feeling, new ideas, an idealism, a fresh way of looking at the world around him. Other experiences are capable of doing the same, and I do not believe a writer ought to be given extra marks, as it were, for his commitment to a cause, or that we should repeat the old left-wing criticism of the thirties, with Welsh Nationalism substituted for Marxism.<sup>11</sup>

He focuses his discussion mainly on authors whom he knew personally, many of whom were not, according to Jones, among the most explicitly political writers in Wales:

Emyr Humphreys and R. S. Thomas . . . had come under the influence of Saunders Lewis, one of the founders of the Welsh Nationalist Party, and they were far more conscious of their Welshness and of Welsh nationhood than

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<sup>9</sup>Thomas, *The Welsh Extremist*, pp. 74 - 75.

<sup>10</sup>Thomas, *The Welsh Extremist*, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup>Glyn Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), p. 193.

Dylan Thomas or Rhys Davies, or Vernon Watkins or Caradoc Evans had been.<sup>12</sup>

Jones's claim that Rhys Davies and Caradoc Evans, in particular, were not especially conscious of their Welsh national identity, is a highly contentious one, and will be challenged in some of the following chapters. Although it is clear that Glyn Jones makes a clear separation between consciousness of a Welsh identity and support for Welsh Nationalism, it is never apparent where that separation lies, as in the case of Idris Davies, whose political views in later years are described as coming 'gradually very near to the Welsh Nationalists',<sup>13</sup> with no attempt made to clarify how Davies's views or writing differ from those of Nationalist supporters.

Despite its early focus on cultural concerns, reflected in the mixture of Nationalist politics and Welsh writing discussed in such texts, Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru represents, for the first time in Wales, an assertive and politicized brand of Nationalism organized on a party political basis, with clearly-defined (although frequently debated)<sup>14</sup> goals, which accounts for the chronological span of this study being so closely linked with its history. Following the formation of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru, the people of Wales could, for the first time, define themselves as 'Nationalist' first and foremost, without simultaneously pledging allegiance to any other party, simplifying and refining the Nationalist movement in Wales, and beginning the process of institutionalising its ideology.

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<sup>12</sup>Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, p. 43.

<sup>13</sup>Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, p. 149.

<sup>14</sup>D. Hywel Davies discusses many debates on policy in the early years of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru in *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925 - 1945*, such as whether the Party would allow elected party ministers to enter Parliament, and opposition among some members to the *Welsh Nationalist*, the Party's first English-language publication.

If we go further still in examining the role of culture within the Nationalist project, we can arrive at the conclusion, as many have done, that the arts can, in essence, fill a political void. For example, in reference to the effect of Scottish devolution on literature after the foundation of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, Christopher Whyte writes that '[i]n the absence of an elected political authority, the task of representing the nation has been repeatedly devolved to its writers',<sup>15</sup> and that 'the setting-up of a Scottish parliament will at last allow Scottish literature to be literature first and foremost, rather than the expression of a nationalist movement.'<sup>16</sup> The implications of these statements are many and varied: firstly, Whyte speaks of pre-devolution Scottish literature in explicitly political terms, mentioning that it 'represent[s]' the nation in a way which is analogous to a political body. Secondly, in claiming that 'the setting-up of a Scottish parliament will at last allow Scottish literature to be literature first and foremost', Whyte suggests that before devolution, Scottish literature served some other political purpose, for good or ill, and possibly that in being 'the expression of a nationalist movement', Nationalist sentiment in pre-devolution literature was almost inevitable. One aim of this thesis, then, is to test the applicability of this claim to Welsh writing in the period before the election of Gwynfor Evans as the first Member of Parliament for Plaid Cymru in 1966, which represents the beginning of the shift of Nationalist power from the cultural into the political realm. If we are to accept that the presence of Nationalism within Welsh writing during this period is almost inevitable, as is hinted in Whyte's argument, authors studied in this thesis should not only be those who share overt Nationalist

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<sup>15</sup>Christopher Whyte, 'Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 34.2 (1998), 274 - 85 (p. 284).

<sup>16</sup>Whyte, 'Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction', 284.

beliefs, as certain Nationalist principles would therefore be supposed to be present in the work of a wide range of writers from varying political backgrounds.

It is important to note that this idea of literature somehow representing a ‘national character’, or ‘national[ist] sentiment’, is a notion which is as old as Nationalism itself. Johann Herder, for example, whose ideas were fundamental to the development of Nationalism as an ideology, held the view that there existed the ‘idea of an existential relationship between song and nation, widely exploited by the world’s nationalisms . . .’,<sup>17</sup> and that it was language and culture, above all else, that provided states with a *Volk*, a people or nationality, which is roughly analogous to the Welsh *gwerin*. Because of Herder’s great influence on Nationalist thought, which would seem to contradict Benedict Anderson’s claim that ‘unlike most other isms, nationalism has never produced its own grand thinkers: no Hobbeses, Tocquevilles, Marxes, or Webers’,<sup>18</sup> we could, perhaps, see his work as foreshadowing the kind of culturally-informed, intellectualist Nationalism that characterized Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru at its outset:

[Herder’s] stress on language as the ‘natural’ basis of socio-political association had immense political consequences. It not only provided the ideological foundation of subsequent nationalist agitation, but it also led the prodigious philological research which accompanied it. Henceforth professors of language and literature were to play an important part in shaping the political fortunes of emerging ‘national’ entities.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Dace Bula & Sigrid Rieuwerts, ‘Introduction’, in Dace Bula & Sigrid Rieuwerts (ed.), *Singing the Nations: Herder’s Legacy* (Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2008), pp. 1 - 4 (p. 2).

<sup>18</sup>Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 14.

<sup>19</sup>F. M. Barnard, *Herder’s Social and Political Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 142.

This thesis will therefore explore the role of Welsh literature within the Nationalist project, both in English and to a lesser extent in Welsh,<sup>20</sup> during the transitional period between the foundation of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru in 1925 and the election of Gwynfor Evans as a Member of Parliament in 1966. Key to this study will be the consideration of Welsh writing in a comparative context, paying particular attention to writing that has a bearing on Nationalism in both Scotland and Ireland. As Richard Wyn Jones notes in relation to Wales, ‘very, very little could be understood about the political, social, and, indeed, cultural history of our country without referring to our relationship with our neighbour to the east’,<sup>21</sup> in a statement about England which could also be applied to Ireland and Scotland. Consequently, a selection of literature from all three countries will be approached from a postcolonial perspective, for reasons that are comprehensively explained in Kirsti Bohata’s

*Postcolonialism Revisited* (2004):

It is not hard . . . to find (especially in the nineteenth century) numerous examples of Wales being constructed as a place of mystic landscapes, a land which is home to strange and atavistic peoples (supernatural or simply foreign) in texts which are ultimately addressed to a London, or Anglocentric, audience. There are clear parallels between these ‘domestic’ constructions of otherness and those orientalizing discourses which produced the binary others of the wider Empire.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>This is not to imply that Nationalism is less important in Welsh-language literature of the period (on the contrary, as a great proportion of Welsh-language poetry and prose between 1925 and 1966 contains overt discussion on the nature and aims of Welsh Nationalism), but simply that the representation of Nationalism in Anglophone Welsh writing has been comparatively overlooked.

<sup>21</sup>Jones, *Rhoi Cymru'n Gyntaf*, p. 41. Original Welsh-language source: ‘ychydig iawn, iawn y gellir deall am hanes gwleidyddol, cymdeithasol ac, yn wir, diwylliannol ein gwlad heb gyfeirio at ei pherthynas â’i chymydog i’r dwyrain.’

<sup>22</sup>Kirsti Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 36.

Other recent critics have joined Bohata in approaching twentieth-century Welsh writing in English from a postcolonial perspective. Diane Green, for instance, appositely comments:

Should a writer feel his nationality is constrained by the political or social constraints of colonialism, and consequently write in a given way in order to promote aspects of his national culture, history or background (or to undermine those of the dominant nation), then it is arguable that his work *is* postcolonial regardless of whether or not the critic feels the writer's assessment of the situation is accurate.<sup>23</sup>

Rather than placing the emphasis on authorial intent as Green does, Bohata argues, in a statement which echoes Christopher Whyte's implied view that Nationalist sentiment in Scottish writing is far more widespread than is generally assumed, that '[e]ven in the work of writers overtly committed to internationalist, leftist politics, for example, we may find tropes that are fairly common in postcolonial writing and which work to support a postcolonial reading of Welsh cultural history.'<sup>24</sup>

The counter argument - that we cannot think of Welsh culture as postcolonial - has also been made. The complicity of Wales in the British Empire, for example, is often raised as one possible objection, as is the relatively long time between the 'assimilation' of Wales into the English, and later British state, and the first claims of the postcolonial status of Welsh culture.<sup>25</sup> However, others have emphasized the existence of a Welsh identity distinct from the British, some even arguing that 'Welshness' and 'Britishness' are almost mutually exclusive concepts. In his influential study, *Prydeindod [Britishness]* (1966), J. R. Jones argued that a nation

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<sup>23</sup>Diane Green, *Emyr Humphreys: A Postcolonial Novelist?* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), p. 8.

<sup>24</sup>Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited*, p. 10.

<sup>25</sup>These topics have been discussed in such key postcolonial texts as Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), and in the work of Welsh theorists and critics such as Dai Smith.

comes into being through a process of *cydymdreiddiad*, or ‘interpenetration’, among the elements of land, language and the state, and that without any of these ‘interpenetrations’, such a concept cannot exist. According to Jones, when one of the elements that make up a nation does not ‘penetrate’ into another, one may call those who live on that land, or speak that language, a people, but not a nation:

The State ties the two British People [Welsh and English] together, of course. There is nothing more certain than that. *But the link forms an interpenetration with the English People alone, to form a nation.* The obvious lesson of history is that the British State belongs to the English.<sup>26</sup>

It is clear, then, why a postcolonial reading, recognizing the distinction between a singularly Welsh (or Irish, or Scottish) identity, as opposed to an inclusive British identity, may be regarded as appropriate, given the critical and theoretical debate which informs this thesis.

However, explicitly postcolonial readings of Welsh writing did not become widespread until fairly recently, with Stephen Knight’s *A Hundred Years of Fiction* and Kirsti Bohata’s *Postcolonialism Revisited* (both 2004), and Jane Aaron and Chris Williams’s *Postcolonial Wales* (2005), signifying the first sustained attempts to classify Anglophone Welsh writing as postcolonial. Since the publication of these texts, the idea of Wales and Welsh writing as being postcolonial has attained more critical acceptance. In 2006, for example, Dylan Foster Evans published a postcolonial analysis of the work of Welsh poet Dafydd ap Gwilym, in which he mentions that the designation of Wales as postcolonial has been more widely claimed

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<sup>26</sup>J. R. Jones, *Prydeindod* (Llandybïe: Llyfrau’r Dryw, 1960), p. 18. Original Welsh-language source: ‘Fe gydia cwlwm y Wladwriaeth y ddau Bobl Brydeinig wrth ei gilydd, wrth gwrs. Nid oes dim sy sicrach na hynny. *Eithr â’r Bobl Seisnig yn unig y cydymdreiddiodd y cwlwm i ffurfio cenedl.* Canys gwrs eglur hanes yw mai gwladwriaeth briod y Saeson yw Gwladwriaeth Prydain.’



than is often accepted: he claims that '[there was] a strong consensus in favour of the idea of a "colonial Wales" in the fourteenth century.'<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, it is asserted that:

the idea of Wales as a colony was an important one in the rhetoric of the language movement and nationalist movement in Wales from the sixties of the twentieth century on.<sup>28</sup>

The difficulties which have traditionally been associated with this classification, however, are discussed at length in Bohata's *Postcolonialism Revisited*. She claims, for example, that the history and literature of Wales 'in no way conform to the progressive-linear model of moving from colonization (and colonial literature) to decolonization (and postcolonial literature).'<sup>29</sup> Yet Bohata highlights examples of several authors whose work seems to support the designation of Wales as postcolonial:

. . . it is not difficult to find numerous examples of Welsh writers, poets, novelists, short-story writers and academics who make use of the language of colonial or imperial domination in describing the cultural (and even the politico-economic) status of Wales: from Rhys Davies to Gwyn Thomas, from Emyr Humphreys to Owen Sheers.<sup>30</sup>

It is notable that Bohata chooses to mention Rhys Davies here, discussed within this thesis as an example of an author whose representation of Wales within his work is seemingly at odds with his political beliefs, and Gwyn Thomas, who was never

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<sup>27</sup>Dylan Foster Evans, "Bardd arallwlad": Dafydd ap Gwilym a Theori Ôl-Drefedigaethol' ["Expatriate poet": Dafydd ap Gwilym and Postcolonial Theory'], in Owen Thomas (ed.), *Llenyddiaeth Mewn Theori [Literature In Theory]* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), pp. 39 - 72 (p. 43). Original Welsh-language source: '[mae] consensws pur gadarn yn bodoli o blaid y cysyniad o "Gymru drefedigaethol" yn y bedwaredd ganrif ar ddeg.'

<sup>28</sup>Evans, "Bardd arallwlad", p. 45. Original Welsh-language source: 'yr oedd y syniad o Gymru fel trefedigaeth yn un pwysig yn rhethreg y mudiad iaith a'r mudiad cenedlaetholgar yng Nghymru o chwedegau'r ugeinfed ganrif ymlaen.'

<sup>29</sup>Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited*, pp. 2 - 3.

<sup>30</sup>Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited*, p. 10.

supportive of Welsh Nationalism, and whose attitudes towards the Welsh language were complex. This assertion therefore supports the argument that Nationalism is almost uniformly present in Welsh writing before 1966, regardless of the political beliefs of the author.

Further discussions of Welsh writing as postcolonial can be found in Stephen Knight's *A Hundred Years of Fiction*. Knight is entirely unapologetic in his descriptions of Wales as a 'colony' and its people as 'colonized', commenting that '[s]ome people are too comfortable with colonization to even identify it, or are more hostile to what they see as the threat of the natives to separate themselves from the English viewpoint.'<sup>31</sup> He is scathing in his condemnation of texts which present Wales as somehow 'Other', having been safely colonized for the benefit of the English. He refers to Hilda Vaughan's *The Battle to the Weak* (1925), discussed later in this thesis, as 'a fictionalized tourist text',<sup>32</sup> for example, and is especially critical of Richard Llewellyn's *How Green Was My Valley* (1939), calling it:

. . . a classic example of colonized writing that serves almost completely the interests of the colonizer, making the Welsh seem quaint but willing servants of English capitalism, fully validating the individualist and moralist imperatives of English fiction, demonizing any resistance beyond respectful persuasion.<sup>33</sup>

Knight's criticism of the novel clearly shows how a postcolonial approach can allow us to interrogate a text's relation to nationality and Nationalism, and how it offers a critical framework for comparison with texts from other 'postcolonial' countries.

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<sup>31</sup>Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. xiv.

<sup>32</sup>Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. 40.

<sup>33</sup>Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. 116. Llewellyn's *How Green Was My Valley* is an example of a text written between 1925 and 1966 which does not seem to communicate much in the way of real sympathy towards Welsh Nationalist concerns, contributing only to an idealized, fictionalized, and almost unrecognizable image of Wales, and will therefore not be discussed within this thesis.

Another aspect of a postcolonial reading of Welsh, Scottish and Irish writing that will underpin much of the thesis will be the distinction between two modes of writing defined by Raymond Garlick in *Introduction to Anglo-Welsh Literature* (1970) as ‘reciprocal’ and ‘interpretative’ modes. Broadly speaking, Garlick defines ‘reciprocal’ writing as being aimed at a Welsh readership, while ‘interpretative’ writing is concerned with presenting Wales to an outside audience.<sup>34</sup> The implications of these distinctions from a Nationalist perspective are clear: if a text can be defined as ‘interpretative’, then it can be seen as potentially derogatory to a Welsh audience: their environment needs to be ‘interpreted’, perhaps through simplification or romanticization, in order to be palatable to an outside, implicitly superior audience. The distinction between ‘reciprocal’ and ‘interpretative’ modes of writing need not be so clear-cut, however, as it could easily be claimed that authors such as Allen Raine<sup>35</sup> were attempting to serve their country by placing it on the global literary map, and that such a process of interpretation was necessary as a way of introducing the literary community to what she perceived as a culturally rich country. These complex issues of intended readership, with broad political implications, will be alluded to in several chapters of the thesis.

The complex and shifting relationships involved in the concept of ‘Britishness’ shared by Wales, Scotland, and Ireland provide some justification for a comparative study of literature from all three countries. There is also a more tangible

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<sup>34</sup>Examples of ‘interpretative’ texts include the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ‘first-contact romances’ by such authors as Allen Raine (see below). The term was coined by Stephen Knight in his *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, which also deploys a postcolonial framework to view Anglophone Welsh writing, and which can be used as an expansion of/alternative to Raymond Garlick’s definitions.

<sup>35</sup>A writer who wrote romanticized, ‘interpretative’ novels about Wales during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as *Queen of the Rushes* (1906). The worldwide success of Raine’s work shows how her idealized depictions of Welsh life were of interest to a large audience outside Wales.

connection between them, centred on the occasional interdependence of the three brands of Nationalism found here. While Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru was not formed until 1925, the starting date of this study, and the Scottish National Party not until 1934, the Irish Free State had already been established by 1922. For the people of what is now termed the Republic of Ireland, Irish Nationalism had, to all extents and purposes, achieved its goal of independence before similar, politicized Nationalist movements calling for autonomy existed in Scotland and Wales.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, while Scottish Nationalism sometimes followed the example of Welsh Nationalism (as in the founding of the Nationalist parties of both countries, or the election of Winifred Ewing as the first SNP Member of Parliament, shortly after the victory of Gwynfor Evans in Wales), it is unquestionable that the successes of Irish Nationalism had a great influence on Nationalist politicians, theorists and writers in both Scotland and Wales. However, the relationship that both Wales and Scotland share with Ireland was not one-sided, as Daniel G. Williams notes: 'If Wales and Scotland generally followed Ireland in politics, the cultural influence travelled both ways.'<sup>37</sup> Once again, we notice in the exchange of ideas between all three countries that the purely cultural elements of Nationalism exist separately from the organized political movements which draw upon them.

The influence of the cultural aspects of Irish Nationalism is clearly seen in the political writing of Saunders Lewis, probably the most significant figure in Welsh Nationalism during the period covered by this study. It has been claimed that Lewis

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<sup>36</sup>While *Cymru Fydd* and the Home Rule movement existed in Wales before the turn of the century, their aims were largely not achieved, and their influence both on Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru and later Welsh writing was minimal.

<sup>37</sup>Daniel G. Williams, 'Another Lost Cause? Pan-Celticism, Race and Language', *Irish Studies Review*, 17.1 (February 2009), 89 - 101 (p. 91).

owed a debt 'to the Irish dramatists and literary men . . . not to the political leaders or the men of 1916.'<sup>38</sup> In an interview with Aneurin Talfan Davies conducted in 1960, he emphasizes the importance of Irish writing in his early literary development: 'with Synge and W. B. Yeats especially - Yeats most of all - contemporary English literature began to take hold of me.'<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, he states that Irish writing had a similar influence on his political beliefs:

Through reading the literature of Yeats, Synge, Patrick Colum . . . I came, for the first time, to understand what patriotism and the national spirit were. And soon I began to think that things like that, which grabbed hold of them in Ireland, were relevant for me to grab hold of in Wales.<sup>40</sup>

He saw in Irish writing in English (then termed 'Anglo-Irish' literature) a possible model for constructing an 'Anglo-Welsh' literature that was indisputably Welsh, and free of the Anglicizations which he saw as being the defining characteristic of much of the literary output of Wales during this time. In the influential lecture *Is There An Anglo-Welsh Literature?* (1939), he made a statement which has clear postcolonial implications, namely that '[t]he true Anglo-Irish writers were not concerned with interpreting Ireland for English readers. They were concerned with interpreting Ireland to herself.'<sup>41</sup> He goes on to assert that the vernacular English of Ireland, unlike that of Wales, was 'rich in traditional idiom and

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<sup>38</sup>Dafydd Glyn Jones, 'His Politics', in Alun R. Jones & Gwyn Thomas (ed.), *Presenting Saunders Lewis* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973), pp. 23 - 78 (p. 39).

<sup>39</sup>Dylanwadau: Saunders Lewis Mewn Ymgom ag Aneurin Talfan Davies' ['Influences: Saunders Lewis in Conversation With Aneurin Talfan Davies'], *Taliesin*, 2 (Christmas 1961), 5 - 18 (p. 9). Original Welsh-language source: 'gyda Synge a W. B. Yeats yn enwedig - Yeats yn bennaf oll - y dechreuodd lenyddiaeth gyfoes Saesneg afael ynw' i.'

<sup>40</sup>Dylanwadau: Saunders Lewis Mewn Ymgom ag Aneurin Talfan Davies', 9. Original Welsh-language source: 'Trwy ddarllen llenyddiaeth Yeats, Synge, Patrick Colum . . . y des i, am y tro cyntaf, i ddeall beth oedd gwlatgarwch ac ysbryd cenedl. Ac yn fuan mi ddechreuais i feddwl fod pethau fel yna, oedd yn gafael ynddyn' nhw yn Iwerddon, yn briodol i mi afael ynddyn' nhw yng Nghymru.'

<sup>41</sup>Saunders Lewis, *Is There An Anglo-Welsh Literature?* (Cardiff: Urdd Graddedigion Prifysgol Cymru, 1939), p. 7.

folklore and folksong, and capable of use in a poetry which was not “literary poetry”, and contained no echoes or rhythms of the English literary tradition.’<sup>42</sup> Crucially, he also links Nationalism in Ireland with the intelligentsia producing ‘Anglo-Irish’ literature, stating that the ‘Anglo-Irish school was consciously and deliberately nationalist.’<sup>43</sup> It is clear from his later work that he did see Welsh-language writing, at least, as following the example of Ireland, as he wrote in a 1965 article for the *Western Mail*, ‘Welsh Literature and Nationalism’, republished in *Presenting Saunders Lewis*: ‘I make what I believe to be a statement of fact: the majority of Welsh poets and writers, novelists, dramatists, critics, have since 1930 onwards been avowed members of the Welsh Nationalist Party.’<sup>44</sup> Despite this clear admission, and while these influences are often acknowledged in criticism of Lewis’s work, little attempt has been made to undertake an in-depth comparison of his writing (particularly his first play, the English-language *The Eve of Saint John* (1921)) with that of those Irish poets and dramatists so admired by him.

In the figure of Saunders Lewis we can discern a microcosm of Welsh Nationalism during this period: his interests were chiefly literary, rather than purely political, reflecting the distinction between the political and cultural spheres of Nationalism. In correspondence with his fellow author, Kate Roberts, he confessed that:

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<sup>42</sup>Lewis, *Is There An Anglo-Welsh Literature?*, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup>Lewis, *Is There An Anglo-Welsh Literature?*, p. 8.

<sup>44</sup>Saunders Lewis, ‘Welsh Literature and Nationalism’, in *Presenting Saunders Lewis*, pp. 142 - 144 (p. 143).

I would never say a word on behalf of nationalism or Welsh were it possible some other way to keep alive a small, aristocratic Welsh company that kept literature and art safe without caring a damn for the churls of the *gwerin*.<sup>45</sup>

It is also clear here that the Nationalism of Saunders Lewis was not compatible with Socialism, a reflection of the often antagonistic relationship Welsh Nationalism has had with class-centric belief systems. Despite his rejecting the Nonconformity that went hand in hand with much Welsh Nationalist thought during the twentieth century and adopting the Catholic faith, which ‘was a serious handicap to his being accepted as a public figure in some areas of the country’,<sup>46</sup> Lewis’s strong religious convictions informed much of his beliefs and rhetoric. In his pamphlet *Egwyddorion Cenedlaetholdeb* [*The Principles of Nationalism*] (1926), for example, he asserted that ‘[Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru] must appeal not to material rights but to spiritual principles.’<sup>47</sup> Finally, as discussed above, he looked towards Ireland and Scotland for artistic inspiration and, to a lesser extent, political guidance, which, due to the influence of Lewis on Welsh literature and politics, had a marked effect on the development of Welsh Nationalism through the early to mid-twentieth century.

While his political writing is of obvious importance, it is equally important to acknowledge the contribution made by Saunders Lewis as a literary critic. The lecture *Is There an Anglo-Welsh Literature?* not only includes one of the first theoretical discussions of Welsh writing in English, but also provides one of the

<sup>45</sup>Dafydd Ifans (ed.), *Annwyl Kate, Annwyl Saunders* [*Dear Kate, Dear Saunders*] (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1993), p. 4. Original Welsh-language source: ‘. . . ni ddywedwn air yn dragywydd dros genedlaetholdeb na Chymraeg pedfai modd cadw’n fyw rywsut arall gwmni bach aristocrataidd Cymreig a gadwai lén a chelf yn ddiogel heb falio botwm am y werin daeogion.’

<sup>46</sup>Paul O’Leary, ‘Public Intellectuals, Language Revival and Cultural Nationalism in Ireland and Wales: A Comparison of Douglas Hyde and Saunders Lewis’, *Irish Studies Review*, 17.1 (February 2009), 5 - 18 (p. 10).

<sup>47</sup>Saunders Lewis, *Egwyddorion Cenedlaetholdeb* (Machynlleth: Evan Jones, 1926), p. 4. Original Welsh-language source: ‘Rhaid inni apelio nid at hawliau materol ond at egwyddorion ysbrydol.’

clearest admissions of his debt to and admiration of Irish writing. He accepts the existence and validity of 'Anglo-Irish' writing, while simultaneously devaluing the contemporary work of most 'Anglo-Welsh' writers, noting that the 'Anglo-Irish school was consciously and deliberately nationalist . . .'.<sup>48</sup> The implication is that this apparent ideological slant elevates it above Welsh writing in English. There are also comments made in the lecture on the perceived superiority of the English used by 'Anglo-Irish' writers, with Lewis maintaining that it remains unquestionably indebted to the 'traditional idiom and folklore and folksong' of Irish Gaelic.<sup>49</sup> While the piece as a whole is generally dismissive of 'Anglo-Welsh' writing, Lewis seeing very little Welsh influence on it, it is important to remember that he does not entirely devalue the potential of writing about Wales through the medium of English, notably identifying Jack Jones as an author who writes 'to Wales more than England'.<sup>50</sup> Rather than an attack on the concept of Welsh writing in English itself, *Is There an Anglo-Welsh Literature?* must be regarded as a polemic which attempts to consider the validity (or otherwise) of several contemporary writers, and should be recognized as one of the earliest attempts to engage critically with 'Anglo-Welsh' writing.

Perhaps the importance of Saunders Lewis is that he could be described as 'an intermediary between philosophy and politics', who is 'before anything else . . . an artist and a critic'.<sup>51</sup> This fusion of art and politics within the figure of Saunders Lewis may be indicative of the importance of cultural Nationalism within Welsh life, as John Rowlands has explained:

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<sup>48</sup>Lewis, *Is There an Anglo-Welsh Literature?*, p. 8.

<sup>49</sup>Lewis, *Is There an Anglo-Welsh Literature?*, p. 7.

<sup>50</sup>Lewis, *Is There an Anglo-Welsh Literature?*, p. 12.

<sup>51</sup>Jones, 'His Politics', p. 26.



It sounds odd to say that literary criticism is a tool of political ideology, but to us, the Welsh, our language and literature were the only things we possessed that were an unbroken continuation from the sixth century until today - apart from our religion, of course - but the Bible and hymns were inextricably linked to our literature in any case.<sup>52</sup>

It could be said that Lewis's status as an artist-politician owes much to similar figures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as Emrys ap Iwan (who was much admired by Lewis) and O. M. Edwards. Neither was Saunders Lewis by any means the last figure in Wales to take on such a role; indeed, comparisons could be drawn with Bobi [R. M.] Jones, who similarly uses literary criticism to communicate his Nationalist beliefs, and who also published an opinion piece on the validity of 'Anglo-Welsh' writing.

Writing fourteen years after *Is There an Anglo-Welsh Literature?*, Bobi Jones uses many of the same arguments as Saunders Lewis, failing to recognize any developments within Welsh writing in English during that time, and being overwhelmingly critical of the popular aspects of English culture which contribute to it. Indeed, Jones does not concede that popular culture, including 'films, television, the cheap-reading campaign, advertisement, sport [and] gambling',<sup>53</sup> can be considered culture at all, arguing that '[f]rom a cultural point of view, England . . . has been wiped out'.<sup>54</sup> Although he does make one conciliatory claim that Welsh writing in English 'must be regarded as a justified retreat from the cosmopolitan

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<sup>52</sup>John Rowlands, *Llên y Llenor: Saunders y Beirniad* [*The Literature of the Litterateur: Saunders the Critic*], p. 9. Original Welsh-language source: 'Mae'n swnio'n od dweud fod beirmiadaeth lenyddol yn arf ideolegol wleidyddol, ond i ni'r Cymry ein hiaith a'n llenyddiaeth oedd yr unig bethau a oedd gennym yn barhad di-dor o'r chweched ganrif hyd heddiw - heblaw ein crefydd, wrth gwrs - ond roedd y Beibl a'r emynau yn annatod glwm wrth ein llenyddiaeth beth bynnag.'

<sup>53</sup>Bobi Jones, 'The Anglo-Welsh', *Dock Leaves* (Spring 1953), 23 - 8 (p. 24).

<sup>54</sup>Jones, 'The Anglo-Welsh', 24.

disintegration and proletarian mass-production of London and its fashions',<sup>55</sup> he does not view 'Anglo-Welsh' writers as 'a co-ordinate part of the whole community',<sup>56</sup> which is, he claims, due to their 'ignorant apprehension or . . . nervous prejudice towards Welsh nationalism.'<sup>57</sup>

The influence of Saunders Lewis is apparent on this piece of criticism, Jones even mentioning Lewis at one point as an example of the kind of influential figure not present within contemporary 'Anglo-Welsh' writing:

The more sociological consciousness of Welsh writers is unequalled in Anglo-Welsh circles; and indeed, the seriousness and sincerity of purpose, balanced by a breadth and strength of knowledge and wisdom, in Saunders Lewis for example, can hardly find their equal in contemporary Europe.<sup>58</sup>

As in *Is There an Anglo-Welsh Literature?*, Jones lauds Irish writing as having been highly influential within British literature. He labels the 'Anglo-Welsh' 'a mere backwater of the Anglo-Irish school', and as 'hav[ing] had no major literary critic, nor even a responsible second-rate critic of talent.'<sup>59</sup> It is clear that comparative discussions of Welsh writing in English, alongside Irish writing in particular, were present within much early-to-mid twentieth-century criticism, but detailed discussions of the similarities and differences between individual authors and works were somewhat lacking. Rather than referring to specific authors and texts, some prominent literary critics were content simply to make broad, largely unproven statements about Anglophone Irish and Welsh literature as a whole.

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<sup>55</sup>Jones, 'The Anglo-Welsh', 25.

<sup>56</sup>Jones, 'The Anglo-Welsh', 26.

<sup>57</sup>Jones, 'The Anglo-Welsh', 26.

<sup>58</sup>Jones, 'The Anglo-Welsh', 25.

<sup>59</sup>Jones, 'The Anglo-Welsh', 25.

This paucity of sustained comparative analyses of Irish, Scottish and Welsh writing is surprising, as such studies offer a potentially fruitful approach to the study of Nationalism and literature from all three countries. Indeed, a comparative methodology may be intrinsically suited to work on Nationalist writing. Susan Bassnett has explained how '[i]n Britain, where Scottish and Irish nationalism were both feared and despised, there was a vested interest in denying the possibility of a great bardic past to those cultures . . .';<sup>60</sup> comparative studies in those countries were used increasingly to discover a semi-mythical shared identity, distinct from an English/British inheritance. There may be some truth to Bassnett's statement that 'comparative literature was linked to nationalism from the start',<sup>61</sup> as she clarifies with reference to recent work on Indian writing, which:

. . . suggests that comparative literature in India is directly linked to the rise of modern Indian nationalism . . . comparative literature [having] been used to 'assert the national cultural identity'.<sup>62</sup>

This thesis will seek to address the relative lack of comparative studies on Scottish, Irish and Welsh writing, emphasizing the mutual influence of writers from all three countries on each other, and the roughly analogous political situations which led to similar developments within the three branches of Nationalist writing under discussion. It will be argued that because the struggle to establish an Irish Free State was over by 1922, the shift of Irish Nationalism from the cultural into the political sphere irrevocably changed the representation of Irish Nationalism within literature.

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<sup>60</sup>Susan Bassnett, *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 16 - 17.

<sup>61</sup>Bassnett, *Comparative Literature*, p. 24.

<sup>62</sup>Bassnett, *Comparative Literature*, p. 5. Bassnett is here quoting literary critic and activist Ganesh Devy, writing in *New Quest* no. 63.

Before the creation of the Irish Free State, Nationalism within Irish writing was as pervasively present as it was in Scotland and Wales up until 1966/7. However, after 1922, to reiterate the words of Christopher Whyte, the Republic of Ireland had an 'elected political authority', meaning that 'the task of representing the nation' was no longer 'devolved to its writers'. As a result, Irish writers after 1922 were essentially free to 'ignore' Nationalism, writing purely for artistic reasons, while such an approach was largely denied to writers from Scotland and Wales.

It should be apparent, then, that the choice to attempt a comparative study in this thesis stems from the differences between the Nationalist politics of Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The decision to split the thesis into thematic chapters also has its basis in Nationalist politics: it has been a defining aspect of Welsh Nationalism in particular that it comprises supporters from a great variety of political backgrounds, with wildly differing, and sometimes even competing, belief systems. It will be the aim of the individual chapters of this thesis to explore the different approaches to Nationalism taken by a variety of writers, both within the context of literature from one country (often spanning two languages), and in comparative contexts. Here, we should perhaps explore the various criticisms made of Nationalist theory, since it is precisely this range of differing and occasionally competing viewpoints within Nationalism that has made it difficult for many political theorists and literary critics to regard it as a coherent ideology.

It is fair to say that while many critics and theorists make some attempt to acknowledge this diversity, for others, Nationalism in all its forms is inseparable from the kind of extreme right-wing, ethnically-centred beliefs that characterized Nazi

Germany: ‘In public, most articulate opponents of Welsh Nationalism attack, not Wales, but nationalism and they attack nationalism as if every form of nationalism was like that of Nazi Germany.’<sup>63</sup> Indeed, in a number of texts which claim to theorize Nationalism, there is no acknowledgment of the broadly liberal, pacifist Nationalism which is found in at least two of the three countries discussed here. As Katie Gramich suggests, ‘the Hobsbawmian model . . . reveals a fairly crude English left-wing bias against all forms of nationalism, which tend to make their initial political appeal in essentialist terms.’<sup>64</sup> So, theoretical discussions which are critical of Nationalism tend to fluctuate between two poles: disavowal of Nationalism because of its ‘exclusive’ nature, or critique based on the difficulty in defining its core ideas. It can be described both as ‘the starkest political shame of the twentieth century, the deepest, most intractable . . . blot on the political history of the world since the year 1900 . . .’,<sup>65</sup> and as an indistinct, indefinable, non-ideology: ‘Does it even make sense to presume that there is some core idea to this “ism” that we can try to make sense of in normative theory the way we can, say, when analyzing liberalism or socialism?’<sup>66</sup> It is even possible to find these two ideas presented simultaneously, as Benedict Anderson does here:

In an age when it is so common for progressive, cosmopolitan intellectuals . . . to insist on the near-pathological character of nationalism, its roots in fear and

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<sup>63</sup>Owen Dudley Evans & Ioan Rhys, ‘Wales’, in Owen Dudley Edwards et al, *Celtic Nationalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), pp. 213 - 298 (p. 213).

<sup>64</sup>Katie Gramich, ‘Cymru or Wales? Explorations in a Divided Sensibility’, in Susan Bassnett (ed.), *Studying British Cultures: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 97 - 112 (p. 100). Models based on the work of E. J. Hobsbawm, whose works *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (1990) and *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), the latter edited alongside Terence Ranger, remain key texts within studies of Nationalism.

<sup>65</sup>John Dunn, ‘Nationalism’, in Ronald Beiner (ed.), *Theorizing Nationalism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 27 - 50 (p. 27).

<sup>66</sup>Wayne Norman, ‘Theorizing Nationalism (Normatively): The First Steps’, in Beiner, *Theorizing Nationalism*, pp. 51 - 65 (p. 51).

hatred of the Other, and all its affinities with racism, it is useful to remind ourselves that nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love. The cultural products of nationalism - poetry, prose fiction, music, plastic arts - show this love very clearly in thousands of different forms and styles.<sup>67</sup>

Anderson's *Imagined Communities* also suffers because the author does not explain that overwhelmingly cultural forms of Nationalism, such as those found in Wales and Scotland, are constructed in opposition to imperialism, rather than contributing to it. While he does hint at the ideological differences between imperialism and cultural Nationalism in its purest form, even clarifying the differences between Nationalism and racism, and claiming that '[t]he dreams of racism actually have their origin in ideologies of *class*, rather than in those of nation',<sup>68</sup> the existence of such purely cultural Nationalist movements as those of Scotland and Wales are not fully explored.

When discussing language, meanwhile, Anderson correctly states:

Language is not an instrument of exclusion: in principle, anyone can learn any language. On the contrary, it is fundamentally inclusive, limited only by the fatality of Babel: no one lives long enough to learn *all* languages.<sup>69</sup>

Nevertheless, he does not acknowledge that this potential inclusivity of language may be accepted and celebrated in some forms of Nationalism, instead claiming that languages are treated merely 'as *emblems* of nation-ness, like flags, costumes, folk-dances, and the rest.'<sup>70</sup> The emphasis on language as a defining characteristic of an exclusive, hostile form of Nationalism has long been present within Nationalist theory. Elie Kedourie's *Nationalism* (1961), for example, is almost entirely focused

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<sup>67</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 129.

<sup>68</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 149.

<sup>69</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 122.

<sup>70</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 122.

on language, and is overwhelmingly critical of linguistic Nationalism, as the following passage clearly indicates:

. . . there is no definite clear-cut distinction between linguistic and racial nationalism . . . . a nation's language [is] peculiar to [a] nation only because such a nation constitute[s] a racial stock distinct from that of other nations.<sup>71</sup>

Benedict Anderson's concession that language 'is not an instrument of exclusion' is entirely absent here, as Kedourie criticizes the 'literary men' who 'invented' Nationalism, who 'had never exercised power, and appreciated little the necessities and obligations incidental to intercourse between states.'<sup>72</sup> His stance on Nationalism is expressed succinctly in the opening of the text, with the criticism that Nationalism is:

. . . obscure and contrived, the outcome of circumstances now forgotten and preoccupations now academic, the residue of metaphysical systems sometimes incompatible and even contradictory.<sup>73</sup>

Great emphasis has also been placed on language in Welsh texts which discuss Nationalism and Welsh writing. Despite asserting that 'some of the Anglo-Welsh in fact are Anglo only by the skin of their teeth',<sup>74</sup> in *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, Glyn Jones concurrently argues: 'The Anglo-Welsh are the often unwitting, as the Welsh-language writers are the conscious, inheritors of a specific culture.'<sup>75</sup> Rather than sharing the viewpoint of Saunders Lewis (adopted after his brief, failed flirtation with writing 'Anglo-Welsh' literature in *The Eve of Saint John*) that the English language in Wales is a corrupting influence, with a 'pure', 'undiluted' Welsh

<sup>71</sup>Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London: Hutchinson, 1961), pp. 71 - 72.

<sup>72</sup>Kedourie, *Nationalism*, pp. 70 - 71.

<sup>73</sup>Kedourie, *Nationalism*, p. 9.

<sup>74</sup>Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, p. 41.

<sup>75</sup>Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, p. 40.

language the only authentic, acceptable medium of writing, Jones sees the two languages in Wales as possessing their own separate but entirely valid heritage.

Indeed, it could be argued that for Glyn Jones, knowledge of both traditions is required in order to possess a fully-formed Welsh identity. As a youth growing up in a largely English-speaking society in Merthyr Tydfil, Jones found it:

. . . intolerable that I should be a Welshman, living in Wales, and yet ignorant of my Welsh heritage, the first in a seemingly endless family descent who was unable to speak the language of my ancestors, and so excluded from the Welsh community.<sup>76</sup>

Simultaneously, in an attempt to defend his choice to write in English, he sees Welsh-language society as having displayed ignorance and scorn towards English-speakers in Wales:

The unconscious rules the poet and the language stewing in the juice of my unconscious, if that mysterious brew has a language at all, is English; every line of poetry that has arisen unsought and unexpectedly in my mind, the words of every image and description, almost every beautiful and striking individual word, have all been English. I, and those Anglo-Welsh writers brought up in circumstances similar to mine, certainly did not reject the Welsh language. On the contrary, the Welsh language rejected us. This is true even of those of us who are deeply conscious of and love our Welsh heritage. On the other hand, while using cheerfully enough the English language, I have never written in it a word about any country other than Wales, or any people other than Welsh people.<sup>77</sup>

Like Harri Webb, whose poetry and journalism will be examined in a later chapter, Glyn Jones does not view the act of writing in either language as an intrinsically political one, and indeed believed Welsh writing in English to be necessary in order to fully reflect the bilingualism of Wales.

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<sup>76</sup>Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, p. 34.

<sup>77</sup>Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, p. 36.



Similar sentiments have been expressed by Gwyn Jones in his study of Welsh writing in English, *The First Forty Years: Some Notes on Anglo-Welsh Literature* (1957), in which he, too, defends the role of ‘Anglo-Welsh’ authors, implicitly refuting the assertion made by Saunders Lewis that the existence of such a school of writers is harmful to the Welsh Nationalist project:

Anglo-Welsh literature, so it seems to me, is the rendering articulate of that majority of Welshmen who cannot, do not, and will not make Welsh their first language. It follows that every Anglo-Welsh writer, passionately though he may proclaim his love of Wales and things Welsh, is a danger to the Welsh language . . . The Anglo-Welsh, though they are a danger to the Welsh language, must never be its enemy; and the Welsh Welsh, even if they are the true dancers before our tribal ark, will be unwise to try and impose an irresistible logic upon an immovable fact; they must accept that they cannot speak for, or even to, half their fellow-countrymen; while to the great world outside they may not speak at all.<sup>78</sup>

This represents a rare example of an English-language writer from Wales echoing the claims of many Welsh Nationalists that writing in English is ‘a danger to the Welsh language’, while also vehemently clarifying what he sees as the limitations of writing only in Welsh. For both Gwyn Jones and Glyn Jones, then, ‘Welsh writing’ cannot be defined using terms solely belonging to one linguistic tradition, and is, rather, an umbrella term comprising both Welsh- and English-language literature from Wales. Just as Glyn Jones makes a distinction between Welsh- and English-language traditions, both authors are making a clear separation between the content of a piece of Welsh writing and the language in which it is written. The status of ‘Welsh writer’ is, to them, dependent entirely on a writer’s chosen subject matter, which is reflected, indeed, in the title of Glyn Jones’s volume.

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<sup>78</sup>Gwyn Jones, *The First Forty Years: Some Notes on Anglo-Welsh Literature* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1957), p. 13.

We see, then, that the conclusions reached in both *The Dragon Has Two Tongues* and *The First Forty Years* are of somewhat more relevance to this thesis than those of a text such as Kedourie's *Nationalism*. When reading this latter text, we must remember that Kedourie, an Iraqi Jew at a time when Jews in Iraq suffered severe persecution during and following the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, is fully aware of the brutality associated with certain forms of Nationalism. As previously mentioned, Kedourie emphasizes the links between religion and Nationalism, asserting:

[The] transformation of religion into nationalist ideology is all the more convenient in that nationalists can thereby utilize the powerful and tenacious loyalties which a faith held in common for centuries creates.<sup>79</sup>

Although many of the points made in the text are valid, it should be remembered that Kedourie cannot envisage forms of Nationalism dissimilar to the ethnic exclusivity which blighted his youth in Iraq. This inability to acknowledge the many permutations of Nationalism is still common within theoretical discussion.

A glance at *Theorizing Nationalism* (1999), for example, which collects a number of critical essays on Nationalism written by theorists from a wide variety of backgrounds, reveals many attempts to essentialize and simplify Nationalism. John Dunn, as we have seen, calls it 'the starkest political shame of the twentieth century, the deepest, most intractable . . . blot on the political history of the world since the year 1900.'<sup>80</sup> Michael Ignatieff, meanwhile, asserts that Nationalism is 'a fiction of identity, because it contradicts the multiple reality of belonging. It insists on the

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<sup>79</sup>Kedourie, *Nationalism*, p. 76.

<sup>80</sup>Dunn, 'Nationalism', p. 27.

primacy of one of these belongings over all the others.’<sup>81</sup> Even the editor of the volume warns in his introduction against ‘tak[ing] the illiberal sting out of nationalism’, in the process ‘remov[ing] from it some of the very things that make nationalism philosophically interesting’.<sup>82</sup> It is significant that among the few references made in the volume to more broadly liberal, pacifistic forms, Welsh and Scottish Nationalism should be mentioned:

Earlier in this century, nationalist movements in Norway and Iceland were peaceful and democratic and present-day nationalisms in Belgium, Scotland, Quebec, and Wales are peaceful and democratic, fitting in well with a liberal conception of society.<sup>83</sup>

It is noteworthy that one of the foremost defenders of a liberal, inclusive Nationalism, and a figure whose arguments are repeatedly addressed by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*, is the Scottish Marxist-Nationalist Tom Nairn, who has expressed his hope that:

The Scots, the Welsh and the population of Northern Ireland may have the opportunity of exploring and developing nationhood within the new circumstances of “globalisation”, rather than the ancient, wretched ones of imperial contestation, warfare and racial dementia.<sup>84</sup>

Exceptions such as this aside, theorists of Nationalism, as a whole, do not possess a full enough understanding of - or indeed sufficient interest in - the sociological and historical factors which differentiate Welsh and Scottish

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<sup>81</sup>Michael Ignatieff, ‘Nationalism and the Narcissism of Minor Differences’, *Theorizing Nationalism*, pp. 91 - 102 (p. 94). Ignatieff’s argument in this essay is flawed, as he does not clarify how this differentiates Nationalism from other belief systems such as Marxism or feminism, which also seemingly contradict ‘the multiple reality of belonging’.

<sup>82</sup>Ronald Beiner, ‘Nationalism’s Challenge to Political Philosophy’, *Theorizing Nationalism*, pp. 1 - 25 (p. 12).

<sup>83</sup>Kai Nielsen, ‘Cultural Nationalism, Neither Ethnic nor Civic’, *Theorizing Nationalism*, pp. 119 - 30 (p. 121).

<sup>84</sup>Tom Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited* (London: Verso, 1997), p. 180.

Nationalism, in particular, from other, more destructive forms. It is for this reason that this thesis will mainly draw on principles established by theorists who comment directly on what may be termed ‘Celtic Nationalism’, and who display an informed understanding of Welsh, Scottish and Irish politics and/or literature. The Welsh philosopher J. R. Jones’s work, for example, was greatly appreciated by Saunders Lewis, who wrote of his books and pamphlets in literary terms, naming them ‘the classics of our Nationalism’.<sup>85</sup>

It is important to realize, however, that not all theories which relate to Welsh Nationalism originate from Wales. The importance of Johann Herder to this thesis has already been noted, and similar mention should be made of theorists such as Leopold Kohr and E. F. Schumacher, whose ideas not only relate to Wales but also, it could be claimed, engage with issues not discussed at any great length in the work of more cultural Nationalists such as J. R. Jones. In *Is Wales Viable?* (1971), for example, a text dedicated ‘To Gwynfor Evans, In Admiration’, the Austrian-born economist Kohr asserts that the health of the Welsh economy is dependent on the success of the Nationalist project. He refutes the claim that the Welsh economy could not support independence:

... if the cause of [Wales’s] weakness is not an impoverishing dearth of resources, what is it?

*The answer is very simple. It is the impoverishing effect suffered by every peripheral economy serving a centre located outside its natural confines and, as a result, being unavoidably, though rarely maliciously, drained in the direction of that centre.*<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Saunders Lewis, ‘Rhagair’ [‘Preface’], in *Tynged yr Iaith* [*The Fate of the Language*] (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 1972), pp. 2 - 6 (p. 2). Original Welsh-language source: ‘clasuron ein cenedlaetholdeb ni’.

<sup>86</sup>Leopold Kohr, *Is Wales Viable?* (Llandybie: Christopher Davies, 1971), p. 21.

The German-born economist E. F. Schumacher expresses similar sentiments, stating:

It is . . . obvious that men organised in small units will take better care of *their* bit of land or other natural resources than anonymous companies or megalomaniac governments which pretend to themselves that the whole universe is their legitimate quarry.<sup>87</sup>

We should therefore not exclude theoretical writing from outside Wales, Scotland and Ireland if it can offer a contribution to a study such as this. Neither should we neglect referring to texts which are mainly political in nature rather than literary, as this thesis aims to interrogate the relationship between Nationalist politics and literature, necessitating a basic understanding of the political situation in Wales, Scotland and Ireland during the period of study. While the studies of Anderson, Kedourie and others are often lauded as seminal treatises on Nationalism, they rarely, if ever, concede that there is considerable ideological variety within Nationalism.

Despite this, such studies do sometimes acknowledge two key ideas of this study: the separation between the political and cultural aspects of Nationalism, and the sheer variety of ideas and ideologies espoused by Nationalist thinkers and writers. Each chapter of the thesis will concentrate on one of five key aspects of Nationalism, comparing the varying approaches taken by two or more writers from Wales, Scotland and/or Ireland. The first chapter will examine the importance of language in Nationalist writing, concentrating on the linguistic experiments of three writers, beginning with J. M. Synge, whose pre-1922 representations of the Irish language through English provided a model for the early English-language writing of Saunders

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<sup>87</sup>E. F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful* (London: Bland & Briggs, 1973), pp. 31 - 32.

Lewis. This in turn will be compared to the highly controversial writing of Caradoc Evans, who consciously misrepresented the Welsh language in his novels and short stories for satirical purposes. It will establish language as one of the core, foundational aspects of Nationalism, particularly in Wales, and establish certain key principles regarding language which will apply to later chapters. Struggles for language survival have been intimately linked to Nationalist upheaval, from the writings of Herder, who believed that ‘the defining feature of ethnicity was language’,<sup>88</sup> to the beliefs of Saunders Lewis, who came to see far more promise in the youthful supporters of *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg* than in the broader constitutional Nationalism espoused by members of *Plaid Cymru*. Another key aspect of this chapter is a discussion of the role played by literary criticism in the debate on language in Wales, particularly focusing on criticism surrounding the work of Caradoc Evans, showing that political debate was essentially being ‘devolved’ into the cultural sphere.

The second chapter will attempt a deeper examination of the reasoning behind writing from a Nationalist perspective, focusing on the work of Emyr Humphreys and Islwyn Ffowc Elis, two authors who span the English and Welsh-language traditions in Wales. Their work perfectly encapsulates the key difference between writing for political reasons, as in the case of Islwyn Ffowc Elis, who consciously wrote populist, mass-appeal Welsh-language fiction in order to expand the readership of Welsh-language writing, and writing for a wider, international audience, as Emyr Humphreys does. While Elis makes his Nationalist sentiments explicitly clear in his writing,

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<sup>88</sup>Brooks, *Dan Lygaid y Gestapo*, p. 3. Original Welsh-language source: ‘nodwedd ddiffiniadol ethnigrwydd oedd iaith.’

imbuing his Nationalist characters with virtuous traits in a manner that he himself described as verging on propaganda, Humphreys often contradicts his own beliefs in his characterization, frequently portraying Nationalists as deluded and immoral.

The third chapter examines one of the ways in which Nationalist writers have sometimes adopted ideologies which are traditionally held to be contradictory to nation-centric doctrines, focusing on the interplay between Marxism and Nationalism in the poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid and Harri Webb. Although there exist great stylistic differences between the two poets, the political similarities between them are numerous. Despite the emphasis placed in *The Communist Manifesto* and similar texts on the apparent incompatibility of Marxism and Nationalism,<sup>89</sup> MacDiarmid and Webb espoused both ideologies at various times during their careers, and the chapter will chart their attempts at overcoming these incongruities. It will be suggested that one possible way of presenting the two ideologies in conjunction is through reference to the *gwerin*, a concept largely invented by the nineteenth-century Welsh writer O. M. Edwards, who claimed that Wales possessed a culturally and morally rich lower class. This notion is used by Webb, and arguably appropriated by MacDiarmid to a Scottish setting. Another key concept discussed in this chapter is the 'Caledonian antiszygy', a term first coined by Professor G. Gregory Smith in 1919, which

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<sup>89</sup>Marx and Engels wrote in *The Communist Manifesto* that:

The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got. Since the proletariat must first off acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the national class, must constitute itself *the* nation, it is, so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word. - Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 23.

As shall be discussed, there exists a range of Communist responses to Nationalism, from its apparent disavowal in *The Communist Manifesto*, to the later acceptance of certain national movements by Engels, to Lenin's endorsement of more 'proletarian' forms of Nationalism in *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination* (1914).

maintains that a meeting of opposites is a crucial part of the Scottish national character. The chapter will make an attempt to apply this concept to the work of Harri Webb, and to Wales in general, positing the existence of a Welsh/Celtic antiszygy, and emphasizing the similarities in the politics of Wales and Scotland at this time.

The fourth chapter examines gender and Nationalism in Welsh writing, briefly addressing the apparent incompatibility of gender- and nation-based ideologies, centred on comments made by Virginia Woolf. However, there is a broader focus to this chapter, which examines the representation of concepts such as the 'Nationalism of the hearth', the separation of society into gendered public and private spheres, and the association of femininity with nature. It also strengthens the argument that writing in support of Nationalist concepts is not exclusively the product of writers who have professed some allegiance to politicized Nationalism. It will be argued that through his treatment of gender issues, Rhys Davies, a lifelong Labour party supporter, displays some implicitly Nationalist sympathies, as does Hilda Vaughan, who was not an overt supporter of political Nationalism. Furthermore, it will be seen that writers from a variety of political backgrounds use similar tropes and imagery when writing on gender and nation, leading to the conclusion that gendered concepts of the nation are not dependent on a writer's acceptance of Nationalist ideas.

The final chapter will attempt to address the relationship between Nationalism and religion in the work of four poets from Wales and Ireland, writing in both Welsh and English. In the poetry of R. S. Thomas, Austin Clarke, Patrick Kavanagh, and Waldo Williams, we are presented with a range of unique responses to both religion



and Nationalism. In the cases of R. S. Thomas and Waldo Williams, we see that some of the most important poetry about Welsh Nationalism during this period emerged from outside the Nonconformity which is often claimed to have been so central to it. Since the individual religious beliefs of all four poets differ, it would follow that their responses to religious Nationalism would also vary. The discussion of the work of Patrick Kavanagh in this chapter also provides something of a parallel to the analysis of J. M. Synge earlier in the thesis, as the post-1922 work of Kavanagh reveals that during this period, Irish writers were free to (self-consciously) 'ignore' Nationalism in their work, which was difficult, if not impossible, during the Civil War which led to the creation of the Irish Free State.

In Ireland after 1922, then, it will become apparent that the dominant arena in which Nationalism was discussed was that of politics rather than culture, while the opposite was true of Wales and Scotland during the same period, with this lack of political representation politicizing Welsh and Scottish writing. As writers with strong Nationalist sympathies - such as Saunders Lewis, R. S. Thomas, Hugh MacDiarmid, and Islwyn Ffowc Elis - began to accrue greater influence and acclaim, other writers, whether consciously or not, would naturally begin to include certain Nationalist subtexts in their work. Put simply, the examples shown in this thesis demonstrate that the dominant ideology in Welsh literary culture between 1925 and 1966 was Nationalism, and that many writers were complicit in this system, whatever their own political beliefs. In her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1988), the postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak comes to a similar conclusion, claiming that postcolonial critics have been complicit in the dominant imperialist mode of thought.

While not devaluing or contradicting Spivak's argument, this thesis inverts her claim. If we accept that Wales and Welsh writing are postcolonial, and that we can define the Welsh as embodying the role of the subaltern, then the dominance of Nationalism in Welsh writing before 1966 is of great theoretical importance. Essentially, it can be claimed that the voice of the subaltern held far more influence in Welsh culture than it is usually afforded, and that it actually influenced those to whom Welsh Nationalism was a secondary concern, or were openly hostile towards it. However, it should be remembered that this apparent victory for the Nationalist cause was only possible because of the lack of representation for Welsh Nationalism in British politics at the time. The prevalence of Nationalist ideas in literature during this period does not contradict the claim that Wales is in some way postcolonial, as it was still under-represented in mainstream political discourse. Neither did the process of legitimizing Wales end with the election of Gwynfor Evans in 1966; this date has been chosen to mark the chronological end of this study because it represents the beginning of the shift of Welsh Nationalism from culture into representative democracy, and the reduction of its influence within literature.

The five distinct aspects of Welsh Nationalism, discussed in each individual chapter, are evidence of the sheer scope and variety of Nationalist thought expressed through literature during this period, and of the number of texts which, either implicitly or explicitly, contain material which informs debate on Nationalism. In examining such a wide variety of texts and authors, it will hopefully become clear that the most sustained explorations of the topic were not being undertaken in the political sphere, but rather through cultural production. While theorists, critics and historians

have previously discussed this notion in relation to Wales, noting that the Welsh Nationalist movement of the twentieth century was almost exclusively founded by the culturally-knowledgeable intelligentsia, it will be suggested that a fuller understanding of this phenomenon is facilitated by comparison with the similar situation in Scotland, and contrasts with the differences found in the representation of Nationalism in Irish writing after 1922. Through such comparisons, it will be established that because of the postcolonial status of Wales, and the lack of any elected representation for Welsh Nationalism within Parliamentary politics before 1966, literature and criticism from Wales, explicitly in the Welsh language and somewhat more implicitly in English, became the primary forum in which Nationalist ideas were presented and discussed.

*Nationalism and Language in Welsh and Irish Writing*

From the inception of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru in 1925, the survival of the Welsh language has been one of its central concerns. In its early years, it may be argued, as David L. Adamson has, that it resembled a cultural movement more than a political party:

*Plaid Cymru* did not take on the objectives and strategies of a political party until after the Second World War. Rather, the movement existed primarily as a vehicle for the protection and promotion of the Welsh language and culture.<sup>1</sup>

To this day, this original emphasis has been maintained: it comprises supporters who are both left- and right-wing, one of their common interests being the continued existence of the Welsh language, regardless of their own ability to speak it. With this in mind, this chapter will discuss the ways in which the Welsh language is portrayed within Welsh writing in English, both before and after the formation of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru,<sup>2</sup> and how authors who profess Welsh Nationalist sympathies defend their decision to write through the medium of English. It will also highlight the importance of critics in the debate on language in Welsh writing, as much of the discussion on how Welsh should be presented in English-language texts, and whether a Welsh-speaking author can ever be truly authentic in his depiction of Wales using the English language, has taken place within literary criticism. The discussion is largely focused on Caradoc Evans, who, more than any other Welsh author writing in English, gained notoriety for his depiction of Welsh. It will, however, be argued that,

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<sup>1</sup>David L. Adamson, *Class, Ideology and the Nation* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), p. 124.

<sup>2</sup>While the thesis as a whole is concerned with texts written after 1925, the texts discussed in this chapter establish the link between Irish and Welsh writing which is crucial to the central argument of this study, and as such must be examined.

despite his lack of any public support for Nationalism, Evans's work is actually broadly sympathetic to some of its core tenets, and that his distortion of the Welsh language does not constitute a direct attack upon it, but rather on the Nonconformist society from which he sprang. The work of J. M. Synge will also be discussed, as he achieved similar notoriety in Ireland, most notably following the first production of *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), as will Saunders Lewis's *The Eve of Saint John*, which owes a great stylistic debt to Synge's work, and is also stylistically comparable to the stories of Caradoc Evans. As will become clear, J. M. Synge is emblematic of the differences in Irish writing before and after the establishment of the Irish Free State, producing work which filled the political void present in Ireland at the time, and providing a model for Welsh writing to do the same. As one of the key figures of twentieth-century Welsh Nationalism, as well as a highly influential Welsh-language writer, Saunders Lewis bridges the gap between the more cultural and purely political sides of Nationalism in Wales, while *The Eve of Saint John* shows the obvious influence of J. M. Synge, and the influence of Irish writing on twentieth-century Welsh writing as a whole.

Before beginning to discuss the work of the three writers, we should first clarify how their politics differed in relation to Irish and Welsh Nationalism, and were defined, indeed, by the very different political contexts in Wales and Ireland over the 40-year period covered by this chapter. The crucial difference is that Irish Nationalism had achieved many of its goals before the foundation of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru. Therefore, while Synge is writing amidst heated discussion regarding the possible creation of an Irish Free State, and his work is in part a reaction

to Irish Revivalism, it would be inaccurate to claim that the work of Caradoc Evans, written over a decade later, is a reaction to political Welsh Nationalism, as an organized Welsh Nationalist political party did not yet exist. Rather, Caradoc Evans is writing from a Socialist perspective of a staunchly Liberal Ceredigion, reacting against the Liberalism of politicians such as Lloyd George, which, in turn, informed the early development of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru. His satirizing of the Welsh language in the early texts should not be taken as a reaction against Welsh Nationalism, or the Welsh speakers who comprise many of its adherents. It was an attack on a specific class of Welsh, rural Nonconformists - although it should be noted that, following the formation of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru, Evans saw the Nationalist movement as 'a means by which politicians of essentially Liberal - Nonconformist complexion might seek to advance themselves.'<sup>3</sup> This chapter, then, will examine and compare the role played by the Irish and Welsh languages in the selected literary texts leading up to the formation of the Irish Free State and Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru, respectively.

It would be incorrect to suggest that all Welsh Nationalists place an identical emphasis on the importance of the Welsh language. Harri Webb, for example, proclaimed:

If the Blaid were to pursue some decorous course dictated by nothing more than sentimental regard for *yr hen iaith* or 'the Welsh way of life' or any of the other superficial and evasive attitudes which must inevitably flourish in a

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<sup>3</sup>John Harris, 'Caradoc Evans, 1878 - 1945: A Biographical Introduction', in Caradoc Evans, *Fury Never Leaves Us: A Miscellany of Caradoc Evans*, ed. John Harris (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1985), pp. 9 - 45 (p. 22). This analysis of the Party is clearly misinformed, however, as it was largely under the influence of Saunders Lewis during this early period, whose opposition to both Liberalism and Nonconformity is well documented.

subject nation, then undoubtedly it would earn more praise than blame. And every such tribute would be but a wreath on the coffin of Wales.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast, many prominent Nationalists placed a strong emphasis on the language as the ultimate signifier of Welsh identity, with literature regarded almost as an arena in which the future of the language was being decided. A key text in this respect is Saunders Lewis's *Is There an Anglo-Welsh Literature?* (1939), in which, as has already been discussed, Lewis argued that 'there is not a separate literature that is Anglo-Welsh, and that it is improbable that there ever can be that'.<sup>5</sup> He perceived the English language in Wales as artificial: 'There is a Welsh accent on our English, - it is the mark of our foreignness, - but there is no pure dialect.'<sup>6</sup> Such a claim can easily be applied to a study of Welsh writing in English: if we accept Lewis's argument, English-language writing which does not attempt to reflect (or construct) such a 'pure dialect' could, by definition, be considered a repudiation of Nationalism. It is clear how an understanding of Lewis's argument here could inform a reading of the work of Caradoc Evans, for example, in which the artificiality of his language is emphasized, in a concentrated attack on Welsh-speaking Nonconformist society.

Before turning to examine the work of other authors, however, we should first examine how Saunders Lewis's theories impact on his own early writing. Before beginning to write in the Welsh language, Lewis wrote *The Eve of Saint John*,<sup>7</sup> a brief, comedic play written in English. It follows the ultimately unsuccessful

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<sup>4</sup>Harri Webb, *No Half-Way House*, ed. Meic Stephens (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 1997), p. 208.

<sup>5</sup>Saunders Lewis, *Is There an Anglo-Welsh Literature?* (Cardiff: Urdd Graddedigion Prifysgol Cymru, 1939), p. 13.

<sup>6</sup>Lewis, *Is There an Anglo-Welsh Literature?*, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup>Although written before the formation of the Welsh Nationalist Party in 1925, the play deserves comment because of the apparent disparity between Lewis's later rejection of 'Anglo-Welsh' writing and the impetus behind this early work.

courtship of the unwilling Megan Morris and Harri Richard, with its central episode being the attempt made by Megan to marry the devil in order to escape Harri's advances, following the folk belief that if she were to leave the door of her cottage open on the Eve of Saint John, the devil would appear in human form. At the time of writing, Lewis seemed poised to become an 'Anglo-Welsh' author, having studied English Literature at Liverpool University. Later dismissed by its author, the language of the play may reflect his private education at a minor public school in Wallasey, in which 'he must have felt something of an outsider, and where he imbibed all the ideals - imperialistic, patriotic, jingoistic, monarchist, and Anglocentric - of the public schools.'<sup>8</sup> The play does not reflect any particular dialect spoken in Wales, but rather is an attempt at creating one, maintaining certain aspects of Welsh grammar and idiom, while investing it with a wholly artificial, mock-classical tone. As Lewis himself states, 'I have tried to suggest in English the rhythms and idioms of Welsh, and the play is practically a translation',<sup>9</sup> which explains the inclusion of such phrases as 'Be satisfied now with a plain man that has money to his back.'<sup>10</sup> (p. 15) and 'It's upset I am' (p. 18), neither of which would seem wholly out of place in the work of Caradoc Evans. It is less immediately apparent why Lewis chose to include examples of entirely synthetic phrasing, such as:

If it was after thy father thou wert taking, Megan Morris, I'd listen to thy talk.  
But it's thy mother's spirit is in thee, stiff-necked as thou art and the most  
fearful tongue of any girl in the county. (p. 15)

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<sup>8</sup>Bruce Griffiths, 'The Eve of Saint John and the Significance of the Stranger in the Plays of Saunders Lewis', *Welsh Writing in English: A Yearbook of Critical Essays*, 3 (1997), 63 - 77 (p. 63).

<sup>9</sup>Saunders Lewis, 'Foreword', in Saunders Lewis, *Dramâu Saunders Lewis: Y Casgliad Cyflawn, Cyfrol I* [*The Plays of Saunders Lewis: The Complete Collection, Volume I*], ed. Ioan Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996). All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

<sup>10</sup>A direct translation of the Welsh idiom *arian wrth gefn*.



From examples like this, it is clear that *The Eve of Saint John*, at times, resembles an attempt to repeat the linguistic experiments contained within the plays of J. M. Synge. As the almost cod-Irish tone of the above quotation makes clear, Saunders Lewis ‘felt the prose of the Irishman’s plays sufficiently close to the rhythms and patterns of Welsh to serve as a model for a writer wishing to forge an acceptable Anglo-Welsh idiom.’<sup>11</sup> Indeed, certain specific quotations from *The Playboy of the Western World* are stylistically indistinguishable from *The Eve of Saint John*, or from the work of Caradoc Evans, as when Christy Mahon asks Michael James, owner of the public house (or ‘shebeen’) in which the play is set, ‘Is it often the polis do be coming into this place, master of the house?’<sup>12</sup> There exists an important distinction between the two plays, however, in Synge’s appropriation and Anglicization of Gaelic words: despite Saunders Lewis asserting that *The Eve of Saint John* is ‘practically a translation’, this extends to grammar and syntax much more than it does vocabulary. Synge, on the other hand, uses words such as ‘streeler’ (p. 49), meaning a lazy, untidy fool, from the Gaelic *straille*, and ‘cnuceen’ (p. 34), or a small hill, from the Gaelic *cnoicín*, among several other examples. In his preface to *The Playboy of the Western World*, Synge offers a romanticized depiction of those from whom he claims to have learnt these words:

A certain number of the phrases I employ I have heard . . . from herds and fishermen along the coast from Kerry to Mayo, or from beggar-women and

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<sup>11</sup>John Harris, ‘Introduction: “The Banned, Burned Book of War”’, in Caradoc Evans, *My People* (Bridgend: Seren, 1987 [1915]), pp. 7 - 47 (p. 12). All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

<sup>12</sup>J. M. Synge, *The Playboy of the Western World*, ed. Malcolm Kelsall (London: A & C Black, 1997 [1907]), p. 13. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

ballad-singers nearer Dublin; and I am glad to acknowledge how much I owe to the folk-imagination of these fine people. (p. li)

In discussing Synge's knowledge and presentation of Gaelic, one must draw attention to *The Aran Islands* (1907), published shortly before the first performances of *The Playboy of the Western World*, in which Synge documents his experiences on the islands while attempting to expand his knowledge of the language. In reading the text, it becomes apparent that Synge considers the Gaelic-speaking inhabitants of the Aran Islands as entirely separate from the urban, modern Irish citizens of Dublin. At various times, Gaelic is presented as being primitive, beautiful in its simplicity, and apparently somehow connected with the natural world:

In some ways these men and women seem strangely far away from me. They have the same emotions that I have, and the animals have, yet I cannot talk to them when there is much to say, more than to the dog that whines beside me in a mountain fog.<sup>13</sup>

Synge clearly displays great admiration and affection towards Gaelic within the text here, but his attitude towards it is often at odds with that of the Irish Revivalist movement. As Angela Bourke notes, 'the self-appointed cultural police of the Gaelic League viewed him with deep distrust',<sup>14</sup> which may, in some part, be due to the presentation of the language in the text.<sup>15</sup>

Directly contradicting the aims of the Revivalists, Gaelic in *The Aran Islands* is not presented as a possible national language for the whole of Ireland, but rather as

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<sup>13</sup>J. M. Synge, *The Aran Islands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979 [1907]), p. 83. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

<sup>14</sup>Angela Bourke, 'Keening as Theatre: J. M. Synge and the Irish Lament Tradition', in *Interpreting Synge*, ed. Nicholas Grene (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 2000), pp. 67 - 79 (p. 68).

<sup>15</sup>It should be clarified that Synge's views on the use of Gaelic within public life and within literature were starkly different, as he made great use of it within his writing to enrich his English. It is for this reason that later Welsh writers such as Saunders Lewis considered him such an influential figure.

an idiom suited only to the old-fashioned rural way of life of what later became known as the Gaeltacht. Synge directly associates primitivism with use of the language: he describes one of the islands, Inishmaan, as a place 'where Gaelic is more generally used [than on Inis Mór], and the life is perhaps the most primitive that is left in Europe.' (p. 9). At one point, he directly transfers Gaelic syntax to English while translating Gaelic letters in his possession, using language similar to that of Caradoc Evans, including phrasing such as 'I am thinking there will not be loneliness on you' and 'I am getting a forgetfulness on all my friends and kindred' (pp. 80 - 81). In addition, Synge does not choose to represent the use of Gaelic on the Aran Islands as having anything to do with Nationalist politics, nor life on the islands as something that can be replicated throughout Ireland: it is simply a natural part of life in the area, as there is no alternative - as he says, 'In the older generation that did not come under the influence of the recent language movement, I do not see any particular affection for Gaelic.' (p. 85) It could be inferred from this that Synge is downplaying the importance of Gaelic within the Irish Nationalist project, and hinting, perhaps, that English is a suitable language for use in more urban areas.

Such controversy is, of course, not limited to what *The Aran Islands* implies about Gaelic: like Caradoc Evans, Synge faced fierce criticism for apparently misrepresenting the 'national character' of his country, centred on Christy Mahon's use of the word 'shifts' in *The Playboy of the Western World*, and its implied sexual connotations. The content of the play caused the now infamous 'Playboy riots' in Dublin's Abbey Theatre during its first production, the history of which is ably

summarized by Christopher Morash, who also points out that the riots were fundamentally rooted in Nationalist concerns:

The most frequently heard protest [among the audience] - 'that's not the West' - also indicates that Synge had offended an imaginative geography underpinned by fashionable notions of racial purity, in which the West of Ireland, as the part of the country most removed from English influence, was considered to be the last bastion of pure Irish virtues, uncorrupted by foreign modernity.<sup>16</sup>

Since the language spoken by the characters is implied to be Gaelic, Synge's use of the word 'shifts' could be taken as an assault on the morality of speakers of the language, in a similar way to the altogether more blatant, concentrated and motivated attack on Welsh Nonconformists undertaken by Caradoc Evans. In creating such controversy, Synge was, perhaps not entirely intentionally, drawing attention to the deep divisions in Irish society at the time, and, more importantly for this study, the highly politicized nature of Irish writing before the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922.

In this, we can identify a key difference between the uses of the Irish and Welsh languages made by Synge and Saunders Lewis, respectively, in *The Playboy of the Western World* and *The Eve of Saint John*. Synge did not see any great need to overcome linguistic boundaries in Ireland:

Synge wished to keep a division between the life of the western peasant and the reality of modern life. Irish was fine as a peasant language, but he was suspicious of any broader cultural and political significance it might have.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Christopher Morash, 'All Playboys Now: The Audience and the Riot', in *Interpreting Synge*, pp. 135 - 150 (p. 144).

<sup>17</sup>Alan Tittley, 'Synge and the Irish Language', in *The Cambridge Companion to J. M. Synge*, ed. P. J. Mathews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 92 - 103 (p. 97).

This attitude could, perhaps, be compared to that of Matthew Arnold, who saw the Celtic languages as somewhat antiquarian, stating that:

The fusion of all the inhabitants of these islands into one homogenous, English-speaking whole, the breaking down of barriers between us, the swallowing up of separate provincial nationalities, is a consummation to which the natural course of things irresistibly tends; it is a necessity of what is called modern civilisation . . .<sup>18</sup>

In contrast, *The Eve of Saint John* represents a reconciliation between Welsh and English culture, which attempts to imbue English-language writing with the dignity with which Lewis sought to provide the Welsh language in later plays such as *Blodeuwedd* (1948). The play reflects his perception of the language of ‘[Cardiganshire] shepherds, in the inn-kitchens of remote hamlets, [who] use words and phrases that were common in Welsh poetry in the seventeenth century, words of noble race, phrases that give dignity to a speaker’ (p. 14), existing in spite of the presence of ‘trippers from Lancashire and workers from the English midlands’ (p. 14).

*The Eve of Saint John* is not unique in this respect: texts such as Margiad Evans’s *Country Dance* (1932) also feature similar, almost mock-classical dialogue in order to represent the Welsh language, such as in the following exchange between the protagonist, Ann Goodman, and her father’s master, Evan ap Evans:

“Thou art very saucy for a shepherd’s daughter: very high and haughty thou art, Ann Goodman: had thy father not been such a good shepherd, thou mightst have had cause to rue it before now! But I am not here to quarrel. I’ll ask thee a question. Wilt thou answer me straight like a man, since thou canst not speak to me like a woman?”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Matthew Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature and Other Essays* (London: J. M. Dent, 1910), p. 20.

<sup>19</sup>Margiad Evans, *Country Dance* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2006), p. 29. Since *Country Dance* is set in 1850, Evans’s use of such archaic language could be somewhat justified by the fact that it is a historical novella. It may also be argued, however, that linguistic differences between 1850 and 1932, the date of the text’s publication, are not as great as implied here.

Instances such as this are further heightened when juxtaposed with the standard English used when Margiad Evans is not attempting to represent the Welsh language. Taken as a whole, the language of her novella is not an attempt to precisely reflect the idioms, grammar and vocabulary of Welsh through the medium of English, for as Kirsti Bohata points out, Evans ‘used the Welsh language very deliberately as a signifier of cultural difference, but she also used these signifiers ignorantly, . . . making mistakes in her use of the Welsh language.’<sup>20</sup> Rather, it is an effort to emphasize the differences between the two languages to a largely English, ‘metropolitan audience’,<sup>21</sup> in much the same way as Synge emphasizes linguistic and cultural divisions in Ireland. The same can be said of *The Eve of Saint John*: perhaps it could be claimed that for Saunders Lewis, using non-standard English was his way of proclaiming the Welsh language to be free of English control and influence. Nor does the language used in *The Eve of Saint John* reflect any specific Welsh dialect, despite Lewis’s claims of being influenced and inspired by the ‘uncorrupted’ speech of Cardiganshire shepherds. Rather than being ‘practically a translation’ of their vernacular, it is in reality a ‘translation’ of formal, literary language. This, too, could be explained by Lewis’s political beliefs: he may here be bypassing regional dialects in order to create a unified, literary language for use by the whole of Wales, a technique later claimed by M. Wynn Thomas to have also been used by Emyr Humphreys, who ‘writes in a plain manner, avoiding any egregious features that

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<sup>20</sup>Kirsti Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 121.

<sup>21</sup>Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited*, p. 121.

identify [his writing] as Welsh. This is his anti-regionalism operative at the level of language.<sup>22</sup>

The impetus behind such an attempt to create an artificial, Welsh-derived written dialect in English stems from Lewis's Nationalist politics, and his contention that the English language in Wales is unlike that of Ireland, 'rich in traditional idiom and folklore and folksong, and capable of use in a poetry which was not "literary poetry," and contained no echoes or rhythms of the English literary tradition.'<sup>23</sup>

Similar statements are made by other writers: Glyn Jones, for example, claimed that 'Attempts have been made to draw parallels between the Anglo-Welsh and the Anglo-Irish . . . To me there seem few resemblances . . .',<sup>24</sup> a highly contentious statement, especially when we consider the similarities between the work of Synge and that of both Saunders Lewis and Caradoc Evans. Jones claims, without any explanation, that 'One can call Yeats or Joyce an Irish writer without ambiguity in a way one could not call Dylan Thomas a Welsh writer',<sup>25</sup> another controversial statement which, it could be claimed, places great importance on the Welsh language,<sup>26</sup> while simultaneously devaluing the role of the Gaelic language in the creation of such works as *The Playboy of the Western World*.

As with Saunders Lewis, the influence of J. M. Synge is also detectable in the work of Caradoc Evans: in his introduction to *My People* (1915), John Harris again identifies Synge as among the English-language authors Evans read at the time of

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<sup>22</sup>M. Wynn Thomas, *Internal Difference* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), pp. 76 - 77.

<sup>23</sup>Lewis, *Is There an Anglo-Welsh Literature?*, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup>Glyn Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), p. 44.

<sup>25</sup>Jones, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, p. 44.

<sup>26</sup>A seemingly paradoxical statement when we consider that Glyn Jones's own literary output was written in the medium of English.

writing the text (p. 12), whose successes in appropriating Gaelic vocabulary, idioms and grammar may well have inspired him to attempt a similar experiment. It is clear from the examples of the three writers examined in this chapter alone that the influence of Irish writing on literature in Wales in the early twentieth century, both before and after the formation of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru, was key to its development.

The controversy which arose from Evans's stylistic choices cannot be overstated. As Gwyn Jones notes, 'with Caradoc Evans the war-horn was blown, the gauntlet thrown down, the gates of the temple shattered.'<sup>27</sup> In *My People* and subsequent texts, Evans sought to draw attention to what he saw as the hypocritical piousness of Welsh-speaking, Nonconformist West Wales, largely through the use of a mock-Biblical tone, coupled with 'a vividly peculiar English idiolect, the equivalent of redskin-speak in old cowboy films, that made the Welsh-speaking community appear to be condemning itself out of its own mouth.'<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the hybrid language which Evans chose to use in his texts cannot be separated from his satirical condemnations of Nonconformity, as John Harris explains in his introduction to *My People*:

The biblical cadence lends Caradoc's narrative an air of authoritative proclamation: simple, often majestic, and suggestive also of parable and myth. Yet his Old Testament prose has another function, becoming a satiric weapon for attacking those who would commandeer biblical language and precepts for their own dark ends. (p. 10)

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<sup>27</sup>Gwyn Jones, *The First Forty Years: Some Notes on Anglo-Welsh Literature* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1957), p. 8.

<sup>28</sup>M. Wynn Thomas, 'Hidden Attachments: Aspects of the Relationship Between the Two Literatures of Modern Wales', *Welsh Writing in English: A Yearbook of Critical Essays*, 1 (1995), 145 - 63 (p. 146).



According to M. Wynn Thomas, the influence and infamy of Caradoc Evans was so pervasive that ‘for a generation thereafter Anglo-Welsh writing seemed to Welsh-language writers to bear the mark of Caradoc like the mark of the Beast.’<sup>29</sup> In fact, the notoriety some feel is synonymous with the name of Caradoc Evans has survived for far more than a generation. As late as 2002, Welsh-language children’s author T. Llew Jones mounted a furious attack on *My People*, in a brief piece, ‘Gelyn y Bobol’ [‘Enemy of the People’], in a biographical collection provocatively entitled *Fy Mhobol I* [*My People*] (2002). It is the stylistic qualities of Evans’s work and in particular his distortion of the Welsh language which T. Llew Jones sees as the most destructive aspect of his work:

I firmly believe by now that the malicious and insulting way in which Caradog [sic] used the idioms and forms of the Welsh language was the unforgivable crime he committed. We could have forgiven him the grotesque characters. The people of Rhyd Lewis and the surrounding area could have said, ‘They are not us’. But the language is a part of us all, and when he mutilated it in order to ‘play to the gallery’ for his English audience, he went beyond forgiveness.<sup>30</sup>

From this quotation, we can infer that, for T. Llew Jones, the apparent criticism of the Welsh language is also an implicit condemnation of the Welsh people; the behaviour and morality of characters in the short stories of Caradoc Evans are perhaps of secondary importance to his apparent denunciation of the language itself, although he does draw attention to the portrayal of the people of Ceredigion as ‘adulterers and

<sup>29</sup>Thomas, ‘Hidden Attachments: Aspects of the Relationship Between the Two Literatures of Modern Wales’, 146.

<sup>30</sup>T. Llew Jones, *Fy Mhobol I* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 2002), p. 140. Original Welsh-language source: ‘Rwy’n credu’n siŵr erbyn hyn mai’r ffordd faleisus a sarhaus y defnyddiodd Caradog [sic] idiomaau a ffurfiau’r iaith Gymraeg oedd y trosedd anfaddeuol a gyflawnodd e. Fe allen ni fod wedi maddau iddo fe’r cymeriadau *grotesque*. Fe allai pobol Rhyd Lewis a’r cylch fod wedi dweud, “Nid ni yw’r rheina”. Ond mae’r iaith yn rhan ohonom i gyd, a phan aeth e i lurgunio honno er mwyn “chware i’r galeri” i’w gynulleidfa Seisnig, fe aeth tu hwnt i faddeuant.’

cheating hypocrites and as abysmally stupid and illiterate people; creatures that were not much better than the animals they had on their rural farms.’<sup>31</sup> For him, the linguistic ‘betrayal’ of Caradoc Evans negates any possible artistic merit of *My People*,<sup>32</sup> thus forming an important distinction between Evans’s work and that of Saunders Lewis, who, in *The Eve of Saint John*, attempted to create an Anglo-Welsh literary dialect for entirely different reasons:

Caradog [sic] did not ‘create’ a language for his characters in *My People*. What he did . . . was use the beautiful idioms of the spoken language of the Rhydlewys area, and by turning them into English, mutilating them in a completely devilish fashion, so that the characters who used them in his stories appeared animalistically stupid and primitively false.<sup>33</sup>

An interesting note is that Saunders Lewis, unlike T. Llew Jones, seems to have considered Evans’s linguistic experiments as a positive development, and saw him as ‘a writer, like Joyce, seeming to “refresh” the English language, “to create from it a personal, new and particular language, before English can be a means of artistic creation for them.”’<sup>34</sup> It may be true that, as a Nonconformist Welsh speaker from Ceredigion, Jones felt that the work of Caradoc Evans directly criticized his own background. But the arresting difference between the viewpoints of Lewis and Jones

<sup>31</sup>Jones, *Fy Mhobol I*, p. 136. Original Welsh-language source: ‘godinebwyr a rhagrithwyr twyllodrus ac fel pobol affwysol o dwp ac anlythrennog; rhyw fodau nad oedden nhw fawr iawn gwell na’r anifeiliaid oedd gyda nhw ar eu ffermydd gwledig.’

<sup>32</sup>This reaction could be compared to that faced by James Joyce from certain Irish critics on the publication of *Dubliners* (1914).

<sup>33</sup>Jones, *Fy Mhobol I*, p. 138. Original Welsh-language source: ‘Nid “gwneud” iaith wnaeth Caradog [sic] i’r cymeriadau yn *My People*. . . . Yr hyn wnaeth e . . . oedd defnyddio idiomau pert yr iaith lafar yn ardal Rhydlewys, ac wrth eu troi nhw i’r Saesneg, eu llurgunio nhw mewn ffordd hollol ddieflig, nes gwneud i’r cymeriadau oedd yn eu defnyddio nhw yn y storïau ymddangos yn anifeilaidd o dwp a chyntefig o ffals.’

<sup>34</sup>John Harris, ‘Afterword: The Evanses at Brynawelon’, in Caradoc Evans, *Morgan Bible & Journal 1939 - 44* (Aberystwyth: Planet, 2006), pp. 169 - 95 (p. 186). All further references are to this edition and are given in the text. The Saunders Lewis quotation given here, translated by T. Robin Chapman, is from his review of *Morgan Bible*, which appeared in *Y Faner*.

is that both Caradoc Evans and Saunders Lewis were attempting to create a Modernist literature for Wales, while the work of T. Llew Jones, aimed at a juvenile audience, was still very much rooted in the Realist tradition. As a fellow Modernist writer, Lewis would have understood the artistic reasoning behind the work of Caradoc Evans, if not, perhaps, the political impetus:

Saunders Lewis saw Caradoc as a 'masterly artist' and in his review of *Morgan Bible* placed the emphasis squarely on its language: 'it builds a world - unique, constant, distinguishable as to character and outline.'<sup>35</sup>

Similar sentiments to those of Saunders Lewis are expressed by Aneirin Talfan Davies in *Astudio Byd* [*Studying the World*] (1967), in which he mounts a defence of Caradoc Evans's work. Despite essentially implying that his linguistic innovations are a failed experiment, Davies praises Evans for being innovative, and for realizing the essential differences between the Welsh and English languages:

It is true enough that it is difficult for us to accept the linguistic conventions he invented, but on the other hand it must be considered a virtue that he realized he could not convey through standard English the lives of characters who live their everyday lives in Welsh. This was an important discovery, and viewed one way, Caradog [sic] Evans, in doing this, was acknowledging the distinctiveness of Wales and her people.<sup>36</sup>

Above all, perhaps, Davies defends Evans's rights as an artist, and argues that it would be counterproductive for him to offer a purely Realist portrayal of the Welsh language:

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<sup>35</sup>Harris, 'Caradoc Evans, 1878 - 1945', in *Fury Never Leaves Us*, p. 43.

<sup>36</sup>Aneirin Talfan Davies, *Astudio Byd* (Llandybie: Llyfrau'r Dryw, 1967), p. 9. Original Welsh-language source: 'Mae'n ddigon gwir ei bod yn anodd i ni dderbyn y confensiwn ieithyddol a ddyfeisiwyd ganddo, ond ar y llaw arall rhaid ei gyfrif yn rhinwedd ynddo iddo sylweddoli na allai gyfleu bywyd cymeriadau sy'n byw eu bywyd bob dydd yn y Gymraeg, mewn Saesneg safonol. Yr oedd hyn yn ddarganfyddiad o bwys, ac ar un olwg, yr oedd Caradog [sic] Evans, wrth wneud hyn, yn cydnabod arwahanrwydd Cymru a'i phobl.'

There is one important thing to remember: the artist, whether a poet or an author, is not a photographer, exactly transcribing the language of his society, nor its 'life'. The artist creates something new. He has his own voice, and we condemn him in vain if we do not appreciate him. I am not fond of the crow's croak; but there is no doubt that it is distinctively hers, and I cannot change it.<sup>37</sup>

Davies's argument is an occasionally surprising and arresting one, which seeks to overturn the criticisms levelled against Evans over the years, and has great implications for critical debate on the role of the Welsh and English languages in Welsh writing, not least because his work, perhaps most notably *Dylan: Druid of the Broken Body* (1964), played an important role in early criticism of 'Anglo-Welsh' Modernism. His arguments, although only sparingly making mention of Caradoc Evans, can be used to see language in the work of authors such as Emyr Humphreys in a new light. It could be argued that they are 'exactly transcribing' the Welsh language, meaning that, for Aneurin Talfan Davies, the artistic value of a stylistically original and controversial writer such as Evans surpasses that of an author like Humphreys who does not attempt such stylistic innovation in his representation of Welsh.

Another valid point made by Davies is that, in criticizing Welsh society, Evans was, in essence, demonstrating his love for it, displaying a proto-Nationalistic outlook: 'the truth is, that the surest evidence for Caradog [sic] Evans's attachment towards his nation was his anger and hatred towards what he considered to be

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<sup>37</sup>Davies, *Astudio Byd*, p. 15. Original Welsh-language source: 'Y mae un peth pwysig i'w gofio: nid ffotograffydd yw'r artist, boed fardd neu lenor, yn copïo'n fanwl gywir iaith ei gymdeithas, na chwaith ei "bywyd". Creu rhywbeth newydd a wna'r artist. Y mae iddo'i lais ei hun, ac ofer yw inni'i gondemnio am nad ydym yn ei hoffi. Nid hoff gennyf grawc y frân; ond nid oes amau taw hi piau'r llais, ac ni allaf ei newid.'

weaknesses within it.’<sup>38</sup> This becomes apparent in his correspondence in the *Western Mail*, in which he often proclaims his desire for Wales to become a better, ‘brighter and more Christianlike’<sup>39</sup> place, albeit in this instance by ‘[burning] every chapel . . . to the ground and [raising] a public-house . . . on the ashes thereof.’<sup>40</sup> This touches upon an important reason why the work of Caradoc Evans created such controversy, which persists to this day: the very fact that he was, on the whole, writing about people he was familiar with, having lived in the same area for so long, and having been part of the same society. He is not an outsider writing about Wales, attempting to interpret its customs and language for an English audience, but a Welshman challenging the community to which he used to belong. If it is mentioned, however, Evans’s cultural background is used only to heighten criticism of his work, as in the review of *Capel Sion* (1916) published in *The Western Mail*, and reprinted in T. L. Williams’s *Writers of Wales: Caradoc Evans* (1970): ‘It is charitable to believe that his knowledge of the language is of the slightest; if his idiotic representation of the talk of the peasantry is not due to ignorance, then may the Lord forgive him!’<sup>41</sup> This reviewer’s ‘charitable’ belief could not be further from the truth, as it is apparent that while at the beginning of his journalistic career, Evans ‘used to experience enormous difficulties over even the most routine stories because he was in the habit of thinking and composing in Welsh and then laboriously translating into English.’<sup>42</sup> It

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<sup>38</sup>Davies, *Astudio Byd*, p. 9. Original Welsh-language source: ‘y gwir yw, mai’r dystiolaeth sicraf i ymlyniad Caradog [sic] Evans wrth ei genedl oedd ei ddieter a’i gasineb tuag at yr hyn a dybiai ef yn ffaeleddau ynddi.’

<sup>39</sup>Caradoc Evans, ‘Letter to *Western Mail*, 27/11/1915’, in *Fury Never Leaves Us*, pp. 143 - 144 (p. 143).

<sup>40</sup>Evans, ‘Letter to *Western Mail*, 27/11/1915’, p. 143.

<sup>41</sup>T. L. Williams, *Writers of Wales: Caradoc Evans* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1970), pp. 1 - 2.

<sup>42</sup>Williams, *Writers of Wales: Caradoc Evans*, p. 20.

is tempting to surmise from this that his stylistic choices may have initially arisen because of this inability to communicate his ideas effectively through the medium of English, and he was later able to take advantage of this in creating his experimental style.

It could not be said, however, that Caradoc Evans is explicitly and directly condemning the Welsh language on moral grounds. Despite critical claims to the contrary, a text such as *My People* is not critical of the Welsh language in the same way as the Blue Books report of 1847, for example.<sup>43</sup> The Welsh language is never *blamed* for the moral repugnancy of the characters who speak it: it is simply a medium to communicate their basest desires. Two things are to blame for his characters' actions: the remote, insular settings of many of his stories and novels (creating what T. L. Williams calls 'a savage satire on the pastoral life'<sup>44</sup>), and, above all, the rigid Nonconformity which dominates the society. This critique of a branch of religion closely linked with Welsh-speaking culture is perhaps the reason why Evans's work has been defined so often by critics as an attack on Welsh life, culture, history and tradition.

Evans was fully aware, however, that Welsh-language society and Nonconformity were not one and the same; the Welsh language is used in his work to signify Nonconformity's alleged hypocrisy. This is particularly clear in *Morgan Bible* (1943), perhaps the most incisive and inflammatory condemnation of religion in Evans's later literary career. Early in the text, a schoolhouse is described as

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<sup>43</sup>The Blue Books report was an enquiry into Welsh education made by three English commissioners who spoke no Welsh, and largely blamed the perceived inadequacy of schools in Wales, as well as the apparent ignorance and immorality of the Welsh in general, on the Welsh language.

<sup>44</sup>Williams, *Writers of Wales: Caradoc Evans*, p. 58.

displaying a number of translations of important Welsh phrases on the wall, the first of which are:

Duw - God, Iesu Grist - Jesus Christ, Mair - Mary, Money - Arian, Punt - Pound, Swllt - Shilling, Ceiniog - Penny . . . Pris - Price, Dim Digon - Not Enough, Arian Yw Y Cyfaill Goreu - Money Is The Best Friend . . . (p. 6)

The list of phrases tellingly ends with ‘Angladd - Funeral, Bedd - Grave’, strongly hinting that religion, and the pursuit of wealth, are the only things of importance in Welsh-speaking Nonconformist society, a theme later revisited when a preacher praises Nonconformity and scorns Anglicanism on the grounds that, as opposed to the “English God”, “The Welsh God puts money in our pockets.” (p. 89).<sup>45</sup> The description of the Welsh-English chart in the schoolhouse marks one of the first examples in the text of what appears to be the presence of the authorial voice of Caradoc Evans, which is much more apparent in *Morgan Bible* than in his pre-1925 output. In *My People*, *Capel Sion* and *My Neighbours*, the hypocrisy and failings of Nonconformity are implied through the actions of Evans’s characters; in *Morgan Bible*, however, there are instances of the narration explicitly and forcefully echoing his well-publicized opinions about religion:

The Welshman is never happy for long. His mind is seldom free of capel religion and the doubts and fears and omens that arise from it. A happy Welshman is as rare as a bee in the snow. If he takes no thought of tomorrow, his past deeds are ever at his heels. Though he does not believe in God, he knows the Devil is waiting for him and will take him down into Hell. (p. 26)

The Welsh have no God and capel is a playhouse where one hears tales about a being who is sometimes a good fairy and sometimes a good ogre. (p. 48)

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<sup>45</sup>A similarly negative picture of wealth-obsessed Nonconformists is presented in R. S. Thomas’s ‘The Minister’, discussed in a later chapter.

In his correspondence with the *Western Mail*, republished in the miscellany *Fury Never Leaves Us*, Evans defends his appropriation of the Welsh language, choosing to highlight some less controversial examples of his language from *My People*, again centred on religion:

... 'brawddeg' or 'ceg' is a good rendering for mouth and ... 'Iesu Bach Glân' or 'Iesu Bach Gwyn' and 'Y Dyn Mawr' or 'Y Gŵr Mawr' are common phrases. (My spelling of these Welsh words may be wrong: in school I was not taught anything, except that the face of the man in the pulpit was the face of God.)<sup>46</sup>

Despite these assertions, it is clear to Welsh speakers that 'Big Man', which Evans translates here as 'Y Dyn/Gŵr Mawr', is an inaccurate and contentious rendering of the Welsh 'Bod Mawr', more accurately rendered in English as 'Great Being'. There are further examples of Caradoc Evans intentionally misrepresenting the Welsh language in order to satirize Welsh Nonconformity, such as the references throughout his controversial play *Taffy* (1923) to the deacons of Capel Sion as 'Big Heads', for example. As much as Evans portrays the leaders of Welsh Nonconformity as immoral, hypocritical and backward-looking through their actions, his language provides an opportunity to satirize the Nonconformist institution itself. His narration, in particular:

... instantly suggests that the Welsh are a lost tribe of Israel, or at any rate a forgotten survival of some ancient race, at once oriental and occidental, which has mysteriously escaped the evolution of Western civilisation.<sup>47</sup>

We can identify two different targets for Evans to satirize, then, as well as his obvious criticism of the hypocrisy of Welsh Nonconformity: in his narration, he implicitly

<sup>46</sup>Evans, 'Letter to *Western Mail*, 27/11/1915', in *Fury Never Leaves Us*, p. 144.

<sup>47</sup>Mary Jones, 'A Changing Myth: The Projection of the Welsh in the Short Stories of Caradoc Evans', *The Anglo-Welsh Review*, 81 (1985), 90 - 6 (pp. 90 - 91).



mocks the dependence of Welsh Nonconformist society on outmoded traditions and ideas, while in his dialogue and moments of characterization, he criticizes the inability of the followers of Welsh Nonconformity to break from these traditions. None of these criticisms specifically target the Welsh language or nationhood as being somehow responsible for such failings in the Welsh populace.

In 'The Talent Thou Gavest', for example, which appears in *My People*, a young shepherd named Eben believes he has been called upon by God to become a preacher, but is ill-prepared for the work such a career entails: 'His life was lonely; books were closed against him, because he had not been taught to read; and the sense of the beautiful or the curious in Nature is slow to awake in the mind of the Welsh peasant.' (p. 74) Eventually, the weight of Nonconformist society's expectations, as well as his inability to meet them, lead Eben to commit suicide. Eben's life, then, becomes a metaphor for the narrowness of Welsh Nonconformity. In the contrast between the lofty, mock-Biblical narration and Eben's simpler language, Evans illustrates his belief that Welsh Nonconformity, in the words of John Harris, 'is the enemy of the imagination, repressive of art, literature, human feeling and the true welfare of the people' (p. 39). A parallel could be drawn here with the Welsh-language writer W. J. Gruffydd's poem, 'Gwladus Rhys' (1921), which tells of the suicide of a thirty-year-old woman trapped by the narrowness of Nonconformist society.<sup>48</sup> As will be discussed in the final chapter, Patrick Kavanagh's *The Great*

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<sup>48</sup>The gender of the titular character in 'Gwladus Rhys' is important, as it is implied that the patriarchal society in which she lived and where women were allowed very little sexual freedom contributed to her death. It should be noted that Evans also portrays Nonconformist society as being entirely patriarchal, with women treated as either a beast of burden or a Jezebel, in stories such as 'A Father In Sion' and 'The Woman Who Sowed Iniquity', both in *My People*.

*Hunger* is also significant in this respect, as it condemns the narrowness and sexual repression of the Catholic Church in rural Ireland.

The same separation between narration and dialogue discussed above is present in Evans's later work; while the stylistic innovation that characterizes his early fiction is still present in later texts (although Evans's distinctive way of portraying the Welsh language has noticeably diminished by the publication of the posthumous collection *The Earth Gives All and Takes All* (1946)), there are also several examples of the authorial voice overtly and satirically exposing the hypocrisies of Nonconformist society. In *Nothing to Pay* (1930), for example, the reader is alerted as to how

Welsh is the speech of the Sunday morning sermon but English is the evening's, because at the evening sermon feast sit many honourable Welsh who have forgotten their language.<sup>49</sup>

This brief passage again demonstrates that Caradoc Evans did not characterize the Welsh language itself as being any kind of corrupting influence, as many have suggested. On the contrary, it is the 'honourable' (and, by association, corrupt) Welsh who have turned to the English language, forgoing their own traditions: in the words of John Harris, 'That a good Welshman was preferable to an imitation Englishman Caradoc did not doubt.'<sup>50</sup> Yet, as T. L. Williams notes, 'the only novels in which the characters begin to approach (though they never reach) normality are those with English settings and characters . . .'<sup>51</sup> Although broadly correct, we may add to this

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<sup>49</sup>Caradoc Evans, *Nothing to Pay* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1989 [1930]), p. 209. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

<sup>50</sup>Harris, 'Caradoc Evans, 1878 - 1945', in *Fury Never Leaves Us*, p. 22.

<sup>51</sup>Williams, *Writers of Wales: Caradoc Evans*, p. 30. Williams does not explain his use of the term 'normality' here, and why it should be applicable to an English setting.

assertion that the Cardiff setting of *Nothing to Pay* is also noticeably different from the rural, west Wales setting of much of Evans's work. With the exception of the protagonist, Amos, there is somewhat less of the religious hypocrisy that surrounds the characters of *My People*, *Capel Sion* and *My Neighbours*, and, crucially, there is less of Evans's trademark linguistic style, perhaps reflecting the fact that Cardiff is mainly English-speaking. Again, though, this should not be taken as an explicit condemnation of the Welsh language, but rather of the cultural and religious traditions which were prevalent in mainly Welsh-speaking societies at the time.

When more generally analyzing the use of language in Welsh and Irish texts, and the relationship of an author's use of language with the Nationalist project, we must consider what the intended readership of a given text might be. Whether a text is 'reciprocal', looking inward towards a readership already familiar with the cultural, political and linguistic concerns which surround it, or 'interpretative', aimed at an external, often English, audience, is a key consideration. It could be said of Saunders Lewis, J. M. Synge and Caradoc Evans that they differ in this respect, intending their work to affect different sections of their readership in varying ways.

As has already been discussed, Synge did not share all of the desires of Irish Revivalists. In *The Aran Islands*, he sees Gaelic as being well-suited for life in remote, rural parts of Ireland, but falls short of recommending its mass adoption in more urban, modernized areas. It may be surprising, therefore, to learn that for some critics, Synge's use of Gaelic went some way to achieving this aim: Declan Kiberd, in *Synge and the Irish Language*, writes: 'In [Synge's] hands, the meaning of Gaelic tradition changed from something museumised to something modifiable, endlessly

open.’<sup>52</sup> It is certainly true that Synge remained entirely unapologetic about his idiom, and makes no attempt in *The Playboy of the Western World* and other plays to dilute the influence of Gaelic upon his work. He does not use the often outdated words and phrases in his plays in order to satirize his characters and their background, as Caradoc Evans does, but rather presents their speech as being a fairly accurate rendering of the Gaelic language. From this, we can claim that the work of J. M. Synge, and *The Playboy of the Western World* in particular, is aimed mainly at an audience already familiar both with the settings of his plays, and the linguistic devices he uses to illustrate them. His plays can be confidently classed as ‘reciprocal’, as Declan Kiberd again clarifies: ‘His postcolonial vision was that of a man who was not so much working for Irish independence as assuming its inevitability, and seeking to provide in art images and ideas appropriate to a liberated people.’<sup>53</sup>

As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, we must be fully aware of the differences in the Nationalist politics of Wales and Ireland during this period in order to compare the work of writers from the two nations. The above quotation illustrates this point: the work of Synge, having been written in a country that seemed poised for independence, necessarily differs in certain respects from the early work of Caradoc Evans and Saunders Lewis, in a largely British-identifying Wales. The position taken by Caradoc Evans in this respect is an interesting one - his satirical work was praised outside Wales and published in London, but was of obvious interest to a Welsh readership. However, Evans often chooses mockingly to heighten the divide between

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<sup>52</sup>Declan Kiberd, *Synge and the Irish Language* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), p. xxix.

<sup>53</sup>Kiberd, *Synge and the Irish Language*, pp. xxix - xxx.

Wales and England in his work, portraying the Welsh as insular and detached from the outside world, as a result of their dependence on Nonconformity.

This is clear in *Morgan Bible*, as Post Shop attempts to illustrate the differences between Wales and England in harsh, religious terminology:

“The road between England and Hell is wide and full of lost souls. Large thanks, Big Man, we are not the English. The road between Wales and Hell is a field without a path. Large thanks, Big Man, we are the Welsh.” (p. 60)

In *Nothing to Pay*, meanwhile, Evans’s narrator summarizes the differences between the Welsh and English languages in similar terms: ‘Welsh is the language of the mothers of preachers and of the Mansion, but English is the language of the pool the bottom of which is without end.’ (p. 80) In his correspondence with the *Western Mail*, Evans essentially accuses Welsh Nonconformists of engineering this divide between Wales and England in order to hide their own hypocrisy from the rest of Britain:

. . . the leaders of Welsh Nonconformity are uneasy that word of their tyranny will get into England. They and their members of Parliament have lied to the English how the heart of rural Wales is very beautiful; the pastors are fathers in Sion, and the peasants have neither spot nor blemish; and of all the sects that will seek to go into the Palace, none from Capel Sion will stay without the gates. There is none like us in wisdom and understanding.<sup>54</sup>

In this respect, we could see the settings of many of Evans’s short stories as representing a microcosm of Wales itself: his characters are ‘imprisoned in their villages and cut off by language and religion from the possibility of cultural and political regeneration’.<sup>55</sup> In much of his writing, there is no hint of a world outside

<sup>54</sup>Caradoc Evans, ‘Letter to the *Western Mail*, 22/12/1915’, in *Fury Never Leaves Us*, pp. 144 - 146 (p. 145).

<sup>55</sup>Harris, ‘Caradoc Evans, 1878 - 1945’, p. 22.

the small, rural villages to which his stories are confined. As Wales is removed from England, so Ceredigion is removed from Wales: as Evans himself stated, ‘We West Walians are accursed even among our own race; none has regard for us. We are called hypocrites and thieves and liars. We are called “cruel old Cardis.”’<sup>56</sup> This is an important point to consider in our understanding of Evans as an author who was actually sympathetic to some of the causes now associated with Welsh Nationalism. As in the work of Rhys Davies, discussed in a later chapter, the sheer lack of English influence on Evans’s fictionalized Welsh society speaks volumes about his conception of Wales, as existing entirely separately from England. Despite the claims of several prominent critics of Welsh writing, then, we can consider the Wales presented in the novels and stories of Caradoc Evans as being truly ‘independent’.

This raises the question of Caradoc Evans’s intended readership: logically, it would follow that his satirizing of the largely Nonconformist society of Ceredigion meant that he resented the influence of Nonconformity on the area. However, as Mary Jones points out, ‘as a satirist, Evans wavers between faith in the Welsh freed from Nonconformity, and despair about the possibility of change.’<sup>57</sup> His intentions may not have been to change Wales, but rather to draw outside attention to the problems that faced it at the time, overwhelmed by the sheer extent of Welsh Nonconformist influence: ‘Again and again he states that his purpose is to destroy the influence of Nonconformism in Wales and free his people; again and again he states that it is impossible for anyone or anything to do the Welsh any good.’<sup>58</sup> This is

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<sup>56</sup>Evans, ‘Letter to the *Western Mail*, 27/11/1915’, p. 144.

<sup>57</sup>Mary Jones, ‘The Satire of Caradoc Evans’, *The Anglo-Welsh Review*, 72 (1982), 58 - 65 (p. 64).

<sup>58</sup>Jones, ‘The Satire of Caradoc Evans’, p. 64.

clearly seen in 'Self-Portrait' (1944), in which Evans seeks to respond to some of the criticism made against him:

Cant and humbug and hypocrisy and capel belong to Wales and no one writing about Wales can dodge them. I do not think my stuff has done Wales any good. It is not in me to do that. It is not in anyone.<sup>59</sup>

In saying that 'no one writing in Wales can dodge' the hypocrisies raised in his fiction, Caradoc Evans seems to be downplaying the satirical intent behind his writing. Rather than making his satire seem a meticulously planned attack on Welsh Nonconformity, backed by intense ideological convictions, here he describes the dark, pessimistic aspects of his fiction as simply a product of his environment.

As a whole, then, the work of Caradoc Evans could be described as being neither wholly 'reciprocal' nor 'interpretative', but rather as combining elements of both approaches to Welsh writing in English. Despite his assertions to the contrary, it cannot be said that he does not desire his work to have some influence on the apparent narrowness and hypocrisy of Welsh Nonconformity. However, due to his belief that the societies he wrote about were insular and cut off from the rest of Britain, he had to appeal to an English readership out of necessity: it is no accident, for example, that his early texts were all made available by the London publisher Andrew Melrose. At a time when Welsh Nationalism did not yet comprise an organized political movement, Evans may have perceived that any change in Wales required inspiration from outside its borders. Ultimately, however, and perhaps inevitably, it is on Welsh audiences that his work had, and continues to have, the most effect. Referring to *Nothing to Pay*, in particular, John Harris comments that 'All reviewers (save those in

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<sup>59</sup>Evans, 'Self-Portrait', in *The Fury Never Leaves Us*, pp. 104 - 106 (p. 106).

Wales) responded to the mythic dimension, the universality of theme: the Welsh element was less important.<sup>60</sup> It could be said that as an artist, Evans was most successful in England, but that his social commentary, most explicitly made through his use of language, was of interest mainly to Welsh audiences.

This is another area in which we can compare the attitudes of Caradoc Evans and Saunders Lewis, in that ‘for Lewis, Wales was, and had long been, a Philistia where no true artist could flourish.’<sup>61</sup> Throughout his literary career, Lewis’s writing was always ideologically-motivated, and was aimed towards the ‘learned’ few rather than the ‘uneducated’ masses, reflecting his view that change was more likely to come from the upper strata of society. In attempting to create a formal, literary language for Wales, first through the medium of English in *The Eve of Saint John*, and later through the Welsh language, Lewis was attempting to influence his fellow writers, who would then be able to adopt his own techniques, rather than attempting to appeal to a wide audience:

Saunders Lewis was aware that he was inconsistent in attempting to create a language rather than letting his characters speak ‘something fresh and living’, but he did not see that the contemporary dramatist had a choice in a country where the natural language of the people had deteriorated.<sup>62</sup>

In this, too, Saunders Lewis could be said to be influenced by J. M. Synge, who ‘did not wish to create a folk literature for a peasant audience, but . . . did want to

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<sup>60</sup>Harris, ‘Caradoc Evans, 1878 - 1945’, p. 37.

<sup>61</sup>Griffiths, ‘*The Eve of Saint John* and the Significance of the Stranger in the Plays of Saunders Lewis’, p. 65.

<sup>62</sup>Ioan Williams, ‘Cyflwyniad’ [‘Introduction’], in *Dramâu Saunders Lewis: Y Casgliad Cyflawn, Cyfrol I*, pp. 3 - 12 (p. 7). Original Welsh-language source: ‘Yr oedd Saunders Lewis yn ymwybodol ei fod yn anghyson wrth geisio creu iaith yn hytrach na gadael i’w gymeriadau siarad “something fresh and living”, ond ni welai fod gan y dramodydd cyfoes ddewis mewn gwlad lle’r oedd iaith naturiol y werin bobl wedi dirywio.’



incorporate the methods and themes of folklore into his plays and poems.’<sup>63</sup> The same is clearly true of *The Eve of Saint John*, in which folk beliefs are used as a prominent element in the plot. This may be one reason why Lewis decided to begin his literary career by writing in English: it may have been an attempt to reach out beyond the typical audience for Welsh drama and fiction, whom he saw as largely uneducated and unresponsive towards literary innovation. He looked to Synge and other Irish writers for inspiration, considering them able to craft a mature, innovative literature aimed at an audience which he imagined to be educated and literary-minded. The attitudes of both Synge and Saunders Lewis towards Irish and Welsh theatre were not entirely dissimilar: they were both working to modernize portrayals of the Irish/Welsh with a new approach which combined folk tradition with linguistic innovation.

It has often been claimed that the work of Caradoc Evans also represents a revitalization of Welsh writing in English, following a history of almost exclusively stereotypical, interpretative modes of writing (to use Raymond Garlick’s terminology), popularized by such authors as Allen Raine. It is a credit to his writing that he is sometimes referred to as ‘the father of Anglo-Welsh literature’: somewhat inadvertently, Caradoc Evans did for Welsh writing in English what Saunders Lewis was attempting to do with *The Eve of Saint John*, pioneering a new means of expression for ‘Anglo-Welsh’ writers which, despite what Evans’s many detractors claimed, mediated the differences between Welsh and English. His language, as well as the language of both J. M. Synge and Saunders Lewis, is intertwined with the

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<sup>63</sup>Kiberd, *Synge and the Irish Language*, p. 159.

ongoing struggle to establish a school of Welsh/Irish Modernism. Without the linguistic innovation of Caradoc Evans, modern, reciprocal Welsh writing would not have been given a voice, despite the claims of T. Llew Jones and others that his work fostered enduring prejudice towards the Welsh language.

A comparison of the work of Saunders Lewis and Caradoc Evans seems, at first, to be a simple one: in popular opinion, the two figures represent polar opposites. Lewis is a man who devoted his literary career to revitalizing and modernizing Welsh-language writing, and his political career proclaimed the relevance and worth of Welsh Nationalism, while Evans is infamous for his negative portrayal of the Welsh language and its speakers, and saw Welsh Nationalism as simply a repackaging of the Liberal, Welsh Nonconformist ideologies which he opposed. However, in concentrating on *The Eve of Saint John*, and in recalling the admiration of Evans expressed by Lewis, we reach the conclusion that the two men were striving for similar goals. In their literary representations of Wales, we are confronted with a country which, although rooted in folk tradition, is presented in a new, Modernist language which fuses Welsh and English, placing Welsh writing at the forefront of literary innovation, and making it clear that Wales need not be dependent on England, either politically or culturally. Their main inspiration in this regard is undoubtedly J. M. Synge: as Irish Nationalism led to the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922, providing inspiration to the founders of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru, so Irish writers provided a model for the early pioneers of Welsh writing in English. The importance of Caradoc Evans and Saunders Lewis in influencing the growth of Welsh writing in both Welsh and English, with Synge providing inspiration, cannot be overstated. The

enduring legacy of Caradoc Evans, in particular, is one of linguistic innovation which led to a new confidence in Welsh writing across both languages: an outcome which surely his detractors, often relying on Nationalistic arguments, would have welcomed.

*Stereotype, Propaganda, and the Morality of Nationalism in the Work of Emyr*

*Humphreys and Islwyn Ffowc Elis*

This chapter will seek to explore how the political beliefs of Emyr Humphreys are represented in his early novels, and, in turn, how he viewed his role as a Welsh-speaking author, writing mainly in English.<sup>1</sup> It will examine the divide between Welsh-language writing and Welsh writing in English in this respect, in comparing Humphreys's work to that of populist Welsh-language author Islwyn Ffowc Elis who, despite sharing a similar background and ideological position to Emyr Humphreys, viewed the act of writing fiction somewhat differently, as a political gesture in itself. The differences between the two writers encapsulate the divide between writing for political and writing for artistic purposes, a choice often faced by writers who have some sympathy for Welsh Nationalism, and illuminate further the role of literature within that movement. Whereas Humphreys essentially viewed politics and literature as two separate spheres, Elis considered it his duty as a Nationalist campaigner to draw his readers to Welsh Nationalism through his writing.

The relation between the political ideology of Emyr Humphreys and the nature of the characterization that he employs in his fiction is unique in Welsh writing in English. A committed Welsh Nationalist, as well as a Christian, he avoids using his large body of work as a platform to express his strongly-defined views in a positive light, choosing to give equal moral credence to several differing ideologies, and

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<sup>1</sup>Rather than comparing Welsh writing with Scottish or Irish material, this chapter compares the two traditions of Welsh and English-language writing in Wales, the differences between which are significant enough to merit its inclusion in a thesis on comparative literature. There are precedents for such a comparison, perhaps the most prominent among them being M. Wynn Thomas's *Internal Difference* (1992).

occasionally portraying characters who share his views as deeply flawed and, at times, even immoral. Indeed, the immorality of a Nationalist character such as Owen Richards in *The Little Kingdom* (1946) can hardly be equalled in Welsh writing, even among the work of those authors whose political allegiances directly contradict those of Emyr Humphreys. This chapter will attempt to chart the development of Humphreys's Nationalist characters in his early Wales-based novels, from *The Little Kingdom* through to *Outside The House Of Baal* (1965).<sup>2</sup> Humphreys's characterization will then be contrasted with that of Islwyn Ffowc Elis, focusing mainly on *Cysgod y Cryman* [*The Shadow Of The Sickle*] (1953) and *Yn Ôl i Leiflor* [*Back To Lleiflor*] (1956), novels which present a more stereotypical portrayal of Nationalism and nationhood. It will be argued that the writing of Emyr Humphreys rejects such stereotyping, in favour of presenting what R. Geraint Gruffydd calls a

complete [political] panorama . . . designed and implemented masterfully and made tangible through characters who are much more than personifications of social and ideological trends.<sup>3</sup>

Humphreys's first novel, *The Little Kingdom*, contains one of the more complex and beguiling portrayals of Welsh Nationalism in his early work. It is centred on the young and idealistic Owen Richards, a Nationalist, whose attempts to stop the erection of an aerodrome in his North-East Wales home are hardly contained within moral boundaries, as he murders landowner Richard Bloyd and eventually attempts an arson attack on the aerodrome site itself. It is certainly no coincidence

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<sup>2</sup>Incidentally, the 1925 - 1966 period covered by this study roughly coincides with the period in which Humphreys's post-1966 seven-novel *Land of the Living* series is set, reinforcing the idea that this period is a crucial one for either an academic study or a creative portrayal of Welsh Nationalism.

<sup>3</sup>R. Geraint Gruffydd, 'Emyr Humphreys', *Taliesin*, 71 (1990), 91 - 2 (p. 92). Original Welsh-language source: 'Panorama cyflawn . . . wedi'i gynllunio a'i weithio'n feistraidd a'i ddiriaethu drwy gymeriadau sydd yn llawer mwy nag ymgorfforiadau o dueddiadau cymdeithasol a syniadol.'

that the plot parallels the ‘Burning of the Bombing School’ incident of 1936, itself a major catalyst for Humphreys’s embracing of Welsh Nationalism,<sup>4</sup> with Owen Richards effectively being substituted for Saunders Lewis.<sup>5</sup> The first issue that needs to be addressed, then, is why Owen Richards is portrayed so negatively, while Saunders Lewis played such a major role in defining Emyr Humphreys’s Nationalist ideology. Humphreys has stated numerous times in interviews how central Lewis was to his political awakening. He is described in reverential terms: Humphreys speaks, for example, of his time in Italy, and how he ‘never escaped from the Blaid’s grasp fully, but I had moved far to the left of Saunders, who was the compass that ruled.’<sup>6</sup> Owen Richards is also frequently described in quasi-religious terms: as ‘the admirable leader, sometimes almost a prophet’,<sup>7</sup> a positive image which is overturned when he exhorts himself to ‘Believe, in this part of time, myself to be God’s agent, destiny’s instrument. Now, therefore, today and tomorrow I am God.’ (p. 43) In many ways, the surprising portrayal of Owen Richards is a warning against the dangers of allowing one man to wield such power and influence in a small, politically-charged community such as the Welsh-speaking Wales of the early-to-mid twentieth century, not only in terms of the effect such a man can have on society as a whole, but also in

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<sup>4</sup>In R. Arwel Jones’s *Dal Pen Rheswm: Cyfweiliadau Gydag Emyr Humphreys* [*Holding Conversation: Interviews With Emyr Humphreys*] (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), Humphreys speaks of the incident using religious terms, claiming that there were ‘*mass conversions*’ (p. 14) following the incident, and states that ‘I was a Saunders Lewisian nationalist from the very beginning. I didn’t have much of a choice.’ (p. 12) Original Welsh-language source: ‘Ro’n i’n genedlaetholwr Saunders Lewisaid o’r cychwyn cyntaf. Doedd gen i ddim llawer o ddewis.’ See also his dramatisation of the court case following the incident, ‘The Night of the Fire’, in *Planet*, 49/50 (January 1980), 74 - 94.

<sup>5</sup>It should be pointed out that, unlike Owen Richards, two of the three perpetrators of the arson attack at Penyberth were committed pacifists, and successfully avoided injuring anyone during the incident.

<sup>6</sup>Jones (ed.), *Dal Pen Rheswm*, p. 29. Original Welsh-language source: ‘Wnes i erioed lithro o afael y Blaid yn llwyr, ond mi ro’n i wedi mynd ymhell i’r chwith o Saunders, a fo oedd y cwmpawd oedd yn rheoli.’

<sup>7</sup>Emyr Humphreys, *The Little Kingdom* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1946), p. 33. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

terms of what effect such power must have on the human ego. Richards could therefore be seen not necessarily as an embodiment of Saunders Lewis, but as a warning regarding what could be the consequences should such power and influence be used immorally.

Emyr Humphreys himself suggested a similar explanation for the discrepancy between the portrayal of Owen Richards and his own beliefs. In an interview with M. Wynn Thomas, he claimed that:

I would suppose that the figure of . . . Owen Richards represents the author; that the author sets himself some sort of moral problem, how would he react were he a different person, and what hope is there of succeeding in an age ruled by the dictator.<sup>8</sup>

In *The Little Kingdom*, then, Owen Richards is indicative of how easy it would be for someone wielding such power and influence to corrupt and be corrupted. Since certain episodes in the book reflect the life of Saunders Lewis, it could be claimed that the novel is in fact an appraisal of Lewis's moral strength. His political motivations for committing the arson attack at Penyberth were virtually identical to those Owen Richards uses to justify his actions, with Richards telling his confidante, Siôn Bodlon, “. . . you'll be swamped with English here. . . . It won't be your country any more. They'll take it from you.” (p. 31) Despite this similarity, Richards's personal reasons for the attack betray a malicious egocentricity which one cannot imagine Emyr Humphreys believing Saunders Lewis possessed, given his often-stated admiration of the man.

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<sup>8</sup>Jones (ed.), *Dal Pen Rheswm*, p. 58. Original Welsh-language source: ‘Mi faswn i'n tybio bod ffigur . . . Owen Richards yn cynrychioli'r awdur; fod yr awdur yn gosod rhyw fath o broblem foesol iddo fo'i hun, sut fasa fo'n ymateb tasa fo'n berson gwahanol, a beth ydi'r gobaith o lwyddo mewn oes pan fo'r unben yn rheoli.’

However, given that it is his first novel, *The Little Kingdom* is not perhaps the best example of an Emyr Humphreys text which rejects stereotype. As Roland Mathias points out, 'It is only in terms of the later books that the reader may sense here a lack of complexity and the presence of at least one stereotype in Cornelius Evans.'<sup>9</sup> Evans, who remarks at one point that all Welshmen are 'absurdly idealistic' (p. 32), is perhaps comparable to the insensitive and culturally-misinformed Paul Rushmere of Islwyn Ffowc Elis's *Cysgod y Cryman* and *Yn Ôl i Leiflor*. It could also be argued that Owen Richards, while not being a stereotype (at least, not one that fits in with Emyr Humphreys's ideology), is a fairly poorly-developed, two-dimensional character when compared to the protagonists of some of Humphreys's later novels. Perhaps the closest character to Owen Richards is Michael Edwards of *A Toy Epic* (1958): another idealistic young Nationalist (in the later portions of the novel), whose belief in his own importance and superiority leads to complex questions regarding the relationship between Nationalism and morality in the text.

In many ways, Owen Richards is a prototype of Michael Edwards. We are not given extensive information as to how Richards became a Nationalist, except that his beliefs are grounded in childhood experience. His time at school is briefly recounted, during which, we are told, he cried three times: one when he is beaten up and called "Welshy", until 'at last he began crying, forgetting that he was a prince in exile.' (p. 25)<sup>10</sup> Humphreys goes on:

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<sup>9</sup>Roland Mathias, 'Chronicles of Grace: A View of the Earlier Novels of Emyr Humphreys', *The Anglo-Welsh Review*, 70 (1982), 64 - 88 (p. 72).

<sup>10</sup>This particular reference is reminiscent of the appendix to *A Toy Epic*, 'Michael Edwards: The Nationalist at College', during which he dreams of encountering a succession of historical figures important to a Nationalist's vision of Welsh history, and imagines himself to be one of them. The figures, although separate, are implied to be one and the same, who 'has been called Arthur, Hywel,



Second time was when the headmaster read in prayers not long after about Joseph in the pit. Third time was when Mr. Latham, the History master, read about the death of Llewelyn the last Prince, how he was killed by accident in the forest. The class laughed. (p. 26)

This passage is reminiscent of the early chapters of O. M. Edwards's autobiography *Clych Atgof ac Ysgrifau Eraill* [*The Bells of Memory and Other Essays*], in which he not only places great importance on his school years as a vital component of his development into a cultural Nationalist, but interestingly also portrays the struggles of his early years against the anti-Welsh-language schoolmaster as instilling a strong sense of rebellion within him. As he recounts,

Ever since then I have a kind of sympathy with the rebel and the revolutionary. When I read *Paradise Lost* many years later, I sympathized with Satan despite myself. When I read his best play I saw that Shakespeare dedicated his entire genius to condemn Macbeth; I admired Macbeth, despite himself. And when I read James the First's book against smoking, I smoked the only cigarette of my life as a protest against him.<sup>11</sup>

The relevance of quotations such as these to this analysis of the character of Owen Richards is clear. Later, Edwards's rebellion becomes even more reminiscent of Owen Richards's behaviour: 'I remember discovering that the spirit of a murderer was within me once, when aiming a stone at the head of a boy who had made me lose my

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Gruffydd, Llewelyn, Owen Glyndwr, he has lived many centuries and has seen bitter defeats, and yet he lives.' - Emyr Humphreys, *A Toy Epic* (Bridgend: Seren, 2003 [1958]), p. 167. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text. Any similarity between these two extracts should not be overemphasized, however, as Humphreys decided to omit the appendix from *A Toy Epic*, largely on the recommendations of Graham Greene and Kate Roberts (pp. 10 - 11).

<sup>11</sup>O. M. Edwards, *Clych Atgof ac Ysgrifau Eraill*, ed. Thomas Jonas (Wrexham: Hughes a'i Fab, 1958), p. 17. Original Welsh-language source: 'Byth er hynny y mae gennyf ryw fath ar gydymdeimlad â gwrthryfelwr a chwyldrowr. Pan ddarllenais i "Goll Gwynfa" lawer blwyddyn wedyn, cydymdeimlwn â Satan er fy ngwaethaf. Pan ddarllenais ei ddrama orau gwelais fod Shakespeare yn rhoi ei holl athrylith ar waith i gondemnio Macbeth; edmygais innau Facbeth, er ei waethaf. A phan ddarllenais lyfr Iago'r Cyntaf yn erbyn ysmegu, ysmygais unig sigaret fy mywyd fel protest yn ei erbyn.'

temper.’<sup>12</sup> Given Edwards’s position as a foundational figure within Welsh Nationalism, it is not unlikely that Humphreys’s representation of the behaviour of Owen Richards was influenced by these passages. Richards, therefore, represents an amalgamation of several key figures in the development of Welsh Nationalism, whose character and behaviour may at first glance seem to undermine the admiration felt by Emyr Humphreys towards both O. M. Edwards and Saunders Lewis.

Although striking, the glimpse we are given of Owen Richards’s time at school serves not as a vital point in the plot, but as a necessary explanation for his behaviour. In contrast, *A Toy Epic*, a novel rooted in childhood experience, becomes almost a psychological study of how Albie, Iorwerth and Michael form their particular ideologies, and have them challenged. This produces the dual effect of making the three main characters believable, as opposed to Owen Richards of *The Little Kingdom*, for example, while simultaneously presenting each one as representing a different facet of Welsh existence, essentially creating a national allegory out of the novel.

This has clear implications when we consider the importance of Nationalism and morality in the work of Emyr Humphreys. As he admitted, ‘The urge to moralise is very strong in me . . . it is in my constitution . . .’<sup>13</sup> Therefore, we cannot help but view *A Toy Epic* as an allegorical morality tale, with Emyr Humphreys potentially offering a critique and appraisal of the three distinct viewpoints espoused by the boys. Again, as in *The Little Kingdom*, we are confronted with a discrepancy between

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<sup>12</sup>Edwards, *Clych Atgof*, p. 8. Original Welsh-language source: ‘Yr wyf yn cofio darganfod fod ysbryd llofrudd yn of ryw dro, pan yn anelu carreg at ben bachgen oedd wedi gwneud imi golli fy nhymer.’

<sup>13</sup>Jones (ed.), *Dal Pen Rheswm*, p. 71 - 2. Original Welsh-language source: ‘Mae’r ysfa i foeswersu yn gryf iawn yn of i . . . mae o yn fy nghyfansoddiad i . . .’

Humphreys's own beliefs and one of several possible morals presented to the reader, largely centred on the character of Michael.

The two other boys, Iorwerth and Albie, are not subject to the same intensity of moralising as Michael, although both contribute to the ideological dimension of the novel. There is an important difference between the problems faced by Albie and Iorwerth and those that are pertinent to Michael, which explains why Michael's character is the more interesting from a psychological perspective. As M. Wynn Thomas explains in the afterword to the 2003 Seren edition of *A Toy Epic*,

[a]s the cases of Albie and Iorwerth particularly show, it is only by somehow finding common ground between them that the Welsh-language and English-language cultures of Wales can hope to recover from the serious deprivation each suffers through its isolation from the other. Yet as the example of the two boys also shows, communication across a cultural divide is as desperately difficult as it is desperately necessary. (p. 138)

In other words, while the problems of Albie and Iorwerth are intertwined, the challenges faced by Michael have more to do with his own psyche than his relationship with the other characters. Indeed, Michael remains tragically unaware of the other characters' true relations with him throughout the novel. Even when he proclaims that '[Iorwerth] represents the true soul of Wales for me' (p. 117) at the text's climax, he is ignorant of the fact that he has just alienated Iorwerth by kissing Dilys, the girl Iorwerth 'respected and adored' (p. 115). This issue is further emphasized in the appendix, 'Michael Edwards: The Nationalist at College', in which it is revealed that '...he thought of Alfie [sic], and of Iorwerth. He liked them both, enjoyed their company and yet, he could never bring himself to any great degree of intimacy with them' (p. 163), and earlier in *A Toy Epic*: 'That night, in the darkness,

with a stump of pencil I wrote in English on the wall above my bed, "I HAVE NO FRIEND IN THE WIRLD [sic]." (p. 37), betraying his misplaced faith in his grasp of the English language. M. Wynn Thomas again clarifies this issue, with his claim that Michael is temporally isolated from his companions:

[Michael's] passion is not for the Liberal-Nonconformist Wales that Iorwerth represents, nor for the proletarian and proto-socialist Wales to which Albie belongs, but rather for an ancient 'aristocratic' Wales whose golden age was the Middle Ages. (p. 141)<sup>14</sup>

Michael's relative isolation from the other two protagonists also undoubtedly owes much to the fact that Emyr Humphreys used a large amount of autobiographical detail in order to construct the character, in much the same way as he used his reaction to the Burning of the Bombing School in order to create Owen Richards in *The Little Kingdom*. In an interview with R. Arwel Jones for *Dal Pen Rheswm*, Humphreys reveals that Michael's maid, who is opposed to the Welsh language, was based on his own as a child (pp. 10 - 11), and that '... all my beliefs were established by the time I was eighteen years old',<sup>15</sup> roughly coinciding with the age at which Michael makes his final conversion to Nationalism. Therefore, as in *The Little Kingdom*, we are faced with the question of why Humphreys would choose to draw upon his own experiences in order to create a character who is morally unsound, and suffers from the same tendency to self-aggrandisement as Owen Richards. Passages from the appendix such as the description of Michael's reasoning for running for

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<sup>14</sup>This description of Michael could just as easily be applied to Saunders Lewis. As with Owen Richards, Emyr Humphreys is manipulating Lewis's beliefs in order to create a morally-suspect character.

<sup>15</sup>Jones (ed.), *Dal Pen Rheswm*, p. 2. Original Welsh-language source: 'Dwi'n siwr fod fy naliadau i i gyd wedi'u sefydlu erbyn fy mod i'n ddeunaw oed.'

College President reveal his belief that only he can bring about the change he desires in Wales: he claims to want to become President,

[n]ot for love of position, of power, of influence *alone*, but in order that such power, such position, such influence should serve to advance the cause *which he had made his own*, the resurrection of Welsh freedom and honour. (p. 174, my italics)

While Albie and Iorwerth are certainly flawed characters, as their inability to understand each other demonstrates, it is Michael who is the subject of most of the text's implicit moral criticism. Tellingly, it is he, for example, who causes the climactic car accident that finally separates the three boys.

Roland Mathias accurately explains, I believe, the implications of Humphreys's own beliefs being so central to Michael's persona:

[Michael's] innate sense of leadership is Emyr Humphreys's first target. . . What is its basis? Conscience? Belief? Or a psychological 'mix' which goes back to early environmental factors? The fact that the cause Michael chooses is very near to Emyr Humphreys's heart makes his author's disquiet the more poignant. A just cause must be led by conscience, not charisma.<sup>16</sup>

We could therefore claim that Humphreys uses autobiographical detail in the creation of characters like Owen Richards and Michael in order to explore the moral issues raised by their actions. Readers familiar with the background of Emyr Humphreys would find the discrepancy between Humphreys's beliefs and the actions of those characters of his who share them all the more jarring, placing greater emphasis on the usually Nationalist ideological concerns that form such a major part of the early novels.

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<sup>16</sup>Mathias, 'Channels of Grace', 70.

One important autobiographical detail present in the character of Michael that has not been discussed in this chapter as yet is his conversion to Nationalism, mirroring Humphreys's own, if not in precise detail.<sup>17</sup> This marks an important difference between Owen Richards of *The Little Kingdom* and Michael: the brief passages quoted above describing Richards's days at school reveal that, for all intents and purposes, he always held Nationalist beliefs. Roland Mathias's assertion above that autobiographical elements in Humphreys's novels add poignancy to his work leads us to the conclusion that the character of Michael is of great importance to this study. The 'zeal of the convert', detectable in the development of Michael's character, as well as having been experienced by Emyr Humphreys, is an important factor in Welsh writing; the strength of Humphreys's political affiliations following his embracing of Welsh Nationalism is common to many writers, including Saunders Lewis and Waldo Williams. It is also true, it could be claimed, that certain authors such as Gwyn Thomas underwent a conversion away from Nationalism because of negative/traumatic childhood experience.<sup>18</sup> Both extremes are represented in the writing of Emyr Humphreys, from Michael in *A Toy Epic* to Ronnie Miles's rejection of his father's beliefs in *Outside The House Of Baal*. Texts under discussion later in the chapter, Islwyn Ffowc Elis's *Cysgod y Cryman* and *Yn Ôl i Leiflor*, also draw upon the 'zeal of the convert' as a narrative device, with Harri Vaughan turning away

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<sup>17</sup>Humphreys, as well as being swayed to the Nationalist cause by attending Plaid Cymru summer schools, also given as the cause of Michael's conversion in the novel, placed great emphasis on the Burning of the Bombing School, as has already been addressed in the discussion on *The Little Kingdom*, as well as the influence of his secondary school Welsh teacher, Moses Jones. Neither of these latter two causes is alluded to in *A Toy Epic*.

<sup>18</sup>Thomas, one of ten children, came from a divided household in which the five eldest children spoke Welsh, while the younger five did not. Negative feelings associated with such an environment surely soured him towards the language and Nationalism in general, to which linguistic concerns were of central importance.

from his father's Liberalism, itself broadly sympathetic to the concerns of Welsh Nationalism,<sup>19</sup> in order to become a Communist.

Once again, however, Emyr Humphreys manipulates autobiographical detail in order to make the character of Michael all the more unsettling, as the author deliberately represents the conversion process experienced by himself in a negative light. Rather than coming across as a sincere embracing of Nationalist beliefs for conscientious reasons, his final conversion to a Nationalist cause is the last of several 'conversions', each made to seem flippant and insubstantial because of the sheer ease with which Michael seems to change his entire philosophy. His first 'conversion' is a result of the influence of the family's maid, Mary, upon him. We are told how

Mary was English, she said. Her father was born in Chester, but her father could speak Welsh when he had a mind. Only old Methodies spoke Welsh all the time. We agreed, and answered our father in English which pleased my mother, I think, apart from our accent which we got from Mary. (p. 19)

Although the ease with which Michael embraces his maid's world-view can be explained by childhood susceptibility, it sets a precedent for his actions during the rest of the novel. On his seventeenth birthday, Michael states:

I turn my back for ever on all forms of falseness and insincerity, and I wish to state plainly that I am a Communist and a Pacifist and that Private Property is the basis of the evils of our Acquisitive Society. Politics and Economics are one and indivisible and I read widely in both fields. On Religion I keep an open mind. Roughly, this is my position. (p. 75)

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<sup>19</sup>In response to his son's embracing of Communism, Edward Vaughan asks him, "Why in the world did you not join the Nationalist Party, if you had to leave the Liberalism of your family? There are sensible enough young people joining it these days." - Islwyn Ffowc Elis, *Cysgod y Cryman* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 2001 [1953]), p. 205. Original Welsh-language source: "Pam gynllwyn na fuaset ti wedi ymuno â'r Blaid Genedlaethol, os oedd raid iti adael Rhyddfrydiaeth dy deulu? Mae 'na bobol ifanc ddigon call yn ymuno â honno heddiw." All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

This passage appears insincere for several reasons: the certainty with which Michael makes this choice ('I turn my back for ever . . .') contrasts with the suddenness with which the declaration is formed - no reference is made beforehand that even remotely suggests a link between Michael and Communism. Emyr Humphreys has also consciously emphasized Michael's youthful self-importance here; before the above declaration, he makes a point of writing in his journal '(not diary)', 'in a manner conscious of the requirements of style', that '*on this day shaving became less of a ritual and more of a habit*', tellingly remarking afterwards that '[a]t the time I was rather proud of the sentence, but already the smartness has faded and an aftertaste of falseness is all that is left.' (p. 75) The laughable mock-sincerity of this passage influences our perception of Michael's declaration of support for Communism, which assumes the over-formal tone of a piece of schoolwork rather than a meaningful proclamation of political allegiance.

Michael's later conversion to Nationalism is rendered in a similarly ironic manner, despite the environment of a Nationalist Summer School in which it takes place echoing Humphreys's own experiences. It is presented in stark contrast to his earlier rejection of Welsh national concerns:

It is quite fantastic, said Michael, to recall how near I came to rejecting my nationality. . . . All summer I avoided speaking Welsh and I avoided native persons like Iorwerth with their emotional zeal for things Welsh. . . . I considered also the possibility of being English, without any burden of self-conscious patriotism, except in times of national emergency. It seemed to me that *Cymru* was the name of a disease and that the burden of being Welsh was an uncalled-for discomfort and distress. (p. 95)

While its proximity to such vehement anti-Welsh rhetoric makes Michael's conversion to Nationalism all the more unexpected, there are other questions



regarding his ideological shift that cast further doubt on his sincerity. He embraces Nationalism immediately after reading a poem by Hywel ap Owain Gwynedd, in which is praised the landscape of Wales, ‘*Her white seagulls, and gracious women*’ (p. 97). Finally, it is clear that Nationalism is, for him, a vehicle for self-promotion: ‘By searching the past I have not only discovered the key to the future but also the part I myself can expect to play in it.’ (p. 97)<sup>20</sup>

The immorality of Michael’s brand of Nationalism turns *A Toy Epic* into a novel of unremitting bleakness, not least from an authorial perspective. It is Michael’s insular, ego-fuelled Nationalism that eventually isolates him from the other two boys at the climax of the novel, which is where the moral dimension of *A Toy Epic* becomes most important (and most complex). If we are to take the view that the three boys represent different facets of the Welsh political and religious spectrum, with every one impacting on each other, Michael’s final statements strike us as being overwhelmingly poignant and bleak as far as the future of Wales is concerned. His inability to communicate effectively with Albie and Iorwerth may connote the presence of deep divisions within Welsh life, and, perhaps, the ultimate failure of the Nationalist project:

This was the parting of our ways. . . . Comrades, we no longer have anything at all to do with each other. Or at least you have nothing further to do with me. . . . I want to believe that I belong to the few among men who are chosen to battle with Fate and I can believe this better when I am alone. (p. 121)<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>This use of a particular ideology to achieve self-promotion is not, of course, a critique of Nationalism in itself, as the same use could be made of Marxism, religion, or any other belief system.

<sup>21</sup>This final separation between the three boys assumes further importance if we are to see Iorwerth, as well as Michael, as being representative of Welsh Nationalism. Throughout the novel, Iorwerth possesses a strong Welsh identity, rooted in his Nonconformity, but does not share Michael’s zeal, as evidenced on pp. 105 - 106 of the novel, when Michael chastises a barber for mocking Nationalism: ‘If there is to be a row,’ Iorwerth says, ‘I would prefer Michael not to drag me into it.’ (p. 116) The final split between Iorwerth and Michael, with the former representing a traditional Welsh identity and the

We can easily imagine what the consequences of writing this passage were for someone with such strong Nationalist concerns as Emyr Humphreys. It has been accurately claimed by Roland Mathias that

*A Toy Epic* is a book of questions without answers, which its limitation to the days of school makes possible. Beyond them lies a great continuum of silence in which the answers may lie.<sup>22</sup>

While this statement is true, it is nevertheless also true that the immorality of Michael's sudden and climactic espousal of Nationalism casts considerable doubt over the sustainability of the relationship between the three viewpoints represented by the boys, necessary, in Humphreys's mind, for the continuation of a culturally-rich Wales.

Despite being emblematic of varying ideological standpoints, the three boys never become mere stereotypes. *A Toy Epic* marks significant growth in this respect from the two-dimensional villainy of Owen Richards in *The Little Kingdom*, and also marks the novel's distinctiveness from other works that rely on stereotyping in order to advance a political message. Despite the Nationalist politics of Emyr Humphreys, the novel can be appreciated by readers from a range of political backgrounds, and, through the changing behaviour of Michael, could actually be said to reflect the flexibility of Nationalism. While reading *A Toy Epic* may raise awareness of Welsh Nationalism amongst those previously unaware of it, it cannot be considered a deliberate attempt to attract followers to the cause. The same cannot be said of Islwyn

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latter representing contemporary, politicized Nationalism, is therefore one of the greatest tragedies in the novel, from an authorial standpoint.

<sup>22</sup>Mathias, 'Channels of Grace', 71.

Ffowc Elis's *Cysgod y Cryman* and *Yn Ôl i Leifor*, in which stereotypical portrayals along class, gender and national lines seek to advance a Nationalistic 'moral', and to attract followers to Welsh Nationalism. Ioan Williams is one critic who recognizes this flaw:

The biggest problem in *Cysgod y Cryman* is that the author does not stand far back enough from his characters. He ties himself to them excessively, as a result of his narrative method and cannot see their behaviour objectively.<sup>23</sup>

The novels do indeed seem to suffer from a preset notion of what is morally right, and differ in this respect from the early novels of Emyr Humphreys. Despite his strong Nationalist beliefs, Humphreys's politics never become overbearing in his texts, even when, as in *A Toy Epic*, the characters do seem to be representative of various aspects of Welsh culture. The protagonists of Islwyn Ffowc Elis's novels seem similarly to represent differing ideologies and even nationalities, but they do not share the same complexity of relationship as do Michael, Iorwerth and Albie, and more often than not, the author's own viewpoints are evident in his characterisation.

For example, as Ioan Williams again points out:

Edward Vaughan . . . represents the old way of living, and is starting to feel the strain of living in a world which is rapidly changing. The main values of the Wales of the aristocracy from which he is descended are embodied in his person.<sup>24</sup>

It is made clear throughout *Cysgod y Cryman* that Islwyn Ffowc Elis greatly sympathises with Edward Vaughan's position. Rather than being portrayed as a

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<sup>23</sup>Ioan Williams, *Y Nofel [The Novel]* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1984), p. 37. Original Welsh-language source: 'Y broblem fwyaf yn *Cysgod y Cryman* yw nad yw'r awdur yn sefyll yn ôl yn ddigon pell oddi wrth ei gymeriadau. Mae'n ei glymu ei hun wrthynt yn ormodol, o ganlyniad i'w ddull adroddiadol ac yn methu â gweld eu hymddygiad yn wrthrychol.'

<sup>24</sup>Williams, *Y Nofel*, p. 34. Original Welsh-language source: 'Mae Edward Vaughan . . . yn cynrychioli'r hen ffordd o fyw, ac yn dechrau teimlo'r straen o fyw mewn byd sydd yn prysur newid. Ymgorfforir yn ei berson brif werthoedd Cymru'r uchelwyr y mae'n ddisgynydd iddynt.'

backward-looking relic of the past, he is characterised as a benevolent product of his time, and the reader is given the impression that had he been born later, his sympathies would lie with the Welsh Nationalist politics favoured by the author, as his already-quoted argument with his son Harri on the latter's espousal of Communism implies. There does not seem to be any irony in the frequent statements in defence of the squirearchy made by Edward Vaughan such as:

“Places like Lleifior are indestructible. They give security to those people who live around them. Whatever is said about us by some hotheads from afar, in political meetings, in a newspaper, the people expect us to last, and believe that we will last.” (p. 16 - 7)<sup>25</sup>

Elis is essentially justifying Edward Vaughan's position, possibly because he is the most prominent character who consistently holds what could be termed vaguely Nationalistic (or at least patriotic) beliefs.<sup>26</sup>

The only other character who is consistently portrayed positively is the Welsh-speaking Karl Weissmann, a former German prisoner of war, now a farmhand at Lleifior. Karl is unquestioning in his desire to serve his master, Edward Vaughan, and is placed in stark contrast to Wil James, who is abusive to Karl and to his family, choosing to spend his money on drink and on the football pools. Despite his Welsh upbringing, Wil chooses to converse with Karl in English, prompting the narrative comment that ‘Wil James was one of those who spoke English with Karl. He did not

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<sup>25</sup>Original Welsh-language source: “Mae lleoedd fel Lleifior yn anninistriol. Maen nhw'n rhoi rhyw ddiogelwch i'r bobol sy'n byw o'u cwmpas nhw. Beth bynnag ddywedir amdanon ni gan ryw benboethiaid o bell, mewn cyfarfod politics, mewn papur newydd, mae'r bobol yn disgwyl inni bara, yn credu y byddwn ni'n para.”

<sup>26</sup>For a contrasting portrayal of the Welsh 'aristocracy', see Nigel Heseltine's *Tales of the Squirearchy* (1946), in which a similar figure, the interestingly named Cam-Vaughan, 'descendant of Welsh kings and chairman of the English Conservative Association in Wales', proclaims the Welsh language 'rot', amongst many other slurs against Welsh nationality and Nationalism. - Nigel Heseltine, *Tales of the Squirearchy* (Carmarthen: The Druid Press, 1946), p. 54; p. 15.

have the understanding to know that Karl was more of a master of any language than he was.’<sup>27</sup> (p. 22) Somewhat inevitably, Wil James is then portrayed negatively throughout the rest of the novel, calling his wife a slut (p. 33), and ultimately enlisting the aid of a local thug to assault Karl. Characteristically, Karl does nothing when attacked, asking his assailant at one point ““Friend, why do you do this to me?”” (p. 139),<sup>28</sup> in one of the passages most likely to elicit criticism that the character of Karl is unrealistic in his wholesomeness.<sup>29</sup>

The character with whom Karl is most prominently contrasted, however, is Paul Rushmere, the English doctor infatuated with Greta Vaughan, and perhaps the novel’s best example of the kind of stereotype avoided by Emyr Humphreys. When placed in direct contrast with Karl Weissmann, as he frequently is, Paul Rushmere becomes almost a pantomime villain, whose negative characteristics all stem from the fact that he is distrustful of the Welsh language and culture. His criticisms of the language are also stereotypical, at one point echoing an age-old concern: ‘They had their own language. They made a fetish of it, and whispered empty things to each other in it so that the outsider could not understand.’ (p. 42)<sup>30</sup> He also embodies viewpoints which were generally considered to be contrary to accepted Welsh Nationalist doctrine, criticising Harri Vaughan for registering as a conscientious objector, for example (p. 45), which was a common practice for those who saw

<sup>27</sup>Original Welsh-language source: ‘Yr oedd Wil James yn un o’r rhai a siaradai Saesneg â Karl. Nid oedd ganddo mo’r crebwyll i wybod bod Karl yn fwy o feistr ar unrhyw iaith nag ydoedd ef.’

<sup>28</sup>Original Welsh-language source: ““Gyfaill, pam y gwnewch chi hyn i mi?””

<sup>29</sup>Karl’s behaviour in this episode is explicitly Christ-like, with him ‘turning the other cheek’. It could be claimed that Elis’s desire to add a symbolic dimension to this passage overshadowed any concern about naturalizing his character’s reaction to the beating.

<sup>30</sup>Original Welsh-language source: ‘Yr oedd ganddynt eu hiaith eu hunain. Gwnaethant ffetish ohoni, a sibrydient bethau coegion ynddi y naill wrth y llall rhag i’r estron ddeall.’ Although such beliefs, while by no means extinct, are today recognized as a stereotype, Islwyn Ffowc Elis would almost certainly have not thought of them as such during the writing of the novel in 1953.

pacifism as an important component of their Nationalism. The portrayal of Paul Rushmere becomes even more two-dimensional during the novel's sequel, *Yn Ôl i Leiflor*. At one point, he foreshadows his own death by drinking and driving (itself a death heavy with moralistic overtones), thinking to himself:

It was a fine night for an accident. Hopefully he would not see an accident on the road and be forced to go out and doctor the injured. It would be a pity about the injured but it would be a nuisance. (p. 98)<sup>31</sup>

Following Rushmere's fatal crash, Islwyn Ffowc Elis offers perhaps the most blunt condemnation of his politics and beliefs. The accident happens when he drives to Lleiflor in order to track down Greta Vaughan, now his wife, after the two argue over her newly-formed Nationalist politics. After Greta confides to her late husband's colleague Dr. Maldwyn Edwards that she feels guilty over his death, he replies:

“You're saying that it was your Welsh Nationalism that killed Paul,” he said.

“I'm afraid so,” said Greta.

“Do you not think that it was his own English Nationalism that killed him?”<sup>32</sup>

Here, Elis is unapologetic in his condemnation of Rushmere. Up to this point, throughout both novels, the link between his immorality and distrust of Welsh Nationalism is merely implied. It is only after his death that it is explicitly stated that this is the case. In contrast, we are presented with the figure of Karl Weissmann, who has rejected the destructive German Nationalism he fought for during the War in

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<sup>31</sup>Original Welsh-language source: ‘Yr oedd yn noson iawn am ddamwain. Gobeithio na welai ddamwain ar y ffordd a gorfod mynd allan i ddoctora'r clwyfedigion. Fe fyddai'n resyn dros y clwyfedigion ond fe fyddai'n niwsans.’

<sup>32</sup>Islwyn Ffowc Elis, *Yn Ôl i Leiflor* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1956), p. 142. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text. Original Welsh-language source: “‘Rydech chi'n dweud mai'ch cenedlaetholdeb Cymreig chi laddodd Paul,’ meddai.

“Mae arna'i ofn,” ebe Greta.

“Ydech chi ddim yn meddwl mai'i genedlaetholdeb Seisnig o'i hun laddodd o?”

favour of a Welsh identity, presented by Elis as being altogether more virtuous. By examining and emphasizing the difference between the two characters, Islwyn Ffowc Elis may actually be challenging the negative post-World War II stereotype of Germans generally found within British writing<sup>33</sup> in order to reinforce another, that of the linguistically and culturally challenged Englishman in Wales. Simon Brooks has discussed this at length, claiming:

The political function of Karl Weissmann in the novel is to answer the accusation that nationalism is prejudiced, by contrasting the tolerant nature of Welsh nationalism with the intolerance of the British.<sup>34</sup>

The differences between Rushmere and Weissmann also hint at Islwyn Ffowc Elis's opinion on how national identity is constructed: in making Karl so sympathetic towards Wales and its culture, he seems to be portraying Welsh identity not as a genetically-predetermined birthright, but as something that can be chosen and acquired. In *Cysgod y Cryman*, Harri Vaughan states:

“Our usual definition of a Welshman, whether it is correct or not, is a man who can speak Welsh. According to that definition Karl is a good Welshman. In some respects, a better Welshman than you and I. How much Welsh can Paul Rushmere manage?” (p. 247)<sup>35</sup>

Karl's acquired Welsh identity is described in similarly cultural terms by Harri's sister, Greta, earlier in the novel, when she remarks: ‘Because [Karl] spoke Welsh and

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<sup>33</sup>It is something of a trope in Welsh-language writing to subvert the negative characterization of Germans after the war, as can be seen in the poetry of Gwenallt (‘Plant yr Almaen’ in *Eples* (1951)), Waldo Williams (‘Almaenes’ in *Dail Pren* (1956)) and Alun Llywelyn-Williams.

<sup>34</sup>Simon Brooks, ‘Ystrydebau Ethnig Islwyn Ffowc Elis’ [‘The Ethnic Stereotypes of Islwyn Ffowc Elis’], *Ysgrifau Beirniadol* [*Critical Essays*] XXVIII (2009), 95 - 120 (p. 100). Original Welsh-language source: ‘Swyddogaeth wleidyddol Karl Weissmann yn y nofel yw ateb y cyhuddiad bod cenedlaetholdeb yn rhagfarnlyd, wrth gyferbynnu natur oddefgar cenedlaetholwyr Cymraeg ag anoddefgarwch Prydeinwyr.’

<sup>35</sup>Original Welsh-language source: “‘Ein diffiniad arferol ni o Gymro, p’un a ydi o’n iawn ai peidio, ydi dyn sy’n siarad Cymraeg. Yn ôl y diffiniad hwnnw mae Karl yn Gymro da. Ar rai ystyron, yn Gymro gwell na chi a fi. Faint o Gymraeg feder Paul Rushmere?’”

attended chapel and fostered an interest in their interests, she had long ago stopped thinking of him as a foreigner.’ (p. 145 - 6).<sup>36</sup> In *Yn Ôl i Leiflor*, while discussing her unhappy marriage with Paul Rushmere, Greta again makes a similar comment, ending by claiming that “. . . well, you might as well say that Karl was a Welshman . . .” (p. 62).<sup>37</sup>

The character of Paul Rushmere highlights an aspect of Islwyn Ffowc Elis’s ‘Leiflor novels’ which can be applied to the work of Emyr Humphreys. In both *Cysgod y Cryman* and *Yn Ôl i Leiflor*, as well as in the earlier novels of Emyr Humphreys, particularly *Outside The House Of Baal*, the Welsh Nationalism of the protagonists is frequently defined only in reference to the contrary beliefs of an antagonist. The importance of Paul Rushmere in defining and emphasizing the attitudes of Elis’s Nationalist characters is alluded to in *Yn Ôl i Leiflor*, when, after his death, the narrator observes that, ‘The killing of Paul had temporarily removed the rebellion from [Greta’s] Nationalism, and something would have to be found to reignite it once more.’ (p. 160).<sup>38</sup> While the immoral nature of some of Emyr Humphreys’s Nationalist characters such as Owen Richards adds a layer of complexity to the stock anti-Welsh antagonist common in the work of Islwyn Ffowc Elis, the role of a character such as Ronnie Miles in *Outside The House Of Baal* is more straightforward, while still avoiding any classification as a stereotype. Interestingly, our familiarity with Humphreys’s earlier novels may actually add to our

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<sup>36</sup>Original Welsh-language source: ‘Am ei fod [Karl] yn siarad Cymraeg ac yn mynychu’r capel ac wedi magu diddordeb yn eu diddordebau hwy, yr oedd hi er stalwm wedi peidio â meddwl amdano fel estron.’

<sup>37</sup>Original Welsh-language source: “. . . wel, waeth i chi ddeud mai Cymro oedd Karl . . .”

<sup>38</sup>Original Welsh-language source: ‘Yr oedd lladd Paul wedi tynnu’r gwrthryfel o’i chenedlaetholdeb dros dro, a byddai’n rhaid cael rhywbeth i ail danio hwnnw drachefn.’



appreciation of the character, as Ronnie embodies the same ‘zeal of the convert’ that characterizes Michael of *A Toy Epic*, though Miles’s position is reversed: he rejects his father’s pacifistic Welsh Nationalism in favour of what could be termed a British identity.

This reversal of the process that characterizes Michael, as well as being so central to the political allegiance of Emyr Humphreys, has a great impact on other characters in the novel, particularly J. T. Miles. Before Ronnie is portrayed as strongly opposing his father’s beliefs, J. T.’s sympathy towards Welsh Nationalism is made evident throughout the novel, although usually in cautious terms. He writes a letter to Lydia (his future wife), for example, in which he refers to his admiration of O. M. Edwards:

Mr O. M. Edwards is a fine man in my opinion. His ideals for Wales are far higher and more elevated than those of more popular men like D. Ll. George for example. This is only my opinion.<sup>39</sup>

The repeating of J. T.’s qualifier that his appreciation of O. M. Edwards is ‘only [his] opinion’ serves to remind us that he is not fully confident that others will accept his espousal of Nationalism. Later in the novel, and much later in his life, as the novel’s chronology spans many decades, his deviation from straightforward Welsh Nationalist doctrine becomes more pronounced, as he chastises Walter Silin, the lecturer in Welsh History with strong Welsh Nationalist sympathies, echoing public concern over the lack of economic policy in the early years of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru: ‘- What about your economics? Back to the middle ages, Welsh autarchy. Feed Wales on

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<sup>39</sup>Emyr Humphreys, *Outside the House of Baal* (Bridgend: Seren, 1996 [1965]), p. 115. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.



Welsh wheat.' (p. 292) Only relatively late in the narrative does J. T. commit himself fully to the Nationalist cause, again echoing Emyr Humphreys's own life, particularly his support of the arson attack at Penyberth:

- I'm with [the Nationalists] all the way, J. T. said. I'm against that bombing school in Caernarvonshire and I'm against the draining away of our young people to London and the Midlands and Luton too. And I'm against a lot of other things too. And I'd like to do something about it. Before it's too late. I wouldn't want to go on living in the middle of a dying country. (p. 304)

Notably, it is soon after this confession that Ronnie, previously an almost invisible presence in the novel because of his youth, starts vehemently opposing his father's views. The first conversation between them following the above quotation concerns the relationship between Welsh Nationalism and pacifism, and exposes Ronnie as cold-hearted while simultaneously clarifying his anti-Nationalist views, with the effect that the reader is more likely to be sympathetic to J. T.'s opinion. The argument could be made that some of Ronnie's assertions are comparable to those made by Paul Rushmere in *Cysgod y Cryman* in terms of unrealistic callousness. While father and son are discussing the war, we are presented with the following exchange:

- I'm thinking of the men, women and children who will be slaughtered, J. T. said. That's what I'm thinking about. The cities in ruins. The country side destroyed.  
- From now on, we've got a real chance of winning. Best news for years. (p. 323)

However, as already mentioned, despite both Ronnie Miles and Paul Rushmere expressing questionable views, we cannot class the former as a stereotype, especially if we are familiar with Humphreys's past work: Ronnie represents a reversal of both Michael of *A Toy Epic*, and of Humphreys himself. His arguments with his father

fully expose the pacifistic Nationalist beliefs of J. T. Miles, mostly suppressed by J. T.'s uncertainty concerning them before this late point in the novel. Although J. T.'s viewpoint is clearly the one closest to that of the author, he does not escape criticism, as a result of both his simplistic understanding of gender roles and his inability to understand the world outside his narrow spheres of expertise. As his daughter-in-law Dorothy states, 'He lives in a sort of cocoon. Anything unpleasant or disturbing and it's got to be kept from him.' (p. 362)

There is a simple reason why Humphreys's portrayal of Ronnie never approaches the stereotypical nature of Paul Rushmere. Because of Humphreys's own conversion to Welsh Nationalism, he is not only familiar with J. T.'s beliefs, but also understands Ronnie's concerns to a certain degree. As Lowri Davies points out:

. . . Emyr Humphreys understands the mentality of wanting to 'escape from this one'<sup>40</sup> at times, and failing to do so. He is painfully aware that the other side of embracing Welshness and loving Wales, is to be suffocated by it from time to time, by its history, its present, and worries about its future.<sup>41</sup>

Unlike Islwyn Ffowc Elis's portrayal of Paul Rushmere, Ronnie Miles is not a character whose ideological position directly contradicts that of the author. The disagreement between father and son reaches its climax in an argument which, while still portraying Ronnie as unfeeling and somewhat ruthless, contains attempts to explain his behaviour, centred on his bitterness towards his father. As he claims,

<sup>40</sup>A reference to T. H. Parry-Williams's celebrated Welsh-language poem 'Hon' (1949).

<sup>41</sup>Lowri Davies, 'Mwy na *Darn o Dir?* Cymru a Chymreictod yn Nofelau Emyr Humphreys' ['More Than a Piece of Land? Wales and Welshness in the Novels of Emyr Humphreys'], *Efrydiau Athronyddol* [*Philosophical Studies*], LXIII (2000), 110. Original Welsh-language source: '. . . mae Emyr Humphreys yn deall y meddylfryd o fod eisiau "dianc rhag hon" ar brydiau, a methu. Mae'n boenus ymwybodol mai'r ochr arall i gofleidio Cymreictod a charu Cymru, yw cael eich mygu ganddi o dro i dro, gan ei hanes hi, ei phresennol hi, a phoendod am ei dyfodol.' Davies is perhaps referring specifically to a passage from *Outside the House of Baal* in which Ronnie claims, 'I want to go where ideas are made and where the future is shaped. Wales suffocates me.' (p. 324)

‘You set impossible standards. You make impossible demands and then you condemn all of us outright because we don’t fulfil them.’ (p. 374) It may also be said that the structure of Humphreys’s novel, and perhaps *Outside the House of Baal* in particular, is not the ideal medium for the creation of stereotypes: typically, Humphreys’s characters debate with each other, revealing all the strengths and flaws of their ideological position, leaving the reader to decide as to the relative merits of each one.

Ronnie and J. T. Miles part ways shortly after this condemnation, with no sign that they could ever be fully reconciled. As in *A Toy Epic*, then, Emyr Humphreys ends his novel on an unsatisfying, bleak note as far as the future of Wales is concerned, with Ronnie and J. T. Miles embodying two very different facets of the national character. In this respect, the novel also shares similarities with another of Humphreys’s texts, *A Man’s Estate* (1955), as well as with Islwyn Ffowc Elis’s ‘Lleifior novels’. The national tragedy of Ronnie’s rejection of what Humphreys sees as ideals crucial to the survival of Wales’s cultural independence and uniqueness is also a personal tragedy, as J. T. Miles has failed to pass a cultural inheritance on to his son. The concept of inheritance is crucial to Nationalist discussions of Wales in general, and in these novels in particular. In *Yn Ôl i Leifior*, Greta Vaughan’s friend Vera, who has strong Nationalist sympathies, reveals how important inheritance is in a Welsh Nationalist context when she says that she “opposes marriages between the

Welsh and English. They're destructive to the life of a nation as small as ours.”  
(p. 64).<sup>42</sup>

Nationality is not absolutely central to the discussion of inheritance in the ‘Lleifior novels’, as any threat to Harri Vaughan’s inheritance of Lleifior has more to do with his rejection of his father’s class rather than his national allegiance. Harri never rejects his Welsh identity,<sup>43</sup> although neither does he fully support Welsh Nationalism at any point in the two novels, at one point claiming in *Yn Ôl i Lleifior* that “I never had much time for the Blaid.” (p. 77),<sup>44</sup> while tellingly not being able to give an acceptable explanation as to why this is the case to his sister, Greta. In contrast, nationality as a deciding factor in the inheritance of Y Glyn is central to *A Man’s Estate*, with the relation between morality and Nationalism in Humphreys’s novels again informing our understanding of the text. It has parallels with *The Little Kingdom* and with *A Toy Epic*, published three years later, although Humphreys had started working on the manuscript of the latter long before beginning work on *A Man’s Estate*. As with the figures of Owen Richards and Michael Edwards, Philip Elis is often seen in the novel as a semi-legendary potential saviour. However, while Owen and Michael choose to portray themselves in this way, the mythologizing of Philip Elis is done exclusively by his long-lost sister, Hannah, who waits for his return to the family farm of Y Glyn. The Welsh myth of the ‘mab darogan’, a figure who will emerge to lead Wales into a prosperous golden age, heavily referenced in the appendix to *A Toy Epic*, is clearly present in some of Hannah’s statements such as:

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<sup>42</sup>Original Welsh-language source: “yn erbyn priodasau rhwng Cymry a Saeson. Mae n’hw’n ddifaol i fywyd cenedl mor fechan â’n cenedl ni.”

<sup>43</sup>In as much as his acceptance of the foreign ideology of Communism is not a rejection of Wales.

<sup>44</sup>Original Welsh-language source: “Fu genny’ ddim llawer i’w ddweud wrth y Blaid erioed.”

I have wanted my own unknown brother to return and understand but I am too old now, older than my years, to dream as often as I used to of long-lost brother's golden singing return. . .<sup>45</sup>

as well as:

[m]y romantic imagination took comfort in figures of my father, Elis Felix Elis, so long revered and so long dead, and my missing brother, so long lost, so long unspoken of: the rightful heir to whom in due course I could hand over the whole estate, compact, thriving and in good order. (p. 196)

It is significant that Philip Elis is seen as a saviour by someone other than himself, as this places him in direct contrast to Owen Richards and Michael Edwards. As he does not acknowledge his importance to the narrative in the same way, we tend to look at him more favourably, despite his rejection of Welsh identity at the start of the novel. In some ways, his initial refusal to return to Wales may actually make him seem a more moral character: the very fact that he does not wish to assume the responsibility of being the patriarch of Y Glyn shows him to be someone who is free of egocentricity. Claims that he makes such as 'When I hear the word Welsh I feel uncomfortable' (p. 10) and that his family is "[i]n Wales . . . And as far as I'm concerned it can stay there" (p. 19) seem more innocent than they would be if spoken by someone who believed in his own claim to an inheritance, whether national or personal.

Another character of importance is Mary, the mother of Philip and Hannah Elis, who, it is revealed late in the novel, let her husband Elis Felix Elis die because, in her words, "He was a traitor. He betrayed me. He betrayed Wales. He betrayed God! Only one medicine for treason." (p. 375) As in *The Little Kingdom*, Emyr

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<sup>45</sup> Emyr Humphreys, *A Man's Estate* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2006 [1955]), p. 30. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

Humphreys presents us with a character who is willing to commit murder if it advances the Nationalist cause. However, while we are frequently privy to Owen's thoughts, we are never given any insight into Mary's mind,<sup>46</sup> distancing us from the character, and making her motives all the more difficult to understand. Mary Elis assumes further importance when we consider Emyr Humphreys's representation of gender as it relates to Nationalism and morality: of his early Wales-set novels, *A Man's Estate* is the text with the most prominent and powerful female characters. The women of both *The Little Kingdom* and *A Toy Epic* are marginalised, although the powerful effect Frida has on the boys in the latter novel relating to their acceptance of Welsh identity is significant,<sup>47</sup> while Kate of *Outside the House of Baal* is portrayed as being passive, as she attends on J. T. Miles following the death of his wife, and her sister, Lydia.<sup>48</sup>

In *A Man's Estate*, the power that Mary Elis has the ability and potential to wield can be readily contrasted with the passivity of her daughter, Hannah. The latter is entirely dependent on the possible return of Philip, and is forced to embody the role of an obedient nineteenth-century Welsh domestic drudge, as described by Idris Powell:

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<sup>46</sup>Indeed, while the novel is written in the first-person, and from the perspectives of several different characters, none of these characters comes from the older generation which comprises Mary, Elis and Vavator Elis. The reader's distancing from the older generation places further emphasis on the novel's themes of inheritance and the future of Wales.

<sup>47</sup>When Frida boasts that her father was able to speak eight languages, Iorwerth responds by proudly stating that he speaks two languages, English and Welsh, prompting laughter from the other two boys, as well as from Frida herself. (p. 82) Shortly afterwards, she is portrayed as being pompously favourable towards European culture and ideals, while being disdainful towards all things Welsh: "Albie's such a childish name," she says. "Listen. I'm going to christen you anew - Alberto. . . . Sounds so much nicer. Besides, I once knew an absolutely fascinating Italian racing-driver called Alberto." (p. 83)

<sup>48</sup>While gender and Nationalism in Welsh writing is discussed in a later chapter, it is important to discuss Humphreys's treatment of gender here, as it reveals a hitherto unexplored aspect of his treatment of Nationalist politics.

There was a century between us as I stood up still burning with my thoughts while she sat primmer than a spinster of a time past before I was born. I felt so strongly the difference between us that kept us from any real depth of understanding. (p. 240)

The differences between Hannah and her mother could hardly be more pronounced: while Hannah is dependent on the male, Mary Elis has no objection to overpowering men in order to fulfil her goals. As Hannah herself describes:

My mother's public attitude is that my father was not nationalist enough and she deplores the influence of 'Westminster' and 'Party Headquarters' and 'ambitious friends' upon his patriotic efforts for the 'mother-country' (mother-country is a phrase my mother always uses with conviction). (p. 40)

While this independence would usually be thought of as a positive trait, studying the novel alongside Humphreys's early work reveals an interesting tendency to portray those characters who possess the dynamism and aggressive personal and political ambition of Mary Elis as wholly immoral. It is the passive Iorwerth for whom the reader feels most sympathy at the climax of *A Toy Epic*, as the ambitious Michael obliviously wounds him by kissing Dilys. Similarly, the final pages of *The Little Kingdom* consist of the novel's minor characters, some of whom passively allowed themselves to be manipulated by Owen Richards, moralising over his many faults. The ambitiousness of Mary Elis places her in the same category as these characters, with the possible outcome that the reader would consider the passivity of Hannah Elis to be a virtue.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>It is important to note also that pacifism can be a form of action, and is often linked with Welsh Nationalism. The decision made by several Nationalists to refuse to fight in the Second World War is an example of this, as was Gwynfor Evans's 1980 hunger strike in protest at the Conservative government's refusal to establish a Welsh-language television channel.



There are several similarities between *A Man's Estate* and the 'Lleifior novels'; indeed, one cannot help but wonder whether Humphreys's novel was at least partly inspired by *Cysgod y Cryman*, published two years previously.<sup>50</sup> The theme of change underscores much of Elis's text, as the characters react in varying ways to the end of the squirearchical way of life that has defined their existence. While not as prominent in *A Man's Estate*, this theme is certainly present: the fact that we are not presented with a first-person account of events from the perspective of the older generation emphasizes the theme of inheritance and the need for change. As M. Wynn Thomas states in his foreword to the 2006 Parthian edition:

A way of life is ending, in an agonising implosion of values and relationships, and what is to succeed it is altogether unclear. In this respect, it is very much a novel about the Wales of the immediate post-war period, a Wales already (if unknowingly) headed into post-industrial dereliction, and a Wales still (and knowingly) experiencing the final stages of the long death of the Welsh-speaking rural society that had, for more than a century, sustained a most remarkable Nonconformist 'civilization'. (p. xi)

Certain isolated passages in the novel could have been taken from 'the Lleifior novels', such as Hannah's declaration that

We are the most important family in the district, but our time is running out. By being what we are, we constitute the greatest bulwark in this small corner of Wales against the forces of change. (p. 31)

In both authors' novels the forces of change are described in forbidding, almost sinister terms, as in the quotation above, as if the control that the Elis and Vaughan families hold over their communities is an entirely natural thing which should be protected. Edward Vaughan in particular is presented as eager to uphold the tradition

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<sup>50</sup>When making this comparison, the use of the Elis name, so prominent in *A Man's Estate*, may seem to be more than a coincidence. It is unclear, however, whether Humphreys chose this name in order to deliberately reference Islwyn Ffowc Elis and *Cysgod y Cryman*.

of his family's dominance: Islwyn Ffowc Elis makes frequent use of pathetic fallacy in *Cysgod y Cryman*, as nature seems to respond to Vaughan's wishes. The novel begins with a description of how:

... in the Aerwen Valley, the first to harvest every year was Edward Vaughan. He had a right to be first, the same right possessed by his father and grandfather. This right was challenged only once within memory, when Tom y Garnedd, against his father's wishes, took his machine to harvest ahead of him. The next day, torrential rains came, delaying the harvest by ten days. The following year, Tom waited like the rest for Edward Vaughan. (p. 9)<sup>51</sup>

Of course, neither Elis nor Humphreys is wholly uncritical of this attitude, and any discussions of the rights of the novels' dominant families over their surroundings are usually presented in the context of the characters' thoughts, rather than from an authorial perspective. Neither Edward Vaughan nor Mary and Vavasor Elis are fully satisfied with the way in which their inheritance is passed on, with Lleifior becoming a co-operative farm under Harri Vaughan's guidance, and Philip Elis aiding the transfer of Y Glyn into Hannah's possession, against the wishes of their mother. Both *Cysgod y Cryman* and *A Man's Estate* suggest that change is essential, and that the older generation's claim of rightful dominance over their surroundings is not valid.

In general, however, *A Man's Estate* is of greater interest, owing to Emyr Humphreys's refusal to let his political beliefs overshadow his writing. Moral discussions, usually centred on Welsh Nationalism and identity, are clearly signposted within Islwyn Ffowc Elis's writing, leaving little room for readers to formulate their own opinions regarding the principles of his characters. The work of Emyr

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<sup>51</sup>Original Welsh-language source: '... yn Nyffryn Aerwen, y cyntaf i dorri bob blwyddyn oedd Edward Vaughan. Yr oedd ganddo ef hawl i fod yn gyntaf, yr un hawl ag oedd gan ei dad a'i daid. Unwaith o fewn cof yr heriwyd ei hawl, pan aeth Tom y Garnedd, yn groes i 'wyllys ei dad, a'i beiriant i'w wair o'i flaen. Drannoeth, fe ddaeth yn genllif o law, a safodd y cynhaeaf ddeng niwrnod. Y flwyddyn ddilynol, fe ddisgwyliodd Tom fel y lleill wrth Edward Vaughan.'

Humphreys can therefore be thought of as a rejection of Elis's use of stereotype in order to advance the political causes to which he adheres. While both authors are self-confessed Nationalists, the differences between them can perhaps be best understood when we consider their work in the context of political propaganda.

Lowri Davies refers to Humphreys's post-1966 output, claiming that:

He does not mention the campaign to set up a Welsh language television channel . . . a campaign over which he was in prison for a time. The trials and tribulations of the 1969 Investiture [of Prince Charles in Caernarfon] is similarly absent, as is the disappointment of the 1979 referendum . . .<sup>52</sup>

In contrast, Islwyn Ffowc Elis is acutely aware that the politics of his work often overshadows its artistic merit. The manuscript of his novel *Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd* [*A Week In The Wales That Will Be*] (1957), a work of science-fiction detailing a mid-twentieth-century Welshman's journey through time to two possible versions of the year 2033, in which two wildly different possibilities regarding attitudes towards the Welsh language and culture are explored, was even submitted to Gwynfor Evans for approval before publication.<sup>53</sup> In later years,

Islwyn Ffowc Elis has denigrated [*Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd*] publicly more than once, calling it unfit to be considered as literature, and categorizing it as a 'story' rather than a novel.<sup>54</sup>

While the status of *Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd* as a piece of propaganda is without question, *Cysgod y Cryman* and *Yn Ôl i Leiflor* can also be thought of in

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<sup>52</sup>Davies, 'Mwy na *Darn o Dir?*', 101 - 2. Original Welsh-language source: 'Nid oes ganddo unrhyw sôn am yr ymgyrch i gael sianel deledu Gymraeg . . . ymgyrch y bu ef yn y carchar drosti am gyfnod. Ni cheir ychwaith hynt a helynt yr Arwisgo yn 1969, na siom refferendwm 1979 . . .'

<sup>53</sup>For more information, see Dylan Iorwerth's introduction to Islwyn Ffowc Elis, *Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 2007 [1957]), p. xii.

<sup>54</sup>T. Robin Chapman, *Rhywfaint o Anfarwoldeb: Bywgraffiad Islwyn Ffowc Elis [A Little Immortality: A Biography of Islwyn Ffowc Elis]* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 2003), p. 120. Original Welsh-language source: 'Mae Islwyn Ffowc Elis wedi wfftio [*Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd*] ar goedd fwy nag unwaith, gan ei galw'n anffit i'w hystyriad fel llenyddiaeth, a'i chategoreiddio'n "stori" rhagor nofel.'

similarly political terms. The impetus behind Elis's writing of *Cysgod y Cryman* was inherently political, as he set out to craft a novel that would be attractive and enjoyable to those who were relatively unaccustomed to reading Welsh-language fiction. As R. Gerallt Jones notes:

[*Cysgod Y Cryman*] has a significance . . . that can only be appreciated in the dual contexts both of the state of the Welsh novel in the post-war period and of the author's very conscious role as a writer using a language the very existence of which was, many felt at the time, under threat from many quarters.<sup>55</sup>

Elis's perception that the Welsh language and its literature was under threat would therefore logically inform his writing: the possibility that his novels would reach numbers of readers unprecedented in Welsh-language writing was for him an ideal way to express his political views in an entertaining and compelling manner. The very act of writing such novels could also be considered a gesture in support of Welsh Nationalism, as it was his intention to increase readership of Welsh-language fiction, enriching Welsh culture in the process. This politically-motivated urge to write accessible, populist fiction is not common to both authors: Emyr Humphreys praises Saunders Lewis, for example, claiming that he 'doesn't suffer from that common Welsh weakness, the overwhelming desire to be agreeable.'<sup>56</sup> Humphreys is not afraid to alienate or even offend those who believe in Nationalist causes close to his own heart if it serves his writing, and we see in his work an obvious distrust of self-

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<sup>55</sup>R. Gerallt Jones, 'A Watershed Novel', in Islwyn Ffowc Elis, *Shadow of the Sickle*, trans. Meic Stephens (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1998), p. 260.

<sup>56</sup>Emyr Humphreys, *Conversations and Reflections*, ed. M. Wynn Thomas (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002), p. 90.

serving political idealists, coupled with a definite rejection of the kind of stereotypes based on nationality or political affiliation found in the novels of Islwyn Ffowc Elis.

In conclusion, then, we see how the vast difference between the two authors regarding their use of stereotypes, and the relation between Nationalism and morality in their work, can be explained by their differing viewpoints regarding the purpose of literature, and particularly Welsh writing. While Humphreys seeks to attract prestige to Welsh writing through the aesthetic quality of his work, and writes in English in order to reach a wider audience, Elis sees the act of writing in the Welsh language as an inherently political act, and he is prepared to employ stereotype approaching propaganda at times. Perhaps the differences between the two authors can be best summarized if we consider the role of Welsh writing within the Nationalist project. If we accept the argument made in this thesis that the main forum for the communication and propagation of Nationalist ideas in Wales before 1966 was literature, then the work of Islwyn Ffowc Elis assumes greater significance. Indeed, it could be claimed that some of his writing bears more resemblance to a political tract than it does a piece of literature: this could clearly be said of *Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd*, with aspects of the 'Lleifior novels' also contributing to this argument. The different approach taken by Emyr Humphreys, on the other hand, differentiates him not only from Elis, but also from the other writers discussed within this thesis. Despite his public support for Welsh Nationalism, Humphreys chooses largely to bypass any direct endorsement of Nationalist politics. Instead, he opted to let his readership decide as to the relative merits of a particular ideology represented in his

novels. He concentrates on crafting literature which, while unmistakably Welsh, could be appreciated by readers from a variety of political, cultural, and national backgrounds, featuring Nationalist characters who range from being virtuous to wholly immoral, reflecting the fluid and changeable nature of Welsh Nationalism emphasized in this thesis. Ultimately, it could be claimed that of the two authors, it is Islwyn Ffowc Elis who most fully embraced the role of literature within the Nationalist project, and consciously turned his fiction into political statements, whereas Humphreys saw Nationalist campaigning as confined to the political realm, choosing to retain his artistic integrity in the process.

*Class and Nationalism in the Work of Harri Webb and Hugh MacDiarmid*

While Emyr Humphreys and Islwyn Ffowc Elis, discussed in the previous chapter, differ greatly in their portrayal of Welsh Nationalism, it could be claimed that the two authors belong to the 'mainstream' of Welsh Nationalist support; both were Welsh-speaking, Nonconformist, and emphasized cultural Nationalism above all other forms. The role of other writers within various Nationalist movements, however, cannot be so easily compartmentalized, including those who sympathized with both Nationalism and Marxism. The relationship between the two ideologies, often simplified and essentialized, and imagined as being wholly incompatible, is in fact a complex one, which has shifted throughout much of the twentieth century. From its inception, Communism has been largely critical of national divisions, on the grounds that

The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got. Since the proletariat must first acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the national class, must constitute itself *the* nation, it is, so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word.<sup>1</sup>

Despite this firm critique of Nationalist thought, and the presence of many other similar declarations in *The Communist Manifesto*, there does exist a passage which would seem to endorse an eventual end to national oppression, purely as a product of class struggle:

In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Marx, Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, pp. 23 - 24.

Lenin's *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination* (1914) must also be considered a significant example of a prominent Communist apparently endorsing some national movements, with a distinction made between forms of Nationalism supported by the proletariat and by the bourgeoisie, with the conclusion made that

[c]omplete equality of rights for all nations; the right of nations to self-determination; the unity of the workers of all nations - such is the national programme that Marxism, the experience of the whole world, and the experience of Russia, teach the workers.<sup>3</sup>

Later events, however, such as the formation of the USSR, and the genocidal acts perpetrated by Joseph Stalin against the Ukrainian people, in particular, have emphasized the complications that arise from combining the two ideologies.<sup>4</sup>

It is with these complications in mind that we should begin to approach the Marxist-Nationalist writing of Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid, and the significant influence his work had on that of Welsh poet Harri Webb. MacDiarmid not only affected Webb's poetry stylistically and thematically, but also, crucially, influenced his ideological and political beliefs. The claim could be made that Webb's embracing of Welsh Nationalism, as well as his activities as part of the Welsh Republican

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<sup>3</sup>Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Critical Remarks on the National Question/The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, trans. Bernard Isaacs & Joe Fineberg (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), p. 97.

<sup>4</sup>While Stalin's treatment of the Russian people must also be condemned, his treatment of the Ukrainian people in the 1930s can be classed as genocide. Robert Conquest has stated that the Ukrainian famine of 1931 - 1932 'can be blamed quite flatly on Stalin', calling it:

... the only case in history of a purely man-made famine ... [and] the only major famine whose very existence was ignored or denied by the governmental authorities, and even to a large degree successfully concealed from world opinion. - Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1971), p. 45.

While conceding that applying 'a genocide framework to the human havoc of the Ukrainian famine (1931 - 32) is ... controversial', Adam Jones, meanwhile, concludes that Stalin's actions during the famine 'should be considered genocidal'. - Adam Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 136 - 137.



Movement, were due in part to his reverence for MacDiarmid as a writer and as a public figure. Possibly the most significant and intriguing aspect of the similarities between the two poets is their espousal, at various times, of both Nationalism and Communism/Socialism;<sup>5</sup> ideologies which, on the surface, would seem to be incompatible. As is famously stated in MacDiarmid's 'A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle' (1926), 'I'll ha'e nae hauf-way hoose, but aye be whaur/Extremes meet'.<sup>6</sup> It becomes crucial, then, to examine how these two differing ideologies interact in their work, and to determine which, if any, is given more prominence. When we do this, it becomes clear that neither poet is wholly successful in overcoming the tensions inherent in accepting both class-centric and nation-centric ideologies, and usually choose to concentrate on one or the other, with Nationalism and Communism/Socialism rarely overlapping in their poetry. This ideological separation is surprising given MacDiarmid's acceptance of the concept of the 'Caledonian antiszygy', first coined by G. Gregory Smith in *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (1919), which held that the meeting of extremes was a crucial part of the Scottish national character.

This chapter will question whether Harri Webb attempted to appropriate this concept for use in a Welsh setting, further emphasizing the similarities between the poets. These similarities, in turn, are significant in the context of the thesis as a whole

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<sup>5</sup>During the 1930s, MacDiarmid, born Christopher Murray Grieve, was expelled from the Communist Party of Great Britain on account of his Nationalist sympathies, and from the National Party of Scotland (which he helped found) because of his sympathies towards Communism. He rejoined the Communist Party in 1956. Harri Webb joined Plaid Cymru in 1948, before shifting his allegiance to the Labour Party in 1953, and back to Plaid Cymru in 1960.

<sup>6</sup>Hugh MacDiarmid, *A Drunk Man Looks At The Thistle*, ed. Kenneth Buthlay (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987 [1926]), p. 14, l. 141. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

because, as will be shown, the relationship between MacDiarmid and Webb is emblematic of the similar position of Nationalism within Welsh and Scottish writing in the twentieth century. Despite the traditional theoretical difficulty in combining nation- and class-based ideologies, both men attempted to do so in broadly comparable ways, reflecting the analogous political situation in Scotland and Wales, and the similar techniques used by Scottish and Welsh writers in response to this.

MacDiarmid was not the first prominent Scottish figure to bring together the conflicting ideologies of Nationalism and Communism. One of the poet's main political influences was John MacLean, founder of the Scottish Workers' Republican Party, which strongly supported Scottish independence while simultaneously advocating Communism. It could be claimed that '... as well as being the most extreme Socialist of his time he became the most extreme Nationalist as well and an out-and-out champion of Gaeldom.'<sup>7</sup> MacDiarmid's ideological debt to MacLean is displayed clearly in two poems written in his honour: 'Krassivy' (1943) and 'John MacLean (1879 - 1923)' (written in 1934 but not published until 1956), both included in *The Socialist Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid* (1978). In the latter poem, MacDiarmid's admiration of John MacLean is contrasted with his distrust and dislike of the majority of Scotland's public, in a clear contradiction of his Communist politics. They are described as 'fools ... with unseeing eyes' (p. 54, l. 7), particularly the high-ranking officials who were instrumental in sending MacLean to prison in 1918 on charges of sedition:

Stand close, stand close, and block out the light

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<sup>7</sup>T. S. Law, Thurso Berwick, 'Foreword', in Hugh MacDiarmid, *The Socialist Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. T. S. Law & Thurso Berwick (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. xx. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

As long as you can, you ministers and lawyers,  
 Hulking brutes of police, fat bourgeoisie,  
 Sleek derma for congested guts - its fires  
 Will leap through yet; already it is clear  
 Of all MacLean's foes not one was his peer. (p. 55, l. 19 - 23)

'Krassivy' pays him a similar compliment by comparing him favourably to Lenin, who was greatly admired by MacDiarmid, as his three 'Hymns to Lenin' attest. Both men are described as 'beautiful and red' (p. 54, l. 12), which, he claims, is 'A description no other Scot has ever deserved.' (p. 54, l. 15)

While MacDiarmid makes use of Scottish sources that seem to legitimize a potential union of Nationalism and Communism/Socialism, the existence of similar Welsh precedents goes unacknowledged by Webb. The periodical *Tir Newydd* [*New Land*], for example, published in the 1930s and edited by Alun Llywelyn-Williams, contained several endorsements of left-wing Nationalism, from such contributors as T. I. J. Jones, D. Myrddin Lloyd and David Rees. It included several calls for Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru to declare itself a Socialist party, as well as Alun Llywelyn-Williams commenting in an editorial that 'an independent Wales should be formed on the basis of Socialism. Not . . . the feeble Socialism of the English Labour Party.'<sup>8</sup> Another key figure in the history of Welsh Nationalism and Socialism is David Thomas, an early member of the Independent Labour Party, who called for a Socialist Welsh Nationalist Party some fifteen years before the formation of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru, supported the idea of Home Rule for Wales within the United Kingdom, and was keenly aware of the difficulties inherent in creating a uniquely Welsh form of

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<sup>8</sup>Alun Llywelyn-Williams, 'Nodiadau'r Golygydd' ['Editor's Notes'], *Tir Newydd* 3 (Winter 1935), 3 (3). Original Welsh-language source: 'dylid trefnu Cymru annibynnol ar linellau Sosialaidd. Nid . . . Sosialaeth wamal y Blaid Lafur Seisnig.'

Socialism throughout his life. Writing about him, his granddaughter, author and political activist Angharad Tomos, comments on how aware he was that:

[t]he real work was educating the Welsh as to what Socialism was, and educating Socialists as to what were the specific needs and attributes of the Welsh spirit. It is significant that he notes it was a two-way process.<sup>9</sup>

Despite these figures, and others, signifying important precedents in linking Socialism and Welsh Nationalism, it will become clear that Harri Webb's politics are mainly inspired by the Scottish sources introduced to him through Hugh MacDiarmid. His work does not constitute a continuation of the ideas of David Thomas and Alun Llywelyn-Williams, but an attempt to appropriate those of MacDiarmid to a Welsh setting.<sup>10</sup>

If we are to examine accurately MacDiarmid's influence on Harri Webb, it is not with his poetic work we should start, but with *Lucky Poet* (1943), MacDiarmid's (largely) prose work which is at once an autobiography and a critical appraisal of his own output, as Stephen P. Smith clarifies:

If we 'expect' certain kinds of information from *Lucky Poet*, we will indeed be disappointed; if we accept MacDiarmid's concentration on ideas rather than historical and biographical events as one possible type of autobiography, then we can perhaps appreciate MacDiarmid's achievement.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Angharad Tomos, *Hiraeth am Yfory: David Thomas a Mudiad Llafur Gogledd Cymru [A Longing for Tomorrow: David Thomas and the Labour Movement of North Wales]* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 2002), p. 67. Original Welsh-language source: 'Y gwaith gwirioneddol oedd dysgu'r Cymry beth oedd Sosialaeth, a dysgu Sosialwyr beth oedd anghenion a nodweddion arbennig yr ysbryd Cymreig. Y mae'n arwyddocaol ei fod yn nodi mai proses ddwy ffordd ydoedd.'

<sup>10</sup>Although Webb began learning Welsh at the age of 27, and could have read *Tir Newydd* from then on, it was MacDiarmid's Nationalism which provided the impetus for learning the language, and we must therefore consider the work of MacDiarmid to be of greater importance to the development of both his writing and political beliefs.

<sup>11</sup>Stephen P. Smith, 'Hugh MacDiarmid's *Lucky Poet*: Autobiography and the Art of Attack', *Hugh MacDiarmid: Man and Poet*, ed. Nancy K. Gish (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), pp. 275 - 294 (p. 277).

The text was crucial to the development of Harri Webb as both a Republican and a Nationalist: early in his life, it has been noted that he was ‘not . . . strongly conscious of his Welsh nationality, and he seems to have had very little in the way of political conviction of any kind.’<sup>12</sup> The importance of *Lucky Poet* in his life is described by Meic Stephens:

Harri had discovered the work of MacDiarmid, particularly his autobiography *Lucky Poet* (1943), while on shore-leave in Scotland in 1945 and quickly assimilated his Republicanism and anti-English attitudes. He was to revere the Scottish writer for the rest of his life, seeing in his writing and politics a possible model for his own.<sup>13</sup>

It could be contested that there is little evidence in Webb’s poetry that MacDiarmid’s ideologies were ‘quickly assimilated’. The 1949 poem ‘Desert Victory’ was, in Meic Stephens’s own words, ‘written as a tribute to English friends serving in the British Army who had fought the Germans in Libya’,<sup>14</sup> which shows that his attitudes at this time can hardly be thought of as ‘anti-English’, while his first explicitly political poetry was written later in the same year, four years after coming across MacDiarmid’s work for the first time. It cannot be denied, however, that *Lucky Poet* is the single most important literary influence on Webb’s work and ideology. An examination of how the text may have influenced him can therefore shed light on the interaction between class and Nationalism in Webb’s own work.

What instantly becomes apparent from reading the text from a Welsh perspective is how aware MacDiarmid is of Welsh literature and culture, and how

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<sup>12</sup>Brian Morris, *Writers of Wales: Harri Webb* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993), pp. 10 - 11.

<sup>13</sup>Meic Stephens, ‘Introduction’, in Harri Webb, *A Militant Muse*, ed. Meic Stephens (Bridgend: Seren, 1998). All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

<sup>14</sup>Meic Stephens, ‘Notes on the Poems’, in Harri Webb, *Collected Poems*, ed. Meic Stephens (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1995), p. 385. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

eager he is to include Wales in a ‘Celtic Union of Socialist Soviet Republics in the British Isles’.<sup>15</sup> The book is dedicated to MacDiarmid’s wife, with the inscription ‘Bugeilio’r Gwenith Gwyn’ (‘Watching the White Wheat’), from an eighteenth-century Welsh love song. Elsewhere, he shows knowledge of John Cowper Powys (p. 3, p. 82), Rhys Davies (p. 48), D. Emrys James, aka Dewi Emrys, the Eisteddfod, and cynghanedd (p. 83), Gwenallt, Waldo Williams and Emyr Humphreys (spelt ‘Emry Humphries’), among many others (pp. 174 - 175). Concurrently, he refers to the Welsh literary establishment as being supportive of his work, having had poems published in both the *Welsh Review* and *Wales* in 1939. Also worth noting is that MacDiarmid lived for a time in Ebbw Vale and edited *The Monmouthshire Labour News*, as well as contributing to Keir Hardie’s *The Merthyr Pioneer*. It is clear what effect these frequent references may have had on an impressionable Harri Webb: to someone ‘not . . . strongly conscious of his Welsh nationality’, reading about the rich literary history of his own country in a text written by someone so removed from it could have inspired him to discover more about the literary background of Wales. It is significant, too, how many of the authors referred to by MacDiarmid shared Nationalist sympathies, and it does not take a great leap of the imagination to surmise that Webb may have discovered their work, and therefore gained a greater understanding of Welsh Nationalism, from reading *Lucky Poet*.

Also worth noting is that the text, although ostensibly an autobiography, fictionalizes and mythologises the persona of ‘Hugh MacDiarmid,’ rather than presenting a straightforward account of the life of Christopher Murray Grieve. An

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<sup>15</sup>Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet* (London: Methuen, 1943), p. 26. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

attempt is made to present MacDiarmid as the living embodiment of an idealized

Scottish national character:

MacDiarmid's unwavering sense of self-importance, the source of much of *Lucky Poet's* seeming pomposity and exaggeration, stems from the highly selective nature of MacDiarmid's autobiographical memory in creating of his own life a public monument, both Scottish and universal.<sup>16</sup>

This is clear from the earliest passages of the text, with MacDiarmid claiming, 'To this day I have not lost the faculty of being able to go into cottar houses and secure immediate acceptance among the rural worker as one of themselves.' (p. 3) Another crucial aspect of MacDiarmid's persona in *Lucky Poet* is that he is presented as always having held his Communist/Nationalist views. As Stephen P. Smith again explains:

MacDiarmid's bardic *persona* exhibits no sense of conversion or essential transformation; everything he cites in his formative years inexorably led to his present role . . . by investing MacDiarmid from the beginning with those qualities essential to the exiled poet and Bard of his race.<sup>17</sup>

In essence, then, MacDiarmid is overturning the concept of the 'zeal of the convert', discussed in the previous chapter as an almost essential rite of passage for both Nationalist writers and fictional characters who share their beliefs. In reality, although MacDiarmid did not experience such a radical ideological change as authors such as Emyr Humphreys or Waldo Williams did, his decision to write almost exclusively in the Scots language as opposed to his early English work, collected in *Annals of the Five Senses* (1923), is a significant example of conversion. This would have had a striking effect on Harri Webb's political beliefs: having been given the

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<sup>16</sup>Smith, 'Hugh MacDiarmid's *Lucky Poet*', *Hugh MacDiarmid: Man and Poet*, p. 278.

<sup>17</sup>Smith, 'Hugh MacDiarmid's *Lucky Poet*', *Hugh MacDiarmid: Man and Poet*, p. 284.

impression that MacDiarmid always espoused the beliefs outlined in *Lucky Poet*, Webb's ambivalence towards politics throughout his life thus far may have been magnified, possibly leading to his embracing of class-conscious Nationalism.

The text may have also been a linguistic influence on Harri Webb: shortly after returning to Wales from Scotland in 1945, he began the process of learning Welsh, a decision which may well have been prompted by MacDiarmid's railing against the 'Anglo-Scottish' establishment and his promotion of the use of Scots as a substitute for English. Webb was never of the opinion that knowledge of the Welsh language was entirely necessary to consider yourself a Welsh Nationalist, claiming in 1950, for example, that

. . . the real division in Wales today is not between Welsh-speaking and English-speaking, but between self-satisfied politicians who have an attachment to English Rule and the ordinary people whose hearts are with Wales.<sup>18</sup>

It is nonetheless clear that he saw the act of learning and speaking Welsh as an inherently political one, as his 1966 poem 'Colli Iaith' ('Losing a Language'), by far his most well-known Welsh-language work, will attest. A similar attitude can be found in *Lucky Poet*: despite writing his poetry mainly in Scots, MacDiarmid admits at one point that he believes 'a Scottish Scotland must be a Gaelic Scotland' (p. 201), and, in an interesting parallel with Saunders Lewis's views on the differences between Welsh and Irish writing in English,<sup>19</sup> MacDiarmid observes that:

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<sup>18</sup>Harri Webb, *No Half-Way House*, ed. Meic Stephens (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 1997), pp. 53 - 54. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

<sup>19</sup>As outlined in the opening survey of the field, Lewis believed that '... there is an English which ... was the general language of ... Ireland, rich in traditional idiom and folklore and folksong, and capable of use in a poetry which was not 'literary poetry' and contained no echoes or rhythms of the English literary tradition.' - Saunders Lewis, *Is There An Anglo-Welsh Literature?* (Cardiff: Urdd Graddedigion Prifysgol Cymru, 1939), p. 7.



. . . modern Anglo-Irish literature derives all its motivation from the movement for the repudiation both of England's Empire and language, and is intentionally cultivated as at once a sort of barrier against English culture and a preparation for the creation of an Irish culture in Gaelic. (pp. 200 - 201)

He also claims that 'I would certainly be unable to express my profoundest ideas in English at all . . .' (p. 22), which, while being a declaration that Webb would not echo,<sup>20</sup> would perhaps have had an impact on him when reading the text for the first time in 1945.

The linguistic dimension of MacDiarmid's poetry and ideology is implicitly connected to the question of whether he placed more emphasis on his Communist or Nationalist beliefs, given the differences between them. He conveniently describes himself in *Lucky Poet* as a 'Communist-Nationalist' (p. 286),<sup>21</sup> and, attempting to minimize the significance of the major ideological conflicts he faced as a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, he states that:

My coming to Communist membership was not the resolution of a conflict, but the completion, as it were, of a career; no conflict existed except on very minor points - the attitude of the Communist Party to Scottish Nationalism, for example . . . (p. 232)

From studying certain aspects of Communist doctrine, however, it becomes clear that its opposition to certain national movements is more than a 'minor point': it has been

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<sup>20</sup>Although it may be argued that Webb hardly uses a standard form of English, preferring to use South Welsh idiom.

<sup>21</sup>It could be claimed that MacDiarmid is here attempting to reconcile the differences between his two views in a similarly controversial manner as the initial designation of Welsh writing in English as 'Anglo-Welsh' writing. He does not concede that hyphenization can be a contentious issue, and his brief categorization of himself as a 'Communist-Nationalist' may strike the reader as unsatisfactory as a result. The union of both ideologies here may also be an example of MacDiarmid attempting to portray himself as an embodiment of the 'Caledonian antiszygy': a meeting of opposites which G. Gregory Smith maintained was a characteristic of the Scottish people and national character.

suggested, for example, that Marx and Engels made the distinction between two different kinds of Nationalism:

On the one hand, Marx and Engels argued, as one might expect, that the working classes were the motor of history. . . . On the other hand, Marx and Engels also endorsed the nationalist causes of 'historic' nations where these were seen to facilitate and expedite the proletarian revolution.<sup>22</sup>

Will Kymlicka clarifies this point, specifically citing Welsh Nationalism as an example of the kind of national movement which would not have gained the support of Marx and Engels:

. . . they supported the unification of France, Italy, Poland, Germany; and the independence of Hungary, Spain, England, and Russia. But they rejected the idea that the smaller 'nationalities' had any such right, such as the Czechs, Croats, Basques, Welsh, Bulgarians, Romanians, and Slovenes.<sup>23</sup>

Despite seemingly attempting to reconcile the significant differences between Communism and Nationalism, then, MacDiarmid seems to be relegating his Nationalism to being merely a secondary concern. Elsewhere in the text, he claims that ' . . . the Scottish national character . . . of my poetry is not the most important thing about it' (p. 180), that ' . . . above all, my poetry is Marxist . . . ' (p. 152), and that he wishes to disassociate himself from 'the weaknesses of the Scottish National Party and . . . all the organizations now seeking to promote that cause. . . ' (p. 66).<sup>24</sup> These declarations contrast starkly with others in the text that position his Nationalism (or rather, his opposition to Anglocentrism, which can hardly be separated) as the defining factor in his work, with his classification of his poetry as 'anti-English

<sup>22</sup>Stephen May, *Language and Minority Rights* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), p. 22.

<sup>23</sup>Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 69 - 70.

<sup>24</sup>This is despite, in the same passage, asserting 'I am more confident than I have ever been of its conclusive victory at no very distant date.'

propaganda' (p. 23), and the rather flippant remark that '*Who's Who* has long given my hobby as "Anglophobia". But it is a great deal more than a mere hobby. It is my very life.' (pp. 23 - 24) While an attempt is made in *Lucky Poet* to overcome such blatant confusion, stemming from the apparent incompatibility of his two chosen ideologies, by criticising those who accuse him 'at the same time . . . of [possessing] a narrow nationalism and an inordinate internationalism' (p. 96), and somewhat melodramatically claiming that '. . . what the Scottish people need above all to-day to realize is that . . . static adherence to any particular methodology marks the decline of civilization . . .' (p. 154), the overwhelming impression one gets from reading the text is that MacDiarmid was largely incapable of discussing his two main ideological affiliations in conjunction.

It may be that these two ideologies are only satisfactorily discussed simultaneously once in *Lucky Poet*, and even then, MacDiarmid is referring to the testimony of others in order to make his claim, rather than offering his own justification for sympathizing with both ideologies. In a statement written in 1936, and published in its entirety within the text, he writes:

. . . we are reverting to Keir Hardie's admonition that a much greater impetus would have been given to Socialism if Scottish Socialists had given priority in their programme to Scottish independence . . . I accordingly stand out as a Scottish Republican candidate, feeling sure that if Scotland had to elect a Parliament to sit in Scotland it would vote for a Working Class Parliament. (p. 144)

This potentially interesting concept, that those who desire Scottish autonomy also share intrinsic Socialist views, remains relatively unexplored throughout the rest of the text. He does, however, make references that echo O. M. Edwards's concept of

*gwerin*, claiming that what could be termed the Celtic working classes are

interested in, and knowledgeable about, art and literature:

Professor Daniel Corkery has pointed out in *Hidden Ireland*, that fascinating study of the Munster bards of the Penal Age, how the field labourers were adept and keenly interested in prosodical niceties and the other intricacies of the literary craft; H. I. Bell in *The Development of Welsh Poetry* testifies to the same effect with regard to the working class in relation to Welsh literature. There must have been something of the same sort in England in Elizabethan times, but it is a phenomenon strikingly absent in England since then . . . (p. 335)

Elsewhere, he shows more knowledge of the concept, referring to ‘the difference between the Welsh “People” and England’s proletariat . . .’ (p. 173).

His apparent endorsement of such a concept contradicts the view many had of him, that he was actually scornful about, and adopted a somewhat elitist view of, the attitudes of the Scottish working classes towards art.<sup>25</sup> In particular, his well-publicized disdain for Scottish comedians and entertainers who presented a stereotypical and comical view of his country, such as Harry Lauder, and also towards those who supported and defended these entertainers, occasionally undermines his apparent sympathy with the ‘People’. These attitudes are clearly shown in ‘To Circumjack Cencrastus’ (1930), as well as in ‘A Drunk Man Looks At The Thistle’, in which he criticises his countrymen in such lines as:

*They canna learn, sae canna move,  
But stick for aye to their auld groove  
- The only race in History who’ve*

*Bidden in the same category  
Frae stert to present o’ their story,*

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<sup>25</sup>Despite not naming the Scottish as possessing its own *gwerin* in the quotations selected above, reference is made in *Lucky Poet* to ‘the great gulf . . . between the English . . . and the Gaelic . . . attitude to art, scholarship, and literature’ (p. 335), encompassing Scotland, Ireland and Wales within the designation ‘Gaelic’.

*And deem their ignorance their glory.* (l. 2620 - 2625)

As well as:

And Edinburgh and Glasgow  
Are like ploomen in a pub.  
They want to hear o' naething  
But their ain foul hubbub. . . . (p. 64, l. 787 - 790)<sup>26</sup>

David Goldie is particularly critical of this attitude, commenting that 'Part of MacDiarmid's queasiness about the cultural and recreational tastes of contemporary working-class Scotland might be put down simply to old-fashioned prejudice and snobbism',<sup>27</sup> and that:

[b]y placing himself above the culture, speaking as a True Scot to the sorry mass of inauthentic Scots perverted by the English and their popular culture, he closes down the possibility of meaningful dialogue.<sup>28</sup>

Iain Crichton Smith goes further in his condemnation:

I do not think that MacDiarmid is a Communist in any ordinary sense of the word. True, he writes in approval of certain of Lenin's actions, and in these poems a certain inhumanity emerges. But that MacDiarmid has much in common with the 'masses' I do not believe.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>It is interesting to note that here, the narrator seems to be using 'ploughmen' (ploomen), an intrinsically lower-class occupation, as an insult which denotes lack of understanding about the world at large. However, such lapses in MacDiarmid's own class-centric ideology could be explained by the drunkenness of the poem's narrator. Kenneth Buthlay's editing of the 1987 edition (p. 7) reveals that this was MacDiarmid's explanation for such tasteless lines as:

You canna gang to a Burns supper even  
Wi'oot some wizened scrunt o' a knock-knee  
Chinee turns roon to say, "Him Haggis - velly goot!"  
And ten to wan the piper is a Cockney. (p. 6, l. 37 - 40)

<sup>27</sup>David Goldie, 'Hugh MacDiarmid, Harry Lauder and Scottish Popular Culture', *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, 1 (Autumn 2006), 1 - 26 (p. 1). The same tension between a writer's idealization of the 'common man' and their actual encounters with the working class can be found in the work of R. S. Thomas and Yeats, among others.

<sup>28</sup>Goldie, 'Hugh MacDiarmid, Harry Lauder and Scottish Popular Culture', 6.

<sup>29</sup>Iain Crichton Smith, 'The Golden Lyric: An Essay on the Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid', in Duncan Glen (ed.), *Hugh MacDiarmid: A Critical Survey* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1972), p. 132.

It is difficult to disagree with much of such criticism when we read *Lucky Poet*, and come across such declarations, in reference to the Scottish populist comedians Harry Lauder, Will Fyffe and Tommy Morgan, as: 'It is indeed necessary to eschew humour altogether if a man is to make it possible for himself to pursue his art with the almost inhuman tenacity and resolution which is necessary.' (p. 80)<sup>30</sup>

There are further poems which make it clear that MacDiarmid's attitude towards the working classes was not always one of respect. 'Second Hymn To Lenin' (1932) is particularly relevant in this discussion, as it puts into verse the assertion often made in his prose that, in the words of Raymond Ross, 'He was an intellectual elitist who wished to be quoted "in the factories and fields" while . . . he derided talent as the enemy of genius.'<sup>31</sup> Here, in the extract from the poem quoted by Ross, MacDiarmid attempts to ease his conscience in this respect by, in essence, pouring scorn on the literary and cultural knowledge of the 'common people', and claiming that no writer, no matter how great, is familiar to the vast majority of his countrymen:

*Are my poems spoken in the factories and fields  
In the streets o' the toon?  
Gin they're no, then I'm failin' to dae  
What I ocht to ha' dune.*

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<sup>30</sup>This is certainly one aspect of MacDiarmid's ideology which Harri Webb did not attempt to imitate. As Nigel Jenkins noted, 'Harri is aware . . . that if you want to tell people the truth you had better make them laugh or they'll kill you', and that even his style of humour retained some awareness of the class struggle in Wales: 'The humour of Harri Webb is . . . collaborative: the poet is "one of us" rather than a prophet standing on some mountain in Gwynedd dishing out the thunderbolts.' Indeed, humour plays a large role in the poetry of Harri Webb, with short, almost throwaway poems making up much of his early output, featured in the *Collected Poems*, such as 'Progress' (1965), here quoted in its entirety:

Hooray for English culture,  
To Wales it's such a blessing:  
Tuneless songs and tasteless jokes  
And blowzy bags undressing. (p. 81)

<sup>31</sup>Raymond Ross, "'Oneness of Concept": MacDiarmid and Empirio-Criticism', in *Hugh MacDiarmid: Man and Poet*, pp. 89 - 108 (p. 89).

*Gin I canna win through to the man in the street,  
The wife by the hearth,  
A' the cleverness on earth 'll no' mak' up  
For the damnable dearth.*

*Haud on, haud on; what poet's dune that?  
Is Shakespeare read,  
Or Dante or Milton or Goethe or Burns?  
- You heard what I said. (p. 39, l. 17 - 28)*

It could be argued, then, that this distrust and disillusionment directed towards the working classes forms an integral role in MacDiarmid's poetry, and provides us with an example of how the poet himself embodies the 'Caledonian antiszygy', or the meeting of opposites.

It is difficult to discern anything other than the influence of Hugh MacDiarmid's occasional scornful attitude towards popular culture and, indeed, the general populace, in one of Harri Webb's earliest poems which explicitly endorses Nationalism, 1949's 'Salm y Werin' ('The People's Psalm'). The poem echoes MacDiarmid's distrust of populist entertainers, sarcastically commenting that:

Our fathers before us wore beards and banished laughter  
They walked on the hills and reared sheep just like peasants  
We laugh our heads off at Cockney comedians on the radio  
We are broad-minded, cleanshaven, and eat mutton from Australia (p. 24, l. 5 - 8)<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>MacDiarmid's influence is also detectable in a passage found in *A Militant Muse*, in which Webb praises Shakespeare for his portrayal of Owain Glyndŵr ('Glendower') in *King Henry IV, Part I*, on the grounds that it is 'at variance with the stage tradition of the comic Welshman.' (p. 74). It should also be noted, however, that a distrust of popular culture is detectable within Welsh-language poetry, as can be seen in Saunders Lewis's 'Y Dilyw 1939' ['The Flood 1939']:

... the fragile rabble, the half-penny *demos*,  
Base progeny of the greyhounds and the football pool,  
Filled its belly with filthy pictures  
And with the rotten chaff of the press and the radio. - 'The Deluge 1939', in Saunders Lewis, *Selected Poems*, trans. Joseph P. Clancy (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993), pp. 10 - 12 (l. 78 - 81).

Original Welsh-language source:

‘Salm y Werin’ is one poem which reveals that, like MacDiarmid, Harri Webb can occasionally come across as somewhat scornful of the lower classes he claims to defend. The voice of the poem is that of a deluded Labour voter who self-importantly mocks the ancestors of the mid twentieth-century Welsh population for being uneducated and for giving up the Welsh language, while simultaneously exposing the failings of his contemporaries. The Welsh ancestors are mocked for having ‘never tasted fish and chips in their lives’ (24), and the educational advantages of a Welsh person living in the twentieth century are celebrated:

Our fathers before us were poor fish altogether  
Of course they produced *us* but they didn’t have education  
We have got so much of it we don’t know what to do with it  
There’s wonderful we are isn’t it? (l. 17 - 20)

Here, through the ignorance of the speaker, Webb seems to be portraying the twentieth-century Welsh lower classes as deluded in their own right, perhaps belying an ideological position that has much in common with middle-class Socialism.<sup>33</sup>

There are several other poems written by Harri Webb before and during 1966 that also support the notion that, at times, his concern over the class struggle in Wales could be overlooked in favour of a broader, Nationalist agenda. Specifically, he often sympathizes with, and even glorifies, the ancient, aristocratic and royal Welsh ruling

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‘A’r frau werinos, y demos dimai,  
Epil drel milieist a’r *pool* pêl-droed,  
Llanwodd ei bol â lluniau budrogon  
Ac â phwdr usion y radio a’r wasg.’ - ‘Y Dilyw 1939’, in Saunders Lewis, *Cerddi Saunders Lewis [The Poems of Saunders Lewis]*, ed. R. Geraint Gruffydd (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), pp. 10 - 12 (l. 78 - 81).

<sup>33</sup>It is important to note that at the time of writing ‘Salm y Werin’, Webb had been a Plaid Cymru member for a year, and thus could be attempting to negatively stereotype the typically lower-class Labour voters.



classes, who are portrayed as precursors of the twentieth-century *gwerin* in terms of their cultural attitudes.<sup>34</sup>

Before turning to those poems, however, we should first examine an earlier poem in which royalty is discussed in a different light. 'A Loyal Address' (1953), written in the same year that Webb shifted his allegiance from Plaid Cymru to the Labour Party, was published in his first volume of poems, *The Green Desert* (1969), and is inspired by the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. As the sarcastic tone present in even the title of the poem would suggest, it is a tongue-in-cheek address to the new Queen, in which Webb invokes the social injustice he feels is inherent in the British monarchy. It begins with a plea:

Queen of the rains and sorrows,  
Of the steep and broken ways,  
Lady of our tomorrows,  
Redeem your yesterdays. (p. 29, l. 1 - 4)

Webb then goes on sarcastically to proclaim that the Queen has power over nature itself, which is described in singularly bleak terms ('Queen of the bitter weather,/We kneel before your throne.', l. 7 - 8), and mockingly beseeches her: 'Take us and break us, O Mother/For whom our fathers died.' (l. 11 - 12) Apart from a brief reference to the legendary Celtic warrior queen Boadicea, where Webb refers to Elizabeth II as 'Queen of the scythe-wheeled chariots' (l. 23), and the possibility that 'our fathers' in line 12, quoted above, is a reference to the Welsh national anthem, there is no obvious Welsh national dimension to the poem. Perhaps due to his temporary rejection of

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<sup>34</sup>This contrasts sharply with Glyn Jones's work, particularly his poem 'Merthyr', which positions the working-class of that town as truly representative of a possible Welsh national character. This poem, in turn, was a response to 'Y Dilyw 1939' by Saunders Lewis, to whom Harri Webb referred in *No Half-Way House* as 'the greatest living Welshman.' (p. 182).

Nationalism in favour of Socialism, it is the perceived social injustice of the position of the monarch which is emphasized, rather than her status as an embodiment of English superiority over the Welsh.

This becomes important when we examine later poetry which seems to glorify the former royalty of Wales, namely the Welsh princes. As Nigel Jenkins remarks, ‘. . . [Webb] cannot rid himself, in his poetry, of more than a sneaking admiration for the aristocratic superstrata . . .’<sup>35</sup> The most significant example of this is possibly ‘By A Mountain Pool’ (1964), first read at a Plaid Cymru rally in the year of its publication, which takes the form of a dialogue between an aged Owain Glyndŵr,<sup>36</sup> who has lost hope about the future of his country, and a voice from the future which represents modern Wales. During the course of the poem, the voice convinces Glyndŵr that the future of Wales is more secure than he imagines,<sup>37</sup> leaving him with renewed optimism. Early in the poem, Webb attempts to portray Glyndŵr’s high status as a product of the *gwerin*:

A plain steel helmet hastily adorned  
 With Corwen smith-work was my only crown  
 When those lads rode with me from Glyndyfrdwy  
 Up to the Clwydian hills and made me king. (p. 68, l. 18 - 21)

<sup>35</sup>Jenkins, ‘The Poet in the Welsh Republic’, 23.

<sup>36</sup>Glyndŵr, who led a revolt against English rule of Wales and was crowned as Owain IV, was last seen in 1412, with no information known about his final years. Before becoming Prince, Glyndŵr was born into a prosperous family, was a landowner, and decreed himself to be Squire of Sycharth and Glyndyfrdwy. This high-ranking position is clearly at odds with what Harri Webb is attempting to present in the poem.

<sup>37</sup>Typically, Webb does not go so far as to proclaim that Wales’s future is wholly secure. The greatest note of optimism in the poem occurs when the voices assure Glyndŵr that:

*After this dark night came a darker,  
 And darkness on darkness and then a long dawn,  
 A struggling sickly dawn as long as the darkness.* (p. 70, l. 99 - 101)

Here, the appointing of Glyndŵr is described almost as a democratic process, made by ordinary people ('the lads').<sup>38</sup> This revisionism, motivated by concerns about Nationalism and class, is somewhat grating: here, rather than keeping separate his Socialist and Nationalist ideologies, as both he and MacDiarmid tend to do, Harri Webb is trying to bring them together in a fictionalized re-imagining of Wales in an attempt to forge his own, uniquely Welsh version of the 'Caledonian antisyzygy'.

Perhaps aware that such a combination of modern Socialist concerns (as well as informal, twentieth-century slang) and incompatible historical material could not be sustained, the focus of the poem shifts to emphasize the glory of Glyndŵr's rebellion, and the tragic nature of his eventual failure. Glyndŵr describes his helm as being an object of 'greatness' (l. 67) for example, and mourns the fact that 'The hall is not yet built, the church not hallowed/That dares to house the royalty of Wales.' (l. 60 - 61) This contrasts sharply with the presentation of British royalty (as opposed to the royalty of Wales) in 'A Loyal Address'. The possibility that this change in attitude can be explained by the fact that the focus of 'By A Mountain Pool' is on the royalty of Wales rather than that of England is somewhat unconvincing due to the lack of a national dimension in 'A Loyal Address', and in the light of Webb's allegiance to Plaid Cymru at the time.

This emphasis on one ideology over another, which takes place at various points during their careers, and with wildly varying consequences, is a necessary choice for both MacDiarmid and Webb. They always encounter great difficulty in

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<sup>38</sup>This overlapping of *gwerin* with the Welsh aristocracy is something of a common trope within Welsh writing. There are hints of it within Saunders Lewis's *The Eve of Saint John*, for example, as well as in T. Gwynn Jones's 'Gwas' ['Servant'], a portrayal of the '[s]on of a well-off farmer' who chooses to become a lowly servant. - T. Gwynn Jones, *Cymeriadau* [*Characters*] (Wrexham: Hughes a'i Fab, 1933), p. 153. Original Welsh-language source: 'Mab i amaethwr cefnog.'

presenting both ideologies as being of equal importance, and so choose to emphasize one or the other, as need dictates. This is further evidenced by their inability to remain members of one political party, due to insurmountable differences between their views and official party policy. Despite this, Webb did attempt to present his concerns about Nationalism and class simultaneously on rare occasions in his poetry, and it is the *gwerin* which again offers him the easiest opportunity to do so. 'Patagonia' (1965) was written during the centenary of the establishment of the first Welsh colony in the Patagonian region of Argentina, and essentially serves as a definition of the concept of the *gwerin*, emphasizing the poverty of the original settlers, as well as their great cultural wisdom, and the essential part these two characteristics play in the popular perception of the Welsh lower classes.

Initially, Webb lists the settlers' simple, rudimentary possessions:

Teaspoon and tablespoon, towels, plates,  
 Blankets, a cup and saucer rather large,  
 Knife and fork, a boiling pot, a quart tin  
 And one that would hold three gallons (p. 86, l. 1 - 4)

With these, he claims, they '[c]onquered a wilderness' l. (8), which clearly portrays them as being resourceful and possessing vast practical knowledge and ingenuity.

The Welsh are also shown to be more civilized than other pioneers of the time, with their devotion to their religion characterized as being particularly strong:

The Indians came, trading skins and feathers  
 For cloth and bread, they could hardly believe  
 That these were Christians. (l. 18 - 20)<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>This passage is unique in Webb's early poetry, in that he very rarely referred to religion as an essential component of the Welsh national character, nor did he refer to his own spiritual beliefs. Here, however, he seems to be hinting that any Christian denominations or traditions that can be classed as particularly and traditionally 'Welsh' are somehow purer and less hypocritical than the Christian belief

'The atmosphere,' Webb claims, 'Is wholesome, clean and indisputably Welsh.' (l. 25 - 26) The poem ends with the assertion that 'They are there today,/Prosperous farmers writing in the style of Ceiriog.' (l. 29 - 30), before ending on a typically sombre note, with Webb asking 'Who now will conquer the wilderness of Wales?' (l. 31)

Despite portraying the settlers as being unrealistically perfect, in order to attempt to pass his unshakable belief in the *gwerin* concept on to his audience, 'Patagonia' is an admirable attempt to try to fuse together Harri Webb's two main ideological standpoints. Possibly the only other piece that simultaneously discusses both ideologies in such an effective manner is *Our National Anthem* (1964), a pamphlet published by the Triskel Press and reprinted in *A Militant Muse*. Here, Webb again makes great use of *gwerin* in order to communicate his message: that 'Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau', the Welsh national anthem, is a product of the Welsh working classes. It portrays Evan James, the writer of the anthem, as 'a village weaver-poet' (p. 55), and praises the organic nature of the song's adoption as the

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systems of the Spanish settlers. A similar idea is seen in the work of Eluned Morgan, as in this passage from *Dringo'r Andes* (1904), set in the home of a Native American chief:

While conversing in the tent, the word 'Cristianos' was used, and I asked him who 'Cristianos' referred to.

'The Spanish', he said.

'Are we also not Cristianos?' I said.

'Oh, no, you are *amigos de los Indios* (friends to the Indians).' - Eluned Morgan, *Dringo'r Andes & Gwymon y Môr*, ed. Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, Kathryn Hughes (Dinas Powys: Honno, 2001), p. 37.

Original Welsh-language source:

'Wrth ymgomio yn y babell, daeth y gair 'Cristianos' i mewn, a gofynnais iddo pwy feddyliai wrth y 'Cristianos' hyn.

'Y Sbaenwyr,' meddai.

'Eithr onid ydym ninnau hefyd yn Cristianos?' meddwn.

'O, na, *amigos de los Indios* (cyfeillion yr Indiaid) ydych chwi.'

national anthem of Wales: 'It was not commissioned. What authority existed to make such a commission? It was not officially promoted. Who could have done that?' (p. 65) The content of the anthem is also lauded as proof that traditional class differences in Wales are not as great as Webb perceives them to be elsewhere: 'The virile warriors, lovely in the love of their land, are not directly or explicitly compared with poets and singers. They stand shoulder to shoulder with them.' (p. 60)

Generally, the relation between Webb's two chosen ideologies is presented as being an altogether natural one. This makes both *Our National Anthem* and 'Patagonia' curiosities, however, as Webb's Nationalism and Socialism are usually kept separate in his work. As well as the difficulty he shares with MacDiarmid in attempting to portray both ideologies as being compatible, the separation of Nationalism and Socialism in Harri Webb's early poetry may hold further significance when we once again consider the work of both writers.

Throughout his career, MacDiarmid was concerned with exploring the idea of the 'Caledonian antisyzygy', defined by Kenneth Buthlay in his notes to 'A Drunk Man Looks At The Thistle' as 'the characteristically Scottish form of the combination of opposites or meeting of extremes' (p. 15). MacDiarmid himself could be termed the personification of this concept, as he was '... a nationalist with an often poor opinion of Scotland, a communist with a doubtful enthusiasm for the proletariat, and a social creditor with little knowledge of economics.'<sup>40</sup> The concept is central to much of MacDiarmid's work, with 'A Drunk Man Looks At The Thistle' perhaps the poem to which it is most crucial. When we consider how to apply knowledge of the

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<sup>40</sup>Morag Shiach, "'To Purify the Dialect of the Tribe": Modernism and Language Reform', *Modernism/Modernity*, 14.1 (January 2007), 21 - 34 (p. 30).

‘Caledonian antisyzygy’ to the poem, we are immediately struck by the contrast between the complex ideas presented within it and the unsuitability of the narrator to convey them effectively. As Paul Robichaud notes:

The apparent incongruity between the poem’s linguistic complexity and the speaker’s low social status reflects the incongruity of Scotland’s strong educational traditions with its failure as a nation . . .<sup>41</sup>

The thistle itself could also be seen as an embodiment of the contrast of opposing concepts which MacDiarmid felt was crucial to Scotland’s national character. It is at once great and all-encompassing, pitiful and meaningless: both ‘[a] symbol o’ the puzzle o’ man’s soul’ (l. 2065), and, as noted in Buthlay’s introduction to the 1987 edition of the poem, ‘ultimately . . . “a wretched weed”, [making it unlikely] that the Drunk Man, however hard he looks at it, will come up with much that can be neatly categorised.’ (xlii) The poem hinges on the contrast between the discussion of complex national ideas and the speaker’s inability to comprehend them, a form of the ‘Caledonian antisyzygy’ which could conversely be thought of as a criticism of the Scottish lower classes represented by the Drunk Man. The meeting of extremes, in this poem in particular, is a concept which was wholeheartedly embraced by Harri Webb. Indeed, the collection of his political journalism, *No Half-Way House*, published posthumously, takes its title from the Drunk Man’s assertion that he will ‘ha’e nae hauf-way house’ (l. 141). To what extent, then, can we claim Webb took it upon himself to fashion his own, intrinsically Welsh version of the ‘Caledonian antisyzygy’, inspired by works such as ‘A Drunk Man Looks At The Thistle’?

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<sup>41</sup>Paul Robichaud, ‘MacDiarmid and Muir: Scottish Modernism and the Nation as Anthropological Site’, *Journal of Modern Literature*, 28.4 (Summer 2005), 135 - 51 (p. 143).

It seems logical that we should concentrate this discussion on *No Half-Way House*, given that Webb's journalism perhaps owes a greater debt to MacDiarmid than even his poetry. It is in his journalism that his views, obviously inspired by MacDiarmid, whether acknowledged or not, are most clearly outlined: the nature of the politically-motivated editorial intrinsically requires a lack of ambiguity. It is here, therefore, that evidence of a possible attempt on Webb's part to forge a 'Welsh antiszygy' would logically be at its most pronounced and easily identifiable.

Webb first wrote for the Welsh Republican Party's newspaper, *The Welsh Republican*, in August 1950 and continued until January 1957, when the publication folded. From November 1961 he wrote for the *Welsh Nation*, published by Plaid Cymru, and continued to do so until 1977, with his most prolific work appearing early in this period. It is therefore useful to look first at his writing as a member of the Welsh Republican Party, identifying any references to or endorsements of mainstream Welsh Nationalism, then moving on to study his Nationalist writing, attempting to locate discussions of Socialism/Republicanism. If to embody the 'Caledonian antiszygy' is to position oneself as being 'whaur Extremes meet', it would follow that Webb would make some attempt to bring Nationalism and Republicanism/Socialism together in his journalism in order to forge an 'antiszygy' of his own.

To an extent, this is achieved in Webb's early journalistic writing, centred on the fledgling Welsh Republican movement. He portrays followers of Republicanism and Nationalism as sharing a core set of beliefs which oppose those of 'Imperialists', painted in broad strokes as those wishing to destroy the Welsh way of life. He claims



that, 'Wales . . . has always upheld Socialism as opposed to Toryism, and Nationalism as opposed to Imperialism' (p. 85), with his favoured ideologies described as intrinsically Welsh, and those he opposes as singularly English:

. . . wouldn't it be [true] to say that the Crown is the fount of flunkeyism, snobbery, debutantism, 'honours', and all other such highly coloured sauces as disguise the stinking fish of England's social decadence? What has Wales, the People's Nation, to do with all this mummery? (p. 77)

Again, Webb uses the concept of *gwerin* as a vital cultural backdrop to his discussion, with the Welsh working class portrayed as constantly embroiled in Nationalist struggle against their English oppressors:

. . . it is to the plain people we speak, and from where we take inspiration: the plain people who marched with John Frost to Newport or rode out with Rebecca against oppression, the country folk who for a generation fought the Tithe Wars against Queen Victoria's redcoats, the collier who faced Churchill's bloody bayonets and the women who kept house and family, yes and nation, together while the Christian gentlemen of England garrotted them with the Means Test. (p. 83 - 4)

Here, and at other points in his articles and editorials for *The Welsh Republican*, it could be claimed that Webb is successfully uniting seemingly incompatible class-centric and nation-centric ideologies, in essence expanding G. Gregory Smith's 'Caledonian antiszygy' into a 'Celtic antiszygy'.<sup>42</sup> He is not

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<sup>42</sup>Like Hugh MacDiarmid, Harri Webb does not accurately specify why an 'antiszygy' would be particularly prevalent in Scotland/the Celtic nations. Mac Diarmid broadly claims that '. . . our national genius . . . is capable of countless manifestations at absolute variance with each other, yet confined within the "limited infinity" of the adjective "Scottish".' - Hugh MacDiarmid, *Selected Essays of Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. Duncan Glen (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969), p. 68. Similarly, in *No Half-Way House*, Webb is (consciously and perhaps apologetically) vague in his stressing of the importance of class-centric ideologies to the Welsh national character:

The special relation of Socialism to the national requirements of Wales, the special status of the Labour Movement as the contemporary expression of the historically evolved attitudes of the Welsh in politics, economics and social philosophy generally - these are matters which remain inadequately covered by research, and imperfectly apprehended by nationalists and doctrinaire socialists alike. (p. 113)

entirely uncritical of Nationalism, referring to early Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru doctrine as ‘bourgeois nationalism’ (p. 65), and emphasizing the superiority of Welsh Republicanism: ‘Our fellow-nationalists who identify themselves with Liberal techniques are two laps behind. Socialism has replaced Liberalism and now Welsh Republicanism must succeed Socialism.’ (p. 65). Even here, Webb is inclusive in his criticism of Plaid Cymru, referring to its members as ‘fellow-nationalists’, and aiming for a subtle change in the politics of the party, rather than attacking it outright.

After joining Plaid Cymru in 1960 for the second time, however, there is a shift in Webb’s attitude to the relationship between the fundamentally contradictory ideologies he chooses to promote. Perhaps motivated by the collapse of the Welsh Republican Party, he adopts an attitude which separates Socialism and Welsh Nationalism, and, more than he does at any other time, stresses the incompatible aspects of both belief systems. In a speech at Plaid Cymru’s annual conference in 1961, given shortly after his second espousal of Nationalist doctrine, and printed in *Welsh Nation* and in *No Half-Way House*, Webb claims that:

[t]he progress from socialism to Nationalism is the progress from tutelage to maturity, it is a coming to terms with the real world, it is a coming of age, bringing with it acceptance of the responsibilities of adult citizenship. In joining Plaid Cymru, I forsook the company of the dead for the company of the living. (p. 170)

While not emphasizing the total incompatibility of the two ideologies *per se*, but rather positioning Plaid Cymru as a more worthy, ‘mature’ progression from the socialist parties he once endorsed, this affirmation of Nationalism contrasts sharply with his moderate criticism of it in the pages of *The Welsh Republican*.

Webb's portrayal of the *gwerin* is also no longer entirely positive. In a 1963 letter to Gwilym Prys Davies, he states that 'In the industrial areas the *gwerin* have become what it was once said they would never become - a proletariat.' (p. 228) Yet, he still makes an effort to convince his readers that the Welsh national character is somehow inextricably linked to the struggle of the working classes. Indeed, certain individual quotations from his work in *Welsh Nation* would perhaps be better suited to a purely socialist publication:

Wales is not an abstraction, not a mere subject for sentimental rhetoric at eisteddfodau and St. David's Night dinners. It consists of seaports and industrial cities, mining valleys and quarrying communities, market towns and a varied countryside. (p. 190)

Elsewhere, in an editorial titled 'Farewell to the Old Year', Webb recounts the lives of various recently deceased Welsh public figures whom he found to be admirable, with each one portrayed as being emblematic of the *gwerin*. Bob Owen of Croesor, for example, is described as 'the last of the great self-taught scholars' who 'sprang from the peasantry' (p. 216), while Bob Lloyd (Llwyd o'r Bryn) is described as 'the finest example of what people used to mean when they claimed that the Welsh country man was a natural aristocrat' (p. 216). St. David, meanwhile, in the next editorial, is provided with a revised, mythologised history which presents him as the original model for the *gwerin*:

The outstanding characteristic in the life of [St.] David as it has come down to us was that of total commitment to the cause he believed in, the complete subordination of every other consideration to the betterment of the lot of his people, and above all, the utter willingness to pay the price that this course of action demanded - a price measured in hardship, poverty, laborious toil, unceasing diligence; no small undertaking for the son of a king. (p. 221 - 2)

Even though Webb attempts to appeal to both Socialist and Nationalist readers both before and after his final conversion to Plaid Cymru in 1960, there is a bitterness in his references to Socialism in his editorials and other writing appearing in *Welsh Nation* that is generally not found in *The Welsh Republican's* references to Nationalism. Perhaps it could be claimed, therefore, that Harri Webb was a Nationalist first and a Welsh Republican second: that his admittedly strong Socialist sympathies merely informed his Nationalism, at all times other than his seven-year period as a member of the Labour and Welsh Republican Parties. He was a member of Plaid Cymru before he pledged allegiance to any other political party, and as Brian Morris states, 'every poem is about Wales: there is no other subject.'<sup>43</sup> Also, growing support for Welsh Nationalism at the time of his writing articles and editorials for the *Welsh Nation* would suggest that Webb is more aware that his work could realistically aid the Nationalist cause, and that any suggestion of sympathy with Socialism would be detrimental to it.

Despite this difference between his pre and post-1960 output regarding Socialism, there is no doubt that throughout his writing career, Harri Webb made some attempt to bring together his conflicting beliefs. It could indeed therefore be claimed that he is applying the 'Caledonian antiszygy' to a Welsh setting. As Webb's awareness of the concept can be solely credited to his appreciation of MacDiarmid's work, before committing to the notion that there is evidence of a 'Welsh antiszygy' in the poetry and journalism of Harri Webb, we should first compare and contrast the ways in which Webb and MacDiarmid use the concept.

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<sup>43</sup>Morris, *Writers of Wales: Harri Webb*, p. 53.

This will aid us in determining whether Webb's appropriation of the 'Caledonian antisyzygy' directly parallels the use of it in MacDiarmid's work, or whether he finds an alternative use for it.

One crucial difference between the two men is that Harri Webb has a generally narrower view of how he can use the meeting of extremes in his work. His use of 'antisyzygy' is always for the benefit of whatever class or nation-centric cause he is championing at a given moment in time, and he never positions himself as emblematic of the concept. For MacDiarmid, on the other hand, the 'Caledonian antisyzygy' is an important component in both his created persona and in mainstream critical perception of him. Raymond Ross describes him as:

... the poet of perpetual opposition and self-contradiction *par excellence*. He was a nationalist *and* a communist. He declared that Gaelic was Scotland's only true language; but he himself wrote only in Scots and its sister language, English. ... He decried obscurantism in life and letters and yet would seem to go out of his way in order to damn rational consistency.<sup>44</sup>

Other critics, meanwhile, have surmised that these contradictions are exaggerated and even possibly fabricated in MacDiarmid's work (which may be particularly true of *Lucky Poet*, as discussed earlier in the chapter) in order to strengthen his portrayal of himself as somehow embodying an idealized Scotsman:

... there *is* no place where extremes meet - it is worth recalling the famous story of MacDiarmid's expulsion both from the Communist Party and from the Scottish National Party for his allegiance to nationalism and communism respectively - and thence that such a position can *only* be worked out 'synthetically' or figuratively, and not practically.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Ross, 'MacDiarmid and Empirio-Criticism', *Hugh MacDiarmid: Man and Poet*, p. 89.

<sup>45</sup>Rena Grant, 'Synthetic Scots: Hugh MacDiarmid's Imagined Community', *Hugh MacDiarmid: Man and Poet*, pp. 191 - 206 (p. 202).

For MacDiarmid, then, whether as Christopher Murray Grieve or only as his poetic persona,<sup>46</sup> the ‘Caledonian antisyzygy’ forms an integral and often-publicized part of his character. Harri Webb does not form such a personal bond with the concept: when he attempts to fuse together his Nationalism and Socialism/Republicanism (which he does far less often than Hugh MacDiarmid, especially in his poetry), he does not present himself as emblematic of any potential national significance these contradictions might hold. Rather than mythologizing himself, creating a semi-fictional persona, he chooses to mythologize Wales’s history and those figures central to it, such as Owain Glyndŵr in ‘By A Mountain Pool’, and Llywelyn Fawr in ‘The Stone Face’ (1966). Another difference between the two poets is that Harri Webb can occasionally suppress his concerns about class equality in favour of pursuing a purely Nationalist agenda in his poetry, while MacDiarmid very rarely writes in favour of Nationalism alone without stressing the equal or greater importance of Communism. Apart from a brief reference to the carved face of Llywelyn Fawr in ‘A Stone Face’ representing ‘not an impersonal mask of sovereignty’ but ‘the portrait of a living man’ (p. 87, l. 6 - 7), he is presented throughout the poem as an archetypal model of what Welsh royalty represented, which is contrasted with the ‘Seven hundred and fifty years of darkness’ (l. 38) that

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<sup>46</sup>Many critics and associates have commented on the differences between his public persona of Hugh MacDiarmid and Christopher Murray Grieve’s private character. John Montague recalls: ‘. . . any one who was angry at Hugh MacDiarmid would be confronted with Christopher Murray Grieve, who was one of the most gentle and agreeable persons that one could possibly meet . . .’ - Nancy Gish, ‘Interview with John Montague’, *Hugh MacDiarmid: Man and Poet*, pp. 55 - 62 (p. 56). Nancy Gish goes further in claiming that Grieve was ‘an often distinctly different character, who did not necessarily, by his own account, always agree with MacDiarmid.’ - Nancy Gish, ‘Introduction’, *Hugh MacDiarmid: Man and Poet*, pp. 13 - 19 (p. 15). This latter quotation would seem to suggest that MacDiarmid was fully aware of any differences between his public and private personas, and that he consciously exaggerated and exploited this difference in creating and sustaining the character of ‘Hugh MacDiarmid’ in the public sphere.

followed his rule. As with certain passages in 'By A Mountain Pool', the rule of the Welsh Princes is presented as part of the natural order of things, sharply contradicting Webb's Socialist/Republican views.

The difference between the two poets in this respect can be summarized in that MacDiarmid is very aware of possible public criticism of his use of the 'Caledonian antisyzygy', and therefore exhibits greater control over it both in his life and work. While contradictions in Harri Webb's work can sometimes lead to lapses in his argument, Hugh MacDiarmid simply refers to G. Gregory Smith's concept as a way of supporting his theories, and also to his own life and ideology, giving examples of how he manages to reconcile his Communism and Nationalism. Perhaps the greatest and most obvious advantage MacDiarmid has over Webb in being able to support and defend his ideology is that G. Gregory Smith identified the 'Caledonian antisyzygy' as a feature of Scottish writing in 1919.<sup>47</sup> Such a tradition is not as prevalent in Wales: although the meeting of opposites is occasionally portrayed as a characteristic of the Welsh people, particularly in writing produced outside Wales,<sup>48</sup> there existed no critical equivalent to Smith's *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence*, until comparatively recently.<sup>49</sup> If Webb is indeed attempting to adapt the concept in his own poetry and journalism, he had no access to the necessary critical material in order to support his work.

It must be concluded, then, that Hugh MacDiarmid is far more successful in presenting his Communism and Nationalism as ideologies that are not wholly

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<sup>47</sup>G. Gregory Smith refers specifically to contradictory qualities in the work of Robert Louis Stevenson and James Hogg, which provides an historical basis for the concept.

<sup>48</sup>This can be seen in Shakespeare's Welsh characters such as Glendower and Fluellen, portrayed as passionately and spontaneously shifting from one emotional extreme to another.

<sup>49</sup>M. Wynn Thomas's *Internal Difference* (1992) could be said to include a similar argument.

incompatible. Although he occasionally attempts to dismiss his Nationalism as a secondary concern, it is rarely entirely sidelined in his poetry, even when he pursues a straightforwardly Marxist or Communist agenda. Linguistically, MacDiarmid's use of the Scots language in much of his poetry serves as a more potent and constant reminder of his Nationalism than the standard, if nuanced, English of Harri Webb. As including a Nationalist dimension in his Socialist/Republican poems is more difficult linguistically for Webb, it follows that his attempts to include a Nationalist subtext in work which is mainly concerned with class occasionally results in somewhat disjointed poetry. The same is true of his Nationalist poetry which includes some Socialist subtext. His journalism for both *The Welsh Republican* and *Welsh Nation* reveals something of a divided allegiance, which suggests that he found reconciling class and nation-centric ideologies to be difficult.

It could be claimed that the reason that Harri Webb rarely truly overcomes the difficulties in discussing class and nation-based ideologies in conjunction is precisely because of the tremendous literary influence Hugh MacDiarmid had on him. Instead of forging his own intrinsically Welsh synthesis of Socialism and Nationalism in his poetry,<sup>50</sup> Webb was ultimately dependent on MacDiarmid's use of the 'Caledonian antisyzygy' in developing his understanding of how the two ideologies should interact. Webb's dependence on MacDiarmid, and his lack of reference to such Welsh sources as the political writing contained in *Tir Newydd*, and the attempts made by David Thomas to introduce elements of Nationalism into the Independent Labour

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<sup>50</sup>As opposed to doing so in his political life - it could indeed be claimed that the Welsh Republican Party was an attempt to create an alternative form of Welsh Socialism.



Party,<sup>51</sup> can lead the reader to question the effectiveness of Webb's juxtaposition of Socialism and Nationalism. Ultimately, his work proves the difficulty inherent in combining the two ideologies, as does that of Hugh MacDiarmid, although MacDiarmid's work is enriched through his references to Scottish sources which are of less relevance to Webb.

Within the context of Welsh and Scottish writing as a whole, the similarities between the two authors are of paramount importance. Webb was able to emulate MacDiarmid effectively and to such an extent precisely because of the similarities between Scottish and Welsh Nationalism during this period: both movements were in their infancy, and were not represented within the British Parliament, with literature the main conduit for the expression of Nationalist ideas. While the earliest poetry by MacDiarmid predates that of Webb, it is apparent that Welsh influence on MacDiarmid was great, with his adoption of the concept of the *gwerin* of particular significance in this respect. From examining the work of the two poets, it becomes apparent that the exchange of ideas between Welsh and Scottish writing was a mutual one. In the context of this thesis, then, their work becomes crucial in establishing the precise connection between the Nationalist and literary movements of Scotland and Wales at this time, and how the lack of representation for Welsh and Scottish Nationalism in British government is intimately linked to its prevalence in literature.

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<sup>51</sup>As previously mentioned, however, Webb does make use of the concept of the *gwerin*, as does MacDiarmid to a certain extent.

*Gender and Nationalism in Welsh Writing, 1925 - 1966*

Much has been written on the connection between nation, Nationalism and gender over the past fifteen years. Theorists such as Anne McClintock, Tamar Mayer, and Aamir Mufti, among others, have illustrated, using broad and various examples, how questions regarding gender and nation impact upon each other in both politics and literature. However, while there have been attempts to chart the connection between the two issues in the Celtic nations as a whole, and in Ireland particularly, broad studies of gender and nation largely ignore the relation between the two in Wales.<sup>1</sup> There have been prominent studies on gender in Welsh writing in English,<sup>2</sup> but those concentrating specifically on depictions of gender and political Nationalism, as opposed to national identity, are conspicuously absent. In attempting to chart whether discussions of Nationalism are present in texts from Wales that have, in the past, been studied mainly because of their relevance to gender, I will be examining the work of several authors, including those who did not hold Nationalist beliefs, such as Rhys Davies and Hilda Vaughan, as well as Emyr Humphreys and Kate Roberts, who were politically-active Nationalist sympathizers. This chapter therefore encompasses the

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<sup>1</sup>This chapter, like the previous one on Emyr Humphreys and Islwyn Ffowc Elis, compares Welsh and English-language writing, and, to a certain extent, male and female authors. The chapter seeks to demonstrate that the use of similar tropes and ideas relating to gender and nation, by authors from a variety of political/social backgrounds, supports the argument that Nationalist sympathies were present in the work of writers not usually considered as explicitly supportive of Nationalism.

<sup>2</sup>Such studies include Jane Aaron's *Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in Wales: Nation, Gender and Identity* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007) and Katie Gramich's *Twentieth-Century Women's Writing in Wales: Land, Gender, Belonging* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), while the series *Our Mothers' Land, Our Sisters' Land, and Our Daughters' Land* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991 - 1996), edited by Angela John, Jane Aaron and Sandra Betts respectively, is useful in a wider, contextual sense. It should also be noted here that studies of Welsh Nationalism and politics in Wales, such as John Osmond's *The National Question Again: Welsh Political Identity in the 1980s* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1995), contain little or no mention of gender issues.

work of authors who were active within political Nationalism, as well as the work of those who were ambivalent towards it. It will examine the somewhat archaic gender divisions present within texts written by those generally supportive of a Nationalist ideology, and question whether the work of an author such as Rhys Davies, whose novels and short stories offer an interesting perspective on gender roles in Wales, also betrays an underlying appreciation of traditional Welsh Nationalist concerns, in a similar way to the writing of Caradoc Evans. It will be argued that, just as feminist theorists such as Toril Moi have claimed that ‘women often enact the roles patriarchy has prescribed for them’,<sup>3</sup> writers in Wales between 1925 and 1966, whatever their political beliefs or linguistic background, are complicit in a culture which is fundamentally sympathetic to the Nationalist cause.

Despite the paucity of discussions of gender and political Nationalism in Wales, mention should be made of Laura McAllister’s chapter on gender in *Plaid Cymru: The Emergence of a Political Party* (2001), which highlights many of the issues discussed here. She begins the chapter by emphasizing the lack of similar studies, and comments that the fact that her study ‘breaks new ground says much about the documentation of Welsh politics.’<sup>4</sup> It is claimed that despite the party having always included ‘women in positions of influence and authority’, ‘Plaid Cymru’s nationalism has been based largely on traditional understandings of gender, language and culture.’<sup>5</sup> Crucially, she also offers an explanation for this lack of focus on gender, explicitly linking Nationalism to anti-feminist thought:

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<sup>3</sup>Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 92.

<sup>4</sup>Laura McAllister, *Plaid Cymru: The Emergence of a Political Party* (Bridgend: Seren, 2001), p. 185.

<sup>5</sup>McAllister, *Plaid Cymru: The Emergence of a Political Party*, p. 186.

Historically, there have been two rather ambivalent interpretations of women in Plaid Cymru. First, they have been seen as agents for the biological reproduction of the nation and the language. Secondly, there has been a deep-seated antipathy towards those women members who described themselves as feminists, for feminism was viewed as a foreign or external influence on Welsh nationalism.<sup>6</sup>

The significance of such a statement will become clear when we examine the work of Kate Roberts, particularly her column in the weekly newspaper *Baner ac Amserau Cymru* [*The Banner and Times of Wales*], which displays a certain inability to engage with Nationalist concerns of the time in ways which do not reduce the female role to that of an 'agent' for biological reproduction, confined to the private sphere of the home.<sup>7</sup>

Conversely, it should be suggested at this point that the formation of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru could have been inspired, at least in part, by the failure of earlier cultural Nationalist movements in Wales, such as the 'Nationalism of the hearth' espoused by *Cymru Fydd*, an idea which lived on after the collapse of *Cymru Fydd* in 1896, to successfully emphasize the role of mothers in the home as vital agents of the survival of the Welsh language. W. J. Gruffydd, for example, who was an early member of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru, wrote in 1923:

In the name of our self-respect and in the name of reason, is it through keeping our language in the hands of housemaids in coarse aprons in the kitchen that we are likely to urge people to speak Welsh? Would it not be better for us to

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<sup>6</sup>McAllister, *Plaid Cymru: The Emergence of a Political Party*, p. 207.

<sup>7</sup>It should be remembered that Roberts's columns in *Baner ac Amserau Cymru* are starkly different to her earlier writing in the Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru publication *Y Ddraig Goch* [*The Red Dragon*], some of which 'reveal[s] a confident, independent, politically aware female teacher keen on equal opportunities and equal pay.' - Katie Gramich, *Writers of Wales: Kate Roberts* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), p. 65.

attempt another plan before it is too late, before the shadows close in upon us forever as a nation?<sup>8</sup>

Writing over 75 years later, Mari A. Williams agrees, arguing that the formation of an electable political party, rather than a purely cultural movement, was necessary for the survival of the Welsh language:

Ultimately, social and economic considerations were the principal factors which shaped linguistic preferences and patterns among the inhabitants of the South Wales valleys during the period under consideration, and the notion . . . that women could save the native tongue by championing the Welsh language in their homes was nothing but a pipedream.<sup>9</sup>

The failure of ‘Nationalists of the hearth’<sup>10</sup> to halt the decline of the Welsh language may have been crucial, then, in the transposing of Welsh Nationalism from the private sphere into the traditionally male-dominated public, political sphere.

Discussions of gender and nation frequently use ideas and terminology familiar to Nationalist theorists; for example, when commenting on the traditional role of women in Irish homes, Catherine Nash remarks: ‘The cottage as “cradle of the race” evoked the idea of women as preservers of the race, active only as nurturers and reproducers of the masculine Gael.’<sup>11</sup> While ‘[i]t is men who are generally expected

<sup>8</sup>W. J. Gruffydd, ‘Yr Iaith Gymraeg a’i Gelynyon’ [‘The Welsh Language and its Enemies’], *Y Llenor* [*The Litterateur*], 2.1 (1923), 11 - 19 (p. 17). Original Welsh-language source: ‘Yn enw ein hunan-barch ac yn enw rheswm, ai trwy gadw ein hiaith yn rhyw law forwyn mewn ffedog fras yn y gegin yr ydym yn debig [sic] o gael pobl i siarad Cymraeg? Oni fyddai’n well inni brofi cynllun arall cyn iddi fyned yn rhy hwyr, cyn i’r cysgodion gau am byth arnom fel cenedl?’

<sup>9</sup>Mari A. Williams, ‘Women and the Welsh Language in the Industrial Valleys of South Wales 1914 - 1945’, in Geraint H. Jenkins and Mari A. Williams ed., *Let’s Do Our Best for the Ancient Tongue’: The Welsh Language in the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), pp. 137 - 180 (p. 180). Williams comes to this conclusion because of the decline of the Welsh language between the two World Wars, as well as the acquisition of more progressive social ideals by women of the time that excluded the possibility of staying in the home.

<sup>10</sup>Williams, ‘Women and the Welsh Language in the Industrial Valleys of South Wales 1914 - 1945’, p. 168.

<sup>11</sup>Catherine Nash, ‘Remapping and Renaming: New Cartographies of Identity, Gender and Landscape in Ireland’, *Feminist Review*, 44 (Summer 1993), pp. 39 - 57 (p. 47).

to defend the “moral consciousness” and the “ego” of the nation’,<sup>12</sup> and are thus presented as being concerned with the public realms of politics and industry, rooted in the present, women are often seen in literature as being the guardians of a nation’s future. Regardless of an author’s political views, this is a standpoint which has inherently Nationalistic connotations, and it will be one of the aims of this chapter to determine to what extent this idea is present in texts from Wales, and presented in a Welsh context.

However, it would be untrue to claim that the association of gender with nation and Nationalism is uncomplicated. As in the fusion of Nationalism and Communism/Socialism that characterizes the work of Harri Webb and Hugh MacDiarmid, there are elements of a Nationalist doctrine that have been claimed to be detrimental to, or even incompatible with, a feminist ideology. In 1938, in an attempt to challenge the drive towards war and fascism, Virginia Woolf asserted that ‘as a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world’,<sup>13</sup> which instantly brings to mind the proclamation made by Marx and Engels that ‘The working men have no country.’<sup>14</sup> More recently, Ann Curthoys has echoed Woolf’s declaration, in asking ‘Are not feminists true internationalists, indifferent to and critical of yearning for national identity?’,<sup>15</sup> while Tamar Mayer goes further, essentially claiming that feminism and Nationalism are incompatible:

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<sup>12</sup>Tamar Mayer, ‘Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Setting the Stage’, in Tamar Mayer (ed.), *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1 - 22 (p. 6).

<sup>13</sup>Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 313.

<sup>14</sup>Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 23.

<sup>15</sup>Ann Curthoys, ‘Feminism, Citizenship and National Identity’, *Feminist Review*, 44 (Summer 1993), pp. 19 - 38 (p. 25).

. . . because nation, gender and sexuality are all constructed in opposition, or at least in relation to, an(O)ther, they are all part of culturally constructed hierarchies, and all of them involve power.<sup>16</sup>

This power struggle, which, as will be discussed, can be termed a struggle between public and private spheres, between industry and rurality, or between technological advances and a return to natural primitivism, is an apparent impediment to the fusion of Nationalism and feminism. Attempting to determine whether or not these differences can be reconciled in literature from Wales will be another focus of this chapter.

A cursory examination of the English-language novel in Wales during the early-to-mid twentieth century reveals that gender roles are often presented in a reactionary way: one need look no further than Richard Llewellyn's *How Green Was My Valley* for an example of gendered public and private spheres being presented as entirely separate; the work of Gwyn Jones, such as *Times Like These* (1936), provides another example. It has been implied that the same can be seen in many other industrial novels in both English and Welsh:

In the novels of Lewis Jones and T. Rowland Hughes, derogatory references were made by male characters regarding the political and social meetings held by women in mining communities.<sup>17</sup>

While this may be true regarding the portrayal of women in the novels of T. Rowland Hughes, the reference made by Mari Williams to gender disparity in the work of Lewis Jones may be somewhat misleading, as his work contains several positive representations of women in industrial communities. In *We Live* (1939), for example,

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<sup>16</sup>Mayer, 'Gender Ironies of Nationalism', p. 5.

<sup>17</sup>Williams, 'Women and the Welsh Language in the Industrial Valleys of South Wales 1914 - 1945', p. 158.

Mary Roberts is portrayed as a highly motivated, politically-minded and idealistic figure who joins the Communist Party and is eventually elected as a councillor, prompting an elderly woman to vote for the first time because of the candidate's gender. She is described as 'her husband's superior intellectually, having the capacity to think more coherently and feel less acutely . . .'<sup>18</sup> While there are exceptions to the apparently negative or at least reactionary portrayal of women within the male-authored Welsh industrial novel of the 1930s, then, it could still be claimed that Williams's argument is generally correct. Therefore, it may be best to look at narratives based in more rural societies if we are to discover portrayals that differ from this model.

It has frequently been noted that women are often equated with nature, rurality, and the nation itself, in writing which has some bearing on nationality/Nationalism. Catherine Nash places great emphasis on this concept when she writes that:

[i]ssues of gender and national identity intersect in multiple ways; in the gendering of the concept of the nation, in the idea of the national landscape as feminine, in the concern with issues of race, place, and the national population and the delimiting of gender roles in the idealization and representation of rural life.<sup>19</sup>

Anne McClintock goes further, claiming that this representation of women is a vital component of the Nationalist project:

Women are represented as the atavistic and authentic body of national tradition (inert, backward-looking, and natural), embodying nationalism's conservative principle of continuity. Men, by contrast, represent the progressive agent of national modernity (forward-thrusting, potent, and

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<sup>18</sup>Lewis Jones, *We Live* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1988), p. 83.

<sup>19</sup>Nash, 'Remapping and Renaming: New Cartographies of Identity, Gender and Landscape in Ireland', pp. 41/44.



historic), embodying nationalism's progressive, or revolutionary, principle of discontinuity.<sup>20</sup>

While McClintock remains unaware of concepts such as the 'Nationalism of the hearth' espoused by *Cymru Fydd*, which saw women as the guardians of the future of the nation, she is clearly aware of the fluidity of Nationalism, and its ability to shift between being 'conservative' and 'progressive'. As a political movement that has always encountered difficulty when labelled, or attempting to label itself, as either 'liberal' or 'conservative', Welsh Nationalism would seem to require this duality in order to justify its existence. A text that aids us in exploring this issue is Hilda Vaughan's *The Battle to the Weak* (1925), which focuses on the role of Esther Bevan in her male-dominated, largely anti-Welsh family, as she courts the educated Rhys Lloyd, to the displeasure of both the Lloyd and Bevan families.

Esther is repeatedly portrayed in the novel as being at one with nature, while simultaneously being ignorant of civilized society. This is most often made clear in Esther's interactions with Rhys Lloyd: interestingly, their initial encounters reveal how little understanding exists between them, and possibly, therefore, between the world of the 'educated' male and the 'unsophisticated' female, and possibly between liberal and conservative Nationalism, to follow McClintock's argument. After her first prolonged encounter with Rhys, Esther is preoccupied with him:

[t]hroughout the morning her thoughts were busy with Rhys. She pictured him alone in his raftered attic, poring at midnight over his books. Wondering what could be the subject of so many volumes, she sighed to think how many matters there were of which she knew nothing in the world. For the first time

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<sup>20</sup>Anne McClintock, "'No Longer in a Future Heaven": Gender, Race, and Nationalism', in Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, Ella Shohat (ed.), *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, & Postcolonial Perspectives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 89 - 112 (p. 92).

in her life she was acutely conscious of her own ignorance, and ashamed of it.<sup>21</sup>

After their next encounter, Rhys is similarly uncomprehending:

[Rhys] did not profess to understand [Esther], as he fancied that he understood most things. Many of her ways were childlike, and she was ignorant of many subjects upon which he could talk glibly; yet, he thought, there was an instinctive wisdom in her which gave interest to all she said and an unconscious dignity to her every movement. (p. 62)

The gender implications here are clear: while Esther cannot begin to understand the educated male mind, Rhys does see the value in Esther's natural wisdom, and therefore appears to be the more open-minded of the two.<sup>22</sup> Vaughan is not uncritical of Rhys, however: at one point, he describes the burgeoning role of science in British society using religious terminology, betraying his fundamental lack of any real scientific understanding, as he expresses his worship of "the new God of evolution" (p. 115).

As the narrative progresses, and Rhys moves overseas, much emphasis is placed on the affinity Esther, her sisters, and other female characters feel with nature.

The connection felt by Esther's sister Gladys with nature is especially strong:

[a]ll the secrets of the country-side were known to [Gladys] - where the best nuts could be found in a disused lane with hazel trees meeting overhead; where the blackberries were juiciest beside a stream overgrown with brambles; what was the best place for sloes and crab-apples; which grasses were sweet to nibble and from what flowers honey could be sucked. (p. 168)

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<sup>21</sup>Hilda Vaughan, *The Battle to the Weak* (London: The Queensbury Press, 1925), p. 49. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

<sup>22</sup>An interesting comparison could be drawn here with *Cysgod y Cryman*, in which Greta Vaughan is the first character to become fully conscious of the Nationalist movement, as opposed to the natural wisdom of Esther Bevan, who remains somewhat ignorant of the political realm throughout the novel. Gwylan Thomas, who attempts to convert Harri Vaughan to Communism, is also clearly politically conscious, but, as discussed in a previous chapter, her political intelligence cannot be considered a positive trait, given her self-serving idealism.

One section of the novel in particular, in which Esther and Gladys discuss gender roles and their relationships while Gladys sits astride a pony, is notable. Gladys's bond with the pony is described in terms of gender:

“‘Tisn’t a very safe job for a gal, tamin’ horses,” Esther murmured.  
 “Go on! . . . Look how he’s lettin’ me touch him now. D’ye think either o’ the boys shall do that?” (p. 146)

Elsewhere, Esther sees little difference between the moral code of humans and the behaviour of animals:

[m]ankind, [Esther] had been taught to believe, had a moral sense with which the other animals were not endowed. Yet it was her habit always to speak of a ‘kind dog’ or a ‘wicked horse,’ and the distinction between man and beast was never very powerfully marked in her mind. (p. 154)<sup>23</sup>

Interestingly, this affinity with nature and with the country is not presented as being altogether natural; rather, it is described by Gladys as a well-established societal construct, stemming from male insecurities: “‘I ‘ould be happy I was workin’ out o’ doors. But the men is knowin’ well enough what is the dull jobs, and those is the ones they are leavin’ to us.’” (p. 150)

The attitudes of the male characters towards nature contrast sharply with these depictions of female affinity towards the natural world. After Gladys is injured following a disagreement with her father, she is treated by the local doctor, who leaves the house with a somewhat changed outlook:

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<sup>23</sup>Similarly, at one point, Megan Bevan’s attitudes towards lovemaking and relationships are described in animalistic terms:

[Megan’s] instincts demanded that she should give herself to [Tom Pugh] freely, unconditionally, as the wild creatures mated; but her reason told her that she must deliberately choose and lawfully marry a man able to hold his own in a hard-working community and provide a home for her and the children she might bear. (p. 188)

As his cob jogged down the track leading to the main road he stared about him gloomily as if the familiar landscape had acquired a new and sombre significance. Far below him lay the river, serene and silvery in the mellow sunlight of late afternoon. Somewhere out of sight larks were singing their rapturous song.

“Nature’s callous,” he muttered; “callous.” (pp. 166 - 167)

Despite his apparent sympathy for Gladys, the doctor’s description of John Bevan’s attack on his daughter as an act of ‘nature’ instantly draws our attention to the fact that male characters in the novel share a highly misogynistic view of women, as well as a complete lack of understanding of nature. There is a similarly insurmountable difference between the sexes in their attitudes towards Welsh culture, which, although not a major theme in the novel, does deserve further analysis.

It would be inaccurate to claim that female characters in *The Battle to the Weak* share an affinity with Wales in the same way that they are portrayed as having an affinity with nature. Rather, their attitudes towards Welsh culture can perhaps best be termed as ambivalent: early in the novel, Rhys tells Esther his own idealized versions of the legends and history of Wales and, although moved by the stories, the reader is given the impression that Esther is more impressed by Rhys’s charismatic presence than by the tales themselves:

Esther, listening to the talk of the strange youth beside her, wondered whether she were awake or dreaming, so unreal did everything appear. He talked of the ‘golden age’ of Wales, of poetry and harp playing, royal hospitality and chivalrous love. From a smattering of historical knowledge he drew large deductions, ignoring what did not appeal to him in his country’s story and enlarging on what was best, making the past appear as he would have the future be. . . . But to his silent listener his talk was one with the magic of the night. Strange memories, not of her own, but of her race’s past, began to stir in her. A thousand starlit lovmakings that had gone to her creation haunted her . . . As they descended the steep hillside behind Aberdulas she ceased even to hear what her companion was saying, so conscious was she of his near presence. (p. 45)

Despite the reference to Esther's 'race' here, implying perhaps that she does obscurely sympathise with the core ideas of ethnic Nationalism, it becomes clear from reading the passage as a whole that she is responding to Rhys's romanticization of history, rather than to any Nationalist message that he may be attempting to convey. Yet, Esther is unmistakably Welsh: one of her letters to Rhys after he moves overseas displays her inability to communicate using standard written English. It contains many grammatical and punctuation errors, some of which are due to the influence of the Welsh language on her speech, such as: 'I am free now, Rhys. Do you know what that is meaning to me?' (p. 207).

Despite not being overly conscious of their Welsh heritage, women in *The Battle to the Weak* do appear to have a somewhat stronger connection with Welshness than the prominent male characters. When Esther's father, the abusive John Bevan, is first described, he is immediately identified as opposing Welsh culture:

John Bevan, coming from an anglicized border country, could not speak his own language, and despised his fellow-countrymen who were able to do so as much as they despised him. (pp. 16 - 17)

Through the negative portrayal of John Bevan, it could be claimed that Hilda Vaughan is sympathizing to a certain extent with cultural Nationalism: the description of Welsh as Bevan's 'own' language, emphasizing his failure to claim a linguistic birthright, is notable, as is the proximity of this information to the assertion that he is 'despised' by his 'fellow-countrymen'. This would seem to suggest that Bevan's anti-Welsh stance is an important component of the overwhelmingly negative portrayal of him.

These early descriptions of John Bevan are contrasted with Rhys Lloyd's initial idealization of Wales, while the long-standing rivalry between the Bevan and Lloyd families further heightens these cultural differences. Despite it being made clear in the text that Rhys Lloyd's version of the history of Wales is by no means authoritative, the more positive portrayal of him and his family serves to remind the reader that John Bevan's behaviour, including his dismissal of the Welsh language, cannot be defended. This matter is complicated, however, when we examine the character of Rhys Lloyd following his return from Canada. His previous fantasizing about Welsh history is transformed into an intense dislike of his country and countrymen, motivated, it would seem, by Esther's unwillingness or inability to move away from her family in order to join him. During a conversation between the two, after describing Wales as a "melancholy, wet, depressing place, full of drunkenness, insanity, suicide" (p. 248), Rhys makes a confession:

"I *hate* Wales, I tell you - and the Welsh. I hate them more than any other place and people because they are my own whom I have tried to love. What a man has once idealized and been disappointed by, he grows to despise." (p. 248)<sup>24</sup>

Essentially, in his absence from Wales, Rhys has grown more sympathetic towards the beliefs that once characterized John Bevan. However, rather than presenting us with a character whose ideals are already firmly defined at the beginning of the narrative, Vaughan presents us with motivation for Rhys Lloyd's rejection of Welsh culture, making him the more sympathetic character: Esther has come to represent Wales for him, and his rejection of his country, it can be inferred, is not due to any

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<sup>24</sup>One suspects that Rhys's outpouring could easily be applied to Caradoc Evans, whose dissatisfaction with the people of Ceredigion may also be due to his having 'tried to love' them.

change in his politics, but wholly due to her rejection. These statements are further undermined at the novel's climax, when Rhys admits that he cannot escape from his Welsh background, in a passage which also recalls the earlier depictions of Esther and her sisters as being inherently close to nature:

“[Esther is] of the land,” [Rhys] thought, dropping back into the idiom of his own people. “Maybe as that is how she is bein’ so dear to me. My nature is rooted in hers like, same as ‘tis rooted in the soil from which the both of us was springin’. It’s a poor hard soil, no better nor that of other countries, but ‘tis *ours*. Welsh I was born, and Welsh I was bred. I’ve tried to make the world my country, and all folk my kin, but ‘tis to Wales as I’ve come home, and to my first love.” (p. 315)

Such clearly Nationalist sentiments are not confined to this early text by Vaughan; she explores even more explicitly the connection between gender and Nationalism in her later novel, *The Candle and the Light* (1954). Like the earlier text, the protagonist is a young Welsh woman described as possessing a strong connection to nature. One of the earliest descriptions of Grace Felin has her leaving the house ‘like a young bird released from its cage’,<sup>25</sup> while she feels threatened within the town - ‘[i]t was a place of critical eyes and nodding heads. She wanted only to get through it.’ (p. 5) - preferring to exist in the natural environment of ‘Lovers’ Lane’. At one point, during one of her frequent excursions there, her relationship with nature is described in almost sexual terms, positioned as a possible substitute for her absent English lover:

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<sup>25</sup>Hilda Vaughan, *The Candle and the Light* (London: Macmillan, 1954), p. 3. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text. This, and similar descriptions of Grace, offer a possible challenge to the traditionally gendered private sphere of the home: she frequently wishes to escape the house, seeing it as a confining and restrictive space - entirely different from the portrayal of women in such texts as Gwyn Jones’s *Times Like These*, for example, where women are described as existing almost solely within the home.

[Grace] stumbled back to the ash tree beneath which she and her lover had kissed. It was a young tree, slender as her own body. She put her arms around it, slid to the ground and knelt, clasping it tight. She pressed her forehead against its smooth bark and wept inconsolably. This living thing that could not reason, but vigorously followed the laws of its own nature, drawing strength from its roots, thrusting upwards toward the light, understood her, she felt. In their instinctive way she and it were akin. (p. 66)

*The Candle and the Light* is also significant because of the inclusion of Amos

Rhys, a Nationalist character represented entirely differently from Rhys Lloyd.

Despite being portrayed somewhat sympathetically throughout much of the text,

mainly due to his friendship with Grace, his Nationalism, and, arguably, his

Welshness as a whole, are presented as mainly comedic in nature. His speech takes

the form of a humorous and self-consciously exaggerated dialect:

Whenever [Amos] grew excited he shed his veneer of English accent, rolled his *r*'s, broadened his vowels and stressed his syllables in the lilting chant he used for his mother tongue. He was thinking in Welsh now, though he spoke in English, and was carried away by the *hwyl* that had gained him local fame as a chapel preacher. (p. 23)

In addition, he is a figure of scorn in the local community, with Grace - whom he

describes as “my Cymric song-bird” (p. 22) - fulfilling the role of his only constant

supporter and friend, until Rhys disavows their companionship later in the text.

Another negative characteristic is that he remains scornful of female independence:

during his confrontation with Grace, he labels her “a woman, a weak, foolish woman,

grovelling before the pettiest of local opinion” (p. 157). Earlier, he describes Grace’s

novel positively as “an almost *too* graphic revelation of the Eternal Feminine” (p.

130), but also condemns it for being “artless, simple, a woman’s outpouring of tender

em-*o*-tion” (p. 132). Because Amos Rhys is the only character in the novel not

ambivalent towards issues surrounding Welsh identity, we must, therefore, come to



the conclusion that *The Candle and the Light* presents Nationalism and feminism as being somewhat incompatible.

At their core, however, some of Hilda Vaughan's novels do seem to express sympathy for a cultural Nationalist agenda, which cannot be separated from the gender issues that permeate them. It is suggested that the relationship women share with nature and the land, in *The Battle to the Weak* especially, is generally more conducive to an understanding of Welsh nationality, while men, although more politically-minded, are more liable to struggle with their national identity. Although we may question this simplistic separation of men and women into two distinctly different spheres, the conclusion of the text provides hope: Rhys Lloyd returns to Wales, regains some of his nationalistic fervour, and is finally united with Esther, their differences overcome. Other texts by Welsh writers, however, present Wales as a place where gender roles, stereotypes and preconceptions cannot be so easily abandoned.

Rhys Davies is such an author; he has been described as 'a disquietingly bleak writer, best characterized as the Strindberg of Wales',<sup>26</sup> and his humour as 'black enough to make you weep . . . [and] not infrequently the grimacing expression of his deepest fears'.<sup>27</sup> At first glance, Davies may seem an author not suited to discussions of Welsh Nationalism, as his work could be described as apolitical: Meic Stephens explains how '[I]ike Stephen Dedalus, he decided early on to fly by the nets of

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<sup>26</sup>M. Wynn Thomas, "'Never seek to tell thy love": Rhys Davies's Fiction', *Welsh Writing in English: A Yearbook of Critical Essays*, 4 (1998), pp. 1 - 21 (p. 1).

<sup>27</sup>Thomas, "'Never seek to tell thy love'", 10.

nationality, language, and religion',<sup>28</sup> and that '[h]e was . . . unconcerned in his writing with political or social questions, though he claimed to have had a lifelong allegiance to the Labour Party . . .'<sup>29</sup> However, as in the case of Caradoc Evans, despite his public disavowal of Nationalist politics, there does exist a national dimension in his work, linked to primitivism and gender, as Kirsti Bohata explains:

. . . sexual desire [in his work] is conceived of in atavistic terms, using the vocabulary of race and purity, breeding and miscegenation, savagery and civilization, linking sexuality to dark, primitive impulses which are relics of humankind's barbarous and even bestial origins.<sup>30</sup>

This overwhelmingly bleak portrayal of gender relations is a result, at least in part, of Rhys Davies's homosexuality, which he kept hidden from view during his lifetime. Therefore, it is important we make a distinction between sex and the social construct of gender in his work.

Davies's novel *The Black Venus* (1944) is of particular interest when we consider nation and gender. The fictional village of Ayron, which forms the setting of the novel, could be thought of as a microcosm of Wales; it is described by the Reverend of the village, Padrig Pryce, as: "' . . . indifferent to the laughter - or worse - of the vast outside world. Not only indifferent; Ayron is unaware of the outside world. It is a complete little community in itself.'"<sup>31</sup> Moreover, during the long section in which the protagonist, Olwen Powell, is put on trial in chapel for

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<sup>28</sup>Meic Stephens, 'Introduction', in *Rhys Davies: Decoding the Hare*, ed. Meic Stephens (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 1 - 28 (p. 2).

<sup>29</sup>Stephens, 'Introduction', pp. 1 - 2.

<sup>30</sup>Kirsti Bohata, 'The Black Venus: Atavistic Sexualities', *Decoding the Hare*, pp. 231 - 243 (p. 232).

<sup>31</sup>Rhys Davies, *The Black Venus* (London: William Heinemann, 1944), p. 62. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text. This aspect of the novel is strikingly similar to the representation of the village of Manteg in the early stories of Caradoc Evans, and as such, it could be argued that the sympathy of both writers to what may be termed Nationalist causes are directly comparable.

undertaking the folk practice of ‘courting in bed’ with the men of the village, Ayron is not compared to the rest of Wales, but to England directly, as the village patriarch Moesen Rowlands states:

“... no effect is there made on me by the statement that in go-ahead nations like England our custom of courting in bed rouses surprise and more. A new and foreign race the English are and have not yet had time to settle successfully in Britain.” (p. 31)

Although such quotations clearly should not be taken entirely seriously, as Rowlands’s description of the English as a ‘new . . . race’ and the humour present in the novel as a whole attests, Rhys Davies’s portrayal of Wales as an old-fashioned, near-primitive land fundamentally differentiates it from England. It is also highly relevant to his treatment of gender; from the perspective of Mrs. Drizzle, an Englishwoman in Ayron who hates the ‘natives’, Wales is a place where primitive traditions survive which are detrimental to the safety of women:

Savages, savages. Secret and sly, they were prowling about in the night, come down from the mountains with their dark crafty faces. This ancient land was not civilised; it had the feel, particularly at night, of being a thousand miles from a railway station. A lonely woman with no protective male in the house was not safe. (pp. 64 - 65)

Conversely, Olwen is later equated with this primitivism, and with Wales itself:

[Olwen] could be like her native country. It was a conquered territory obedient to the material sovereignty of an alien race. But still the old wild soul of Wales pulsed triumphantly within her borders . . . (p. 183)

Rather than Davies’s writing lacking any political dimension, this description of Wales as a colonized country proves that he was keenly aware of the issues which informed much Nationalist doctrine of the time. Similar descriptions can be found in

many of his short stories: in 'Blodwen' (1931), for example, Pugh Jibbons is described as:

. . . a funny-looking fellow. A funny fellow. Perhaps there was a gipsy strain in him. He was of the Welsh who have not submitted to industrialism, Nonconformity or imitation of the English. He looked as though he had issued from a cave in the mountains.<sup>32</sup>

Here, it is jokingly implied that 'true' Welshness, undiluted by such outside influences as industry, organized religion and Anglicization, is characterized by an implicit affinity with the natural world. In 'Arfon' (1931), meanwhile, the protagonist's obsessive courtship with Dilys Roberts is strongly linked to her association with nature in his mind:

The hills cried and the valleys murmured her name. [Arfon] stole roses from back gardens because in their perfume she was nearer to him; he bathed in the sheep pond in the hills because the coolness was like her skin against his . . .<sup>33</sup>

Here, as in the other examples cited, we see how the connection between nation and gender is prominent in Rhys Davies's novels and short stories, with the effect that Wales is often presented as an embodiment of primitive, age-old values and traditions that are under threat - both from the modern world, and from those opposing values that are occasionally directly labelled as those of England and the English. Again, this would seem to support some of the positions taken by Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru at the time, a significant claim to make about an author who was, at best, ambivalent towards the aims of Welsh Nationalism.

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<sup>32</sup>Rhys Davies 'Blodwen', in *Collected Stories: Vol. I*, ed. Meic Stephens (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1996), pp. 81 - 93 (p. 81). Primitivism is unusually associated with a male character here, which adds credence to the claim that gender roles are frequently blurred in Davies's work.

<sup>33</sup>Davies, 'Arfon', in *Collected Stories: Vol. I*, pp. 17 - 43 (p. 26).

Unlike Rhys Davies, Emyr Humphreys's sympathy towards Welsh

Nationalism was, as we have seen, more apparent, but his representations of gender cannot be easily compartmentalized, as his portrayal of women changes significantly over the course of his writing career. Women are marginalised in early texts such as *A Toy Epic*,<sup>34</sup> and certain portrayals in the novel could arguably be categorized as misogynistic. However, his later series of novels known as the 'Land of the Living' sequence, beginning with *Flesh and Blood* (1974) and ending with *Bonds of Attachment* (1991), contain a more progressive portrayal of women, centred on the main protagonist, Amy Parry. Since these novels were published after 1966, they will not be discussed in this chapter, but the differences between his earliest novels and a later one such as *Outside the House of Baal* are significant and interesting enough to merit discussion.

The first thing that strikes us about *A Man's Estate* and the depiction of gender within the text is the possible connotations inherent within the title of the novel itself, as Linden Peach explains:

[The title] may be taken as referring to a man's property and inheritance or to his manhood and sexuality. In other words, it may be viewed as alluding to both the male body and the principal patriarchal institutions that privilege it.<sup>35</sup>

Yet, since the novel is largely concerned with the question of whether Philip Esmor-Elis or his sister Hannah will inherit the family home, the title *A Man's Estate* could be seen as interrogating the traditional gender bias that surrounded inheritance in the

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<sup>34</sup>Novels from around the same period such as *The Little Kingdom* and *A Change of Heart* (1951) contain very little real focus upon female characters, and therefore will not be discussed in this chapter.

<sup>35</sup>Linden Peach, 'The Woolf at Faulkner's Door: Modernism and the Body in Emyr Humphreys's 1950s Fiction', *Welsh Writing in English: A Yearbook of Critical Essays*, 6 (2000), pp. 144 - 162 (p. 148).

early half of the twentieth century. Since the difference between Philip and Hannah is significant because of their (adopted) nationalities as well as their gender, it becomes instantly clear that gender and nation are inextricably linked in the novel: Y Glyn will either be passed on to an English-bred male academic who initially claims to have no spiritual ties to his homeland, or to:

. . . a [Welsh-bred] spinster of thirty-five confined to her bedroom, having more in common with the faded wallpaper and mean worn carpet than to the inexhaustible soil and the sap-concealing branches . . .<sup>36</sup>

There is nothing traditional or predictable about how the issue of inheritance is discussed in *A Man's Estate*, and this reversal of our expectations is often due to interaction between men and women, as Linden Peach again clarifies:

[p]roperty . . . is never the subject of that stable father-son inheritance which is supposed to constitute the linchpin of patriarchy. . . . [P]roperty is stolen by a wife who to all extents and purposes murders her husband; it is taken by the State to pay outstanding taxes; and it is the subject of a man's seduction by an ostensibly manipulative woman.<sup>37</sup>

As previously touched upon, Mary Felix Elis, the mother of Hannah and Philip, is the character who most frequently expresses Nationalist views, and lets her husband die because, in her words, "He was a traitor. He betrayed me. He betrayed Wales. He betrayed God! Only one medicine for treason." (p. 375) It could be claimed that Mary Elis is an example of an extremely strong female Nationalist figure, albeit by no means a positive one. However, this assertion is undermined by the frequent de-feminization of the character within the text: at one point, Hannah

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<sup>36</sup>Emyr Humphreys, *A Man's Estate* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2006 [1955]). All further references are to this edition and are given in the text. As well as emphasizing the difference between Hannah and her brother, this passage overturns the traditional portrayal of women in Welsh writing in English, previously discussed in this chapter, as linked to, or custodians of, nature.

<sup>37</sup>Peach, 'The Woolf at Faulkner's Door', p. 148.

comments that '[e]ven after thirty years my mother's prestige owes something to the fact that she is still known as Mrs. *Felix* Elis . . .' (p. 36), and, elsewhere, that she has 'a masculine arrogance thrown like fox fur across her broad shoulders.' (p. 38) It is tempting to surmise from this that Humphreys was not, at this point in his career, entirely comfortable in portraying an influential, entirely feminine Nationalist figure.

Hannah Elis, meanwhile, possesses a curious mix of both masculine and feminine characteristics. Her longing for her brother's return is entirely gendered: she is dependent on her construction of him in many ways, and her feelings about his possible claiming of his inheritance resemble those of a subservient wife rather than an independent sister:

I, for a lifetime it seems, I wait for you. I expect you, coming to claim your inheritance, beautiful and dangerous, to destroy and restore. I fear your coming and yet I long for your coming. . . . And I . . . must restrain my own passions, my pattern must be your needs and not my own frustrated desires. . . . although I am prematurely old, although I am worn and sick and ugly, I go on dreaming like a green girl. (p. 31)

Simultaneously, this yearning for a 'saviour' (p. 169) and a 'rescuer' (p. 170) reveals Hannah's perception of herself as a thoroughly unfeminine 'sick and unlovely creature' for whom 'sex has no delights' (p. 156), whose confinement in the 'prison' (p. 54) of Y Glyn has made her a person 'specially equipped to stare into the shadows and discern the muted forms that writhed there while others walked in the sun.' (p. 78) The contrast between this description and the portrayal of females as possessing an innate connection with nature, as seen in the work of Hilda Vaughan, is self-evident. It is only at the end of the text, after Mary and Vavasor Elis leave the farm, prompted by Philip's return, that Hannah feels confident enough to claim that '[a]s for

me, I have a function.’ (p. 409) However, this ‘function’ seems to be nothing more than taking over her uncle’s role at Y Glyn: at one point, Hannah’s response to a farm worker is described as an echo of Vavasor Elis (p. 410). The climax of *A Man’s Estate* could be read in two different ways: while it could be read negatively, and taken to mean that the only role that has a ‘function’ in this agricultural society is that of the male, Hannah Elis could also be seen as a female character who breaks free of traditional gender boundaries, and deservedly lays claim to her inheritance - the ‘Man’s Estate’ now belongs to a woman. Gender roles in the novel are further complicated by Hannah’s half sister, Ada Evans, who represents a new kind of woman. Unlike Hannah, she displays a fierce independence:

People behave better when you have some sort of power over them. It doesn’t pay to be helpless. The whole purpose of living is to become independent and put yourself in a position where you can have power as you need it: to strike down the hostile or reward the friendly. (p. 275)

Simultaneously, she also longs for Y Glyn and is concerned with the concept of inheritance, at one point yearning for ‘my own place, my own castle, my own plough and pasture, woods, gardens, hills, rivers, my own domain.’ (p. 287) It is clear that at this period in his writing career, Humphreys was unwilling to portray all female characters uniformly, realizing the full extent of feminist responses to inheritance, and to the wider issues of nationality and Nationalism.

Humphreys’s treatment of gender in *A Toy Epic* is somewhat less complex. Since the narrative is told from the perspectives of three male characters (contrasting with *A Man’s Estate*, which is partly told from the viewpoint of Hannah Elis), all female figures are marginalized, becoming either obstacles that the three boys have to



overcome, or objects of desire. Although females in *A Toy Epic* often demonstrate a great level of control and influence over Iorwerth, Albie and Michael, they also frequently display beliefs that could be categorized as anti-Nationalist, contradicting the ideologies of Michael and Iorwerth at the novel's climax.

The first female character presented as being of importance in the lives of the three boys is Mary, the maid, who has already been mentioned and whose influence over Michael is absolute: 'Mary was our mentor, our adviser of the business of living. We were credulous clay in her red, scrubbed hands; her rights and wrongs were ours. We were on her side.'<sup>38</sup> It is Mary who provides the text with its first mention of issues pertaining to Welsh nationality/Nationalism, as she claims to be English, and tells Michael that '[o]nly old Methodies spoke Welsh all the time' (p. 19), leading to his conscious decision to speak English in the home. The passage ends with Michael asserting that '[i]t was Mary's idea. One of her principles.' (p. 19), and a similar declaration is made later, when Michael states that 'Mary the maid, I suppose, sowed the seed of sedition in my mind.' (p. 25)<sup>39</sup> Mary's acceptance of the imposed colonial ideology of Welsh inferiority could be seen as a typical characteristic of her generation; indeed, we can identify similar figures in other texts: in Hilda Vaughan's *The Candle and the Light*, for example, the servants at Y Felin, the home of the text's protagonist, Grace, are described as being 'proud of their thin, town shoes and their gloss of English accent' (p. 84). A similar characterization can be found in 'The

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<sup>38</sup>Emyr Humphreys, *A Toy Epic* (Bridgend: Seren, 2003 [1958]), p. 19. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

<sup>39</sup>Despite the importance of Mary in his life, the role of Michael's mother in forming his initial anti-Nationalist stance should not be overlooked. The choice Michael and his sister make to speak English to their father pleases their mother (p. 19), and her significance is further heightened when Michael reveals: 'Mary gets all the blame, but in fact it is my mother who is sending my sister to a boarding school at Llandrindod, for the sake of her accent.' (p. 26)

Pretender', a short story by Caradoc Evans first published in 1908, in which a young girl named Maria returns to her Welsh-speaking parents following eighteen months as a draper's assistant in London having apparently forgotten her Welsh, which is revealed as a falsehood at the story's climax.<sup>40</sup> It is significant that this urge to abandon all outward signs of a Welsh identity is most common in characters of low social rank, who desire to better themselves through Anglicization.

Apart from Mary, arguably the most significant female character in the novel when studied from a Nationalist standpoint is Frida, the internationalist who scorns the Welshness of both Albie and Iorwerth, seducing Albie as she does so. The first indication given in the text that she has very little respect for Wales comes when Michael discloses that 'We understood that Frida was to stay until the autumn and then go to college: Cambridge, she said. Cardiff, said Les [James].' (p. 83) Immediately afterwards, as we have seen, she insists on referring to Alfie as 'Alberto', on the basis that "'I once knew an absolutely fascinating Italian racing-driver called Alberto.'" (p. 83) Our immediate reaction to Frida is one of distrust and dislike, which is amplified by her pompous rejection of all things Welsh. This perception of her is eventually shared by the three boys: after overcoming his infatuation for her, Albie accuses her of attempting to 'destroy' him (p. 111). Earlier, Michael is similarly dismissive of her:

I am worried . . . about her influence over Albie. She takes him in completely, and that is very bad for him. I have tried to tell him as kindly as I can that Frida is an actress who only comes to life when she can posture in a part. (I used to be like that myself, so I know.) And really (this, of course, I cannot tell him) there is nothing attractive about her. She has bad teeth and her breath

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<sup>40</sup>Although Evans is characteristically dismissive of the naïve Ceredigion peasantry here, he reserves his harshest condemnation for Maria, again revealing his sympathy with those cultural causes later associated with Welsh Nationalism.

smells. She dramatizes herself into some kind of histrionic beauty and that is what puts Albie under her spell. Iorwerth can see this and he agrees with me. (He also disapproves of her; because she swears so freely, I suspect.) (p. 88)

Here, Michael is attacking two main characteristics belonging to Frida: her influence over Albie, and her appearance. It is not difficult to conclude that this condemnation of her could be read as misogynistic. Again, we see a female figure in the text who exerts great influence and power, but is criticized for doing so, and when male characters exhibit questionable behaviour later in the text, this influence is identified as the cause, as when Iorwerth states: 'I blame Frida for the enmity that flares up so easily between Albie and Les.' (p. 114)

The figures of Mary and Frida represent the most influential female characters in *A Toy Epic*,<sup>41</sup> and from studying how they are presented, a certain degree of misogyny is detectable. That they should both oppose Nationalism, for different reasons, goes some way to proving that their only role in the text is as obstacles to the ideological development of the three boys. An analysis of gender issues in the text would not be complete, however, without paying some attention to the apparent homoeroticism that exists between the three protagonists. It could be argued that one possible reason for the marginalization of females, particularly those who engage in romantic relationships with the three boys at some point during the narrative, is that the various friendships between the three often resemble a sexual relationship in their own right. The first to experience these feelings is Iorwerth, who is seemingly

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<sup>41</sup>With the exception, perhaps, of Dilys, who drives a wedge between Iorwerth and Michael at the text's climax, and is again portrayed in a negative light. Michael condemns her by stating: 'In spite of her beauty and attractiveness the horizon of her mind was as limited and as rigid as the polished wooden rail that hemmed in the deacon's dais in her father's chapel.' (p. 116)

infatuated with Albie from the moment the two meet. He boasts that ‘Among all the school, only I think the world of [Albie]’ (p. 54), and also yearns for Michael’s acknowledgment of the relationship between the two: ‘Look, Michael, this tall boy has taken notice of me. Come here and let me tell him who you are. Come here! Come here!’ (p. 43) In a passage with overwhelming homoerotic overtones, during a week-long stay at Albie’s home, Iorwerth describes how: ‘I slept with Albie, and this too was a brilliant experience. My head lying on the same bolster as that of my greatest friend, our bare feet sometimes touching as we turned over in bed.’ (p. 55)

It soon becomes clear, however, that Albie’s obsession at this point is Michael. During the Latin lesson in which the boys study Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, the three notice ‘a dark-haired young girl standing in the bedroom window of one of the new houses’ (p. 63), which prompts Albie to condemn her as not being worthy of Michael’s attention. It is also Albie who becomes the only one of the three openly and specifically to identify his relationship as a homosexual one:

To think how infatuated I was with Michael! (Of course, in those days words like Freud and homosexuality and so on meant nothing to me. . . .) I can only say how thankful I am that no one knew of my weakness except myself, and no one saw the emotional storms I suffered alone for such a long time. (p. 73)

It is clear from the relationships between the three boys, and their differing ideological perspectives, that their roles in the text are symbolic of various ideological and political positions which are significant in Wales. As previously touched upon, if we look at the protagonists in this way, the text becomes a kind of national allegory, with their relationships mirroring connections between Socialism, Nationalism and Nonconformity, and the apparent homoeroticism between them indicative of the

dependence of one ideology upon another. When examined from this perspective, the boys' relationships with the female characters of *A Toy Epic* lose much of their importance: it is their interaction with *each other* which provides the text with most of its political impact.

In the seven years which passed between the publication of *A Toy Epic* and *Outside the House of Baal*, much can be said to have changed in Emyr Humphreys's portrayal of women. Unlike the two-dimensional and manipulative females of *A Toy Epic*, who seemingly exist merely as dramatic devices in order to create conflict among the male protagonists, *Outside the House of Baal* presents us with an occasionally startling portrayal of women struggling in an oppressively patriarchal society. This is immediately made clear in the first chapter of the novel, as the inactivity of J. T. Miles is repeatedly contrasted with the busyness of his sister-in-law Kate as she prepares the house in what we assume is a daily routine. The chapter ends on a suggestively bleak note, with Kate exclaiming: ' - Damn you, Joe Miles. . . . You soft old fool!' <sup>42</sup> There is further contrast between the two throughout the text: the fifth chapter (pp. 63 - 65) consists of a similar sequence, while we are later presented with a prolonged description of J. T.'s awkward efforts to complete the simple task of removing sardine oil from an envelope, asking Kate for guidance as he does so (pp. 179 - 180). J. T.'s inability to take care of himself eventually prompts Kate to label him as 'quite helpless' (p. 219), although, tellingly, it is 'said under her breath', so as not to challenge the control J. T. has over her.

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<sup>42</sup>Emyr Humphreys, *Outside the House of Baal* (Bridgend: Seren, 1996 [1965]), p. 18. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

This relationship between the two characters (complicated because of the shifting narrative voice and the novel's representation of a period of time which spans from the late nineteenth century through to the 1960s) is notable in this study because J. T. Miles often exhibits Nationalist sympathies, most often towards the end of the text, when, as we have seen, he is confronted by his son Ronnie's objections to Welsh Nationalism. His enthusiasm for the cause, as well as his religious activity, is presented as overshadowing all other aspects of his life: he is dependent on the care shown to him by females, first by his wife Lydia and then by her sister, Kate, in order to survive. Yet, J. T. is never aware of his debt to the women in his life, nor does he admit to believing in equality between the two sexes. In a letter to Lydia in which he praises a lecture by O. M. Edwards, he passes judgment on the females attending the event:

I think perhaps the young ladies are more forward in these parts. . . . On my way out I saw four young women lighting cigarettes and acting in a very frivolous manner considering the gravity of the lecture they had just heard. (p. 115)

Here, his condemnation of this behaviour undermines the possible validity of his arguments in favour of O. M. Edwards's Nationalist ideas, further adding to his character's shortcomings. Later, he engages in an animated discussion with Lydia regarding a group of striking workers, during which they have the following exchange:

- There's no excuse for not working, Lydia said. I work hard enough. Why shouldn't they?
- There's no excuse for that, J. T. said. He spoke as gently as he could.

- For less pay and for longer hours, J. T. said. These are free men not slaves. A free man must have a fair price for his labour. Especially when it's all he's got.

- What about me? Lydia said. Am I free or am I a slave? My husband works longer hours for no pay. Now just tell me what I am. Am I free or am I a slave? A slave to all these people. (p. 241)

J. T.'s failure to grasp Lydia's argument eventually leads her to proclaim that '- A man like you has no business to get married' (p. 242), and the chapter ends with a startling admission from her: '- I could hit you, Lydia said. I could really. I could hit you.' (p. 242)

Lydia is herself a pivotal character, as it is she who most consistently and openly expresses her feelings of frustration towards the gender bias of early twentieth-century Wales, while also being dismissive of, or hostile towards, some of the key principles of Welsh Nationalism. Her objections aimed at the patriarchal society in which she lives are revealed relatively early in the narrative, as she tells Kate: '- I wish I was a man . . . I wouldn't be here now if I was. An unpaid skivvy. I could work in an office if only [Pa would] let me. Just because I'm a girl.' (p. 77) Her reasons for marrying J. T. Miles are also explained by these feelings of confinement: 'I'll tell you one thing, Lydia said, looking up at Kate. I wish I wasn't a woman, but since I have to be, I'll marry the first man who asks me.' (p. 78) As the narrative progresses, it becomes clear that Lydia does not understand Welsh Nationalism, or objects to it. The first instance of this occurs after she reads a letter from her brother Griff to J. T. concerning the '*fervid Cymric idealism*' (p. 162) found in Wales, to which her response is incomprehension, on the basis that, by her own admission, 'It's too clever for me.' (p. 162) Later, it is implied that her children's disillusion with

Wales and the Welsh is because of her lack of Nationalist conviction, as when she insists on conversing in English with her daughter, Thea (p. 260), anticipating her eventual migration to England. The differences between the ideologies of J. T. and Lydia are dramatically exposed in one of their final conversations before Lydia's death, when she criticizes her husband on the basis of his beliefs: '- And everybody else has got to be perfect. Everybody to speak Welsh! Everybody pacifist! Everybody Welsh nationalist! Everybody teetotal!' (p. 299)

The novel provides another example of Humphreys's willingness to critique his own Nationalism. In J. T.'s self-indulgent idealism, his political and religious activism is only made possible because of the labours of Lydia and Kate, to which he remains largely oblivious. As Lydia explains, 'I live in this house. I make his meals. I clean his boots. I sleep in his bed. And most of the time I can't stand him. I can't stand him.' (p. 276) The same sentiment is more succinctly expressed in Humphreys's post-1966 poem 'Twenty Four Pairs of Socks', which offers a portrayal of a preacher and a widower who never 'supported [a political party that] ever stood in danger/of being obliged to exercise power',<sup>43</sup> and is mockingly described as possessing 'the secret of living' (p. 38), but 'never cleaned his own boots/until his wife died' (p. 38).

In reading *Outside the House of Baal* from a gender perspective, we are struck by how much Humphreys's writing has changed in this respect since his earliest novels. He shows a keen and consistent awareness of the limitations of an overwhelmingly patriarchal society, and portrays the struggles of its female inhabitants with genuine compassion and understanding. However, despite

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<sup>43</sup>Emyr Humphreys, *Ancestor Worship* (Denbigh: Gwasg Gee, 1970), p. 38. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.



Nationalism being central to the novel, we find very few instances of characters showing sympathy towards both Nationalist and feminist ideologies. It could be that Humphreys encountered some difficulty in portraying Nationalism and gender-consciousness simultaneously at this point in his career, or that he simply decided that such a union of beliefs would not have been found in the patriarchal, chapel-dominated community of early twentieth-century Wales, with Lydia's proto-feminist opinions presented as being at odds with the prevailing views of her society. In its depiction of women, *Outside the House of Baal* also presents us with an important contrast with novels such as those of Hilda Vaughan, which present women as being closely linked to nature and the national unit. In the early work of Emyr Humphreys, it is men who tend to sentimentalize about the national project and their role within it, with female characters, most notably Kate and Lydia of *Outside the House of Baal*, having to be more practically-minded because of this. His work, then, must be regarded somewhat separately from that of authors such as Rhys Davies and Hilda Vaughan: in it, we are not confronted with as much obvious overlap between feminism and Nationalism, perhaps stemming from Humphreys's own Nationalist beliefs, and the general lack of feminist sympathy within Welsh Nationalism at this time.

The work of Welsh-language author Kate Roberts is also not without complication in its depiction of Nationalism from a female, gender-conscious perspective. Roberts was a staunch and active participant in the early activities of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru, and it has often been commented how rarely she chose to express her political beliefs directly in her fiction, instead relying on her public

speaking and columns in *Baner ac Amserau Cymru* and *Y Ddraig Goch* in order to express her views. Her consciousness of gender struggle in Wales is also displayed clearly in these writings, although in her Women's Column, the political is often juxtaposed with the mundane: in her column 'Prinder Glo' ['The Scarcity of Coal'] in the edition of *Baner ac Amserau Cymru* published on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1946, for example, she begins by discussing the need to use various types of energy rather than having to rely on coal, but finishes with a brief section entitled 'Awgrym at Wneud "Sandwich"' ['A Suggestion for Making a "Sandwich"'].

Indeed, on the occasions that Roberts discusses political/Nationalist issues in her columns, very rarely does she dedicate the entire piece to these concerns: there is almost always a caveat at the end of the column, in which she typically offers recipe suggestions (which often form the basis of entire columns in their own right). However, these frequent conciliatory gestures must also be viewed in the context of the immediate post-war period of austerity, during which a housewife's skills at making little food go far were often necessary in a harsh economic climate. There exist more blatant signs that Roberts's Nationalism outweighs her feminism at this point in her career; at one point she writes:

The question of female independence is a complex one. In the nineteenth century it was taken for granted that a woman did not possess any independence at all. . . . I know that I am considered old fashioned[;] the majority of this country's educated women today believe that you should not be too confined to the home and in the early days of the Labour Party women believed that one of the signs of education was that you were uncaring about your home. If you can accomplish work outside the house without neglecting it, all the best, but someone must look after the home . . .<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup>Kate Roberts, 'Rhoi Plant Mewn Cratsh' ['Putting Children in a Creche'], *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 104.41 (4/6/1947), p. 7. Original Welsh-language source: 'Mae cwestiwn annibyniaeth merch yn gwestiwn dyrys. Yn y bedwaredd ganrif ar bymtheg cymerid yn ganiataol nad oedd gan ferch annibyniaeth o gwbl. . . . Gan yr ystyrir fi'n hen ffasiwn, cred y rhan fwyaf o ferched deallol y wlad

Elsewhere, in one of the few columns significant because of the intersection of gender and nation, Roberts urges her readers not to blame 'us the women for reading English novels'<sup>45</sup> because of their comparative lack of an education in the Welsh language, and makes an almost apologetic definition of the type of literature which is, in her opinion, appealing to women:

The same kind of book is not pleasurable to everyone, and the tendency of women, especially after a fairly difficult day's work, is to read something that does not require a fully awake mind.<sup>46</sup>

In her later journalism, at least, Kate Roberts does not seem to be advocating any kind of drastic change in the way Welsh women's lives are being led, but rather suggesting that they should endure in the face of hardship, much as many of her fictional characters do.<sup>47</sup> At this point in her career, 'it is . . . the conservative voice of tradition which predominates, drowning out the younger feminist.'<sup>48</sup> We should now, therefore, turn to her fiction, in order to determine to what extent the same features are present.

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yma heddiw na ddylech fod yn rhy gaeth i'r cartref ac yn nyddiau cynnar y Blaid Lafur tybiai merched mai un o'r arwyddion eich bod yn ddeallol ydoedd eich bod yn peidio â malio yn eich cartref. Os medrwch wneud gwaith y tu allan i'ch cartref heb ei esgeuluso gorau oll, ond mae'n rhaid i rywun edrych ar ôl y cartref . . .'

<sup>45</sup>Kate Roberts, 'Llyfrau' ['Books'], *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 105.30 (17/3/1948), p. 7. Original Welsh-language source: 'ni'r gwagedd am ddarllen nofelau Saesneg.'

<sup>46</sup>Roberts, 'Llyfrau', p. 7. Original Welsh-language source: 'Nid yr un math o lyfr a rydd bleser i bawb, a'n tuedd ni'r merched, yn enwedig ar ôl diwrnod go galed o waith, yw darllen rhywbeth nad yw'n gofyn meddwl rhy effro.'

<sup>47</sup>Her column 'Rhoi Plant Mewn Cratsh', quoted above, ends with Roberts reassuring her readers that although 'a house and children can make a wife a prisoner, it should not be that way when there are so many more conveniences within reach than in the past.' (p. 7) Original Welsh-language source: 'gall tŷ a phlant wneud caethferch o'r wraig, ond ni ddylai fod felly pan fo cymaint cyfleusterau o fewn ein cyrraedd rhagor na hynt.'

<sup>48</sup>Gramich, *Writers of Wales: Kate Roberts*, pp. 65 - 66.

In Roberts's novels and short stories, and unlike her journalism, an awareness of both Nationalism and gender issues is largely implicit, but unmistakably present, usually informing characterization and individual moments of interaction between figures in her texts rather than contributing to wider storylines and character arcs. According to John Emyr:

It is in the midst of private battles between individuals that Nationalism is seen in the author's most powerful fiction. This does not constitute a step back towards indefinable, over-subjective Nationalism. . . . [it] is important in the history of individuals.<sup>49</sup>

The passage most often cited as an example of the presence of Nationalism in Roberts's work comes towards the end of her novel *Traed Mewn Cyffion* [*Feet In Chains*] (1936), when Jane Gruffydd receives a letter informing her of her son's death in the First World War, which she has to have translated by a local shopkeeper as she cannot understand English (177 - 178). This results in the character eventually reacting bitterly against a government officer who reveals to her that he is to reduce a local widow's pension, after she too loses a son in the war:

That minute Jane Gruffydd was overcome with a strange feeling. For fifteen months, feelings had been gathering in her soul against everything that was responsible for the War, against men and against God; and when she saw this adipose man in his high-quality clothes priding himself on reducing the pension of a poor widow, she failed to control herself. It was as if she came to the conclusion that this man, at that moment, represented everything that was behind the War, and she picked up the closest thing at hand - which was a clothes brush - and struck the officer on his head.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>John Emyr, *Enaid Clwyfus: Golwg ar Waith Kate Roberts* [*Bruised Soul: A Look at the Work of Kate Roberts*] (Denbigh: Gwasg Gee, 1976), p. 155. Original Welsh-language source: 'Yng nghylch brwydrau preifat rhwng unigolion y mae cenedlaetholdeb i'w weld yn fficsiwn grymusaf yr awdures. Nid camu'n ôl at genedlaetholdeb goroddrychol anniffiniedig yw hyn. . . . yn hanes unigolion y mae cenedlaetholdeb yn bwysig.'

<sup>50</sup>Kate Roberts, *Traed Mewn Cyffion* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1988 [1936]), pp. 187 - 188. Original Welsh-language source: 'Y munud hwnnw daeth rhyw deimlad rhyfedd dros Jane Gruffydd. Ers pymtheng mis o amser, bu rhyw deimladau yn crynhoi yn ei henaid yn erbyn pob dim oedd yn gyfrifol am y Rhyfel, yn erbyn dynion ac yn erbyn Duw; a phan welodd y dyn blonegog yma yn ei ddillad

As emotionally effective as this passage is, the comic nature of Jane Gruffydd's attack on the officer, as well as its ultimate futility, could perhaps be seen as underscoring how little influence Kate Roberts's women are able to exert on the world outside the home. Although it is through Jane's eyes that the reader experiences the horrors of the First World War, it is her son Owen who vows to take advantage of the opportunity to oppose the war for what could be termed Nationalist reasons:

And his eyes were opened to the possibility of *doing* something, rather than suffering like mutes. It was high time for someone to oppose all this injustice. To do something. To think of it, that was the fault of his people. They were courageous in their ability to suffer, and not in their ability to do anything against the cause of their suffering. . . . It was surprising to think that some small, out-of-the-way corner of Wales such as this had any part in the War at all. And yet, the talons of that beast reached to the farthest reaches of the mountains. . . . Why did the region not rise against a thing like this? (pp. 192 - 193)<sup>51</sup>

Owen is here opposing the commonly-held view of the time that the First World War was a crusade in defence of small nations. In making him take this view as the text comes to a close, Kate Roberts is essentially transforming *Traed Mewn Cyffion* into a novel which explores the impetus behind the formation of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru.

As Emyr Humphreys notes:

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graenus yn gorfoleddu am dynnu pensiwn gwraig weddw dlawd i lawr, method ganddi ddal. Yr oedd fel casgliad yn torri, y dyn yma a gynrychiolai bob dim oedd y tu ôl i'r Rhyfel ar y munud hwnnw, a dyma hi'n cipio'r peth nesaf i law - brws dillad oedd hwnnw - a tharo'r swyddog yn ei ben.' All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

<sup>51</sup>Original Welsh-language source: 'Ac fe agorwyd ei lygaid i bosibilrwydd *gwneud* rhywbeth, yn lle dioddef fel mudion. Yr oedd yn hen bryd i rywun wrthwynebu'r holl anghyfiawnder hwn. Gwneud rhywbeth. Erbyn meddwl, dyna fai ei bobl ef. Gwrol yn eu gallu i ddioddef oeddynt, ac nid yn eu gallu i wneud dim byd yn erbyn achos eu dioddef. . . . Yr oedd yn syndod meddwl bod gan ryw gongl fechan ddiarffordd fel hyn o Gymru ran yn y Rhyfel o gwbl. Ac eto, cyrhaeddai crafangau'r anghenfil hwnnw i gilfachau eithaf y mynyddoedd. . . . Paham na chodai'r ardal yn erbyn peth fel hyn?'

. . . there is here a trace of longing for the monolingual garden of Eden, the lost Paradise, where there is no trace of the English language, nor the duplicitous, seductive, destructive sound of the new, mechanical Anglo-Saxon world.<sup>52</sup>

Before this point, such political discussion is, although not entirely absent, not at the forefront of the narrative. Jane Gruffydd's traumatic discovery of her son's death is at one point foreshadowed as she converses with a neighbour:

“Is it not a pity that we don't understand some English, Ann Ifans?”

“I'm really not sure; one understands more than enough in this old world as it is. Who in the world knows how much pain is avoided by not understanding English.” (p. 80)<sup>53</sup>

Other than this exchange, and a reference to the workers of Wales getting their ideas from ‘. . . English books and from Welsh newspapers that were echoes of English newspapers’ (p. 92),<sup>54</sup> sections of the novel which could be linked to Roberts's Welsh Nationalism usually involve Sioned Gruffydd, the disobedient daughter of Jane and Ifan Gruffydd. She is eventually married to Bertie, who is somewhat comically presented as greatly influenced by English tradition and language,<sup>55</sup> who insists on calling her ‘Janet’ (p. 131), and presumably influences her in her decision to send the family a Christmas card written in English. Sioned is also repeatedly condemned for not being able to undertake household chores, due to the corrupting influence of her

<sup>52</sup> Emyr Humphreys, ‘Traed Mewn Cyffion’, *Kate Roberts: Cyfrol Deyrnged* [*Kate Roberts: Tribute Volume*], ed. R. M. Jones (Denbigh: Gwasg Gee, 1969), p. 54. Original Welsh-language source: ‘mae yma arlliw o ddyheu am yr ardd Eden uniaith, y Baradwys goll, lle na ddaeth y Saesneg ar gyfyl y fan, na sŵn twyllodrus, nwydus, distrywiol y byd newydd Anglo-Sacsonaidd mecanyddol.’

<sup>53</sup> Original Welsh-language source: “‘On’ d ydi o’n biti na fasa rhywun yn dallt dipyn o Saesneg, Ann Ifans?”

“Dwn i ddim ‘wir; mae rhywun yn ddallt llawn digon yn yr hen fyd yma eisys. Wybod ar y ddaear faint o boen mae dyn yn ‘i arbed wrth beidio â gwybod Saesneg.”

<sup>54</sup> Original Welsh-language source: “[I]lyfrau Saesneg ac o bapurau Cymraeg oedd yn adlais o’r papurau Saesneg.’

<sup>55</sup> His Welsh, tinged with Anglicisms, is curiously described at one point as ‘girlish corrupt speech’ (p. 131). Original Welsh-language source: ‘llediaith ferchetaidd.’

grandmother, with the implication that these tasks are necessary components of female existence. Delyth George provides an effective summary of Sioned's role in the text:

Sioned is the only one in *Traed Mewn Cyffion* who falls prey to the instinct of romantic love, which leads her to an unhappy marriage with Bertie, an urban character who is associated (in typically Welsh fashion) with low morality because of it.<sup>56</sup>

We can appreciate, then, how some of Kate Roberts's characterizations of women could lead us to believe that her treatment of gender is somewhat unprogressive, despite the presence of strong female characters such as Jane Gruffydd. However, there are significant differences between her characterization of women and that of many of her contemporaries:

. . . the personalities of Kate Roberts's women are not softly feminine . . . They are women who are independent of spirit, and emotionally self-sustaining; these are characteristics that are traditionally associated with the male. Kate Roberts writes about women who are strong of character, whom she respects and admires.<sup>57</sup>

One character who undoubtedly fits this description is Lora Ffennig, the protagonist of Roberts's *Y Byw Sy'n Cysgu* [*The Living Sleep*] (1956). Despite the novel

<sup>56</sup>Delyth Ann George, 'Kate Roberts - ffeminist?' ('Kate Roberts - feminist?'), *Y Traethodydd* [*The Essayist*], 140 (1985), pp. 185 - 202 (pp. 192 - 193). Original Welsh-language source: 'Sioned yw'r unig un yn *Traed Mewn Cyffion* a syrth yn ysglyfaeth i reddf serch rhamantus, sy'n ei harwain i briodas annedwydd â Bertie, cymeriad trefol a gysylltir (yn nodweddiadol Gymreig) â moesoldeb is o'r herwydd.' There may indeed be some connection between the role so often given to female characters as custodians/guardians of nature, as seen in the novels of Hilda Vaughan, for example, and this apparent condemnation of urban life as a corrupting influence.

<sup>57</sup>Delyth Ann George, 'Kate Roberts - ffeminist?', p. 186. Original Welsh-language source: 'nid yw merched Kate Roberts o ran personoliaeth yn feddal fenywaidd . . . Merched annibynnol eu hysbryd, a hunangynhaliol yn emosïynol ydynt; dyma nodweddion a gysylltir yn draddodiadol â'r gwryw. Ysgrifennu am wragedd cryf o gymeriad, gwragedd y mae ganddi barch ac edmygedd ohonynt a wna Kate Roberts.' Roberts's portrayal of men, it should be clarified, is also of interest to this thesis as a whole: William Gruffydd of *Traed Mewn Cyffion*, for example, frustrated by the political passivity of his fellow quarrymen, moves to South Wales and becomes involved in Socialism. This betrays the Socialist sympathies of the young Kate Roberts, and may display some of the same inability to fuse Nationalism and Socialism found in the work of Harri Webb and Hugh MacDiarmid.

containing very little commentary on Welsh nationality/Nationalism,<sup>58</sup> it is worthy of discussion simply because of the extraordinary resilience with which she chooses to imbue her protagonist. The novel gradually reveals a catalogue of disaster that befalls Lora Ffennig: her husband abandoning her in favour of the housekeeper of a neighbour, Mr. Meurig, (to whom she is attracted, but feels she cannot reveal her feelings for fear of a local scandal<sup>59</sup>), and eventually taking money from their joint account, leaving her virtually penniless. Nevertheless, as John Gwilym Jones has commented, with particular reference to Lora Ffennig, Kate Roberts's prominent female characters:

. . . [are] loaded with cares and sadness. But none of their backbones are ever broken. There is in the human race some stubbornness [sic], some assiduity, some flexibility which is able to challenge everything . . .<sup>60</sup>

It is difficult to imagine Kate Roberts imbuing a male character with the same characteristics. Indeed, examples of male protagonists in her novels and short stories are rare, but one text which may aid us in identifying the differences in her characterization of males and females is her children's story, *Deian a Loli* [*Deian and Loli*] (1927). The narrative follows twins, one male and one female, through

<sup>58</sup>One of the only significant mentions of Welsh nationality is the following condemnation of the Welsh mindset, from Lora's perspective: 'They were people from the country, and Welsh at that, and the people of Wales could not enjoy their pleasures for fear of not being godly, and were unable to enjoy their godliness because they wanted to follow their urges.' - Kate Roberts, *Y Byw Sy'n Cysgu* (Denbigh: Gwasg Gee, 1995 [1956]), p. 98. Original Welsh-language source: 'Pobl o'r wlad oeddynt o hyd, a Chymry at hynny, ac yr oedd pobl Cymru yn methu mwynhau eu pleserau am fod arnynt ofn peidio â bod yn dduwiol, ac yn methu mwynhau eu duwioldeb am fod arnynt eisiau dilyn eu chwantau.' All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

<sup>59</sup>Lora's divorce is not finalized until very late in the text, leading to another rare mention of Welsh nationality, as she muses: 'So soon would an Englishman or a Frenchman have settled a matter like this.' (p. 185) Original Welsh-language source: 'Mor fuan y buasai Sais neu Ffrancwr yn setlo mater fel hyn.'

<sup>60</sup>John Gwilym Jones, 'Y Byw Sy'n Cysgu' ('The Living Sleep'), in *Kate Roberts: Cyfrol Deyrnged*, (pp. 111 - 121), p. 113. Original Welsh-language source: '. . . yn cael eu llwytho gan ofalau a thristwch. Ond nid oes torri ar asgwrn cefn yr un ohonynt. Mae yn y ddyfnoliaeth ryw ystyfnigrwydd, rhyw ddygnwch, rhyw ystwythder sy'n medru herio'r cwbl . . .'



childhood and into adolescence, charting the events that lead to their inevitable separation. From the opening sentence, we swiftly become aware that gender is a crucial issue in the text:

Deian and Loli were twins, living in a smallholding named Bwlch y Gwynt, on the slopes of Moel y Grug. A smallholding is a little farm, and the father of the children who live there must go to the quarry, or somewhere else, to earn money.<sup>61</sup>

Apart from this mention at the opening of the text, and his participation during an episode in which the twins are missing,<sup>62</sup> the father is an almost invisible presence in *Deian a Loli*. Since the two protagonists spend most of their young lives at home, their mother is, for much of the time, their sole guardian, enforcing the convention that the home is the mother's only domain. Loli seems to have no desire to move beyond the home, mentioning to her brother after a fatal accident at the quarry that she 'will never marry a quarryman' (p. 90).<sup>63</sup> The two are often contrasted, with Deian exhibiting a logical, rational mind more suited to success at school, while Loli's defining characteristic is her active imagination: 'When the teacher told them a story [Loli] was all eyes and ears . . . . As for Deian, he had no patience with a silly old story.' (p. 45)<sup>64</sup>

*Deian a Loli* was published early in Roberts's writing career, and aimed primarily at children, so we should not expect a radical departure from gender

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<sup>61</sup>Kate Roberts, *Deian a Loli* (Cardiff: Hughes a'i Fab, 1992 [1927]), p. 13. Original Welsh-language source: 'Dau efaill oedd Deian a Loli, yn byw mewn tyddyn bach o'r enw Bwlch y Gwynt, ar ochr Moel y Grug. Fferm fechan yw tyddyn, ac mae'n rhaid i dad y plant sy'n byw yno fynd i'r chwarel, neu rywle arall, i ennill pres.' All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

<sup>62</sup>While the father goes in search of the twins, the mother stays at home 'to stoke the fire, to boil the kettle, and to weep.' (p. 25) Original Welsh-language source: 'i gadw tân, i ferwi'r tecell, ac i grio.'

<sup>63</sup>Original Welsh-language source: 'na phriodai hithau chwarelwr byth . . .'

<sup>64</sup>Original Welsh-language source: 'Pan ddywedai'r athrawes ryw stori wrthynt yr oedd yn glustiau ac yn llygaid i gyd. . . . Am Ddeian, nid oedd ganddo ef amynedd gyda rhyw hen stori wirion.'

stereotyping in this novel. At the end of the text, for example, the two protagonists conform to gender stereotypes, as Loli moves to London in order to become a maid, leaving Deian to attend school, which signifies that ‘it would not be possible to call them “Deian and Loli” in the same breath for much time to come.’ (p. 97)<sup>65</sup> The climax of *Deian a Loli* clearly shows Roberts’s inability to expand female roles beyond the sphere of the home, which, as we notice in the conclusion of *Traed Mewn Cyffion*, signifies that their participation in politics, and particularly in the burgeoning Welsh Nationalist movement, is severely limited. This is particularly unexpected considering that Kate Roberts herself went to University and became politically active, overcoming these traditional gender boundaries. A comparison could be made here with females in the work of Emyr Humphreys, particularly *Outside the House of Baal*, who are overwhelmed with the demands of a woman’s life in the home, quite simply leaving no time to pursue any political aspirations.

It may be because of this separation of men and women into two different spheres, whether we term them as public/private, urban/rural, or logical/instinctual, that the inclusion of Welsh Nationalist discourse in texts focused on gender in Wales is so vague and unsatisfying. Despite a definite and noticeable progression from a text such as *Deian a Loli*, highly conservative in its compartmentalization of gender, to one such as *Outside the House of Baal*, which shows a great degree of sympathy towards the lack of freedom experienced by females in early twentieth-century Welsh society, it is clear that these separations are never truly overcome during this period. It is important also that we differentiate between Welsh nationality and political

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<sup>65</sup>Original Welsh-language source: ‘na ellid eu galw yn “Deian a Loli” ar yr un gwynt am lawer o amser eto.’

Nationalism. In the work of those writers who did not publicly demonstrate any significant Welsh Nationalist sympathies, such as Hilda Vaughan and Rhys Davies, women do seem to be representative of a kind of 'national character', being connected closely with nature and the landscape of Wales. This seems to support the argument that Welsh Nationalist sentiment was more widespread in literature of this period than is usually claimed.

However, the association of femininity with nationality is rarely complex in these texts, with females typically and simplistically coupled with the natural world, and embodying essentialist concepts of nationhood. In the work of Emyr Humphreys and Kate Roberts, the intersection between gender and Nationalism is considerably more complex, which may perhaps be attributed to their conscious avowal of Welsh Nationalism. There exists in Humphreys's novels a range of representations of femininity, with the one-dimensional portrayals of *A Toy Epic* giving way to the nuanced depictions of women in *Outside the House of Baal*. Despite this great shift in characterization, Humphreys is never fully committed to associating women with Welsh Nationalism during this period, with Amy Parry of the *Land of the Living* sequence, published after 1966, his first real attempt at doing so. This same inability to depict women as playing a vital, political role within the Nationalist movement is also detectable within the work of Kate Roberts, and all the more troubling because of her own role within Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru. She tends to separate men and women into two distinct spheres, with her female characters, although possessing great emotional and practical strength, generally confined to supporting the political ambitions of men. While Jane Gruffydd's outburst against the government officer in

*Traed Mewn Cyffion* represents the emotional climax of the novel, it merely allows her son to start considering the possibility of taking the Nationalistic fervour she displays from the private into the public sphere.

When considering the texts studied in this chapter as a whole, leaving aside any prior knowledge of a particular author's political allegiances, what becomes obvious is that all four writers tend to use the same stock tropes and images when working with ideas of femininity and nation. The more mature and nuanced depictions of gender in *Outside the House of Baal* aside, women are generally seen as either the semi-mystical keepers of national identity, possessing a vaguely-defined connection with nature and nation, or, in the case of *A Toy Epic*, impediments in the development of the three protagonists, two of whom possess certain Nationalist beliefs at the end of the text. This dependence on stock ideas can either be seen to represent the restricted influence of feminism in Welsh writing at this time, or as indicative of the limited and somewhat simplistic ways in which an underlying sympathy with Nationalism is communicated in the novels of Rhys Davies and Hilda Vaughan. We can therefore see how an examination of gender in Welsh writing contributes to the overall argument of this thesis: the authors whose work is discussed in this chapter present nation and Nationalism in strikingly similar terms, illustrating that conceptions of Welsh national identity in literature do not shift along party-political lines as neatly as is often accepted.

*Nationalism and Religion in Irish and Welsh Poetry, 1925 - 1966*

Welsh and Irish Nationalism have been defined by their relationship with religion over much of the twentieth century. While Nationalism in Ireland drew much of its support from among Catholics, and Welsh Nationalism has long been linked in the public imagination with Nonconformity, dating back to the nineteenth-century *Cymru Fydd* movement, a detailed study of Welsh and Irish history between 1925 and 1966 may reveal weaknesses in these simple definitions of religiously-inflected Nationalism in the two countries. Nationalist intellectuals often sprang from among religious minorities within the nation, with Saunders Lewis the most prominent example in Wales, whose particular brand of Nationalism, informed by his Catholic faith, proved to be highly influential in literature and politics, as has been previously discussed. Indeed, organized Welsh Nationalism, as well as being traditionally associated with Nonconformity, was also strongly linked to Catholicism at its inception. There were several prominent members of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru who shared Lewis's faith, including R. C. Richards, R. O. F. Wynne, Victor Hampson-Jones, Catherine Daniel, T. Charles Edwards and T. P. Ellis. Such was their influence that, according to Trystan Owain Hughes, 'right up the 1950s, the Plaid was hounded by the accusation that it was a Papist party.'<sup>1</sup>

In addressing the interplay between Nationalism and religion in literature, this chapter will contain an analysis of the work of Austin Clarke, an Irish Catholic poet whose relationship with his faith was far from straightforward, and that of R. S.

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<sup>1</sup>Trystan Owain Hughes, 'An Uneasy Alliance? Welsh Nationalism and Roman Catholicism', *The North American Journal of Welsh Studies*, 2.2 (Summer, 2002), 1 - 6 (p. 3).

Thomas, whose combination of Anglicanism and Welsh Nationalism makes him notable among writers sympathetic to Welsh Nationalism in the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the work of Patrick Kavanagh will be examined in comparison with the poetry of Austin Clarke, as well as that of Welsh-language poet Waldo Williams, whose work adds further complexity to the relationship between religion and Nationalism in Ireland and Wales. All four authors embody varying positions regarding religion and Nationalism, with Waldo Williams and R. S. Thomas challenging the popular opinion that Nonconformity dominated Welsh Nationalist discourse in the twentieth century, which supports the argument made in this thesis that national sentiment is often found outside its usual confines. Clarke and Kavanagh, meanwhile, shared a roughly similar position on Catholicism, but possessed differing views as to the importance of Irish Nationalism, and ‘Celticism’ as a whole. Kavanagh, in particular, is of great importance to the thesis, as it is his poetry which suggests most clearly that following the partial victory for Irish Nationalism which was the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, Irish writers could (albeit deliberately and self-consciously) write material free of any implicit sympathy for the Nationalist cause.

There has been a great deal of theoretical debate on the precise relationship between religion and Nationalism in twentieth-century society. It has, for example, been commented that the relationship between religion and Nationalism is, in many ways, an altogether natural one:

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<sup>2</sup>As with Catholicism, the representation of Anglicanism within Welsh Nationalism is somewhat greater than is generally accepted, with leading intellectual figures such as Euros Bowen, Gwenallt and Aneurin Talfan Davies having joined the Anglican Church. However, it remains a minority religious position for Welsh Nationalists to adopt.

There are various aspects of religion that are shared by nationalism. Both share an imagined community and rely on the importance of symbols (flags, crosses, and so on) to provide shared meaning . . . . Both are often concerned with territory. Both offer a belief system to members to assist them as they navigate through a complex world.<sup>3</sup>

The relationship between Welsh Nationalism and territory is particularly central to Dorian Llywelyn's *Sacred Place, Chosen People*, in which he maintains that the importance of territory to Welsh Nationalists is due to their awareness of, and dependence on, the Bible:

A major element in the foundations of Welsh spirituality of place is found in Old Testament Israel's relationship to the land, where holiness is seen as both divine gift and call to the nation, in a spirituality involving rights and responsibilities.<sup>4</sup>

Llywelyn, therefore, maintains that Welsh Nationalism comes as a direct result of Welsh awareness of Biblical concepts of territory, and that such strong Nationalist feeling in Wales could not exist without such knowledge among the general populace. This mentality, in which Wales essentially becomes a substitute for Israel, is parodied in the work of Caradoc Evans, as several characters express viewpoints similar to that of Gwyn Owen in *Morgan Bible*, who claims that ““We Welsh are more Bible learned, more Bible learned than all other peoples.””<sup>5</sup> Wales, according to such beliefs, becomes a sacred ground, while the Welsh become God's chosen people. Other theorists, meanwhile, question the validity of religious Nationalism, claiming that ‘[i]n practice, the distinctions between religion and ethnicity as bases for

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<sup>3</sup>Barbara-Ann J. Rieffer, 'Religion and Nationalism: Understanding the Consequences of a Complex Relationship', *Ethnicities*, 3.2 (2003), 215 - 42 (p. 217).

<sup>4</sup>Dorian Llywelyn, *Sacred Place, Chosen People* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), p. 44.

<sup>5</sup>Caradoc Evans, *Morgan Bible & Journal 1939 - 44* (Aberystwyth: Planet, 2006), p. 86.

nationalism are rarely clear',<sup>6</sup> while some go further still, arguing that: 'Religious nationalists make politics into a religious obligation. We are wont to view the religious nationalist project as a retreat from modernity.'<sup>7</sup>

Any discussion of the interplay between religion and Nationalism in both countries during this period must take into account the influence of disestablishment on the Irish and Welsh people. In Wales, the disestablishment of the Church in 1920, which came in the wake of a campaign intimately linked with the cause of Home Rule, brought about the illusion of autonomy from the British state:

Disestablishment was not simply a 'religious' issue. Although there were distinguished Welshmen serving in the ministry of the Church, there was some truth in the commonly held perception that the Established Church was much more English in outlook than were most of the Nonconformist denominations.<sup>8</sup>

The same is broadly true of the Disestablishment of the Church in Ireland, in 1871, as many believed that the Church 'was in origin an instrument for making the Irish people Protestant, and thereby making England more secure . . .'<sup>9</sup> Arguments against disestablishment were also prevalent, and placed more emphasis on the importance of religion in public life, ignoring the Nationalist dimension, as explained by P. M. H.

Bell:

. . . it is not surprising to find many expressions during debates on disestablishment of the view that establishment meant the State's acknowledgment of the importance of religion, or of the authority of God in

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<sup>6</sup>Jonathan Fox, 'The Rise of Religious Nationalism and Conflict: Ethnic Conflict and Revolutionary Wars, 1945 - 2001', *Journal of Peace Research*, 41. 6 (November 2004), 715 - 731 (pp. 718 - 719).

<sup>7</sup>Roger Friedland, 'Religious Nationalism and the Problem of Collective Representation', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27 (2001), 125 - 52 (p. 126). By 'we' here, Friedland is referring to those who support the 'separation of state authority from religion', and opposed to the '[c]leric, rabbi, sadhu and mullah . . . seeking to ordinate society according to a text originating outside of it.' (126)

<sup>8</sup>D. T. W. Price, *A History of the Church in Wales in the Twentieth Century* (Penarth: Church in Wales Publications, 1990), pp. 2 - 3.

<sup>9</sup>P. M. H. Bell, *Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales* (London: SPCK, 1969), p. 26.



human affairs, and that conversely disestablishment would mean the repudiation of religion and divine authority.<sup>10</sup>

The arguments for and against disestablishment could therefore be seen as a dispute over the merits of Nationalism; if Anglicanism was to remain an established state religion, it could be perceived as devaluing the role of Irish/Welsh national identity within a religious context. From long before the period discussed in this study, then, we see that religion and national identity in Ireland and Wales have been inextricably linked, with disestablishment possibly seen as one of the first steps towards political devolution.

From the inception of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru in 1925 to the election of Gwynfor Evans as its first MP in 1966 and beyond, prominent Welsh Nationalists have been vocal about their religious beliefs, and have often characterized them as being both intrinsically Welsh and fundamentally different from the dominant religious beliefs of England.<sup>11</sup> In Ireland, meanwhile, as Tom Inglis explains, ‘Religious identity in modern Ireland has been as socially significant as gender, class, ethnicity or sexual orientation’,<sup>12</sup> while, like national identity, ‘For most people, religion is not a matter of choice. They are, for example, born and remain Catholics or Protestants.’<sup>13</sup>

This is certainly true of Austin Clarke: despite his fervent opposition to the perceived restrictive aspects of Catholic doctrine, he still defined himself as

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<sup>10</sup>Bell, *Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales*, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup>As an example, consider the opposition of many Welsh Nationalists to both World Wars on the basis of their religious pacifism.

<sup>12</sup>Tom Inglis, ‘Religion, Identity, State and Society’, in Jon Cleary & Claire Connolly (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 59 - 77 (p. 59).

<sup>13</sup>Inglis, ‘Religion, Identity, State and Society’, p. 63.

possessing an unshakeable Catholic identity. This is clearly seen in his autobiographical prose works *Twice Round the Black Church* (1962) and *A Penny in the Clouds* (1968), in which his formative religious experiences are examined. Despite the relative lack of material relating to his Nationalist sympathies in these volumes, particularly *Twice Round the Black Church*,<sup>14</sup> studying this text in conjunction with R. S. Thomas's *Neb* [*No-One*] (1985) will aid us in comparing the beliefs espoused by both poets.

It is clear from reading *Neb* that R. S. Thomas drew heavily upon Ireland for both ideological and literary inspiration: he describes journeys through the country at length, and mentions meeting Austin Clarke, 'who was considered to be Ireland's foremost poet after W. B. Yeats'.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the influence of *Twice Round the Black Church* is detectable on *Neb*, with both poets' descriptions of childhood trauma stemming from their fears of various household objects (a portrait of Shakespeare for Clarke, and religious paraphernalia in Thomas's case) being strikingly similar. It is difficult to say whether Thomas had any noticeable influence on Clarke after their first meeting, but it is clear that Clarke did show a knowledge of, and interest in, Welsh affairs, as his poems 'Menai Strait' (1960) and 'Over Wales' (1963), as well as his friendship and association with Caradoc Evans,<sup>16</sup> attest. A comparison of the

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<sup>14</sup>*A Penny in the Clouds* details Clarke's encounters with various notables of the Irish literary world during his young adult life, and has little to say about his national/religious development.

<sup>15</sup>R. S. Thomas, *Autobiographies* (London: J. M. Dent, 1997), trans. Jason Walford Davies, p. 45. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text. Despite being first published, in Welsh, in 1985, the text is pertinent to this study because of its relevance to the early writing career of R. S. Thomas.

<sup>16</sup>In *A Penny in the Clouds*, Clarke mentions his experiences of working on *T. P.'s Weekly* with Evans, affectionately described as 'the [Welsh] National Enemy, so mordant was his satire on preachers and Bible men.' - Austin Clarke, *A Penny in the Clouds* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 185.

memoirs of the two poets in relation to the formation of their political and religious beliefs may therefore yield some common tropes and experiences.

The emphasis of this study must clearly be on the poetry written by both men, but the memoirs can provide a useful introduction to their philosophies. The difference between the childhood experiences detailed in *Twice Round the Black Church* and *Neb* is a fundamental one: while both poets largely defined themselves in their poetry in relation to both religion and Nationalism, *Twice Round the Black Church* is notable for the relative absence of Nationalism within its pages,<sup>17</sup> while *Neb* is surprisingly lacking in detail about Thomas's embracing of religion, and Anglicanism in particular.

Despite being the son of 'staunch Irish nationalists',<sup>18</sup> any mention of how they may have attempted to transfer these beliefs to their son is conspicuously absent in *Twice Round the Black Church*, apart from a brief mention of his mother telling him how 'the wicked Henry VIII had confiscated all the lands and properties of religious communities.' (pp. 145 - 146) Indeed, any mention of Nationalist themes in the text is largely free from the Anglophobia that characterizes the Nationalism of such poets as Hugh MacDiarmid and Harri Webb.<sup>19</sup> England is described almost as a

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<sup>17</sup>The relative absence of obvious Nationalist sympathies detailed in *Twice Round the Black Church* is perhaps explained in *A Penny in the Clouds*, which recounts Clarke's later experiences as a young poet and his encounters with various Irish literary figures. It is hinted, in reference to Clarke's concentration on reimagining Irish mythology in his early work, that national identity had replaced religion in his adult life: '[The] pagan figures of the heroic age became as real to me as the religious figures of my childhood, and the Celtic religion, of which vestiges had survived, despite the care and toil of monks, had the appeal of a lost cause.' - Clarke, *A Penny in the Clouds*, p. 84. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

<sup>18</sup>Halpern, *Austin Clarke: His Life and Works*, p. 23.

<sup>19</sup>Clarke's memoirs are not entirely devoid of some mild Anglophobia, however: in *A Penny in the Clouds*, he claims, 'I felt that I could not succeed in London, since writers there had still the Victorian view of Ireland.' (p. 174) In *Twice Round the Black Church*, meanwhile, Clarke describes George

haven for rationality as opposed to Ireland, which is dominated by outdated religious dogma:

Frequently at morning, youths are rigid when they wake up, so potent is the Devil, and our confessors bid them be on their guard. Only when I went to England did I learn from a sensible writer that this diabolical manifestation, which had caused me so much spiritual anxiety, was really due to the pressure of urine.<sup>20</sup>

Here, as elsewhere, Clarke is portraying Catholicism as being unable to address issues such as teenage sexuality. The advantages England has over Ireland are described as being due to Ireland's dependence on religious teachings which Clarke sees as outdated. Elsewhere, he describes how, as a boy, 'the wicked English Sunday newspapers were burned occasionally in the streets of Limerick, and these acts of piety were praised in our national press' (p. 61), again demonstrating the hostility between the two countries as being mainly concerned with moral differences based on religious beliefs.

Despite recalling his childhood scorn towards the dialect of his cousins from Liverpool - 'they spoke with an English twang and, as we liked our own flat Dublin accent, we thought their speech horrid and derided it . . .' (p. 78) - when he later comes into direct contact with England and the English, he is again surprised by how little they conform to his expectations:

. . . the Englishmen around me [in London] were beaming with friendliness. All that I had heard about this taciturn, phlegmatic race was evidently untrue. These men were strangers to one another; yet after a few tentative remarks about the weather they were soon talking together with surprising gusto. (p. 85)

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Bernard Shaw's 'cultured Dublin accent' as being 'unspoiled by a single London inflection . . .' (p. 101).

<sup>20</sup>Austin Clarke, *Twice Round the Black Church* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 56. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

It could be claimed, then, that Clarke's Irish Republicanism is not portrayed in *Twice Round the Black Church* as being due to any hostility he may feel towards England.

The same is true of the presentation of R. S. Thomas's Welsh Nationalism in *Neb*: it is free from much of the bitterness that characterizes his poetry, and described as a romanticized reaction to the beauty of Wales itself, rather than a reaction against any perceived English oppression. Thomas first displays national pride during his time in college, inspired by the Welsh landscape:

Now and again he would take a day off and catch a bus for Abergwynnegrugyn. Then climb towards Foel Fras and walk along Y Carneddau and down to Bethesda to catch a bus back to Bangor. The first time he did this, after climbing a hillock and seeing the summits in their glory before him, he burst out singing 'Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau', 'The Ancient Land of My Fathers', pitching his tiny voice against the majestic mountains around him. (p. 37)

Soon after this awakening of national identity, he describes the segregation of Welsh and English students during meals at college:

In the refectory there were two tables, one for the English students and the other for the Welsh. The boy would sit with the English students, as English was his language. But sometimes he would be drawn to sit at the other table. One or two of them would try to get him to say words like 'llwy', 'spoon', and then burst out laughing because of his patois. (p. 40)

The Welsh in *Neb*, like the Irish in *Twice Round the Black Church*, are described as being largely responsible for the problems faced by their own country, and the blame is not placed only on oppression by the English.<sup>21</sup> R. S. Thomas goes

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<sup>21</sup>John Powell Ward, referring to Thomas's occasional condemnations of the Welsh, observes: 'Some of Thomas's most acerbic pronouncements were directed against "the English" as colonialist, tourist, or speaker of a foreign tongue. Equally acid, though, was his attitude to those Welsh who in his view had no stomach for the struggle and lay down under this intrusion.' - John Powell Ward, *The Poetry of R. S. Thomas* (Bridgend: Seren, 2001), p. 8.

further in his criticism of the Welsh, hinting that his discomfort around Welsh Nonconformity may have led to his espousal of Anglicanism: 'he had never felt comfortable in a chapel. There was a lack of taste, a lack of atmosphere.' (p. 89) He goes further in his condemnation, claiming that:

. . . the fault that he saw in Nonconformity [sic] was that it had started in plain but beautiful buildings like Maesyronnen, and, after becoming respectable and beginning to win wealthier people as members, had tried to put a shine on things and finished up with grand and tasteless places. (p. 72)

Apart from these references, and a brief mention of the influence of his mother's Anglican faith on him (pp. 34 - 35), we are given little information about Thomas's rejection of the Nonconformist values common to many who shared his Nationalist beliefs. In *Neb*, and, arguably, in his poetry as a whole, he does not attempt to answer the question posed by John Powell Ward:

How can the staunch defender of a wholly independent Wales avow the central importance, for all social life, of the English established church, with its political preferments and . . . its power?<sup>22</sup>

One exception to this classification of Thomas's early poetry as containing little justification of his religious beliefs is 'The Minister' (1953), a verse play which details the coming of a young Nonconformist minister, Elias Morgan, to a rural parish. Morgan is described by Patrick Crotty as

. . . a representative Welshman, an unreflecting agent of the Nonconformity which dominated the political as well as the religious life of the country for more than a century from the early 1800s.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Ward, *The Poetry of R. S. Thomas*, p. 67.

<sup>23</sup>Patrick Crotty, 'Lean Parishes: Patrick Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger* and R. S. Thomas's *The Minister*, in Katie Gramich & Andrew Hiscock (ed.), *Dangerous Diversity: The Changing Faces of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), p. 141.

In essence, then, despite his situation being similar to that of R. S. Thomas when he moved to Manafon, Morgan is representative of the Nonconformity which was eschewed by Thomas, and, it becomes clear, is somewhat unsuited to Morgan's parishioners. The impact of the poem hinges on the differences between Morgan and his parishioners, as well as on the juxtaposition between the imagery of the Welsh countryside and the incongruity of the Nonconformist chapel in such surroundings, emphasizing the difficulties faced by the local people in relating to Nonconformity. This contrast is highlighted early in the poem, as the narrator evocatively describes the chapel vestry as a 'bare room/That is sour with books and wet clothes',<sup>24</sup> in 'the untamed land west of the valleys' (l. 3), where God is found 'in the throat of a bird' (p. 43, l. 51), 'in the sound of the white water/Falling at Cynfal' (l. 53 - 54) and 'in the flowers/Sprung at the feet of Olwen' (l. 54 - 55).<sup>25</sup>

In his first lines of verse, Elias Morgan describes a typical Sunday service in these surroundings:

. . . long hymns were sung  
 Three times on a Sunday, but rarely between  
 By a lean-faced people in black clothes,  
 That smelled of camphor and dried sweat. (pp. 45 - 46; l. 142 - 145)

Nonconformist worship is here described as nothing more than a ritualistic duty which has no bearing on the daily lives of the parishioners. Elsewhere, the perceived artificiality of Nonconformity is emphasized, as when Elias Morgan is humorously

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<sup>24</sup>R. S. Thomas, 'The Minister', in *Collected Poems 1945 - 1990* (London: Phoenix, 1995), p. 42, l. 29 - 30. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

<sup>25</sup>Despite these idealized depictions of the Welsh countryside, Thomas is not entirely complimentary, describing, for example, 'the inhuman cry/Of buzzards circling above the moor' (p. 42; l. 24 - 5), assaulted by 'wind and rain,/Dryness and heat, and then the wind again . . .' (p. 53; l. 423 - 4).

perturbed at the unfamiliarity of his rural surroundings, reacting to the singing of a thrush outside his window:

Its singing troubled my young mind.  
 With strange theories, pagan but sweet,  
 That made the Book's black letters dance  
 To a tune John Calvin never heard.  
 The evening sunlight on the wall  
 Of my room was a new temptation.  
 Luther would have thrown his Bible at it.  
 I closed my eyes, and went on with my sermon. (p. 46; l. 171 - 178)

Here, Morgan (and Nonconformity, by association) is portrayed as having little affinity with nature, and as someone whose creativity has been stunted by his religion, which later leads the Narrator to describe Protestantism as:

. . . the adroit castrator  
 Of art; the bitter negation  
 Of song and dance and the heart's innocent joy . . . (p. 54; l. 450 - 452)

The poem is not entirely critical of Nonconformity, however, as it is portrayed as a vital (if not entirely successful) link between the rural peasantry and a Welsh identity, as well as occasionally providing them with a rudimentary political education:

Men came [to the chapel] and spoke to them about Wales,  
 The land they lived in without knowing it,  
 The land that is reborn at such times.  
 They mentioned Henry Richard and S. R. - the great names;  
 And Keir Hardie; the names nobody knew. (p. 51; l. 346 - 350)

It is important to note here that Thomas is not advocating using religion to communicate any particular political message, but rather the possibility of a political awakening amongst the rural peasantry of Wales as a result of their devotion to the chapel. This crucial difference is signposted in *Neb*:



By all means, a priest should be interested in politics and, if necessary, deal with it in his sermons. But it is hardly fair to use the pulpit to preach party politics, with the congregation having no opportunity to ask a question or to answer back. (p. 92)

The fact that it is stated that such a political awakening is necessary among the Welsh peasantry is perhaps indicative of Thomas's often scornful attitude towards them, as is his description of them as living in Wales 'without knowing it', suggesting that they are not in possession of a fully-formed national identity. Nonconformity is here presented as a possible means for the Welsh peasantry to gain a rudimentary political education. Such praise is rare, however, and as a whole, 'The Minister' offers by far the most sustained and virulent condemnation of Nonconformity to be found in R. S. Thomas's work.

Austin Clarke, meanwhile, dedicates much of *Twice Round the Black Church* to his childhood reaction against the restrictive religious doctrine imposed on him at home and elsewhere. His early, fearful response to Catholicism is presented as being central to the text as a whole in its title, stemming from the local legend that if anyone were to run around the imposing Black Church three times after dark, the Devil would appear. The Church of the text's title casts both a literal and symbolic shadow over Clarke's childhood: he explains that '[c]ertainly, as a child, I knew a great deal more about the next world than this one.' (p. 21)<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the reactions of both Austin Clarke and R. S. Thomas to their religious upbringing are superficially similar, as

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<sup>26</sup>A sentiment repeated in the poem 'Ancient Lights' (1955), which begins with Clarke recalling a time:

When all of us wore smaller shoes  
 And knew the next world better than  
 The knots we broke . . . - Austin Clarke, *Collected Poems*, ed. R. Dardis Clarke (Manchester: Carcanet, 2008), p. 199, l. 1 - 3. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

both emphasize the curtailing of creative thought that often accompanies such experience. Compare, for example, the following two recollections, the first by Clarke and the second by Thomas:

I forgot how much I had raged secretly against her [Clarke's mother] when I was growing up, our incessant quarrels over religion, my bitterness when she seized and burned those heretical books of mine, most of them in cheap reprints which I had to buy all over again. (p. 7)

For a lively youngster, Sundays would be painful. The family didn't get up until late, but if the boy were seen taking a trivial book to bed to read on Sunday morning, he would be rebuked harshly for not reading the Bible or some other religious book. (p. 33)

While the latter quotation is presented in the wider context of *Neb* as being typical of a child's response to such a strict religious upbringing, Austin Clarke refers back to further examples of his childhood frustration towards Catholic doctrine in the course of the text in an attempt to justify his opposition to it.

The childhood experiences detailed in Clarke's memoirs can offer one possible explanation as to why he so derided the Catholicism of his upbringing.

Susan Halpern explains:

. . . religion *per se* is not the object of Clarke's criticism, for Clarke differentiates sharply between religion that depends on mindless, blind faith and devotion and that which grows and enriches itself by including intellectual faith and argument.<sup>27</sup>

This explanation of Clarke's ideology is applicable to *Twice Round the Black Church* because of the emphasis placed on the ways in which the Catholic Church in Ireland extends its influence over children by exploiting their innocence and inability to understand the doctrine. Recounting going to confession, for example, Clarke

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<sup>27</sup>Halpern, *Austin Clarke: His Life and Works*, p. 64.

remembers how a priest 'repeated over and over his strange question, asking me if I had ever made myself weak', prompting him to admit to 'the unknown sin' (p. 132) - another example of Clarke's depiction of the inability of Catholicism to address sexuality.

Although not always referring specifically to religion's exploitation of childhood experiences, the same themes are broadly seen in Clarke's poetry. 'Night and Morning' (1938) is particularly relevant in this respect, as it addresses the tension between the Church's demand for obedience from its followers and the human need for personal freedom:

Adoring priest has turned his back  
Of gold upon the congregation.  
All saints have had their day at last,  
But thought still lives in pain. (p. 181, l. 15 - 18)

There is no mention in 'Night and Morning', however, of any national dimension, with the Catholic Church presented as exerting its influence over 'all Europe' (p. 182; l. 28). For that we must look in greater detail at the 1938 collection in which this poem appears, also entitled *Night and Morning*, and 'Repentance', which seemingly refers specifically to the incident that took place during confession, recounted in *Twice Round the Black Church*.

Here, the cross-cultural, international influence of the Catholic Church is sharply contrasted with the exceedingly limited range of an Irish child's conception of the world. The poem begins with Clarke proclaiming:

When I was younger than the soul  
That wakes me now at night, I saw  
The mortal mind in such a glory -  
All knowledge was in Connaught. (p. 186; l. 1 - 4)

Implicit in these lines is the idea that a child, with a severely limited perception of the world, has no need for religious teachings; as far as Clarke is concerned, a child is in possession of '[a]ll knowledge', implying that childhood innocence can only exist without religion.<sup>28</sup> The recollection of the infamous confession appears in the second stanza, and comes as a sinister counterpoint to this initial depiction of the simple virtuousness that accompanies ignorance of Catholic dogma:

. . . I felt  
 Repentance gushing from the rock;  
 For I had made a bad confession  
 Once, feared to name in ugly box  
 The growing pains of flesh. (l. 15 - 19)

Here, it could be claimed that Clarke sees religion, 'gushing from the rock' of his homeland (using phrasing that has clear sexual connotations, linked to the poem's references to masturbation), as being unmistakably present in Irish society. Despite the highly personal nature of this poem, it would be incorrect to claim that Clarke's distrust of Catholicism was solely caused by events like this, as John Goodby notes:

to see a merely personal motivation in his anticlericalism is to miss the point; the Church is, in general, attacked in ideological terms for its thwarting and distortion of human potential.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Paradoxically, however, this passage contains a pun, with Con [learn] & naught [nothing] containing '[a]ll knowledge'. Critical attention has also been given to R. S. Thomas's tendency to use puns, especially in his later work, with Damian Walford Davies writing: 'Thomas's punning can be seen as an inscription of the dualities and tensions at the heart of his cultural, linguistic and religious experience.' - Damian Walford Davies, "Double-Entry Poetics": R. S. Thomas - Punster', in *Echoes to the Amen: Essays After R. S. Thomas*, ed. Damian Walford Davies (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 149 - 182 (p. 149).

<sup>29</sup>John Goodby, *Irish Poetry Since 1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 24.

An interesting comparison could be made here with R. S. Thomas's 'The Minister', which, despite its criticisms of Nonconformity, does seem to suggest that it can offer the Welsh peasantry a basic education. Such concessions, as Goodby notes, are generally not present in Clarke's poetry. Also worth noting when considering the poem's significance to the relation between nation and religion in Clarke's work is that, as he explains in the notes that accompanied the first edition of *Night and Morning*, reprinted in his *Collected Poems*, 'The Confession poem was a recognised literary form in Gaelic and lasted till the eighteenth century.' (p. 545) He is therefore taking an intrinsically Irish and long-dormant poetic tradition and adapting it so that it becomes a polemic against a specifically Irish form of Catholicism; a reclaiming, in a sense, of Irish literary forms in the name of his own beliefs.

Clarke's view that religious intolerance plays a central role in Irish society is demonstrated in the short poem 'Irish Mother' (1957), which summarizes the twin roles he saw his mother as ultimately unsuccessfully fulfilling, both a comforting maternal presence and a conveyor of strict Catholic doctrine:

'My son will burn in the Pit,  
 She thought. Making his bed  
 And glancing under it:  
 'He slept last night,' she said. (p. 219; l. 1 - 4)

The title of the poem suggests that this juxtaposition of maternal love and moral concern is common in parents throughout Ireland, which emphasizes how much control religion has over the lives of all Irish children, at the expense of the motherly bond that should exist in its place. Indeed, the theme of motherhood in Irish writing

and society has been discussed in depth by various theorists, with Edna O'Brien's

*Mother Ireland* a notable text in this respect. O'Brien claims, for example, that:

Countries are either mothers or fathers, and engender the emotional bristle  
secretly reserved for either sire. Ireland has always been a woman, a womb, a  
cave, a cow, a Rosaleen, a sow, a bride, a harlot . . .<sup>30</sup>

It could be claimed, then, that Clarke shows awareness of this tradition in portraying the 'Irish Mother' as an emblematic figure, whose religiously-motivated intolerance is typical of mothers throughout the country, and who can, as evidenced by the work of O'Brien, among others, be seen as a symbol for Ireland itself.

Similar themes are seen in another brief poem, 'Living on Sin', from *Flight to Africa and Other Poems* (1963). Here, the restrictive influence of Catholic schools on children is directly contrasted with the natural bond between a mother and her offspring:

The hasty sin of the young after a dance,  
Awkward in clothes against a wall or crick-necked  
In car, gives many a nun her tidy bed,  
Full board and launderette. God-fearing State  
Provides three pounds a week, our conscience money,  
For every infant severed from the breast. (p. 275; l. 1 - 6)

The violent image of an infant being severed from its mother's breast serves to remind readers of the influence Clarke perceives the Catholic Church as wielding over the youth of Ireland. The Church is able to exert more authority over a child than its parents, with the Irish State being entirely complicit in this. There is a clear hierarchy here: the Catholic Church is dependent on the State for funding, with the people of Ireland dependent on the State, in turn, for the moral guidance they perceive as

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<sup>30</sup>Edna O'Brien, *Mother Ireland* (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 11.

necessary for the development of their children. Again, we see Clarke presenting religion as an integral component of Ireland, with Church and State engaged in what is portrayed as an almost conspiratorial relationship which denies the Irish people their freedom. Therefore, we could consider Clarke's criticism of religion as also being a condemnation of the Irish state, by definition.

Already in this chapter, we have seen how much emphasis is placed by Clarke on childhood experience in the formation of his religious beliefs, and how he believes that blind faith essentially denied him a childhood, as seen in *Twice Round the Black Church*. A parallel could be drawn here with R. S. Thomas, who also places great emphasis on childhood, particularly in his prose, not in relation to his religious beliefs, but rather regarding what he saw as the failure of his parents to pass on a Welsh identity, rooted in the Welsh language. It is in this context that Welsh identity is first mentioned in *Neb*, as Thomas recounts: 'One day on the beach at Hoylake his father directed his attention to a row of mountains far away over the sea to the west. "That's Wales", he said, in English.' (p. 28) Thomas presents himself here as being alienated from his adopted country from an early age, emphasizing the insurmountability of this cultural barrier. This feeling of alienation is summarized in 'Gifts' (1966), in which Thomas lists the characteristics passed down to him by both his parents and his country:

From my father my strong heart,  
My weak stomach.  
From my mother the fear.

From my sad country the shame.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>R. S. Thomas, *Pietà* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1966), p. 17; l. 1 - 4. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

The same sentiments are expressed in ‘Welsh’ (1964), in which the speaker describes himself as ‘Welsh, see;/A real Cymro’, with:

Only the one loss,  
I can’t speak my own  
Language - Iesu,  
All those good words;  
And I outside them . . . (p. 15, l. 9 - 13)<sup>32</sup>

Thomas’s longing for a Welsh identity rooted in mastery of the language is perhaps linked to the romanticization of Welsh peasantry which is common in his early poetry.<sup>33</sup> His numerous poems about Iago Prytherch demonstrate how Thomas perceives the peasantry as demonstrating a natural affinity with the Welsh landscape which he does not share. In ‘A Peasant’, published in *The Stones of the Field* (1946), for example, Prytherch is described as:

. . . an impregnable fortress  
Not to be stormed even in death’s confusion.  
Remember him, then, for he, too, is a winner of wars,  
Enduring like a tree under the curious stars.

Similar sentiments are expressed in ‘A Priest To His People’, from the same volume, in which Thomas seems to contrast this natural affinity with the land with the ‘refinements of art and the mysteries of the Church’ (p. 29; l. 4). These sentiments

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<sup>32</sup>R. S. Thomas, *The Bread of Truth* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1964 [1963]), p. 15, l. 2 - 3. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text. Thomas’s choice of ‘Iesu’ [Jesus] as an example of a Welsh word he feels he has been denied the use of by his parents is surely no accident, perhaps hinting at the importance of religious discourse in Welsh-language society.

<sup>33</sup>This tendency is also detectable in the early work of Austin Clarke. His poetry between 1925 and 1929 has been described as featuring ‘a congeries of green islands, grey skies and fiery sunsets . . . set to a tin-whistle soundtrack, its landscapes populated by obliging peasant girls, hard-drinking fishermen, merry cattle-drovers and sage turf-cutters.’ - John Goodby, ‘From Irish Mode to Modernisation: The Poetry of Austin Clarke’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Contemporary Irish Poetry*, ed. Matthew Campbell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 21 - 41 (p. 24).



are expressed by the priest of the poem's title, who begins by condemning his parishioners for having no great love of the Church, on account of being:

Men of bone, wrenched from the bitter moorland,  
Who have not yet shaken the moss from your savage skulls,  
Or prayed the peat from your eyes . . . (p. 29; l. 7 - 9)

Interestingly, religion is portrayed here as being something of a restrictive influence on the people of Wales. The priest protests that:

. . . all the devices of church and school  
Have failed to cripple your unhallowed movements,  
Or put a halter on your wild soul. (p. 29; l. 16 - 18)

However, by the end of the poem, the priest acknowledges the benefits of being a member of the Welsh peasantry:

. . . I know, as I listen, that your speech has in it  
The source of all poetry, clear as a rill  
Bubbling from your lips; and what brushwork could equal  
The artistry of your dwelling on the bare hill? (p. 29; l. 25 - 28)

Thomas's role here is essentially that of a mediator between the Anglican Church and the Welsh peasantry, traditionally linked to Nonconformity. Indeed, this may be one of the reasons why his poetry has been afforded so much critical attention. In his espousal of Nationalism and Anglicanism, it could be claimed that he is 'bridging the gap' between beliefs generally limited to Welsh and English societies, respectively, allowing an audience largely unfamiliar with Welsh Nationalism to begin to understand it in a non-traditional context. In 'A Priest To His People', he seems to concede the inherent unsuitability of Anglicanism as a means of religious expression for certain people, and does not present it as being rooted in Welsh

experience.<sup>34</sup> A similarity could be drawn here with Austin Clarke, who often, particularly in *Twice Round the Black Church*, glorifies a semi-mythical Irish/Celtic Church, more suited to the people of Ireland than the foreign Catholic Church: 'I had been thinking over our forgotten medieval Ireland when we almost had a religion of our own . . .' (p. 142) For both Thomas and Clarke, it could be said that it is the foreignness of the Catholic and Anglican Churches that accounts for their incompatibility with certain aspects of Irish/Welsh society, with Clarke in particular being

. . . offended by [the Catholic Church's] similarity to the practices of the Church of England, commonly thought of as abhorrent and offensive in the twenty-six counties of the Republic of Ireland.<sup>35</sup>

As R. S. Thomas's poetry develops, however, this focus on the Welsh peasantry, twinned with a criticism of Anglicanism, is abandoned in favour of a more straightforward condemnation of the Welsh. Thomas portrays them as having abandoned their national heritage, and as being unwilling to embrace any kind of spirituality. These attitudes are particularly prevalent in *Pietà* (1966): in 'Service', for example, Thomas bemoans his parishioners' failure to grasp the meaning of his teachings, as the speaker is 'left alone/With no echoes to the amen' (p. 36; l. 6 - 7). The subject of 'Rhodri' is 'Rhodri Theophilus Owen,/Nothing Welsh but the name . . .' (p. 7; l. 1 - 2), who is entirely ignorant of his background (l. 9 - 16), and described as the 'Emblem of a nation's despair.' (l. 27). 'There', meanwhile, could be seen as a

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<sup>34</sup>As opposed to Nonconformity, which, as we have seen in 'The Minister', is often presented as being an essential component for many in the forming of a Welsh identity, but is simultaneously unsuited to Thomas's pastoral ideal of Welsh country life.

<sup>35</sup>Halpern, *Austin Clarke: His Life and Works*, pp. 54 - 55.

rejection of the sentiments expressed in 'A Priest To His People', as it describes a similar breed of Welsh peasantry:

. . . for one animal born  
 Healthy, where seven have died,  
 He will kneel down and give thanks  
 In a chapel whose stones are wrenched  
 From the moorland. (p. 26; l. 11 - 15)

At the end of the poem, however, rather than praising the peasantry because of their affinity with nature and the Welsh landscape, Thomas concedes that:

It was not my part  
 To show them, like a meddler from the town,  
 Their picture, nor the audiences  
 That look at them in pity or pride. (l. 19 - 22)

The poem therefore displays a great deal of self-awareness on Thomas's part, and represents a denunciation of the authority which accompanied his earlier portrayals of the peasantry. It could be claimed that this conciliatory gesture is evidence that Thomas criticizes Wales and the Welsh people in order to show his love for them; his frustration is based on Wales not fulfilling its potential as a nation, and is rooted in his Nationalism. A comparison could be drawn here with the work of Caradoc Evans, in which the promise of Wales has been destroyed by the corrupting influence of religion: again, we can see a similarity between a poet fully committed to Nationalist politics and an author who was somewhat ambivalent towards it, and frequently criticized by Nationalists for his apparent negative caricaturing of Wales. The similar attitudes of the two otherwise dissimilar writers clearly support one of the main arguments of this thesis, regarding the almost inevitable proliferation of Nationalist sympathies within a wide range of writing from Wales during this period.

An understanding of the development of the attitudes of both Clarke and Thomas towards nation and religion is crucial to a full appreciation of their work: a reader must be aware, and is often reminded of, feelings of bitterness surrounding both childhood and adult experiences with religion and nationality. In this respect, we could claim that the development of the ideologies of Thomas and Clarke represent a variation on the 'zeal of the convert' so common to Nationalist writers of this period, as we have already seen in examining the work of Emyr Humphreys and Harri Webb. The process of writing about the embracing of a Welsh identity/rejection of Catholic doctrine, for Thomas and Clarke respectively, becomes almost a way of publicly validating these beliefs.<sup>36</sup> While R. S. Thomas's defence of the Welsh language is clear, however, it must be conceded that for Austin Clarke, the propagation of the Irish language was not of the highest importance. Although he was largely dependent in his early poetry on knowledge of Gaelic myths, it has been noted that 'the Gaelic language . . . had an air of the foreign: strangeness pervaded his first experiences with it . . .',<sup>37</sup> and that 'the question of language certainly does not disturb him as much as what his own countrymen have done to Ireland . . .'<sup>38</sup> In the case of R. S. Thomas, although the decision of his parents not to pass the Welsh language on to him is often condemned in his work, he chose to continue writing poetry in English because of his

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<sup>36</sup>Mention must briefly be made here of Bobi Jones, whose adoption of the Welsh language coincided with his religious awakening. Like R. S. Thomas, he was raised in an English-speaking environment, but learned Welsh somewhat reluctantly at secondary school, which allowed him to understand more about Welsh-language culture, including its strong religious dimension: 'With every new Welsh word that he learnt, the growing boy gained, unconsciously, more knowledge of his own country, a deeper awareness of his cultural environment.' - John Emyr, *Writers of Wales: Bobi Jones* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), p. 10. Tellingly, Jones himself described the experience of learning Welsh as a process of being 'converted' - Bobi Jones, 'Why I Write in Welsh', *Planet*, 2 (October/November 1970), 21 - 5 (p. 23).

<sup>37</sup>Halpern, *Austin Clarke: His Life and Works*, p. 29.

<sup>38</sup>Halpern, *Austin Clarke: His Life and Works*, p. 88. Despite these assertions, in *A Penny in the Clouds*, Clarke recalls how, in his youth, he yearned for a 'hoped for bilingual age' (p. 23) in Ireland.

apparently insurmountable difficulty in expressing himself adequately in Welsh.

For Waldo Williams, meanwhile, Nationalism was inexorably linked to the survival of the Welsh language which was denied him in his early years. He adopted the language as his primary medium of expression, and stressed in the essay 'Anglo-Welsh and Welsh' what he saw as the unsuitability of writing in English about Wales:

In a story of Welsh Wales the otherness will be of a synthetic kind unless the author has a mastery of the language. All such compensations in literature are of this synthetic kind. The real Celtic Twilight was the decline of the Irish language. (p. 160)

Despite this crucial political dimension to his development as a poet, both Nationalism and his Quaker faith remain largely an undercurrent in his poetry, belying his status as a figure publicly embraced by several Welsh Nationalists, as John Rowlands observes: 'He is the poet from whose works Professor J. R. Jones quoted,<sup>39</sup> and whom the members of the Welsh Language Society thought of almost as a patron saint during the late sixties.'<sup>40</sup> Of the poems contained within his only

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<sup>39</sup>J. R. Jones drew heavily on Williams's poetry, particularly in *Ac Onide* [*And If Not*], in which both 'Cymru'n Un' ['Wales as One'] and 'Wedi'r Canrifoedd Mudan' ['After the Mute Centuries'] are referred to in almost reverential terms, as Jones claims that they offer insight into the continuation of the Nationalist project (p. 147).

<sup>40</sup>John Rowlands, 'Waldo Williams - Bardd y Gobaith Pryderus' [Waldo Williams - The Poet of Anxious Hope], in *Waldo*, ed. James Nicholas (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1977), pp. 203 - 213 (p. 204). Original Welsh-language source: 'Ef yw'r bardd y bu'r Athro J. R. Jones yn dyfynnu o'i weithiau, ac y bu aelodau Cymdeithas yr Iaith yn ei ystyried bron fel rhyw nawddsant tua diwedd y chwedegau.' It should be noted here that Quakerism is often seen as particularly compatible with Welsh Nationalism, perhaps due to its emphasis on pacifism. In the novels of Marion Eames, for example, Quakerism is seen as being linked to a Welsh identity, and opposition to it as being rooted in loyalty to the British government:

[Quakers] were secret Catholics who were attempting to save the old religion, some said. Others said they were plotters against Parliament, aiming to destroy that which was won so dearly in the Civil War. And because people were so eager to prove their loyalty to the Church and the State (did they not know the cost if their fervour was doubted?) everyone outdid each other in proclaiming their hatred towards the blasted Quakers. - Marion Eames, *Y Stafell Ddirgel* [*The Secret Room*] (Llandybie: Llyfrau'r Dryw, 1970), p. 41. Original Welsh-language source:

published collection, *Dail Pren* [*Leaves of Wood*], ‘Mewn Dau Gae’ [‘In Two Fields’] is perhaps the one which owes the most to his adoption of Quakerism, as well as being relevant to his decision to write in the medium of Welsh. It has been described as ‘the most Quakerish poem that we have [of Williams’s work],’<sup>41</sup> in which the silent contemplation so crucial to Quakerism is commended as a way of communicating with God: it is a calming ‘llonyddwch mawr’ [‘great quiet’] in a world filled with ‘rhwyg [a] rhemp’ [‘pomp [and] super-abundance’] (p. 25; l. 21).<sup>42</sup>

Indeed, this contrast between the quiet meditation of Quakerism and the unending commotion of life is what provides the poem’s central thrust, as the speaker finds himself ‘in two fields’, in a liminal space which affords him the opportunity to step back from the world and consider his position within it. He is visited by a God-like energy, both divine creator and poetic muse, indicative of Williams’s Quaker faith, as Euros Bowen explains:

The [Divine] Light is equivalent to the Muse for Waldo, because the experience of revelations provided by the Muse forms the Light. The Welsh, metaphysical, theological, aesthetic Muse and the Light of Quakerism meet in Waldo’s vision.<sup>43</sup>

In addition, the experience of being in two fields, or between two worlds, may echo Williams’s own experiences of coming to learn of Welsh-language culture as

Pabyddion dirgel oeddynt yn ceisio adfer yr hen grefydd, meddai rhai. Cynllwynwyr yn erbyn y Senedd, meddai eraill, gyda’r bwriad o ddymchwel yr hyn a enillid mor ddrud yn y Rhyfel Cartref. Ac oherwydd fod pobl mor awyddus i brofi eu teyrngarwch i’r Eglwys a’r Wladwriaeth (oni wyddent y gosb os amheuid eu sêl?) roedd pawb am y gorau yn cyhoeddi eu casineb tuag at y Cwaceriaid bondigrybwyll.

<sup>41</sup>Euros Bowen, ‘Waldo a Chrynwriaeth’ [‘Waldo and Quakerism’], *Y Traethodydd*, 540 (October 1971), 247 - 53 (p. 251). Original Welsh-language source: ‘[y] gerdd fwya Crynwraidd sy gennym.’

<sup>42</sup>Waldo Williams, *Dail Pren* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1991 [1956]), p. 25, l. 8. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text. My translation.

<sup>43</sup>Bowen, ‘Waldo a Chrynwriaeth’, 251. Original Welsh-language source: ‘Mae’r Goleuni’n gydiad â’r Awen i Waldo, oherwydd profiad gwelediadau’r awen yw Goleuni. Mae’r Awen Gymreig, fetaffisegol, ddiwinyddol, esthetig a Goeluni Crynwriaeth yn cydgyfarfod yn ngweledigaeth Waldo.’

something of an outsider, and adopting a minority religion largely ignored by the Welsh Nationalists he was inspired by, and whom he, in turn, inspired. It could, in essence, be read as a meditation on approaching Welsh national identity from outside the Nonconformity within which it was so often confined.

Such conclusions cannot easily be drawn by making a cursory reading of the poems of Waldo Williams: more often than not, any distinct political dimension is hidden or implied. His own personal reaction to the world around him (as seen in ‘Mewn Dau Gae’) is prioritized over any sweeping political statements, which is also, perhaps, symptomatic of his Quakerism:

Waldo Williams is no theologian. He does not express his experiences within a rigid, pre-ordained structure. As a Quaker, the personal and sociological effects of his experiences are more important to him than [the faith’s] devotional aspects.<sup>44</sup>

It could be claimed, then, that Waldo Williams presents his own psyche as a microcosm of the world around him.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, the frequent paeans to Pembrokeshire in his poetry could be seen as a way of indirectly commenting on Wales as a whole, with Williams’s *brogarwch* [affection for locality] substituted for patriotism. In ‘Preseli’, for example, Williams begins by praising ‘Mur fy mebyd, Foel Drigarn, Carn Gyfrwy, Tal Mynydd,/Wrth fy nghefn ym mhob annibyniaeth barn’ [‘Wall round my boyhood, Foel Drigarn, Carn Gyfrwy, Tal Mynydd,/At my

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<sup>44</sup>John Rowlands, ‘Ystyried *Dail Pren*’ [‘Considering *Leaves of Wood*], *Ysgrifau Beirniadol IV* (March 1969), 266 - 86 (p. 270). Original Welsh-language source: ‘Nid diwinydd mo Waldo Williams. Ni fynega’i brofiad y tu mewn i fframwaith gaeth ragordeiniedig. Fel Crynwr, mae effeithiau personol a chymdeithasol y profiad yn bwysicach iddo na’i agweddau defodol.’

<sup>45</sup>This is explicitly stated in ‘Cymru’n Un’, for example, as Williams begins the poem with the assertion: ‘Ynof mae Cymru’n un. Y modd nis gwn.’ [‘In me Wales is one. I know not how.’], p. 87, l. 1.

back in all independence of mind'] (p. 29; l. 1 - 2),<sup>46</sup> in a song of praise for the

landscape and people of Pembrokeshire, but soon moves on to address:

Fy Nghymru, a bro brawdoliaeth, fy nghri, fy nghrefydd,  
Unig falm i fyd, ei chenhadaeth, ei her,  
Perl yr anfeidrol awr yn wystl gan amser,  
Gobaith yr yrfa faith ar y drofa fer. (p. 29; l. 13 - 16)<sup>47</sup>

Pembrokeshire, Williams claims, was a 'ffenstr' ['window'] (l. 17) in which he could observe the rest of the country, which is directly addressed in the oft-quoted final two lines of the poem, which have clear Nationalistic overtones:

Mae rhu, mae rhaib drwy'r fforest ddiffenestr.  
Cadwn y mur rhag y bwystfil, cadwn y ffynnon rhag y baw. (l. 19 - 20)<sup>48</sup>

It is easy to surmise why such lines were taken almost as a rallying call by Welsh Nationalists, following the publication of *Dail Pren* in 1956. It is unfair, however, to claim that the bitter, almost aggressive tone of these lines is indicative of the representation of Nationalism in Williams's poetry as a whole. Often, a distinct note of cautious optimism is detectable, as he prefers to emphasize the positive virtues of the people of Wales, rather than condemn them for their failings:

This is the answer to the cynicism of R. Williams Parry and Sir Thomas Parry-Williams.<sup>49</sup> In their work, as in so much Western literature this century, the pox of hopelessness and lack of meaning are spreading. We should not

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<sup>46</sup>My translation.

<sup>47</sup>My Wales, brotherhood's country, my cry, my creed,  
Only balm to the world, its mission, its challenge,  
Pearl of the infinite hour that time gives as pledge,

Hope of the tedious race on the short winding way. - trans. Tony Conran, in *The Bloodaxe Book of Modern Welsh Poetry*, ed. Menna Elfyn & John Rowlands (Tarsset: Bloodaxe, 2003), p. 126.

<sup>48</sup>There's a roar, there's a ravening through the windowless forests.

Keep the wall from the brute, keep the spring clear of filth. - trans. Tony Conran, in *The Bloodaxe Book of Modern Welsh Poetry*, p. 126.

<sup>49</sup>Saunders Lewis and Gerallt Lloyd Owen, whose poetry was extremely pessimistic regarding the future of Wales, could also be compared to Waldo Williams in this respect.



condemn them for that. The agony of pessimism offers a prophetic warning. The pox is a symptom: Waldo Williams offers a cure.<sup>50</sup>

In 'Cymru a Chymraeg' ['Wales and Welsh'], for example, Williams skilfully outlines his vision of the interpenetration of land and language in Wales, by proclaiming: 'Dyma'r mynyddoedd. Ni fedr ond un iaith eu codi/A'u rhoi yn eu rhyddid yn erbyn wybren cân' ['These mountains, only one language can lift them,/Give them their freedom, against a sky of song'] (p. 93; l. 1 - 2).<sup>51</sup> Despite warning, 'Ni waeth a hapio/Mae'n rhaid inni hawlio'r preswyl heb holi'r pris.' ['No matter what,/We must claim this house, never asking the price'] (l. 9 - 10),<sup>52</sup> demonstrating the importance placed by Williams on the survival of the Welsh language, in a similar exhortation to the famous couplet at the end of 'Preseli', the poem ends on an uplifting note, the Welsh language personified as young and full of vigour: 'Hyd yma hi welodd ei ffordd yn gliriach na phroffwydi./Bydd hi mor ieuanc ag erioed, mor llawn direidi.' ['Till now she has seen her way clearer than prophets./She'll be as young as ever, as full of mischief.'] (l. 13 - 14)<sup>53</sup> It is possible to discern in this the influence of religious thinking, highlighted by Williams's use of the word *proffwydi* [prophets]: his optimism regarding the future of the Welsh language and culture seems to be motivated by his belief in some kind of divine protection afforded to Wales. In his prose, he defended his Nationalist beliefs with

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<sup>50</sup>Rowlands, 'Ystyried *Dail Pren*', p. 285. Original Welsh-language source: 'Dyma'r ateb i besmistiaeth R. Williams Parry a Syr Thomas Parry-Williams. Yn eu gwaith hwy, fel yng nghymaint o lenyddiaeth y Gorllewin yn y ganrif hon, gwelir brech gwacter ystyr ac anobaith yn ymledu. Nid eu condemnio a ddylem am hynny. Mae ing pesimistiaeth yn broffwydol rybuddiol. Symptom yw'r frech: dangos meddyginiaeth y mae Waldo Williams.'

<sup>51</sup>trans. Tony Conran, in *The Bloodaxe Book of Modern Welsh Poetry*, p. 127.

<sup>52</sup>trans. Tony Conran, in *The Bloodaxe Book of Modern Welsh Poetry*, p. 127.

<sup>53</sup>trans. Tony Conran, in *The Bloodaxe Book of Modern Welsh Poetry*, p. 128.

the assertion that ‘The World Council of Christian Churches has stated that it is the duty of every nation to govern itself’ (p. 326), and as is proclaimed in the final line of ‘Cymru’n Un’, ‘Gobaith fo’n meistr: rhoed Amser inni’n was.’ [‘Let Hope be our master: Time was given to us as a servant.’] (p. 87; l. 14)<sup>54</sup>

The religious Nationalism of Waldo Williams can therefore be thought of as mainly hopeful and forward-looking, with very little of the bitterness that is so often used to characterize the nation-centric poetry of R. S. Thomas, and none of the animosity towards religion seen in the work of Austin Clarke. These three poets display varying attitudes towards religion in their work, but all were equally concerned about the future of their country, and participated in the Nationalist movements of Ireland and Wales. In response, it would therefore be useful to examine the work of Patrick Kavanagh, who exhibited very few cultural Nationalist sympathies, but whose relationship with religion, both in his life and in his poetry, was a complex one.

Before discussing the relationship between religion and Nationalism in Kavanagh’s work, however, it would be illuminating to consider his tense relationship with Austin Clarke, most notably documented in ‘The Paddiad’ (1949), which encapsulates the differences between both poets. The poem, modelled on Alexander Pope’s ‘Dunciad’ and offering a similar condemnation of contemporary literary figures, takes the form of a dialogue between several notable figures on the Dublin literary circuit who habitually congregated in the Pearl Bar, each given cod-Celtic names (with Clarke going by ‘Chestertonian Paddy Frog’), a figure loosely modelled,

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<sup>54</sup>My translation.

in part, on Kavanagh ('Paddy Conscience'), and Lucifer, known here as 'the devil Mediocrity', who goads everyone bar 'Paddy Conscience' into crafting singularly 'Catholic and Gaelic'<sup>55</sup> poetry. Kavanagh subverts the usual image of the devil here, crafting a figure who is not '[h]orned and hooped and fearful gory' (p. 151; l.44), but rather one who 'does not know a single curse' (p. 152; l. 47):

... a fellow  
 Aged about sixty, bland and mellow;  
 Saintly silver locks of hair,  
 Quiet-voiced as monk at prayer . . . (p. 151; l. 13 - 16)

In an exchange with 'Paddy Conscience', 'Chestertonian Paddy Frog' mockingly labels him 'Essentially a man of prose/As any whole-time verseman knows' (p. 153; l. 108 - 109), which prompts 'Conscience' to rebel, leading to his ejection from the tavern:

Tearing, raving, using bad  
 Language in the bar  
 Where the bards of Ireland are. (p. 154; l. 117 - 119)

Kavanagh here presents Dublin's Pearl Bar set as possessing an overwhelming self-righteous attitude, rooted in their glorification of an ancient and pious Celtic tradition, which, Kavanagh argues, may or may not have existed, but which certainly cannot be linked to the modern 'bards' of Ireland. It is maintained that, far from possessing any kind of universal appeal, such an emphasis on ancient Irish myth is irrelevant to modern life in Ireland, in a repudiation of techniques used by Clarke, and others, in order to communicate Nationalist ideas. The poem ends with the death of 'Paddy

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<sup>55</sup>Patrick Kavanagh, 'The Paddiad', in *Collected Poems* (London: Penguin, 2005), p.154, l. 126. All further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

Conscience' in Paris, with the devil, in a clear expression of Kavanagh's view of the Pearl Bar set as insincere and disingenuous, exhorting them to:

. . . do him proud.  
Our wives will make a green silk shroud  
To weave him in. The Emerald Isle  
Must bury him in tourist style. (p. 155; l. 155 - 158)

As Antoinette Quinn explains:

The Pearl Bar crowd, as caricatured in 'The Paddiad', could be characterised as Kavanagh's 'other', as assemblage of all the aspects of contemporary Irish writing he most detested. He defines himself by opposition; he is the unwanted outsider, Paddy Conscience, a composite of Yeats, Sean O'Casey, James Joyce and himself . . .<sup>56</sup>

As seen here, the most notable ideological difference between Clarke and Kavanagh is clearly their attitudes towards Irish cultural Nationalism, perhaps most notably documented in Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger* (examined below). Their varying attitudes towards religion, however, cannot be so easily separated. Both in his memoirs and poetry, Austin Clarke chose to portray himself as a lapsed Catholic who was largely unable to escape the shadow of the 'Black Church' throughout the rest of his life. Although Kavanagh 'seems to have altogether escaped the hellfire and damnation brand of religion instilled in urban predecessors such as James Joyce, or near-contemporaries like Austin Clarke',<sup>57</sup> he did attempt to critique Catholicism, as in the poem 'Sanctity' (1936):

To be a poet and not know the trade,  
To be a lover and repel all women;  
Twin ironies by which great saints are made,  
The agonizing pincer-jaws of Heaven. (p. 17; l. 1 - 4)

<sup>56</sup>Antoinette Quinn, *Patrick Kavanagh: A Biography* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2001), p. 286.

<sup>57</sup>Quinn, *Patrick Kavanagh: A Biography*, p. 27.

It could be claimed that Antoinette Quinn's summary of Kavanagh's religious position could just as easily be applied to Clarke: '[Kavanagh possessed] a compound of belief and scepticism, affectionate tolerance and fierce criticism, superstitious fear and anti-clericalism . . .'<sup>58</sup> He allegedly proclaimed while working on an obituary for Cardinal Joseph McRory at Dublin's *Catholic Standard* newspaper that "McRory now knows what I knew years ago - there is no God!",<sup>59</sup> while his last words are reputed to have been "Oh God, I believe",<sup>60</sup> in a clear repudiation of his occasional public critiques of religion.

Perhaps the most accurate way of separating the religious beliefs of the two poets is to recognize that while Clarke saw religious orthodoxy as being at the root of virtually all injustice in Ireland, Kavanagh saw it as one component of a wider problem, linked to the rise of Irish cultural Nationalism, as Patrick Crotty suggests:

There is no outside enemy to blame for the current state of affairs, *The Great Hunger* protests, and no admission in the discourses of national identity of the sexual and spiritual starvation which 'screams' from 'every corner of this land'.<sup>61</sup>

He saw no fault in spirituality and mysticism, often styling himself as a 'mystical poet and a holier-than-thou countryman at odds with a corrupt urban society . . .',<sup>62</sup> but considered Catholicism in Ireland a corrupting influence, its dogma overshadowing its spiritual benefits.

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<sup>58</sup>Quinn, *Patrick Kavanagh: A Biography*, p. 192.

<sup>59</sup>[http://www.ricorso.net/rx/az-data/authors/k/Kiely\\_B/life.htm](http://www.ricorso.net/rx/az-data/authors/k/Kiely_B/life.htm) [last accessed 2/7/2009]

<sup>60</sup>Quinn, *Patrick Kavanagh: A Biography*, p. 462.

<sup>61</sup>Crotty, 'Lean Parishes: Patrick Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger* and R. S. Thomas's *The Minister*', p. 145.

<sup>62</sup>Quinn, *Patrick Kavanagh: A Biography*, p. 288.

*The Great Hunger* is also of great relevance in this respect, and may also aid us in reaching a greater understanding of his religious beliefs, as well as an understanding of the relationship between politics and literature in Ireland during this period: as in so much of his work, we can take the central character of Patrick Maguire as a vague representation of Kavanagh himself,<sup>63</sup> who undergoes a telling spiritual transformation in the course of the poem. Initially, he possesses what is presented as a wholesome, natural spirituality, a kinship with the land which transcends human relationships, as he works on the farm, ‘spanging across wide furrows/Lost in the passion that never needs a wife’ (p. 64; l. 32 - 33), guided, but not entirely motivated, by Christian theology:

Watch him, watch him, that man on a hill whose spirit  
Is a wet sack flapping about the knees of time.  
He lives that his little fields may stay fertile when his own body  
Is spread in the bottom of a ditch under two coulters crossed in Christ’s name.  
(p. 65; l. 57 - 60)

As the poem progresses, however, and Maguire falls under the influence of his mother, and the ritualistic, superstitious brand of Catholicism she professes,<sup>64</sup> Kavanagh questions whether the speaker’s original affinity with the land and with nature could ever be sustained under such a continuous dogmatic influence:

. . . is the earth right that laughs haw-haw  
And does not believe  
In an unearthly law.  
The earth that says:

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<sup>63</sup>Patrick Crotty remarked that ‘Maguire is more emphatically an alter ego of Kavanagh than [Elias] Morgan is of [R. S.] Thomas [in *The Minister*]. . .’ - Crotty, ‘Lean Parishes: Patrick Kavanagh’s *The Great Hunger* and R. S. Thomas’s *The Minister*’, p. 142, while Antoinette Quinn, in more general terms, commented: ‘As poet and journalist as well as novelist, Kavanagh was a pervasively autobiographical and confessional author . . .’ - Quinn, *Patrick Kavanagh: A Biography*, p. ix.

<sup>64</sup>“Now go to Mass and pray and confess your sins/And you’ll have all the luck,” his mother said.’ (p. 73; l. 275 - 6).

Patrick Maguire, the old peasant, can neither be damned nor glorified:  
 The graveyard in which he will lie will be just a deep-drilled potato-field  
 Where the earth gets no chance to come through  
 To the fun of the sun  
 The tongue in his mouth is the root of a yew.  
 Silence, silence. The story is done. (p. 89; l. 736 - 745)

Under such influence, Kavanagh claims, the very spiritual essence of religion is destroyed, as the 'two coulter crossed in Christ's name' have become nothing more than 'just a deep-drilled potato-field', in a bleak conclusion which predicts the death of meaningful spirituality, and the survival of mindless orthodoxy.

Organized religion, therefore, is given a prominent role in *The Great Hunger*, and represented as a corrupting influence. As Patrick Crotty explains, however:

Kavanagh reserves his strongest criticisms for nationalism . . . subverting the rhetoric of the separatist tradition so thoroughly that we might call *The Great Hunger* the first post-nationalist poem of modern Ireland.<sup>65</sup>

It could be claimed, as Crotty does, that Nationalism is not explicitly addressed in the poem, but is criticised nevertheless, precisely because of its relative absence:

The internal chronology of the narrative . . . indicates that Maguire must have lived through such momentous events as the Parnell 'split', the Black and Tan War and Civil War. There is not as much as a mention of any of these in the 753 lines of *The Great Hunger*. So remarkable a 'gap in the text' makes an eloquent point about the relevance of the so-called 'national struggle' to the plight of the rural poor and to the felt life of the population more generally.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Crotty, 'Lean Parishes: Patrick Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger* and R. S. Thomas's *The Minister*', p. 145.

<sup>66</sup>Crotty, 'Lean Parishes: Patrick Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger* and R. S. Thomas's *The Minister*', p. 145.

The implication here is that the Irish rural peasantry have no real concept of Nationalism, as it has no bearing on their lives.<sup>67</sup> There is never any doubt, for example, that the characters in *The Great Hunger* are speaking English: here, Kavanagh ‘accepts English without guilt or regret as the language in which Irish life is, and Irish literature should be, conducted.’<sup>68</sup> In this respect, *The Great Hunger* can easily be compared to R. S. Thomas’s *The Minister*, with which it shares many similarities: the rural setting, populated by impoverished peasantry, the two poems’ charting of the spiritual decline of their protagonists, eventually leading to their death, as well as many others, recounted by Patrick Crotty (*Dangerous Diversity*, pp. 133 - 134). While *The Great Hunger* could be described as an implicitly ‘post-nationalist’ poem, it could be claimed that *The Minister* is a didactic poem favourable to Nationalism, which praises people like Elias Morgan precisely because of their awareness of Nationalist concerns:

Is there no passion in Wales? There is none  
 Except in the racked hearts of men like Morgan,  
 Condemned to wither and starve in the cramped cell  
 Of thought their fathers made them. (p. 54; l. 446 - 449)

*The Great Hunger* illustrates just how much Irish society had changed since the publication of Synge’s plays earlier in the twentieth century, most notably *The Playboy of the Western World*. Whereas Synge’s play was condemned on the basis of apparent slights against the virtues of Irish nationality, Kavanagh’s poem, its central

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<sup>67</sup>A comparison could be made here with the characters of Moel Arian in Kate Roberts’s *Traed Mewn Cyffion*, members of the rural peasantry who remain oblivious of (proto-)Nationalist causes until late in the novel. It could be argued that Austin Clarke was making a similar point about religion in such poems as ‘Repentance’, discussed above, arguing that children have no need to conform to Catholic dogma, despite being pressurized into doing so.

<sup>68</sup>Crotty, ‘Lean Parishes: Patrick Kavanagh’s *The Great Hunger* and R. S. Thomas’s *The Minister*’, p. 144.



character emerging from the same rural, largely Gaelic-speaking background as Christy Mahon, intentionally ignores the tumultuous Nationalistic upheaval which would otherwise have served as the poem's backdrop. Kavanagh's message is clear: as Irish Nationalism moves from the cultural into the political realm, so its role within literature should be lessened, with Irish writing having become more global than parochial. It is *The Great Hunger*, more than any other piece of work discussed in this thesis, which proves the argument that a society in which Nationalism is represented politically, such as that of Ireland after 1922, is more likely to produce writing which, if not entirely apolitical, can be 'literature first and foremost'. It is difficult to imagine such a poem being written in Wales before 1966, when discussions of cultural Nationalism were largely confined to the literary sphere.

*The Great Hunger* and *The Minister* also vary in their depiction of peasantry: Patrick Maguire is a peasant himself, whose decline is largely due to the outside influence of religion. Morgan, on the other hand, comes to his rural parish as an outsider, and is eventually thwarted by the 'sly/Infirmities of the hill people' (p. 54; l. 462 - 463). The suggestion that Morgan's distrust of his parishioners mirrors Thomas's attitudes to the peasantry, most notably displayed in poetry featuring Iago Prytherch, is expressed in Bryn Griffiths's poem 'The Master', written as a response to Thomas from the perspective of Iago Prytherch, who protests that he hasn't time to question 'the meaning of my life',<sup>69</sup> in accordance to Thomas's demands, with:

. . . the farm to look after,  
The milking, and the sheep to tend,  
And one doesn't get much time

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<sup>69</sup>Bryn Griffiths, 'The Master', in Meic Stephens (ed.), *Poetry 1900 - 2000* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2007), p. 411; l. 15.

For other things.<sup>70</sup>

The poem ends with Prytherch chastising Thomas, which could be seen as an effective summary of the differences between *The Minister* and *The Great Hunger*, as well as encapsulating wider criticisms levelled against Thomas for his apparent misrepresentation of the peasantry:

You're in your world and I'm in mine.  
 I don't go to church, you see -  
 Chapel's good enough for me.  
 (And you making the village  
 Work to your words . . .)  
 I mean, who are you to talk?  
 Up there, high and mighty in your vicarage,  
 Playing the lord in Eglwys Fach.<sup>71</sup>

The four poets discussed in this chapter demonstrate the wide variety of possible attitudes towards religion and Nationalism, and can be compared in various ways: whereas Waldo Williams was greatly influenced by both, and used Quakerism to support and inform his Nationalist beliefs, R. S. Thomas, despite his well-documented allegiances to both the Welsh Nationalist cause and to the Anglican Church, preferred to keep the two separate in his work, perhaps due to the difficulties of justifying his religious beliefs in a Nationalist context. In Ireland, while Austin Clarke saw the influence of Catholic dogma as being detrimental to the Irish Nationalist cause, Patrick Kavanagh was similarly scornful towards the advance of 'Celticism' and the Gaelic tradition, and had an altogether more complex relationship with religion. Kavanagh also, more than any other writer examined during this thesis,

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<sup>70</sup>Griffiths, 'The Master', p. 411; l. 19 - 22.

<sup>71</sup>Griffiths, 'The Master', p. 412; l. 33 - 40.

demonstrates the importance of the link between Nationalist politics and literature, as *The Great Hunger* represents a conscious attempt to reject the Nationalism that had, until 1922, dominated Irish writing to the same extent that Welsh Nationalism exerted an influence on Welsh writing before 1966. Such a variety of viewpoints displayed by the four writers studied in this chapter is understandable, given the history of debates on disestablishment in Ireland and Wales immediately leading up to this period, and the strong religious influence continually exerted during it. In their interactions with each other, most notably between Austin Clarke and Patrick Kavanagh, but also seen in the influence of Irish poetry on R. S. Thomas, we are presented with a microcosm of the debates surrounding Nationalist and religious concerns, and are given an idea of how Irish and Welsh discourses on Nationalism and religion were intertwined in the early - mid twentieth century.

While we may study the poets discussed within this chapter individually and comparatively, it is also important to remember that their work supports the central arguments made during this thesis. The importance of Patrick Kavanagh has already been emphasized, but we should also consider the significance of both R. S. Thomas and Waldo Williams having approached Welsh Nationalism from outside the Nonconformist society in which it was most prominent. We could look at their work, as well as that of Saunders Lewis, in a similar way to that of Caradoc Evans, Rhys Davies and Hilda Vaughan. While the latter group of writers' political beliefs bely the apparent sympathy with Nationalist causes found in their work, it is the religious backgrounds of Thomas, Williams and Lewis which are not usually conducive to Nationalist writing. It should also be remembered that these three writers were among

the most influential of all those sympathetic to Welsh Nationalism, with the early doctrine of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru largely shaped by Saunders Lewis, the writing of Waldo Williams being highly influential to early members of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, and the poetry of R. S. Thomas representing perhaps the most sustained and virulent defence of Welsh Nationalism in the English language. Once again, it becomes apparent how broad the spectrum of Welsh Nationalist writing truly is, and how little this has been appreciated in critical discourse.

*Conclusion: Nationalism and Welsh Writing in Comparative Contexts*

In the preceding five chapters, two arguments have been emphasized above all others. Firstly, it has been claimed that without representation for Welsh Nationalism within the British Parliament, the task of maintaining, promoting and advancing such beliefs was 'devolved' into the cultural sphere, especially literature. Moreover, such a conclusion can be supported through a comparative analysis, taking into account the roughly analogous situation in Scotland during the same period, and the radically different position of Irish Nationalism within literature following the foundation of the Irish Free State. Secondly, it has been made apparent that because of this confining of Nationalist sentiment to Welsh writing, work which can be considered as being broadly supportive of traditionally Nationalist ideas was produced by authors and poets who were both ambivalent towards Nationalism, and occasionally hostile to the concept. This argument is, in turn, strengthened by the structure of the thesis itself, which spans five different themes, some of which are traditionally considered incompatible with Nationalism. Without political representation, it is clear that Nationalism permeates virtually every facet of Welsh writing, making literature the primary medium in which the Nationalist project is advanced or at least adumbrated.

The thesis as a whole has hinged on comparative analysis, either between individual writers working in the same tradition, using different languages, or writing in different countries. The thesis began with an examination of J. M. Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* (alongside the work of Caradoc Evans and Saunders Lewis), and the last chapter ended by studying some of the later poetry of Patrick

Kavanagh (in conjunction with the work of Austin Clarke, R. S. Thomas and Waldo Williams). It is these two writers who best encapsulate the differences in Irish writing before and after the establishment of the Irish Free State, and indicate that literature, and public reaction to it, becomes heavily politicized in the absence of any significant Nationalist representation within politics. The major shift in Irish writing which occurred following Irish independence is the reason why we can so confidently identify the influence of Welsh Nationalist politics (or rather, the lack of it within the British political establishment) on Welsh writing. During the period in which Synge was active as a writer, the founding of the Irish Free State was several years away, and the position of Nationalism within Ireland was roughly analogous to that of Wales and Scotland during the period covered by this thesis.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the public reaction to a play such as *The Playboy of the Western World* can be directly compared to the reactions which greeted the publication of Caradoc Evans's short stories some years later; through literature, ideas were communicated which were not voiced within the political realm, politicizing the act of writing about the stateless nation. Following the formation of the Irish Free State, communication of Nationalist ideas was largely transferred to politics, allowing Irish literature 'to be literature first and foremost, rather than the expression of a nationalist movement'.<sup>2</sup> This shift is, I have argued, directly responsible for the self-conscious ignoring of Nationalist politics and contemporary Nationalist events found in work such as Patrick Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger*. This crucial change in Irish society which led to the development of Irish

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<sup>1</sup>The similarities in the way Welsh and Scottish writing reacted to Nationalism between 1925 and 1966 are detailed in the chapter which examines the work of Harri Webb and Hugh MacDiarmid.

<sup>2</sup>Christopher Whyte, 'Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 34.2 (1998), 274 - 85 (p. 284).

writing underpins the main argument of this thesis; the political situation in Ireland shapes its literature, resulting in it being radically different from the literatures of Scotland and Wales at this period, firmly establishing the direct relationship between culture and Nationalist politics.<sup>3</sup>

In essence, then, the formation of the Irish Free State represents the beginning of the 'decolonization' of Irish writing: after 1922, literature in Ireland was no longer required to address questions of nationality as a way of establishing its separation from mainstream British/English culture. Nationalism has been described as 'a legitimization [sic] of the nation-state',<sup>4</sup> a definition which can be expanded upon following this study, with the assertion that a Nationalist victory on the scale of the formation of the Irish Free State negates the need for such legitimization. Following this conclusion, two further points must be made. Firstly, while Christopher Whyte, whose theories on the impact of the foundation of the Scottish Parliament on literature,<sup>5</sup> quoted above, are of key importance to this thesis, surmises that post-devolution Scottish writing will be 'literature first and foremost', this does not signify the absolute lack of any Nationalist content within either contemporary Scottish writing, or Irish writing after 1922. The work of James Joyce, *Æ*, and the continuing poetic output of Austin Clarke shows that discussions of Nationalism and national

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<sup>3</sup>An alternative approach to the study of Welsh Nationalism within literature, which may have yielded similar results, would be a comparison of Welsh writing from three different periods: the transitional period between 1925 and 1966 studied in this thesis, the period between 1966 and 1999, before the foundation of the Welsh Assembly, and contemporary writing from 1999 onwards. The advantage of my methodology is that each text and author is studied within an international, implicitly postcolonial framework, which interrogates concepts of 'Britishness' far more than a study focusing exclusively on Welsh writing.

<sup>4</sup>Simon During, 'Literature - Nationalism's Other? The Case for Revision', in Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 138 - 153 (p. 140).

<sup>5</sup>The effect of the foundation of the Scottish Parliament on Scottish writing is comparable to that of the foundation of the Irish Republic on Irish literature.

identity were present and prominent within literature from Ireland during this period. The events of 1922 did not entirely remove discussions of Irish Nationalism from the cultural sphere, but it could no longer be claimed that literature, and the arts in general, were the primary medium in which such ideas were transmitted.

Secondly, it must be clarified that the election of Gwynfor Evans in 1966, and the effect it had on Welsh writing, should not be considered as comparable in scale to an event such as the formation of the Irish Republic. It did not, to use Christopher Whyte's terminology, completely 'allow [Welsh] literature to be literature first and foremost, rather than the expression of a nationalist movement': some of the most heated Nationalist reactions in Welsh writing to contemporary events took place after 1966, such as the fierce reaction within Welsh-language poetry, in particular, to the investiture of the Prince of Wales at Caernarfon in 1969.<sup>6</sup> Neither did the establishment of the Welsh Assembly in 1999, signifying the most important achievement thus far for the Welsh national movement, entirely disconnect literature from politics within Wales, with Wales remaining an integral part of the UK. Indeed, it is doubtful that any change within the Welsh political landscape, no matter how great, could have such an effect, as literature in Wales (in the Welsh language in particular) is inextricably associated with complex issues regarding language, belonging and identity which cannot be resolved through the victory of civic Nationalism alone. The election of Gwynfor Evans merely represented the beginning of the shift of Welsh Nationalism from culture into politics; the end of this process is yet to be seen.

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<sup>6</sup>The most famous example of poetry which deals specifically with this event probably being Gerallt Lloyd Owen's 'Fy Ngwlad' ['My Country'] in *Cerddi'r Cywilydd* [*Poems of Shame*] (1972).



Nevertheless, from the examples used within the entire thesis, spanning the literatures of Wales, Scotland and Ireland, it is clear that a definite relationship exists between the cultural and political spheres, as evidenced by the major shift between the public displays of outrage which greeted the first performances of *The Playboy of the Western World* and the self-conscious 'silences' on Nationalism within Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger*. Patrick Kavanagh's poetry is important in another sense, in that it represents the work of an Irish writer, publicly opposed to the dependence of his contemporaries on what he felt were outdated tropes of cultural Nationalism, whose views are openly, unambiguously reflected in his poetry. Before 1966, there is no Welsh equivalent to a poem such as Kavanagh's 'The Paddiad', explicitly condemning cultural Nationalism. In Wales, despite support for Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru (later Plaid Cymru) generally remaining low across the country, even in the years leading up to the election of Gwynfor Evans, representations of Welsh Nationalism and nationality were highly prominent within literature. Furthermore, depictions and tropes which appear broadly supportive of Nationalist ideology are detectable in the work of writers who were ambivalent or hostile towards organized Nationalism.

The two writers discussed within this thesis who most clearly show this are Caradoc Evans and Rhys Davies. The work of Caradoc Evans continues to attract controversy today for its deliberately skewed representation of the Nonconformist Welsh-speaking society in Ceredigion in which Evans was raised. However, the way Caradoc Evans distorts the Welsh language cannot be considered a direct attack on Welsh nationhood or the language itself; the language found within his texts is

primarily a way of satirizing the Nonconformity he sees as having corrupted Welsh-speaking rural society.

It is clear why the early stories of Caradoc Evans were so shocking at the time of publication. The dark subject matter of his work was coupled with a challenging Modernism which was new to Welsh writing, in either language, and it was this linguistic innovation which, for many, obscured the true target of his satire. A far more accurate portrayal of Evans's attitude to his country has been given by George H. Green:

Caradoc himself never intended that [*My People*] should be an attack upon Wales or the Welsh. . . . that the happenings that made up the materials of his stories were typical or everyday happenings, or that all Welsh people were like the characters he portrayed, Caradoc was far too sensible and balanced to believe.<sup>7</sup>

When examining his work, we should keep one thing in mind above all others: throughout all of Evans's fiction, he portrays a Wales which is entirely free of English influence, and fiercely possessive of its own traditions and language, while his novels and short stories display a linguistic innovation which revitalizes Wales as a worthy subject for Modernist writing. His work, put simply, adheres strictly to some of the foundational tenets of Welsh Nationalism.

In Aneurin Talfan Davies's *Astudio Byd*, this underlying sympathy with Nationalist concerns within the work of Caradoc Evans was identified. Indeed, Davies's analysis of his work is of key importance to the thesis as a whole, as it is possibly the only critical analysis published to date which goes some way to

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<sup>7</sup>George H. Green, 'Caradoc', in Caradoc Evans, *The Earth Gives All and Takes All* (London: Andrew Dakers Limited, 1946), pp. vii - xxxiv (xxiv).

acknowledging the near-implicit support for core Nationalist ideas within Welsh writing in English during this period. As outlined in the first chapter of this thesis, Davies acknowledged the Modernist advances brought to Welsh writing by Caradoc Evans, and praised him for being the first writer to ‘transmit the essence and peculiarity of Welsh life through the medium of a foreign language’,<sup>8</sup> while simultaneously conceding that ‘[i]t is very hard for a Welsh person to arouse enough patience, and to implement enough grace, to discuss the writer from Cardiganshire fairly and objectively.’<sup>9</sup> In admitting his own difficulties in overcoming the abrasiveness of Evans’s style, while also making clear his appreciation for his work, Aneurin Talfan Davies is, in effect, explaining why a study such as this one offers an approach to Welsh writing which aims to look beyond the accepted understanding of a particular writer’s political position, and examines hitherto unexplored aspects of the texts themselves.

The work of Rhys Davies can be directly compared to that of Caradoc Evans, as we find within *The Black Venus* and some of his short stories the same emphasis on uniquely Welsh traditions. Although we cannot claim that his work explores issues of language in nearly as much depth as Caradoc Evans, we do find within it a Wales completely excised of English influence, with the few English characters frequently expressing their lack of understanding of Welsh culture. This contradicts the frequent critical descriptions of his work as being apolitical, and the understanding that he was generally dismissive of Nationalist politics:

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<sup>8</sup>Aneurin Talfan Davies, *Astudio Byd* (Llandybïe: Llyfrau’r Dryw, 1967), p. 27. Original Welsh-language source: ‘[t]ros glwyddo rhin ac arbenigrwydd y bywyd Cymreig trwy gyfrwng iaith estron.’

<sup>9</sup>Davies, *Astudio Byd*, p. 9. Original Welsh-language source: ‘Y mae’n anodd iawn i Gymro ennyn digon o amynedd, a gweithredu digon o ras ymatal, i drafod y llenor o Sir Aberteifi yn deg ac yn wrthrychol.’

... when Davies does refer to ‘the Nationalists’ in [autobiographical text] *My Wales*, his comments are at best neutral and at times hostile. He senses little response in the valleys to the Nationalists’ message and is generally negative towards their advocacy of the Welsh language . . .<sup>10</sup>

It could be claimed that the expressions of ‘Nationalism’ we can detect within his work do not precisely correspond to the cultural Nationalism of Plaid Cymru at the time, which was largely centred on the language, just as Rhys Davies’s *My Wales* does not precisely correspond to the ‘real’ Wales of which he was writing. As in the work of Caradoc Evans, which represents a distorted, grossly exaggerated caricature of Ceredigion in the early twentieth century, the Wales represented in the fiction of Rhys Davies is not a realist portrayal of modern Welsh life, but rather ‘an older ‘Wales’, constructed by Davies out of his own emotional and imaginative circumstances.’<sup>11</sup> This constructed “Wales” retreats into a mythical past, populated by characters ‘with long racial memories, who couldn’t forget sorcery . . .’,<sup>12</sup> and is presented in such a manner as to emphasize the ways in which his settings, perhaps most notably ‘Ayron’ of *The Black Venus*, retain hold of Welsh traditions in the face of encroachment from the modern, largely Anglicized world.

As part of Davies’s retreat into the past, alongside the emphasis on Welsh identity came a reliance on gender roles which depict the female as sharing an unspoken affinity with the natural world, and occasionally an implicit connection with national tradition. The same can be said of Hilda Vaughan, who, despite not publicly disavowing Nationalism with the same vehemence as Rhys Davies, was not a

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<sup>10</sup>Tony Brown, “‘The Memory of Lost Countries’: Rhys Davies’s Wales’, in Meic Stephens (ed.), *Rhys Davies: Decoding the Hare* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 71 - 86 (p. 83).

<sup>11</sup>Brown, “‘The Memory of Lost Countries’: Rhys Davies’s Wales’, p. 72.

<sup>12</sup>Rhys Davies, *The Black Venus* (London: William Heinemann, 1944), pp. 194 - 195.

prominent supporter of the Nationalist movement. However, within her work, broad gestures in support of Welsh culture, language and tradition are detectable, although these declarations are made in accordance with strict gender boundaries. As in the work of Rhys Davies, but portrayed in more explicit terms, females are associated with the natural world, with their understanding of the national unit stemming from an unbreakable, almost atavistic connection with nature. Males, meanwhile, such as Rhys Lloyd of *The Battle to the Weak*, are often active participants within national movements, but their association with Wales is grounded in more political Nationalism, their place within it needing to be qualified and debated, with their ties to the nation sometimes discarded as a result.

A study of gender within Welsh writing reveals how similar concepts of nationhood are used within the work of writers both ambivalent and explicitly supportive of a Welsh Nationalist ideology. A similar separation between private/public spheres is found within Kate Roberts's *Traed Mewn Cyffion*. Although Jane Gruffydd clearly sympathizes with Nationalism by the end of the text, it is her son who is charged with transplanting these ideas into the political realm, suggesting that serious political engagement with Nationalist ideas must be undertaken by men. Despite her role as one of the most prominent women in the Welsh Nationalist movement from the 1920s onwards, as well as being one of the most influential Welsh-language authors of the twentieth century, Kate Roberts usually adheres to traditional gender roles in her conception of Nationalism. Her work, along with the writing of Hilda Vaughan and Rhys Davies, presents a startlingly similar portrayal of the role of women within the Nationalist movement, blurring the boundaries between

literature which seeks to contribute to the development of Nationalism, and that which has rarely been considered a part of the Nationalist tradition. While the reaction of the three authors to the Welsh Nationalist movement ranged from active participation to outright mistrust, the similarities in their novels and short stories prove that such ideological differences are not present to the same extent in their writing.

The representation of gender within some of the early novels of Emyr Humphreys was also examined alongside these authors, and while we see some of the same reliance on familiar tropes, gender roles within his work are somewhat more complicated. Indeed, studying Humphreys's work can complicate and enrich our understanding of many topics discussed within this thesis, and his early novels have been mentioned as part of more than one thematic chapter. As well as his representations of gender, which show significant progression throughout his early career, culminating after 1966 with the *Land of the Living* series, Emyr Humphreys is key to our understanding of the importance of Welsh writing within the Nationalist project.

At first glance, the early novels of Emyr Humphreys seem to undermine the use made of literature by authors such as Saunders Lewis and Kate Roberts in furthering the Welsh Nationalist cause. In *The Little Kingdom*, for example, Humphreys presents us with a protagonist, Owen Richards, who can be considered an amalgamation of several different figures in the development of Nationalism, with subtle similarities to O. M. Edwards. The plot itself blatantly mirrors the 1936 'Burning of the Bombing School' perpetrated by Saunders Lewis, D. J. Williams and

Lewis Valentine. The association felt by Michael Edwards of *A Toy Epic* with Nationalism is based solely on a self-serving political idealism, while J. T. Miles of *Outside the House of Baal*'s eventual understanding of a Nationalist ideology comes at the cost of his relationship with (the primarily female members of) his extended family. The claim could be made that these novels emphasize that despite the crucial role of Welsh writing in furthering Nationalism, Emyr Humphreys was interested in preserving a separation between the cultural and political spheres, and that to him, his own artistic integrity was of more importance than actively promoting the Nationalist cause he openly championed elsewhere.

In this, we can perhaps categorize Humphreys's work as representing an inversion of the broad support for core Nationalist concerns found in the work of writers who were not generally supportive of political Nationalism as an ideology. Rather than reflecting the breadth of support for Nationalism found within Welsh writing, Humphreys makes a deliberate choice in making his work accessible to a wide range of readers from differing political backgrounds. As Humphreys's Wales-set novels present Nationalism as a central concern, his work does not contradict the assertion made in this thesis that Nationalism was almost uniformly present within Welsh writing at this time. However, his various presentations of Nationalism represent a significant deviation from the broad support for Nationalism found among many of his contemporaries, allowing us to question the role of literature as a medium for the propagation of Nationalist ideas.

Within the thesis, this was done by comparing the work of Emyr Humphreys with the 'Lleifior novels' of Islwyn Ffowc Elis, which present the Welsh Nationalist

struggle in much more simplistic terms, directly contrasting the Welsh and English, upper and lower classes, religion and agnosticism, among many other binary oppositions. *Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd*, for example, was described by the author himself as propaganda, and written explicitly in order to further the Nationalist cause. The differences in the approaches taken by both authors are clear: both were aware of the ways in which Welsh writing contributed to Nationalism, but while Humphreys sought to differentiate his work from that of many of his contemporaries, Elis fully embraced his role as a populist author committed to the unambiguous communication of Nationalist ideas. While Humphreys saw Nationalist activism as being rooted in politics, Elis saw literature as playing a key role in the propagation of Welsh Nationalism, and consciously blurred the boundaries between populist fiction and propaganda. It was also suggested that another reason for the disparity between them could be rooted in possible differences between Welsh- and English-language literature. As Elis's aim in writing *Cysgod y Cryman* was to popularize Welsh-language fiction, he would necessarily need to engage with his Welsh-speaking readership, who were likely to agree with some of the foundational tenets of Welsh Nationalism, despite support for Plaid Cymru not being particularly widespread at this time. In contrast, Emyr Humphreys, while never apologetic or dismissive of Nationalism, presents characters who share his Nationalist beliefs as constantly engaging in dialogues with characters representing other ideologies, exposing the strengths and weaknesses of Nationalism while doing the same for any other belief system discussed. It is important to remember that Humphreys never condemns Nationalism (or indeed, any ideology) directly, instead choosing to focus on the



behaviour of his characters, whatever their political motivation. The key concern of his early novels is undoubtedly the Nationalist movement in Wales, but Humphreys does not require his readership to support it, with his work often possessing a moral ambiguity lacking in that of his contemporaries.

In many ways, Emyr Humphreys bridges the gap between the overt, politically-motivated endorsements of Nationalism found in the work of such writers as Islwyn Ffowc Elis, Saunders Lewis, and R. S. Thomas, among others, and the subdued, implicit acceptance of core Nationalist ideas expressed by Caradoc Evans, Rhys Davies, and Hilda Vaughan. However, despite not having been raised as a Welsh speaker, and his novels and short stories offering a highly complex portrayal of Nationalism, Humphreys can be considered as being supportive of 'mainstream' Welsh Nationalism in late twentieth-century public life. Other writers have approached Nationalism from outside its usual confines, and have been highly influential in the process, supporting the idea that Nationalism in literature is almost ubiquitous if it is not represented in politics.

In the third chapter, the work of Hugh MacDiarmid and Harri Webb was examined, which revealed how similarities in the Nationalist movements of Wales and Scotland led to further similarities in Nationalist writing from those countries. Perhaps the easiest way we can reconcile the Marxism and Nationalism of MacDiarmid is by reference to the *gwerin* concept, which originated in Wales but is subtly used by MacDiarmid at times. More significantly, Harri Webb makes use of G. Gregory Smith's 'Caledonian antiszygy', often mentioned by MacDiarmid as a theoretical precedent for the meeting of opposites found in his work. Although

stylistically very different, then, in the sharing of ideas which is apparent between the poets, we are presented with a microcosm of the relationship between the writers, and Nationalist movements, of Wales and Scotland at this time. From studying their work, we see that a two-way exchange of ideas was possible between these two countries, in contrast to the largely one-way influence of Ireland on Wales after 1922.

This chapter also interrogated the precise relationship between Nationalist and Marxist ideologies. Despite the hostility felt by many Marxists towards Nationalism,<sup>13</sup> an attempt is made in the poetry and journalism of Webb and MacDiarmid to overcome the differences between the two ideologies, although neither is wholly successful in doing so. It is important to remember, however, that today MacDiarmid is recognized as one of the finest Scottish poets of the twentieth century, whose engagement with Scottish Nationalism and nationality is perhaps unparalleled. In his legacy, then, we can make the claim that the difficulties inherent in combining Nationalism and Marxism have been overcome, and that one of the strongest voices in support of Scottish Nationalism has emerged from a wholly untypical background.

This theoretical argument is made even more explicit in the final thesis chapter, with the work of R. S. Thomas and Waldo Williams representing perhaps the most influential and acclaimed meditations on Nationalism and religion in Welsh poetry. Neither poet, however, represents the Nonconformity which has supposedly dominated Nationalist discourse over much of the twentieth century, making us question established ideas regarding the 'core supporters' of Welsh Nationalism. An

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<sup>13</sup>As previously explained, Lenin's *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination* and certain passages from *The Communist Manifesto* represent important examples of writing which overcomes this ideological separation, to a certain extent.

even more potent example in this regard is Saunders Lewis, who largely shaped the early doctrine and policy of Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru, but whose Catholicism differentiated him from many of his peers. These examples of writers who approach Nationalism from ‘unconventional’ backgrounds must be considered alongside the work of authors such as Caradoc Evans, Rhys Davies, and Hilda Vaughan, in which we can discern sympathy with Welsh Nationalist causes, despite this not having been widely recognized in criticism. In almost all examples of writers and texts discussed in this thesis, we are presented with forms of Nationalism which are in some way different from our conventional understanding of it, situated outside the strict boundaries which, until now, have dictated the limits of what can be considered ‘Nationalist’.

This suggests that Nationalism as an ideology has many different and ambiguous meanings. Indeed, if theorists of Nationalism agree on anything, it is on the fluidity and ambiguity of Nationalist thought, as Umut Özkirimli clarifies:

almost all scholars recognize the multifarious nature of nationalism, while some go one step further and argue that sorting the different types according to their intrinsic features is all that can be achieved theoretically.<sup>14</sup>

An attempt to explain this difficulty has been made by Carlton J. H. Hayes, who summarized that:

the group-mind of a nationality is demonstrably fickle and inconstant. Most characteristics ascribed to a given nationality are found on investigation to belong to several nationalities, and what is characteristic of a particular nationality at a given time is not necessarily characteristic of it at other times.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Umut Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 62.

<sup>15</sup>Carlton J. H. Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), p. 9.

This analysis of what may or may not constitute a particular nationality is especially relevant to this thesis, as this is essentially what has been proved throughout it. While traditional conceptions of Welsh Nationalism assert that it is largely a product of Welsh-speaking Nonconformist society, and incompatible with such ideologies as Marxism, the range of writers discussed in this thesis prove that sympathy with Nationalism is detectable outside its usual confines. Moreover, some of the most influential writing on Nationalism has emerged from outside these traditional boundaries, with the work of Saunders Lewis and Waldo Williams remaining some of the most important from self-confessed supporters of Welsh Nationalism, despite their break from the Nonconformity some see as being so closely linked to it. Despite his associations with Marxism, Hugh MacDiarmid's writing on Scottish Nationalism is clearly greatly influential, as is proved by Harri Webb's approximation of his ideas for a Welsh audience. Notably, the work of such authors as Hilda Vaughan, Caradoc Evans, and Rhys Davies, none of whom was ever fully supportive of Welsh Nationalism, contains several apparent endorsements of Nationalist ideas, proving both the ubiquity of Nationalist thought, and the difficulty in neatly categorizing it.

It is this wide range of writers discussed within the thesis, alongside the comparisons with the literatures of Scotland and Northern Ireland, which ultimately signals the pervasiveness of Nationalism within twentieth-century Welsh writing before 1966. This sheer breadth of sympathy with Nationalism, coupled with the vital role of literature in forming and promoting Nationalist thought in Wales, leads us to the conclusion that most writers from Wales, regardless of language, whether

consciously or unconsciously, participated within some form of Nationalist discourse at this time.

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