LONDON-WELSH WRITING 1890-1915: ERNEST RHYS, ARTHUR MACHEN, W. H. DAVIES, AND CARADOC EVANS

Tomos Owen

A Thesis Submitted in Candidature for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Cardiff University
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Abstract

This thesis explores the emergence of a Welsh voice in exile in London at the turn of the twentieth century. Through readings of works by four London-Welsh writers active during the period 1890-1915 – Ernest Rhys (1859-1946), Arthur Machen (1863-1947), W. H. Davies (1871-1940) and Caradoc Evans (1878-1945) – it argues that the London context of these works makes possible the construction of various modes of Welsh identity.

The introduction begins by noting how theorists of national identity have identified cultural practices, including literature, as important in shaping the imagined community of the nation. It then incorporates, and adapts, Raymond Williams's thinking about the interplay of residual, dominant, and emergent currents operating within a culture by arguing that residual elements within a society can be harnessed and endowed with the potential to become newly emergent. The introduction concludes by identifying Matthew Arnold's description of the Celt in his *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867) as a residual element. Nevertheless, it points out how, in various ways, Arnold's Celt is recuperated by London-Welsh writers (among others) at the turn of the twentieth century.

Chapter One argues that the work of Ernest Rhys constructs a self-conscious Welsh literary tradition by reclaiming Welsh-language literature and Arnold's Celt and mobilising them as part of a cultural-nationalist aesthetic; London is an important influence on this development for material and aesthetic reasons. Chapter Two considers how Celtic history and mythology haunt the representation of the Gwent border country in the work of Arthur Machen, arguing that Machen's Celt is also derived from Arnold but recast as a spectral, ghostly figure. Chapter Three discusses Machen's fellow son of Gwent, W. H. Davies. Davies's work, both poetry and prose, frequently contrasts country and city, yet this chapter argues that Davies's work articulates a hybrid voice which anticipates several of the themes and techniques present in later Welsh writing in English. Chapter Four extends this by considering the early work of Caradoc Evans, whose early 'Cockney' stories carry structural and thematic similarities with both Davies's poetry and his own later collections. By this reading, Evans's *My People* (1915) stands as a text which inherits earlier works and draws on an already-existing London-Welsh literary culture. This thesis concludes by arguing that the London context to these writers' works makes possible the consolidation of a Welsh literary structure of feeling into an emergent literary voice in English: London enables each of these writers to reassess their relationship with a Wales left behind, but a Wales which nonetheless provides an impetus to new creative developments.

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Contents

Introduction
Culture and Nation: Residual and Emergent Myths of National Identity

Late-nineteenth-century London sees the emergence of a Welsh voice in exile. In various social, political, and cultural spheres, the Welsh community in London succeeds in negotiating a distinctive position for itself within the great metropolis. Across a range of forms and authors, the period around the turn of the twentieth century, from the re-founding of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion in 1878 to the publication of Caradoc Evans's *My People* in 1915, witnesses the development of a distinctive Welsh writing in English. Through reading works by four London-Welsh writers active during the period 1890-1915, this thesis will argue that the London context of these works makes possible the construction of various new models of Welsh identity. Theoretical positions concerning the development of nationalism and national identity will combine with Raymond Williams's thinking about the interplay of residual, dominant, and emergent ideologies to establish a framework for this argument. The thesis complements this methodological approach with primary research into the work of four writers seldom read together: Ernest Rhys (1859-1946), Arthur Machen (1863-1947), W. H. Davies (1871-1940), and Caradoc Evans (1878-1945). While these writers are representative of a London-Welsh literary-cultural milieu, the differences of form and content among their works suggest that London-Welsh writing at the turn of the twentieth century cannot be reduced to these four authors. Religious and political writing burgeons during the period, as do other Welsh discourses in the city, by means of public lectures and the establishment of literary and learned societies. Politically, the 1890s marks the high-water mark for the campaign for Welsh Home Rule centred around the *Cymru Fydd*/Young Wales movement. London-Welsh newspapers and periodicals attest to the vibrancy and diversity of Welsh life – and writing – in London during the period: as well as recording the activities of the London Welsh, the *London Kelt* newspaper, for example, contributes

to the proliferation of Welsh literary production in the city. This thesis aims to read the works of Rhys, Machen, Davies, and Evans as representative of a London milieu in which what can later be described as an Anglophone Welsh literary consciousness is taking shape and awaiting definition.

Theoretical accounts of the emergence of national identity can correlate the synchronous emergence of several different Welsh discourses in London at the turn of the twentieth century. By reading the various models of Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, and Anthony D. Smith charting the rise of national identities, this introduction will suggest that the forward-looking nature of a new national identity always coincides with a look backward to a mythical, ancient, invented, national past. This mythical past is often revived in a new nationalism through the realm of culture. By juxtaposing the models of Anderson, Gellner, and Smith to Williams's thinking about the interplay between what he terms 'residual', 'dominant', and 'emergent' ideological currents present within any society, this introduction will contend that nationalist movements inevitably carry the residual trace of the past, even if that past is 'forged', or invented; furthermore, this residual element of a national identity can be exploited to bind – or invent – a renewed, emergent national consciousness. The propinquity of London-Welsh political activity and cultural production in this period speaks of an interplay between such residual and emergent forces within a growing national movement. The *Cymru Fydd* movement's campaign for Welsh Home Rule and Disestablishment can be read alongside the works of Rhys, Machen, Davies, and Evans as discourses which engage with and imagine Wales in new ways: each writer's engagement with Wales constitutes a complementary – if sometimes uncomplimentary – counterpoint to the aims of more overtly political nationalists of the period.

The final section of the introduction will consider Matthew Arnold's formulation of the figure of the Celt in light of these theoretical models of nationalism. Arnold's ideas about the Celt, as put forward in his *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867), indicate that Celticity represents the trace of the residual cultural mode at Arnold's specific mid-Victorian moment: the Celt is a mythical construct against which Arnold's imperial (dominant) mode is contrasted. The introduction will conclude by arguing that Arnold's Celt constitutes a striking example of the interplay of residual and dominant cultural forces. Looking forward to future chapters in this thesis, it will be suggested that what is for Arnold the residual figure of the Celt becomes, later in the nineteenth century, a revived, emergent power. For Rhys, the Celt connotes a mythologised, romanticised past which can be harnessed for cultural-nationalist ends. In Machen's case, the Celt is a haunting presence, connected with the past yet strangely troubling at his own late-Victorian moment: indeed, Machen's work suggests that the ghostly, gothic Celt is a revenant, returning to prominence at the period of the peak of Pan-Celticism's influence. At the same period, for Rhys, Arnold's Celt comes to be revived at a moment when the distinctiveness of the Welsh and Irish interests within the concept of Britishness were being debated with unprecedented intensity.[1] Again, then, the political and the cultural impulses of nationalism are combined in the figure of the Celt.

Initially, however, it is important to establish the theoretical foundation upon which a discussion of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century nationalism can be built, and in

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[1] Daniel Williams has discussed the Pan-Celtic movement of the 1890s and identified how Arnold's conception of the Celt was reappropriated late in the nineteenth century. While in the 1860s Arnold had wished to see a Celtic identity contribute to an overarching sense of Britishness, writers later in the century came to see Celticity as a marker of distinctiveness set against British imperialism. See Daniel Williams, 'Pan-Celticism and the Limits of Post-Colonialism: W. B. Yeats, Ernest Rhys and William Sharp in the 1890s', in *Nations and Relations: Writing Across the British Isles*, ed. by Tony Brown and Russell Stephens (Cardiff: New Welsh Review, 2000) pp. 1-29. For examples of debates surrounding British identity and its imperial dimension, see Elleke Boehmer's anthology of writings from the period, including fiction, poetry, speeches and essays: Elleke Boehmer, ed., *Empire Writing: An Anthology of Colonial Literature, 1870-1918* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

order to do so it is to the work of Anderson, Gellner, and Smith that this introduction now turns.

Models of National Identity: Anderson, Gellner, and Smith

Nationality or 'nation-ness', claims Benedict Anderson,

> as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind. To understand them properly we need to consider carefully how they have come into historical being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy. [...T]he creation of these artefacts towards the end of the eighteenth century was the spontaneous distillation of a complex 'crossing' of discrete historical forces.[2]

The rise of nations and nation-ness, then, is historically specific – Anderson dates it to the end of the eighteenth century. The *idea* of a nation, therefore, is something relatively new, traceable to a more or less exact historical period stemming back to the Age of Enlightenment. Yet, despite the relative modernity of the concept of nationhood, the claim made by nationalists is that the nation itself has a history tracing back through the ages. Anthony D. Smith, describing the 'myth' of nationalism, observes that '[c]entral to this myth is the idea that nations exist from time immemorial'.[3] It is a curious tension that the history of nations may be relatively short but a nation's history dates back many centuries. Smith, Anderson, and Gellner have noted how nationalists have tried to reconcile this tension through use of images of national (re)awakening. 'In Europe,' notes Anderson, 'the new nationalisms almost immediately began to imagine themselves as "awakening from sleep"'.[4] Gellner likewise describes how '[n]ationalism sees itself as a natural and universal ordering of the political life of mankind, only obscured by that long, persistent and mysterious somnolence.'[5]

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[2] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn (London and New York: Verso, 2006), p. 4.

[3] Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), p. 19.

[4] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 195.

[5] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 47. See also the continuation of the Smith quotation, above, that 'nations exist from time immemorial, and that nationalists must reawaken them from a long slumber to take their place in a world of nations' (Smith, *National Identity*, pp. 19-20).

Nationalists and subsequent scholars of nationalism, then, are always having to straddle

the boundary between the old and the new, between tradition and modernity. Within

every modern nation is the trace of an ancient past. As every modern nation constructs

its narrative of progress there is always a backward look to its roots in bygone ages. The

mythical, sometimes (as in the case of Arthur Machen) ghostly, sight glimpsed by that

glance over the shoulder can be a source of comfort, inspiration, and sometimes terror,

which serves to drive the momentum of the nation on in its inexorable surge forward.

This seemingly contradictory tension could also be described as one between the politics

and the culture of nationhood. Anderson's famous definition of the nation as 'an

imagined political community' identifies nations as explicitly political entities.[6] Gellner,

likewise, opens his study *Nations and Nationalism* with the declaration that '[n]ationalism is

primarily a political principle, which holds that the national unit should be congruent'

and that '[n]ationalism as a sentiment, or as a movement, can best be defined in terms of

this principle.'[7] Though there are plenty of examples of stateless nations or nationalisms,

the establishment of the nation as a political body is often a primary cocnern of

nationalist movements. '[N]ationalism', as Anthony D. Smith notes, 'is an ideology of the

nation, not the state'; he proceeds to describe how

> [m]any Catalan, Scots and Flemish nationalists have been more concerned with
> home rule and cultural parity in a multinational state than with outright
> independence (though there are some nationalists who want outright
> independence in all these cases).[8]

We could add the Welsh (and particularly the London-Welsh) nationalists of the late-

nineteenth century to Smith's list; indeed, the Home Rule and Disestablishment debates

of the late-Victorian period, as will be discussed below, could be interpreted as an early

indication of a fraught relationship between Wales and Welsh nationalists on the one

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[6] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 6.

[7] Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 1.

[8] Smith, *National Identity*, p. 74.

hand and the English/British state on the other. This relationship was to be debated throughout the twentieth century and, indeed, with the establishment of a National Assembly for Wales, into the twenty first. This political drive, identified by Anderson and Gellner, can be viewed in terms of the nation's move forward; the establishment of political or civic institutions can be read in terms of the nation's narrative of progress.

Yet in this very move forward is the inescapable presence of the past traditions and cultures which are invoked as a symbol of nationhood. Smith proposes that, according to his 'Western model' of national identity, 'nations were seen as culture communities, whose members were united, if not made homogeneous, by common historical memories, myths, symbols and traditions.'[9] Smith suggests that 'the notion that every nation must have its own state is a common, but not a necessary, deduction from the core doctrine of nationalism' and it tells us that 'nationalism is primarily a cultural doctrine or, more accurately, a political ideology with a cultural doctrine at its centre'.[10] The nation, according to Smith's Western model, is a participatory, civic entity in which it is the invocation of myths and customs connected with the nation's past which galvanises a population and provides inspiration for the nation's future. The mythical past of the nation, and the important role it plays in the formation of the nation's future, is a tension at the heart of each national identity: the mythic past is often called upon as a source of common, ethnic ancestry, yet this is always complicated by the civic, participatory, performative nature of modern nationalism in which anyone can perform, construct, or imagine themselves as belonging to a given nation. Smith marries the tension between civic and ethnic modes of national identity by means of what he calls ethnic communities, or *ethnies*, which are defined by:

1. a collective proper name
2. a myth of common ancestry

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[9] Smith, *National Identity*, p. 11.
[10] Smith, *National Identity*, p. 74.

3. shared historical memories
4. one or more differentiating elements of common culture
5. an association with a specific 'homeland'
6. a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population.[11]

According to the model of the *ethnie*, all nationalisms are to some degree cultural nationalisms. As a 'political ideology with a cultural doctrine at its centre', nationalism always negotiates, and indeed constructs, the influence of the past on the present historical moment. To borrow terms used by Raymond Williams, and discussed at greater length later, all emergent nationalisms (often contesting against a dominant ideology) are dependent on the influence of residual cultural forces. Smith notes how '[i]t is the attachments and associations, rather than residence in or possession of the land that matters for ethnic identification. [...] It is [...] a sacred land, the land of our forefathers, our lawgivers, our kings and sages, poets and priests, which makes this our homeland. We belong to it, as much as it belongs to us.'[12] As the next chapter will argue, for Rhys, the Welsh language and a sense of Welsh history – particularly a literary and cultural history – constitute these markers of identification. Smith and others suggest that linking the residual and the emergent modes of identity – the forward- and backward-looking elements of the nationalist ideology – is a task which falls to nationalist intellectuals, an elite intelligentsia. Describing nationalism as 'a language and symbolism', Smith notes that it

> begins as an élite phenomenon in which intellectuals play a preponderant role. It is not, however, the same as either nationalist ideology or national sentiment. A nationalist language and symbolism is broader than an ideology or ideological movement; it often connects that ideology with the 'mass sentiments' of wider segments of the designated population, notably through slogans, ideas, symbols and ceremonies. At the same time nationalist language and symbolism span both the cognitive and expressive dimensions, linking up with broader aspirations and feelings among both élites and wider strata. Notions of autonomy and authenticity and symbols of self-reliance and of natural community [...] exemplify the fusion of cognitive and expressive aspects and the links with wider sentiments and aspirations. The feeling for authenticity to be found among the exponents of the Gaelic Revival in late nineteenth-century Ireland, with its stress on native sports,

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[11] Smith, *National Identity*, p. 21.
[12] Smith, *National Identity*, p. 23.

nature, local crafts and ancient pagan heroes, illustrates the diffusion of the new language and symbolism of Irish nationalism.[13]

As well as that between imagined past and projected future, a further tension which nation-builders need to negotiate is that between the ultimately elitist ideological objectives of a nationalist movement and the wider support base targeted by that ideology upon which any political movement depends: it is the tension, or interaction, between what Smith here calls the 'cognitive and expressive dimensions'. The cognitive represents the ideological element of a nationalist movement, the setting out of a nation's aspirations. The expressive element manifests itself through those practices – 'slogans, ideas, symbols and ceremonies' – which appeal to, and are practised by, the wider demographic. This is the group whose actions bring the nation into being: it is significant that Smith's description of their actions – their 'ideas', 'symbols', ceremonies' and, in the case of late-nineteenth-century Irish nationalism, their participation in 'native sports' and 'local crafts' – are notably performative actions. The nation is brought into being by the action of this wider group.

Smith and Anderson note the importance of language in this development. Anderson observes that 'nothing connects us affectively to the dead more than language',[14] and gives an example of the kind of ceremony described by Smith:

> Take national anthems, for example, sung on national holidays. No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance.[15]

While a nation must be imagined by intellectuals and creative elements, it must be performed by a broader body: the singing of a national anthem brings the nation into being in the act of its performance, uniting people 'unknown to each other' in the kind of

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[13] Smith, *National Identity*, p. 73.
[14] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 145.
[15] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 145.

ceremony to which Smith refers. Anderson also places particular emphasis on the temporal element of such performances. Not only does the singing of a national anthem link all those – known and unknown to each other – who are singing it in the present (the 'experience of simultaneity') but also to all of those people, in the past and in the future, who have or will ever sing the anthem. As Anderson suggests, it is an affective connection to the dead, but also to the as-yet-unborn. Arthur Machen's ghostly Welsh border country is a reminder of the spectral dimension of this contract with the dead and unborn. Coining the neologism 'unisonance', Anderson suggests that the nation comes into being by singing from the same song-sheet. Similarly, Gellner argues that

> [i]t is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round. Admittedly, nationalism uses the pre-existing, historically inherited proliferation of cultures or cultural wealth, though it uses them very selectively, and it most often transforms them radically. Dead languages can be revived, traditions invented, quite fictitious pristine purities restored.[16]

The intellectuals of a nation 'revive' or 'invent' a wider mass whose actions are brought into line with the newly emergent sense of national identity. Nations are 'forged' in the sense that they are produced, constructed or fashioned, but are also 'forged' in the sense that nations are a kind of forgery or fabrication. This is the pun intended by Linda Colley in the title of her famous study of British national identity, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (1992).[17] As the following chapter will show in a Welsh context, Rhys's *Readings in Welsh History* shows precisely the ways in which the national fabric is also a national fabrication. Gellner, however, is anxious to anticipate and quickly counter the latter connotation by arguing that

> this culturally creative, fanciful, positively inventive aspect of nationalist ardour ought not to allow anyone to conclude, erroneously, that nationalism is a contingent, artificial, ideological invention, which might not have happened, if only those damned busy-body interfering European thinkers, not content to leave well

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[16] Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 54.
[17] See Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

alone, had not concocted it and fatefully injected it into the bloodstream of otherwise viable political communities.[18]

Nations, as we have seen, can exist without a state, so the foundation for an emergent nationalism must be something other than the explicitly political. Alongside the contribution of creative artists – the 'poets, musicians, painters, sculptors, novelists, historians and archaeologists, playwrights, philologists, anthropologists and folklorists' – Smith notes how '[t]he ideology and cultural core doctrine of nationalism may also be ascribed to social philosophers, orators and historians [...] each elaborating elements fitted to the situation of the particular community for which he spoke.'[19] Indeed, Smith argues that '[t]here is a mass of evidence for the primary role of intellectuals, both in generating cultural nationalism and in providing the ideology, if not the early leadership, of political nationalism.'[20] By this account intellectuals are able to position themselves as both members and builders of the nation: through the creative imagining and re-imagining of the nation in the work of artists, musicians, and writers, an idea of the nation comes into being. This is what makes it possible, using Anderson's phrase, to '"think" the nation'.[21]

This thesis sets out to consider the various ways in which symbols, traditions, myth, and language are constructed in relation to Wales in the work of Rhys, Machen, Davies, and Evans. This is not to argue that each of these four writers was a nation-builder (Rhys is the only figure among them to advance an overt cultural nationalism in his work). Rather, taken together, their works attest to an emergent Welsh consciousness which gains momentum in the early years of the twentieth century. Williams's thinking about the interaction of residual, dominant, and emergent ideological currents within a society can

[18] Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 54-55.
[19] Smith, *National Identity*, p. 93.
[20] Smith, *National Identity*, p. 94.
[21] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 22.

shed light on the precise nature of the use of national myth, language, and symbol in

London-Welsh writing, and it is to Williams that this introduction now turns.

Raymond Williams and the Residual, Dominant, and Emergent Cultural Modes

The ideas of the Welsh cultural and literary critic Raymond Williams concerning the

interplay of residual and emergent ideologies within a society or period offer a theoretical

framework to consider Welsh writing in London around the turn of the twentieth

century. In *Culture and Society* (1958), Williams traces the history of the word 'culture', and

how it acquired new signification from the end of the eighteenth century and onward

during the nineteenth century. Williams notes that

> [b]efore this period, it [culture] had meant, primarily, the 'tending of natural
> growth', and then, by analogy, a process of human training. But this latter use,
> which had usually been a culture *of* something, was changed, in the eighteenth and
> early nineteenth century, to *culture* as such, a thing in itself.[22]

Later in the book, Williams notes that '[w]here *culture* meant a state or habit of mind, or

the body of intellectual and moral activities, it means now, also, a whole way of life.'[23]

Williams's achievement in *Culture and Society* was to place the ideas and works of writers

and intellectuals at the heart of his analysis: explaining his methodology, Williams

declares that the study of culture is 'committed to the study of actual language: that is to

say, to the words and sequences of words which particular men and women have used in

trying to give meaning to their experience. [...] The framework of the inquiry is general,

but the method, in detail, is the study of actual individual statements and contributions.'[24]

Williams's description of his own critical methodology is indicative of an attitude toward

culture which places works by individual writers, thinkers, artists, and intellectuals at the

very core of cultural analysis. Overarching social trends – what Williams calls in his 1977

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[22] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, in association with Chatto and Windus, 1962), p. 16. Italics retained.
[23] Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 18. Emphasis in original.
[24] Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 18.

book *Marxism and Literature* 'epochal analysis'[25] – are always underpinned by the works of

individual thinkers and intellectuals. In a chapter entitled 'Dominant, Residual, and

Emergent', Williams argues that

> The complexity of a culture is to be found not only in its variable processes and
> their social definitions – traditions, institutions, and formations – but also in the
> dynamic interrelations, at every point in the process, of historically varied and
> variable elements. In what I have called 'epochal' analysis, a cultural process is
> seized as a cultural system, with determinate dominant features: feudal culture or
> bourgeois culture or a transition from one to the other. This emphasis on
> dominant and definitive lineaments and features is important and often, in practice,
> effective. But it then often happens that its methodology is preserved for the very
> different function of historical analysis, in which a sense of movement within what
> is ordinarily abstracted as a system is crucially necessary, especially if it is to
> connect with the future as well as with the past.[26]

It is important to clarify Williams's terms here. His thesis seeks to qualify and complicate

this kind of 'epochal' analysis, which implicitly assumes historical periods of social stasis,

when social factors do not change and remain conveniently calm and unaltered. Such an

assumption, Williams argues, is a myth: history is a narrative which is always changing

and in flux. As Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle have noted, we now recognise that

'history is the "history of the present", that history is in the making, that, rather than

being monumental and closed, history is radically open to transformation and

rewriting.'[27] According to this argument, history is itself textual and alive, comprised of

narrative(s) always in the process of being written and rewritten. It is merely for ease of

reference that the 'variable processes' of a culture are given as 'social definitions': it is a

fallacy, however, to consider these demarcations as anything other than conventional and

convenient.

Williams grapples with the tension between the 'social definitions' ascribed to cultural

processes and trends and the internal tensions and flux existing within them. Williams's

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[25] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) p. 121.
[26] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 121.
[27] Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, 'History', in *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, 3rd edn (Harlow: Pearson Longman 2004), pp. 113-23 (p. 115).

intervention identifies how dominant ideologies are often in a state of flux with residual ideas drawn from the past, and emergent, waxing ideas giving on to the future. Abstracting a culture to the level of a 'system', suggests Williams, loses the 'movement within that system', not only in terms of analysis of the particular culture in a particular place at a particular time, but also in that it loses the element of historical comparison connecting a culture to its past and its future. Inevitably, a given period will be misrepresented on two counts: firstly, such a methodology will fail to take into account the relationship between a given period or society and those which immediately precede or follow it; secondly, the internal tensions and 'movement' within that period are often overlooked as a consequence of this shorthand method of cultural historiography. Though accepting its usefulness from time to time, Williams, in effect, warns against the temptation, in breaking history down into manageable periodisation, to overlook more sweeping and overarching historical trends.

To counter this tendency, Williams perceives the presence of what he terms residual and emergent categories within a dominant culture. If the dominant cultural mode of a society consists of the way of life of the majority of its members, the residual and the emergent categories cover the cultural activities of those other members separate from it. No period is ever free from the influences and precedents of that which has gone before, nor is it unattached to the historical period it gives on to: it is always wrapped up in the sweeping and forward-rushing trajectory of history.

Williams associates the residual modes of culture within a society with that society's past, suggesting that, though similar and difficult to distinguish in practice, the 'residual' is distinct from the 'archaic' and that

> [a]ny culture includes available elements of its past, but their place in the contemporary cultural process is profoundly variable. I would call 'archaic' that which is wholly recognized as an element of the past, to be observed, to be

examined, or even on occasion to be consciously 'revived', in a deliberately specializing way. What I mean by the 'residual' is very different. The residual, by definition, has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present. [...] Again, the idea of rural community is predominantly residual, but is in some limited respects alternative or oppositional to urban industrial capitalism, though for the most part it is incorporated, as idealization or fantasy, or as an exotic – residential or escape – leisure function of the dominant order itself.[28]

By this reckoning, the residual is distinct from the archaic in that, though both are conceived of as being in the past, the residual is 'still active in the present'. That which is archaic seems for Williams to be a closed entity, wholly of the past and there to be observed, examined, and studied: the archaic is a closed book in so far as it has ceased to exert influence in the present. Conversely, the residual, though it is connected with the past, it is not wholly *of* the past. Williams cites the invocation of the rural community as a 'predominantly residual' cultural idea, but warns against the view that the idea of the rural is oppositional or alternative to modern, dominant urban industrial capitalism; on the contrary, the residual nature of the rural community is present within, and constituent of, that very industrial capitalist mode. Each of the four London-Welsh writers considered in this thesis negotiates between a rural Wales, which often corresponds to Williams's notion of the residual, and a dominant modern, metropolitan city. Rhys's Wales is romanticised and mythologised, imbued with historical and literary associations. Machen's Welsh border country is a landscape haunted by the ghosts of the Celtic and Roman past. Davies's poetry depicts a Wales associated with the past which is the obverse of, or even an alternative to, the corruption of the city. Evans also brings residual and dominant together in his writing: indeed, it could be argued that the formal experimentations of *My People* (1915) and its antecedent texts deal with a residual cultural formation (Nonconformist rural Wales) in an experimental, innovative style which can be categorised as emergent.

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[28] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 122.

Williams's argument, as borne out by the works of these four writers, indicates that it is a fallacy to consider residual, dominant, and emergent ideas as being oppositional to each other. The residual, says Williams, is always 'incorporated' into the dominant order: indeed, the residual is always a necessary component of any so-called dominant formation. The dominant, in this regard, is always and inevitably Janus-headed, both forward- and backward-looking, and it is the residual element within it which represents this backward-looking trait.

The dominant cultural mode, then, in order to ensure its continued existence (and, indeed, its continued dominance), must, suggests Williams, actively incorporate residual and emergent elements; in order to 'make sense' of these areas, it is essential to acknowledge the play of difference between a dominant culture and the residual and emergent components. Williams implies a sense of competition or contestation between the various cultural modes: the dominant culture makes room for the residual and emergent components with an element of risk; further, its dominance over the residual and emergent is one of neglect, undervaluation, opposition, or lack (or refusal of) recognition. As such, the final sentence from Williams quoted above, describing the ways in which the dominant mode exerts its domination over the residual, is also a description of an imperialist mentality. Matthew Arnold's writings on Celtic literature, as will become clear, are emblematic of the relationship between the dominant of a society and its residual components. Arnold embodies values of British imperialism, and, while acknowledging (and even celebrating) the continued presence of a residual Celtic strain, nevertheless seeks to control that strain (by wishing for the demise of the Welsh language, for example) and incorporate it into a dominant British ideology.

Such a methodology can be useful when read alongside the works of theorists of national identity.[29] Williams's approach, linking literary studies with cultural analysis, bears witness to the significant role of the intellectual and the creative artist in the project of forming and influencing a sense of national identity, or imagining the nation. Anthony Smith notes that nations can be read as 'culture communities, whose members were united, if not made homogeneous, by common historical memories, myths, symbols and traditions';[30] culture can be interpreted as both 'the general body of the arts' in its specific uses, but also, more broadly, as the 'whole way of life' of a given society.[31] Thus, culture can be considered as the artistic or moral element of a society, or indeed can be used as a term to describe that society as a whole.

(Residual) Myths of National Identity

Williams's thinking about the interplay of residual, dominant, and emergent cultural forces is a useful prism through which to consider the development of nationalist movements, and the forging of national identities. Smith has defined a nation as '*a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members.*'[32] Smith's is an attempt to achieve the problematic and difficult task of defining the nation, and it is no surprise that this definition consists of multiple phrases; indeed, the variety of different and differing considerations contained in this definition plays out on a syntactical level the complex and diverse process of forging national identity: territory, memory,

[29] Hywel Dix has demonstrated the usefulness of Williams's thinking to a study of national identity. Indeed, Dix's argument historicises Williams's work – including both his fiction and his academic writing – in the context of Welsh devolution and (borrowing from the title of Tom Nairn's book), *The Break-Up of Britain*. See Hywel Dix, *After Raymond Williams: Cultural Materialism and the Break-Up of Britain* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008).

[30] Smith, *National Identity*, p. 11.

[31] Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 16.

[32] Smith, *National Identity*, p. 14. Emphasis in original.

population, myth, history, culture, economy, and law are all contained within the designation 'nation'. Gellner argues that

> [i]n fact, nationalism has a Janus-like quality. It is Promethean in its contempt for political compromise which ignores the nationalist imperative. But it is also anti-Promethean, when it sees the nation and its cultural development as something which, just because it is concrete and historically specific, rightly overrides the abstract morality of the internationalists and humanists.[33]

Forward- and backward-looking, Promethean and anti-Promethean, open- and closed-minded: nationalism, according to this description, is an ideology riddled with tensions and paradoxes. Always engaged in two projects at once, nationalism is an interplay between residual and emergent: the backward-looking use of the residual often negotiates its position in contradistinction to the forward-looking impulse of the emergent.

This is why the rhetoric of nationalism so often makes use of the image of reawakening:

> [...] the nation stands at the centre of one of the most popular and ubiquitous myths of modern times: that of nationalism. Central to this myth is the idea that nations exist from time immemorial, and that nationalists must reawaken them from a long slumber to take their place in a world of nations. The hold of the nation lies [...] partly in the promise of the nationalist salvation drama itself. But this power is often immeasurably increased by the living presence of traditions embodying memories, symbols, myths and values from much earlier epochs in the life of a population, community or area.[34]

Smith indicates that if humanity is to organise itself at the present moment around the ideological construct of the nation then it is important for that idea to be grounded in history. Nationalists conceive of their nation as a self-evident, historic, eternal entity, and thus are preoccupied with the task of fashioning that idea with an ancient and noble past stemming from 'time immemorial'. Awakening from a long slumber is a convenient metaphor in order to endow the nation with a fresh and new dynamism while also maintaining a history and an origin: in effect, it combines residual and emergent cultural modes, giving the nation a forward-moving impetus while always preserving a backward

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[33] Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 127.
[34] Smith, *National Identity*, pp. 19-20.

look over the shoulder. Such a situation, such interplay of forces and powers, can be projected onto Matthew Arnold's construction of the figure of the Celt within his own, dominant, British imperial period.

Matthew Arnold's Residual Celticity

The association of Wales with the past is one which has been made over the generations by numerous writers, working from politically disparate perspectives. It is certainly a topic discussed by each of the four writers considered in this thesis. For example, on the one hand, Rhys celebrates Welsh history in romantic and mythologised terms; on the other, Evans's work is a violent rejection of the notion of the romanticised peasantry. Williams's concept of the residual currents, drawn from the past yet still at work within the dominant ideological climate of the present, can help bring together writers who are on the surface radically opposed. At the turn of the twentieth century, though, much of the writing about Wales engages (explicitly or otherwise) with an important mid-Victorian paradigm for thinking about Welsh and – especially – Celtic identity: Matthew Arnold's *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, published in 1867. Such was the impact of Arnold's argument that its influence can still be detected in much of the Welsh writing in English of the twentieth century. A brief glance at Arnold's text, alongside a famous poem by one of the inheritors of the tradition of Welsh writing in English, illustrates this influence:

> There is no present in Wales,
> And no future;
> There is only the past,
> Brittle with relics,
> Wind-bitten towers and castles
> With sham ghosts [...][35]

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[35] R. S. Thomas, 'Welsh Landscape', in *Collected Poems 1945-1990* (London: Phoenix, 2000), p. 37.

> On this side, Wales — Wales, where the past still lives, where every place has its tradition, every name its poetry, and where the people, the genuine people, still knows this past, this tradition, this poetry, and lives with it, and clings to it [...].[36]

The extracts from these two texts, while no doubt occupying opposite ends of the political and ideological spectrum, both associate Wales with the past. More specifically, it is a mythical or mythologized past: for the twentieth-century Welsh poet R. S. Thomas, Wales is a place of 'relics' and 'ghosts', 'towers' and 'castles', while for Arnold it sustains (and, in some ways, is sustained by) 'the past', 'tradition', and 'poetry'. Thomas is endeavouring to write from an insider's perspective; his tone is bitterly ironic, his language as spare and bleak as the landscape he describes. Arnold's tone is altogether different; constructing a persona of a visitor looking at Wales from an outsider's point of view, his tone of interest and curiosity nevertheless retains an air of superiority over that which he observes. For Arnold, the intangibles — the past, the tradition, the poetry — clearly hold a strong degree of interest. Eventually, however, this spirit should, according to Arnold's argument, fuse and subsume into the dominant English and English-speaking culture he can be seen to represent — and the sooner the better. Indeed, Thomas's poem, published over eight decades later than Arnold's Celtic Lectures, can be read as a riposte and a rejection of the romanticized depiction of Wales the lectures contain. The past, tradition, and poetry of which Arnold speaks so affectionately (yet perhaps condescendingly) are, according to Thomas, 'brittle', and 'sham'.

To borrow from another of Thomas's poems, the picture-postcard (as presented, verbally, by Arnold's account of the sea-front at Llandudno) holds an appeal for the mass; it is the poem, as a form, which tells of the 'harsher conditions'.[37] This extract from the opening of the Celtic lectures sees Arnold describing the north-Wales coastline, with its castles and traditions and peasantry. In the same passage we see Arnold wishing that

[36] Matthew Arnold, On the Study of Celtic Literature (1867; London and Toronto: Dent, 1910), pp. 13-14.
[37] R. S. Thomas, 'Reservoirs', in Collected Poems 1945-1990, p. 194.

'[t]he sooner the Welsh language disappears as an instrument of the practical, political, social life of Wales, the better; the better for England, the better for Wales itself.'[38] It seems that Thomas may have been observing Arnold's sea-side perambulations, as the speaker of his poem 'Reservoirs' observes:

> [...] I have walked the shore
> For an hour and seen the English
> Scavenging among the remains
> Of our culture, covering the sand
> Like the tide and, with the roughness
> Of the tide, elbowing our language
> Into the grave that we have dug for it.[39]

Both Thomas and Arnold establish a link between Welsh culture and identity and the Welsh language. In both texts, the Welsh language is presented as a link – a performance or an embodiment – of Welsh identity. Arnold's view is that Welsh identity be modified through a change in that language: it is, he claims, better for all concerned that Welsh be done away with so that Wales and Welsh identity be absorbed within an English-speaking British Empire. Arnold's contributionist agenda, whereby Wales is brought completely under the control and provision of the British Empire, is envisaged in terms of a linguistic cultural shift from Welsh to English.[40] This link between the political and the cultural, when considered in terms of its relationship to national identity, is rejected by Thomas's 'Reservoirs', a poem which portrays the presence of 'the English' – the people and the language, perhaps – on the Welsh coastline as a menace and a threat to Welsh identity. The extermination of the Welsh language is overseen, however, not only by 'the English' but also by those contributionist Welsh who embody Arnold's *Celtic Literature* ideal yet are also responsible for digging the grave of the Welsh language. For Thomas, at

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[38] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 20.

[39] Thomas, 'Reservoirs', p. 147.

[40] Ned Thomas has theorised the notion of Welsh complicity with the British imperial project by describing the notion of contributionism, whereby Welsh identity is safely harnessed by a broader British state ideology. See Ned Thomas, *The Welsh Extremist* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 1971). For another account of Arnold and Wales see Emyr Humphreys, 'Arnold in Wonderland', in *Miscellany Two* (Brigend: Poetry Wales Press, 1981), pp. 81-99.

least, Welsh identity within a larger 'English'(-speaking) culture ceases to be Welsh identity. In this regard, Thomas's poetry is not so far removed from the Arnoldian position, in that it establishes a clear link between the Welsh language and a distinctive Welsh identity. Arnold's wish for the disappearance of that language is intended in order that Wales become more fully integrated within an English-speaking British Empire. Thomas, on the other hand, sees Welsh identity and the Welsh language as inextricably linked; to change the nature of one is to lose the other. Arnold's Celt is sentimental, a character 'so eager for emotion that he has not patience for science': Celticity, for Arnold at least, is characterized by precisely this intangible and affective tendency.[41] If Celticity is to be read in terms of its mythic properties, its connections with sentiment, poetry and the past, it can also be considered as what Williams describes as a residual cultural force.

For Arnold, Wales is the country 'where the past still lives',[42] and it becomes increasingly clear that the Wales imagined by Arnold is an enclave of residual cultural force. The past still lives, 'every place has its tradition, every name its poetry, and [...] the people, the genuine people, still knows this past, this tradition, this poetry, and lives with it, and clings to it.'[43] As well as linking Wales with a mythic, traditional past, this passage also represents a search for authenticity. Arnold is keen to assert that the Welsh Celt is of a 'genuine' people: Arnold's move West into Wales is a quest for an essential and authentic identity, an identity which, perhaps, has been lost or modified. Arnold valorises this Celtic genuineness at the same time as he calls for that Celticity to be incorporated into a larger imperial entity.

Nevertheless, as far as Arnold is able to discern, the 'people' of Wales still seeks to cling to the tradition and poetry of its past. No doubt it is important to note that the Celtic

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[41] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, pp. 82-83. It is in the fourth lecture that Arnold speculates most fully on the nature of the 'Celtic Genius'. See *Celtic Literature*, pp. 78-91.

[42] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 14.

[43] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 14.

people are conceived as a unified single entity, described in the singular: Arnold's genuine

people 'clings' to its past. His writing comes at a period when the technological progress

represented by the Industrial Revolution was advancing in rapid strides. Similarly, the

British Imperial project was accelerating towards the peak of its influence. It is in the face

of a rapidly industrialising and globalising world that Arnold writes, and it is tempting to

read his admiration for the unified and essential (or essentialised) character of the Celt as

a search for a fixed point of reference in an ever-changing world. In the context of the

relentless and unstoppable, forward-hurtling momentum of his society as he perceives it,

Arnold's attempt to apply the brake comes by means of a look to the past, with the figure

of the Celt identified as its most suitable and representative embodiment.

Applying Arnold's Celt to the theory proposed by Raymond Williams is an illuminating

process as it demonstrates, before the reader's eyes, it would seem, the 'internal dynamic

relations' of Arnold's 'actual' historical process.[44] Williams offers 'bourgeois culture' as an

example of a 'significant' generalizing description and hypothesis'[45] – of what we might

describe, following Williams, as the dominant cultural and social mode in which Arnold

writes. Yet, as we see from the *Celtic Literature* lectures, present within these dominant

formations is a significant, and haunting, link with the past, established through the

figure of the Celt. If the dominant cultural and social mode at Arnold's time of writing is

that of an industrial capitalism underpinned by an influential and burgeoning ('Philistine',

to use Arnold's own phrase[46]) middle class, then Arnold's study of Celtic literature, and

his desire for the Celt to be incorporated into that dominant mode, is in effect a study in

[44] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 121.
[45] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 121.
[46] Arnold argues in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) that 'the term Philistine conveys a sense which makes it more peculiarly appropriate to our middle class than to our aristocratic. For *Philistine* gives the notion of something particularly stiff-necked and perverse in the resistance to light and its children, and therein it specially suits our middle class, who not only do not pursue sweetness and light, but who prefer to them that sort of machinery of business [...] which makes up the dismal and illiberal life on which I have so often touched.' See Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism*, ed. by Samuel Lipman ([1869] London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 68. Emphasis in original.

the residual element present within it. The tradition to which Arnold's 'genuine' Welsh 'clings' is the presence of that residual element within that society, a particularly important step, it would seem, especially when considering that residual element in opposition to the dominant norm.

Indeed, throughout the course of his lectures on Celtic literature, Arnold uses words and expressions which call to mind the kind of terminology employed by Williams when theorising the interplay between residual, dominant, and emergent. Describing the story of Branwen, in the Second Branch of *The Mabinogion*, Arnold suggests that '[t]he very first thing that strikes one, in reading *The Mabinogion*, is how evidently the mediaeval story-teller is pillaging an antiquity of which he does not fully possess the secret; [...] he builds, but what he builds is full of materials of which he knows not the history, or knows by a glimmering tradition merely'.[47] Further, Arnold also suggests that, in 'Branwen', '[t]here is evidently mixed here, with the newer legend, a *detritus*, as the geologists would say, of something far older: and the secret of Wales and its genius is not truly reached until this *detritus*, instead of being called recent because it is found in contact with what is recent, is disengaged, and is made to tell its own story.'[48] Both extracts serve to connect the Celt with a mythical, but also a narratological, past. The medieval story-teller's 'pillaging' of an even older antiquity is indicative of how even medieval story-telling, as manifested by *The Mabinogion*, comprises an interplay between its own dominant cultural modes and the residual modes which pre-date it. This Welsh story-teller is characterised by the fact that he has not fully grasped the nature of his craft: the (Welsh) narrator, though clearly holding his craft as a very important component of that culture, does not grasp the full armoury of techniques, nor is he well enough versed in the history of the craft. Simultaneously, then, the Welsh are connected with both the act of story-telling and also

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[47] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 54.
[48] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 57.

by an ignorance of historical precedent which inhibits them from reaching their fullest potential. This is a deficiency that Welsh writers at the end of the nineteenth century will endeavour to correct, often with explicit references to Arnold's work.

Arnold's use of the metaphor of geology in the second quotation is as telling as the argument it is used to advance. As one of the Victorian sciences *par excellence*, geological enquiry into history and prehistory, its flora and fauna and its ancient societies, exploded in its impact and advancement during the nineteenth century. Victorian science can be read in terms of a society keen to understand and explain rationally the world around it, and the complex processes which contributed to the establishment of that world. This scientific enterprise can be read as being both constitutive and reflective of the same intellectual, social, and political climate which brought about the expansion of the British Empire. The greatest achievement of this intellectual climate, and the crowning achievement of Victorian science, was Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, published in 1859. The ordered, rational mindset, so strongly valorised by Arnold elsewhere in his writings, also precipitated a turn backwards towards society's ancestors. The dominant social mode – that of industrialism, rationality, progress – is underpinned by a backward glance at the ancient or pre-historic period: a residual and sometimes mythic past. The scientific method may belong to the dominant, but the object of the scientific study belongs firmly to the residual.

Nevertheless, Arnold's metaphor comparing the geologist's work with the process of reading and studying *The Mabinogion* is revealing. Arnold, by invoking the geological term '*detritus*' is positioning himself in the field of Victorian science while *The Mabinogion*, the object of his study, is positioned as the fossilised record of a previous civilization. If nothing else, *The Mabinogion* appear to represent the residual element within the dominant British culture espoused by Arnold from his Chair of Poetry at Oxford University.

Arnold discusses the 'formative pressures' acting on Welsh literature, from without and within, noting ultimately that '[i]t is this which he who deals with the Welsh remains in a philosophic spirit wants to know'.[49] The mention of 'the Welsh remains' is telling in this regard. The Welsh element within Arnold's object of study is present in a discernible, concrete way: Arnold is able to seek it out and identify it. Yet, when considering 'remains' as a verb rather than a noun, 'the Welsh remains' becomes a mini-narrative of its own. It is both an object in the present yet linked to the past: in Williams's terms, describing the 'residual', it 'has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present.'[50] What Arnold calls 'the Welsh remains', therefore, are both an object and a part of a broader historical process. The same effect can be discerned in Arnold's use of the word 'trace', when he notes, aghast, 'that anyone [...] should find in the Welsh remains no traces of mythology, is quite astounding.'[51] For Arnold, not only is there a trace of Welsh mythology, but, also, it is a mythology which can be traced. Indeed, the word '*detritus*' itself also carries connotations of a residue or a debris, a disintegrated waste – a residual trace.

It is also important to note the thrust of Arnold's argument at this point in the lectures by quoting the remainder of the paragraph in full:

> [...] the secret of Wales and its genius is not truly reached until this *detritus*, instead of being called recent because it is found in contact with what is recent, is disengaged, and is made to tell its own story.[52]

The detritus is the remains of that which is much older. In this, the second of his Celtic lectures, Arnold distinguishes between the orality and the literacy of Celtic literature as he understands it. Moreover, Arnold pays particular attention to the conflation of this oral

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[49] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 58.
[50] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 122.
[51] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 53.
[52] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 57.

tradition with literacy at the point these stories came to be written down in manuscript form. Arnold's contention is with the Celtic scholar D. W. Nash, who gives little credence to Celtic literature in any non-written form. Arnold's argument, in contradistinction to Nash, is that the first medieval Welsh manuscripts contain a mixture of the old, oral mythology, and an element of the contemporary. 'No doubt', says Arnold,

> one cannot produce the texts of the poetry of the sixth century; no doubt we have this only as the twelfth and succeeding centuries wrote it down; no doubt they changed it and mixed it a great deal in writing it down. But, since a continuous stream of testimony shows the enduring existence and influence among kindred Celts of Wales and Brittany, from the sixth to the twelfth, of an old national literature, it seems certain that much of this must be traceable in the documents of the twelfth century, and the interesting thing is to trace it.[53]

Arnold's enterprise, as a student of Celtic literature, is to separate the detritus from the more recent element. It is an exercise in identifying the residual, dominant, and emergent elements contained within the Celtic literature, and to separate one from the others. It is a synecdochic moment in the Celtic lectures: Arnold is attempting to isolate the older detritus, i.e. the oral culture dating from the sixth century but extant only in the twelfth-century manuscripts, from the more recent literary, textual element which the manuscripts of the twelfth century (and onwards) represent. On a broader level, Arnold's whole project, his study of Celtic literature, is an endeavour to isolate the older, mythical element present in nineteenth-century British culture and represented by the figure of the Celt. In a sense, Arnold is reading *The Mabinogion* in search of the residual elements it contains at the same time as he is searching for the residual element - i.e. the 'Celtic genius' – present within the dominant culture of his own mid-Victorian moment.

The above quotation from Arnold shows the processes at work within any culture along the lines of Williams's formulations concerning the residual, dominant, and emergent. Arnold characterises the Celtic world between the sixth and the twelfth centuries as a

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[53] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 48.

primarily oral culture: orality, it could be argued, was the dominant cultural mode of that period. Yet Arnold's epochal analysis sees him consider the trace of that older oral culture in his approach to the now-dominant literary cultural mode from the twelfth century onwards. It is a testament to the way these cultural forces are often in a state of flux.

The Celt is, for Arnold, a figure of enigmatic inscrutability. Arnold's famous objective, in his study of Celtic literature, is better

> to *know* the Celt and his genius; not to exalt him or to abase him, but to know him. And for this a disinterested, positive, and constructive criticism is needed.[54]

Arnold's formulation of a culture of 'Sweetness and Light' clearly does not illuminate the Celt very clearly.[55] Seeking 'to know' the Celt suggests that for Arnold the Celt and Celtic literature is a blind-spot in his cultural theory. Things Celtic seem to trouble Arnold's view on culture, as the Celt, as conceived by him, is associated with the unknown: he (for the Celt is unquestionably and always a 'he' for Arnold) is associated with mystery and the past. Indeed, in many ways the Celt embodies the problem of addressing the past in Arnold's study; how, by means of political and social criticism,[56] Arnold may arrive at a better understanding of the forces at work in the process of cultural formation.

Arnold continues his search for knowledge of the inscrutable and elusive Celtic genius by arguing that

> [i]t is not in the outward and visible world of material life that the Celtic genius of Wales or Ireland can at this day hope to count for much; it is in the inward world of thought and science. What it has been, what it has done, let it ask us to attend

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[54] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 61.

[55] 'Sweetness and Light', or beauty and intelligence, are the two components which make up Arnold's definition of culture, as set out in *Culture and Anarchy*. For Arnold's definition of culture, see particularly 'Sweetness and Light' and 'Doing as One Likes', in *Culture and Anarchy*, pp. 29-48 and pp. 48-66 respectively.

[56] *Culture and Anarchy* carries the subtitle *An Essay in Political and Social Criticism*.

to that as a matter of science and history; not what it will be or do, as a matter of modern politics.[57]

Arnold's Celt is clearly not a political animal, according to this description. Rather, the Celtic genius of Ireland and Wales is connected again to the past: past achievements and past status. Arnold's claim is that this element, this 'Celtic genius', belongs to the 'inward' world of thought and science, and is incompatible with the 'outward', 'visible' worlds of 'modern politics' and 'material life'. The implications of this statement mean that, according to this formulation, the Celt is neither 'modern', 'political', nor 'material'; put another way, the Celt is archaic, connected with the past; he is incompatible with or unmatched to the modern political arena and he is altogether more elusive and abstract – mythical, perhaps – than the 'material life' of Arnold's day. This abstract, emotional nature, the opposite of 'material life', is described elsewhere in Arnold's lectures as a 'rebellion against fact':

> If his rebellion against fact has thus lamed the Celt even in spiritual work, how much more must it have lamed him in the world of business and politics! The skilful and resolute appliance of means to ends which is needed both to make progress in material civilization, and also to form powerful states, is just what the Celt has least turn for.[58]

This emotion, this 'sentiment', is what Arnold perceives to have 'lamed' the Celtic nations and inhibited their own self-development. Wales and Ireland, characterised by their 'rebelliousness', are clearly too emotional to survive and flourish in the altogether more thorough and hard-headed worlds of business and politics. Arnold continues, noting that 'as in material civilization he has been ineffectual, so has the Celt been ineffectual in politics. [...] For ages and ages the world has been constantly slipping, ever more and more, out of the Celt's grasp.'[59] Arnold's lionising of the values of the Anglo-Saxon is in contradistinction to his lamenting of the condition of the Celt. The relentlessness of his pontificating on things Celtic serves to prove, if nothing else, that,

[57] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, pp. 22-3.
[58] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, pp. 83-84.
[59] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, pp. 84-85.

for the Anglo-Saxon, British Imperial worldview which Arnold seeks to represent, Ireland and Wales constitute an unsettling influence. Though geographically peripheral, Ireland and Wales nevertheless obstruct the view from the Chair of Poetry at Oxford; indeed, the Celtic fringe makes that Chair of Poetry ever so slightly less comfortable to sit in. Arnold's position is one which clearly celebrates the rational, the logical, the material, and the imperial. It is little wonder, then, that the Celtic countries of the British Isles constitute a problem. Though he may invert the problem rhetorically, it is Arnold himself who is struggling to grasp – i.e., to both understand and possess – the Celt, at least as much as he claims that it is the Celts who are losing their grasp on (and of) the world.

The Celt is seen by Arnold as being altogether too emotional, sentimental – residual, even – to advance his claims in the forward-looking domain of politics:

> [H]is sensibility gives him a peculiarly near and intimate feeling of nature and the life of nature; here, too, he seems in a special way attracted by the secret before him, the secret of natural beauty and natural magic, and to be close to it, to half-divine it. [...] The Celt, undisciplinable, anarchical, and turbulent by nature, but out of affection and admiration giving himself body and soul to some leader, that is not a promising political temperament, it is just the opposite of the Anglo-Saxon temperament, disciplinable and steadily obedient within certain limits, but retaining an inalienable part of freedom and self-dependence [...].[41]

There is a tension in this extract between the values Arnold is seeking to espouse and the language he employs in order to do so. Despite clearly aligning himself with the Anglo-Saxon side of this dichotomy between Celt and Anglo-Saxon, Arnold's language is nevertheless inflected by emotion and sentiment: phrases such as 'intimate feeling of nature and the life of nature' and 'natural beauty and natural magic' are emblematic of the kind of language – allusive, sentimental, metaphorical – which Arnold attributes to Celtic culture. Arnold adopts the guise of the object of his study in order to criticise it. Taken to its fullest consequence, Arnold indicates in this passage that the Anglo-Saxon

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[41] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 86.

temperament he so valorises is itself inflected, even haunted, by the suggestion of Celticity.

Read alongside more contemporary theoretical engagements with the origins of nationalism and the rise of national identity, Arnold's formulations on the Celt, particularly as juxtaposed with the Anglo-Saxon, constitute a description of what Smith describes as the 'alignments of culture',[61] the 'values, symbols, traditions' represented by the Celt. Significant to Smith's ideas concerning national identity is the marriage between the civic, political operations of the nation and the cultural-historical myths which sustain it. The former is usually the domain of an intellectual elite, while the latter – mythical and symbolic – is the element of the nation preserved, sustained, and perpetuated by the population at large. Such common historical memories, rich with mythical, symbolic, and traditional associations (even when these 'myths, symbols and traditions'[62] are themselves invented or re-appropriated), are conveniently embodied in the figure of the Celt.

The London Welsh

Arnold's figuring of the Celt as an embodiment of myth and sentiment was highly influential at the time of his writing. Later in the nineteenth and early in the twentieth centuries, the figure of the Celt is revived and reconstructed. In keeping with the most well-used metaphor employed by nationalists of new nations, the Celt – and the nations which he comes to represent – is revived, woken from his slumber, at the same time as the nations of Wales and Ireland begin to move towards the establishment of their own nationalist movements. Put another way, the re-awakening of the Celt, and that of the nations he represents, coincide. At the end of the nineteenth and the start of the twentieth century, nationalists in both Wales and Ireland were making use of the figure

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[61] Smith, *National Identity*, p. 26.
[62] Smith, *National Identity*, p. 11.

of the Celt, reconstructing the Celt precisely along the lines of the connection between Celticism and a past stretching back over the centuries. In this regard it is both curious and significant that, in mid-century, Matthew Arnold, the embodiment of 'British' values and champion of the Anglo-Saxon genius, should engage himself in the project of 'knowing' the Celt. The period from Arnold's Celtic lectures onwards to the 'Construction of the Celt' by the likes of W. B. Yeats within the Irish context in the 1890s sees the Celt transformed and re-armed.[63] Arnold considered the Celt along the lines of Raymond Williams's 'residual' cultural mode: 'formed in the past, but [...] still active in the cultural process'.[64] In the intervening years between Arnold's lectures in the 1860s and the rise of Irish and Welsh cultural nationalism at the end of the century the Celt has indeed been re-appropriated, resurrected as an embodiment of young and forward-looking nationalist movements which nevertheless still maintain a claim to a rich history, tradition, and mythology. By the 1890s the Celtic revival shows that the residual has become emergent; indeed, the emergent cultural mode is always embedded in, and in some senses is traceable to, the influence of a residual culture.

London is a location of great importance in the refiguring of Celtic identity in the late-nineteenth century, and the contribution of writers and creative artists was crucial to this project. Daniel Williams identifies the importance of the condition of alienation and exile in the city to Yeats's appreciation of the sense of rootedness and belonging pertaining to Ireland.[65] Indeed, Williams argues that Yeats's Celticism 'can [...] be regarded as an aesthetic construct which sought to reconcile in the realm of art that which remained

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[63] 'Constructing the Celt' is a phrase used by Daniel G. Williams in the chapter 'W. B. Yeats: Celticism, Aestheticism and Nationalism', in *Ethnicity and Cultural Authority: From Arnold to Du Bois* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 121-75. For the section 'Constructing the Celt' see pp. 126-33.

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

[65] Williams notes that '[h]is periods in London certainly played an important role in the development of Yeats's Celticism'. See Williams, *Ethnicity and Cultural Authority*, p. 153.

unreconcilable in the realm of politics.[66] Welsh writing and politics experiences a similar

burgeoning at the same period, with London also providing an important impetus. The

political campaigns for Home Rule in both Wales and Ireland are accompanied in each

case with a flourishing of creative literature. Ernest Rhys, discussed in the first chapter of

this thesis, was, with Yeats, a prominent member of the Pan-Celtic movement, who

combined a romanticised depiction of Wales and its history with a contemporary attempt

to stir a sense of Welsh consciousness. Rhys's work, like Yeats's, can be read in terms of

the kind of cultural production which, according to Anderson and Smith, is so important

to the project of imagining the nation and fostering an emergent sense of national

identity.

The work of the other writers discussed in this thesis is by no means as patriotic as

Rhys's. The work of Arthur Machen, acquainted with each of the other writers

considered, imagines a Welsh border country imbued with historical and mythical

associations; though the Celtic past is an important and distinctive element of his work, it

is by no means exclusively a project of Celtic resurrection. While Davies produces what is

often an Edenic view of rural Wales, his writing is not motivated by the ideology of

political nationalism. Caradoc Evans's *My People* is a startling attack on the peasantry so

often celebrated by nationalists; his earlier work includes Welsh-based prototypes to the

My People stories and (like Davies) stories set in the London slums. Nevertheless, taken

together, the works of these four writers suggest that a Welsh writing in English is taking

shape at the turn of the twentieth century. The possibilities afforded the exiled Welsh

writer were by no means confined to these four figures: London-Welsh writing cannot in

any way be reduced to their work. Alongside theirs, all sorts of other London-Welsh

discourses emerge, from the scholarly writings of the Cymmrodorion (revived, in its third

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[66] Daniel Williams, *Ethnicity and Cultural Authority*, p. 152.

guise, in 1873 and still active today), to the journalism, essays, letters and literary contributions published in the *London Kelt* newspaper (founded in 1895 and published weekly until forced to cease by paper shortages brought on by the First World War), to the sermons and religious publications stemming from the vociferous London-Welsh chapels, to the Welsh political discourse of the *Cymru Fydd* movement. These writers provide a snapshot of London-Welsh cultural life. Indeed, the differences of form, content and politics among Rhys, Machen, Davies and Evans are in themselves a significant feature which attests to the differing and diverse senses of Welsh identity which were being constructed in London during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth.

Raymond Williams describes a 'structure of feeling' as a 'social experience which is still *in process*':[67] it is an idea, or an ideology, which awaits definition, or is in the process of taking shape. Indeed, it is often only after the structure of feeling has formed into an emergent movement that it can be identified as such. The various ways in which Rhys, Machen, Davies, and Evans relate, in their work, to an imagined Wales, indicate that London-Welsh identity is far from monolithic or unified. Yet, this diversity is the very force which makes possible the emergence of a new distinctive Welsh literature in English. This thesis argues that, with the hindsight afforded by a text like Evans's *My People* (published in 1915 and so often regarded as the foundation stone for the tradition of twentieth-century Welsh writing in English), it becomes possible to reassess the work of writers who came before as an important contribution to the development of a distinctive Welsh literature in the English language.

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[67] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 132. Emphasis in original.

Chapter One of this thesis looks at the work of Rhys, arguing that it constructs a romantic, mythologised Wales redolent with literary association: Rhys's writing takes residual features of Welsh history and culture (i.e. those drawn from the past) and endeavours to inject them with newly emergent possibilities. Rhys, as editor of the Everyman Library, actively brings Arnold back into focus by publishing *On the Study of Celtic Literature* in 1910. For Rhys, however, Welsh and Celtic culture and literature, represented as superstitious and irrational by Arnold's Celtic lectures, are re-invested with positive attributes of romance, myth and history.

As in Rhys's work, residual ideologies are also recouped and made newly emergent in the work of Arthur Machen, whose work is discussed in Chapter Two. Machen's reconfiguration of Celtic history, myth, and literature is different from Rhys's, though it shares an engagement with Arnold's thinking about the Celt. For Machen, the emotion and sentiment of Arnold's Celt is transformed to a mystical, mysterious, gothic presence: *The Hill of Dreams* (1907, but largely written in the 1890s), is a novel which re-imagines the Welsh border country, with its Celtic and Roman associations, in the context of *fin-de-siècle* decadence. While the Pan-Celticists revive Arnold's Celt for cultural nationalist ends, Machen harnesses its spectral qualities and indicates that subscribing to an 'imagined community' entails a ghostly communion with the dead and yet-unborn.

Chapter Three considers the work of Machen's fellow son of Gwent, W. H. Davies. Beginning with Gwyn Jones's tongue-in-cheek dismissal of Davies's nature poetry and *hiraeth*, it argues for a hybridity in Davies's work which is indicative of a sense of exile or rootlessness. While Wales and London are often contrasted in his work, they are also often overlaid; Davies's work suggests that notions of country and city, Wales and London, are co-dependent, with each carrying the trace of the other. The chapter

develops to argue that Davies's critique of the tyranny of organised religion over oppressed and impoverished people (such as that suggested in *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, published 1908) anticipates the critique of Nonconformity contained in Evans's work; Davies's super-tramp, and his nature poetry, represent both an escape from and, more significantly, a rejection of the oppressiveness of industrial capitalism and the metropolis.

Chapter Four concludes the thesis by looking for the first time in detail at the early work of Caradoc Evans published prior to *My People*. Like Davies's work, Evans's early 'Cockney' stories also contain the figure of the tramp; like *My People*, they also contain a critique of the Welsh peasantry and Nonconformity (although rendered in a more light-hearted tone). Evans's London stories – short, parabolic sketches – anticipate several of the features which were so distinctive in collections like *My People* and *Capel Sion* (1916): the family is often the site of oppression, particularly of women, and patriarchs are often hypocritical, violent men. Evans's tramp material links clearly with Davies's work, and Evans's published journalism reveals an admiration for Davies as a significant Welsh author. This early period in Evans's career is both a literary apprenticeship and also the next development of a Welsh literary structure of feeling written in English. With the publication of *My People*, this structure of feeling would gain momentum to become a distinctive emergent literary movement, as critical accounts of Welsh writing in English have described. It is at this point, therefore, that this study takes its leave. In this regard, this thesis is a prologue to history, and it is to the first of the shapers of that history, the great London-Welsh man of letters Ernest Rhys, that it now turns.

Chapter One
Ernest Rhys: London Kelticism

A Coat Covered With Embroideries Out of Old Mythologies

Gwyn A. Williams, by means of an epilogue to his study of Welsh history, *When Was Wales?* (1985), included R. S. Thomas's poem 'The Welsh Hill Country'. The poem itself is notoriously bleak in its depiction of the rural Welsh landscape, inverting romanticised stereotypes of Wales as a natural idyll: the grazing sheep 'at Bwlch-y-Fedwen/Arranged romantically in the usual manner' are in fact afflicted by '[t]he fluke and the foot-rot and the fat maggot/Gnawing the skin from the small bones'.[1] Published in the years of the 1984-5 Miners' Strike in Britain, Williams's 'History of the Welsh' paints a similarly bleak picture of the Welsh situation in its contemporary moment: the choice of Thomas's gothic landscape is consistent with the tone of Williams's conclusion, in which he suggests that the poem has outgrown its specific original target and, '[r]ead as metaphor, it now seems [...] to have wider significance'.[2] This wider significance lies behind Williams's famously pessimistic concluding sentence, in which he predicts that 'some kind of human society, though God knows what kind, will go on occupying these two western peninsulas of Britain', but that these people who have lived there 'as Welsh people [...] are now nothing but a naked people under an acid rain.'[3]

Elsewhere in that same concluding chapter, Williams identifies what might be described as a performative, or participatory, element of Welsh national identity as he perceives it:

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[1] R. S. Thomas, 'The Welsh Hill Country' in Gwyn A. Williams, *When Was Wales? A History of the Welsh* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 306. Thomas's poem had appeared in his collection *An Acre of Land* (Newtown: Montgomeryshire Printing Co., 1952).
[2] Williams, *When Was Wales?*, p. 306.
[3] Williams, *When Was Wales?*, p. 305.

Wales has always been now. The Welsh as a people have lived by making and remaking themselves in generation after generation, usually against the odds, usually within a British context. Wales is an artefact which the Welsh produce. If they want to. It requires an act of choice. [...]

In that Welsh making and remaking of themselves, a sense of history has been central. The Welsh or their effective movers and shapers have repeatedly employed history to make a useable past, to turn a past into an instrument with which a present can build a future. It was once done in terms of myth, is has been recently and can be done again in terms of history.[4]

Williams's conception of Wales testifies to what Benedict Anderson has described as the nation envisaged as an imagined political community.[5] Indeed, Williams's argument points to a number of factors which theorists of national identity have identified as commonly recurring elements in emergent nationalisms, as previously discussed. The above quotation points to how the idea of a nation is always historically specific; the nation is always a construct, produced under the influence of the specific historical, economic and social forces acting upon it. In suggesting that 'Wales has always been now', Williams indicates that the notion of Wales and Welshness has always been conditioned by specific influences acting upon its construction at various historical junctures. According to such a statement, there is no enduring, ahistorical or trans-historical kernel at the heart of the idea of Wales. Rather, Williams suggests that the nation, Wales, in its present state – 'now' – has always been a construct of successive generations of people who define themselves as Welsh: it 'has always been' so. As Benedict Anderson argues, 'nationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in light of that word's multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind'; that is to say, Anderson's concept of nation-ness is not primarily political.[6] Ernest Gellner's famous dictum that 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist',[7] holds true for

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[4] Williams, *When Was Wales?*, p. 304.
[5] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn (London and New York: Verso, 2006), p. 6.
[6] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 4.
[7] Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964), p. 169.

Gwyn A. Williams's notion of Wales. Similarly to both Williams and Anderson, Gellner's statement links the past and the present by means of the idea of the nation: nationalism simultaneously invents and appears to reawaken the nation (though, of course, the nation, and any notion of the reawakening of its greatness, are themselves products of contemporary nationalists and nation-builders).

A second, linked, factor discernible in Williams's evaluation of the Welsh condition is the constructedness of the Welsh nation as he sees it. Wales, argues Williams, is made and remade from generation to generation: Williams's is an appropriately industrial image given the context in which he was writing and the closure of heavy industry in Wales at the time. Wales, the 'artefact which the Welsh produce', is not so much mass produced as it is produced for the masses. Wales is made and remade as a participatory idea in which a model of Welshness is brought into being by a willed determination – the 'act of choice' – of those people who do and have identified themselves as Welsh. Wales is constructed by means of its own assertion, and a text like Gwyn A. Williams's 'History of the Welsh' is not so much a history of Welshness as it is a history of the use of the term. His analysis indicates that this willed assertion of Welshness is usually at odds or in conflict with a larger British sense of identity: the idea of Wales is pursued and continually reinvented or reinvested with meaning, against the odds, or against the prevailing order of a dominant British ideology. This assertion and reassertion of the idea of Welshenss against the grain of a more dominant imperial British ideology is the pattern as Williams sees it.

Difference from the dominant British-imperial ideology is what constitutes an essential marker of Welsh identity for Gwyn A. Williams. Gellner tallies the number of possible nations as always greater than the number of actual nations:

there is a very large number of potential nations on earth. Our planet also contains room for a certain number of independent or autonomous political units. On any reasonable calculation, the former number (of potential nations) is probably much, *much* larger than that of possible viable states. If this argument or calculation is correct, not all nationalisms can be satisfied, at any rate at the same time.'[8]

The very notion of nationhood, following Gellner's argument, is implicitly conscious of other nations: any given nation is always – directly or indirectly – aware of the existence of other nations against which it might be defined. In Gwyn A. Williams's reading of Welsh history, this is most often in opposition to Britishness.

Moira Dearnley has considered the fictional representations of Wales as a place of otherness, difference, and contradistinction in the literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Dearnley argues that in seventeenth-century pamphlets, chapbooks and songsheets '[t]he Welsh were ridiculed for being dishonest and stupid, credulous and superstitious. [...] They were constitutionally hot-tempered and quarrelsome.'[9] Elsewhere, argues Dearnley, '[i]n complete contrast to the "chapbook" view of the Welsh, there is another major strand in eighteenth-century fiction which idealizes Wales as "a place of virtue".'[10] Wales is represented from the outside; its difference is always in contrast to a real or implied English or London-based centre. By Gwyn A. Williams's account, Welsh distinction or distinctiveness is a choice, a willed, deliberate distinction from the larger British ideology: the Welsh people whose history he is attempting to chronicle draws its legitimacy from an implied (or explicit) opposition 'usually against the odds, usually within a British context'.[11] Time and again, in Williams's account, history is invoked as a source of inspiration, the foundation upon which a sense of national identity may be built. History, argues Williams, has been central in the marriage of past, present

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[8] Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 2. Emphasis in original.
[9] Moira Dearnley, *Distant Fields: Eighteenth-Century Fictions of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), p. xvi.
[10] Dearnley, *Distant Fields*, p. xvi.
[11] Williams, *When Was Wales?*, p. 304.

and future in any conception of Wales or Welshness. Indeed, the Welsh case is by no means peculiar in this regard: nationalist movements are often to be seen negotiating between a sense of the nation's past and its present and future states. The 'invention of tradition' is the term given to this manoeuvre:[12] it is the cultivation of a sense of shared history which is the galvanising influence, enabling a disparate population to be brought together as an imagined community. Williams's term for this invention of tradition is the making of a useable past: the past is a shared construct, a shared inheritance to which each member of a nation, an imagined community, may belong.

By outlining a history of the Welsh, Williams himself continues the invention of tradition, the production of the artefact that is Wales. Later in his conclusion to *When Was Wales?*, Williams looks across the Irish Sea, finding inspiration and solace in the poetry of W. B. Yeats, who, according to Williams, 'immersed himself in the history and mythology of the people to whom he belonged and whom he wished to serve by remaking them'.[13] Yeats, in Williams's analysis, is almost an exemplary nation-builder, bringing together the components (history, mythology) and processes (remaking, serving, belonging) which go into the making of a nation. Yeats's own poetry is a means of bringing such a vision to fruition. Such is the impact of this view that Williams notes the 'chilling' effect of Yeats's 1916 collection of poems, *Responsibilities*, quoting as he does the poem 'A Coat'. The poem deals with the endeavour to construct a national consciousness, referring to the coat, worn by the speaker of the poem in his youth, 'Covered with embroideries/Out of old mythologies'.[14] The song, worn in youth, is shed later for the authenticity (the 'enterprise')[15] of walking naked and unadorned.

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[12] See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[13] Williams, *When Was Wales?*, p. 304.

[14] W. B. Yeats, 'A Coat', quoted in Williams, *When Was Wales?*, pp. 304-305 (p. 304).

[15] W. B. Yeats, 'A Coat', in Williams, *When Was Wales?*, p. 305.

Disillusioned though he is at his own time of writing, Williams's account of Yeats in relation to Welsh history nevertheless gestures towards the kind of myth-making associated with the project of building the nation.

Yeats's early-career ideals, linking nationhood, mythology and his own poetry contribute to the invention of tradition. It bears witness to Anthony D. Smith's 'common historical memories, myths, symbols and traditions' galvanizing an emergent national identity.[16] Such features are what bring the idea of a nation into being in the minds of the wider population. The 'fatality', or historical coincidence, of the old mythologies are woven together through language and the rhetoric of nationhood to create a newly fashionable form. The 'sense of history' is central here again, just as in Gwyn A. Williams's account of the Welsh, to the creation of a new sense of nationhood.

One of the achievements of political and cultural nationalism is the way in which it organises time. Nationalism, as Benedict Anderson has noted, organises time by offering a 'secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning'.[17] According to this argument, it is the idea of belonging to a nation which lends meaning and continuity to the lives of members of its population: individual lives and deaths are brought together by the rhetoric of nationhood. Anderson suggests that

> few things were (are) better suited to this end than the idea of nation. If nation-states are widely conceded to be 'new' and 'historical', the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future.[18]

It is this transformation of fatality into continuity which is the effect of drawing together a populace around the idea of a nation. The concept of nationhood can then unite the dead with the unborn: patriots can thus claim kinship and continuity with long-dead

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[16] Smith, *National Identity*, p. 11.
[17] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 11.
[18] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 11-2.

forbears as well as with those yet to be born, even though an individual patriot may, and likely will, never meet each of his other fellow patriots: it is a community of the imagination.

It is a strength of Raymond Williams's model of residual, dominant, and emergent that his model is geared towards an interpretation of culture as a fluid, shifting entity. What may at one point be dominant may at a later stage be residual as it was once previously emergent. Luke Gibbons has identified the potential of this sense of flux and fluidity in Williams's interpretation and analysis of culture, but has extended Williams's reading to suggest how both residual and emergent categories may combine to challenge the dominant order of a particular culture.[19] Residual ideologies may become re-invigorated as a challenge to dominant orders. Katie Gramich, drawing on Gibbons's rereading of Raymond Williams, cites the figure of the peasant as one which 'may be identified with what Raymond Williams called a residual ideology', before proceeding to argue that it is a figure which nevertheless, 'at the same time, in the context of Ireland and Wales, [...] is not necessarily separable from the emergent ideology which threatens the dominant discourses of power.'[20] What becomes clear in the readings of Gibbons and Gramich is that the residual elements of a culture under certain circumstances can combine with the emergent forces to redouble the challenge to the dominant mode. Far from being a waning, diminishing presence, the residual can, in fact, be reanimated and made newly emergent. Raymond Williams indicates in *Marxism and Literature* that both the residual and the emergent operate in opposition or as a challenge to the dominant. Where

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[19] Luke Gibbons, 'Home Truths: Raymond Williams, Postcolonialism and the Celtic Periphery', unpublished lecture, 'Romantic Nations' symposium, Ireland-Wales Research Network, Cardiff University, 25 October 2008; and 'Changing the Subject: *Ulysses*, Raymond Williams and the Modern Self', unpublished lecture, 'Ireland and Wales: Correspondences', Ireland-Wales Research Network, Cardiff University, 17 September 2009.

[20] Katie Gramich, 'Creating and Destroying the "The Man Who Does Not Exist": The Peasantry and Modernity in Irish and Welsh Writing', *Irish Studies Review*, 17. 1 (2009), 19-30 (p. 19).

Gibbons and Gramich advance Williams's account is in their suggestion that the residual and emergent may combine in that challenge to the dominant discourses. As Gibbons suggests, Williams's own model allows for the fluidity and variability of status, whereby elements which were previously emergent later become dominant, later to become residual (and even, eventually, to become archaic). What then becomes possible is that residual ideologies may gain the impetus of an emergent power, or, that emergent ideologies may be inflected by the trace of a residual culture (or the invention of a residual tradition on the part of an emergent ideology).

Anderson notes a link between age and youth in the formation of national consciousness with reference to the important role of language. The rhetoric of youth employed by nationalists, especially those in Europe, connotes 'dynamism, progress, self-sacrificing idealism and revolutionary will', even though, in Europe, '"young" had little in the way of definable sociological contours' and '[o]ne could be middle-aged and still part of Young Ireland; one could be illiterate and still part of Young Italy'.[21] Nevertheless, youth signifies an idealism on the part of the current generation both to reclaim and further extend the glories and illustriousness of the nation. Those words enumerated by Anderson as characteristic of a young nationalism – 'dynamism, progress, self-sacrificing idealism and revolutionary will' – are all forward-looking: they belong to what might be called, following Williams, an emergent register. Yet the nations which these movements construct and champion are held to exist, as Anthony D. Smith notes, 'from time immemorial';[22] the nation, its traditions, history, language and culture may also belong to the residual mode, being features 'formed in the past but [...] still active in the cultural process [...] as an effective element of the present'.[23] The Welsh language might be cited

[21] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 119.
[22] Smith, *National Identity*, p. 19.
[23] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 122.

as an example of a residual element of Welsh culture, contributing to Gwyn A. Williams's

contention (and also those of R. S. Thomas and Arnold) that Welsh self-identification

has always come by means of opposition and contradistinction to a more powerful,

dominant, British culture. In such a scenario, successive Welsh nationalist movements

have sought to utilise the Welsh language as a marker of difference and distinctiveness

set against an English-speaking (dominant) British state.

Smith's argument concerning what is in fact the invention of tradition formulates what

he describes as a 'cult of golden ages';[24] the intellectual elites to which he attributes such

influence in the construction of national identity draw this influence in no small part

from their use of history:

> The purposes of nationalist educator-intellectuals are social and political, not
> academic; they aim to purify and activate the people. To do so, moral exemplars
> from the ethnic past are needed, as are vivid recreations of the glorious past of the
> community. Hence the return to the past through a series of myths: myths of
> origins and descent, of liberation and migration, of the golden age and its heroes
> and sages, perhaps of the chosen people now to be reborn after its long sleep of
> decay and/or exile.[25]

Smith's argument claims that underlying every national identity is a seam of cultural

activity: all nationalisms are in some way cultural. Yet, at the same time, the above

quotation argues that this cultural activity is never merely cultural: academic work is

never merely academic. Intellectual elites, nation-builders, are similarly included in

Smith's assessment of the cultural builders of the nation too. Nationalism as a political

movement is underpinned by a cultural imperative; however, that same cultural

production is stimulated by a political motive.

These figures – the 'nationalist educator-intellectuals' – are thus charged with the

responsibility of both retelling and constructing the history of the nation. This is why the

[24] Smith, *National Identity*, p. 66.
[25] Smith, *National Identity*, p. 66.

cult of golden ages holds such a prominent position in Smith's analysis of the origins of

national identity. By constructing a national past in such a way, cultural figures are able to

inscribe a history for the nation by inventing a tradition. Smith uses the language of

displacement, emigration and exile to describe the typical features found in narratives of

golden ages. The image of the nation's reawakening from a protracted slumber is by now

familiar, linking as it does both the imagined ancient past with the modernity of that very

historical account. Smith's mention of exile is also important, as this assessment of the

work of Ernest Rhys – alongside that of other London-Welsh writers of the late

nineteenth and early twentieth century – will explore. The awakening from slumber, or

the return from exile of the chosen people, are convenient symbolic devices which can

bring the nation into being in the modern age, and can, as Smith notes, 'purify and

activate the people', galvanizing an imagined community around the idea of a nation.

Smith goes on to illustrate his point by making reference to 'the Gaelic revival of the

1890s', hailing it as 'An example of the nationalist use of history and the nationalist's

desire to return to the golden age'.[26] Smith's account of the Gaelic revival is that

> different cultural nationalists emphasiz[ed] different aspects of Ireland's golden age
> of St Patrick: for the likes of O'Grady and Lady Gregory the golden age lay in the
> period of the High King of Tara, while for others, the period following St Patrick's
> conversion of the island to Christianity constituted the golden age to which Ireland
> was in some ways to aspire towards and then subsequently return.[27]

Smith here identifies the rediscovery of the Ulster Cycle and the Celtic arts and literature

as kinds of cultural artefacts whose rediscovery by educator-intellectuals as a

> dual cult of Celtic heroes and Christian scholar-missionaries suggested to a
> returning Irish intelligentsia what a free Ireland might have become, had its
> development not been thwarted by Norman invaders, and then brutally cut off by
> the English Protestant conquests. The vision of an ethnic golden age told modern
> Irish men and women what was "authentically theirs", and how to be "themselves"
> once again in a free Ireland.'[28]

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[26] Smith, *National Identity*, p. 66.
[27] Smith, *National Identity*, p. 66.
[28] Smith, *National Identity*, p. 67.

The past conditional tense employed by Smith is indicative of the role of conjecture or constructedness in the invention of tradition: accounts of the golden age are always a matter of 'what [...] might have been'. The 'what might have been' of the Welsh past gives impetus to the emergence of a new movement in Welsh writing in English in the late-nineteenth century. Residual ideologies are, from a position of exile, reconfigured into emergent new developments: ultimately, imagining a nation connected to the past makes possible new innovations in Welsh writing in the twentieth century.

In Search of Lost Times: Reading and Constructing Welsh History

The Celtic Revival of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries can stand as an exemplary case of the invention of a tradition and the convergence of the residual and the emergent. The construction, or resurrection, of the figure of the Celt, in the 1890s in particular, bears witness to the influence of the present in the construction of the past. Seekers of a Golden Age are as concerned with the ideologies and agendas of the present as they are with any of the attributes of the sought-for Golden Age itself. Daniel Williams has noticed how the Celtic revival of the late-nineteenth century built a tradition around the Celt for reasons broader than mere cultural-aesthetic concerns. He argues that 'The rise of a Celtic consciousness during the 1890s was partly related to the emergence of Home Rule movements of varying significance in Ireland, Wales and Scotland.'[29] Williams's methodology at this point links the literary works of Yeats, Rhys and Sharp with other discourses of the time, not least the various campaigns for Home Rule and/or disestablishment in Ireland, Scotland and Wales, but also with Matthew Arnold's lectures *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, published back in the 1860s yet (as we shall see) re-

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[29] Daniel Williams, 'Pan-Celticism and the Limits of Post-Colonialism: W. B. Yeats, Ernest Rhys and William Sharp in the 1890s', in *Nations and Narrations: Writing Across the British Isles*, ed. by Tony Brown and Russell Stephens (Cardiff: New Welsh Review, 2000), pp. 1-29 (p. 11).

mobilised at the fin de siècle, reanimated and reappropriated for a specific cultural-nationalist agenda.

In the late-nineteenth century London becomes the important hub, the city of exile from where the Celt is reimagined. With London a centre of population containing many thousands of Irish, Welsh and Scottish inhabitants, it is perhaps little wonder that the Celt is reborn, reawakened, in exile. For example, the numbers of Welsh-born inhabitants in London had swelled from 17,575 in 1851 to 35, 464 in 1901.[30] The city represented the proverbial cultural melting-pot, the cauldron from which the Celt is resurrected, not only with his speech intact, but endowed with a new poetic and political idiom.

The Irish poet Austin Clarke, recalling the Celtic Twilight movement, and how 'its delicate impressionism, its shadowy themes, other-worldly longings and subtle wavering rhythms were in accord with the Fin de Siècle Movement',[31] identifies W. B. Yeats as its 'acknowledged leader'.[32] While of course Yeats is the most famous figure associated with the Celtic Twilight, and is fairly configured as the focal point around which the movement orbited, it is important to consider the contribution of those other figures who worked both alongside him and also under his influence.

One among them was Ernest Rhys, 'a Welshman, lately a mining engineer [...], a writer of Welsh translations and original poems that have often moved me greatly though I can think of no one else who has read them.'[33] In his autobiography Yeats recounts the fact that between them they founded the Rhymers' Club in London, 'which for some years

[30] Emrys Jones, 'Flow – and Ebb', in *The Welsh in London 1500-2000*, ed. by Emrys Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press on behalf of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 2001), pp. 127-60 (p. 127).
[31] Austin Clarke, *The Celtic Twilight and the Nineties* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1969), p. 31.
[32] Clarke, *The Celtic Twilight*, p. 31.
[33] W. B. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1955), p. 165.

was to meet in an upper room with a sanded floor in an ancient eating-house in Fleet Street called the Cheshire Cheese.'[34] Daniel Williams has noted how the circle of poets which became the Rhymers' Club had among their number several figures who identified themselves as, or affiliated themselves with, a kind of Celticism, even if, as Williams explains, '[t]his Celticism did not necessarily entail a commitment to nationalist politics'.[35] On the contrary, the members of the Rhymers' Club who collected their work in their two anthologies – Lionel Johnson, Ernest Dowson, Richard La Gallienne and T. W. Rolleston, among others – were notable for their reticence in, or even their wilful rejection of political matters; Williams describes their work as a 'rejection of politics, a rejection of realist and naturalist tendencies in literature', exhibiting a Paterian aesthetic of art for art's sake.[36] Nevertheless Yeats and Rhys in the 1890s, both Rhymers, emerged as prominent figures in the Celtic Twilight and both, by means of their status as influential men of letters of their day, played an important role in reviving and re-configuring a Celtic identity. As Yeats suggests of Rhys, his output was both prolific and varied: he was a poet and a prose-writer, a critic and a novelist, an autobiographer and a newspaper columnist. He is best remembered, however, as the first general editor of the Everyman Library for the publishers, Dent.

Rhys's long, illustrious and varied career set him among more prominent men of letters of his age. Widely read and widely respected though he was during his lifetime, critical attention to Rhys has not been commensurate with his influence. It is perhaps as a consequence of the diversity of his career pursuits that Rhys's work has tended to be compartmentalised: publisher, poet, journalist, editor. The links between Rhys's work in each of these guises have perhaps been overlooked. The multifariousness of Rhys's

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[34] Yeats, *Autobiographies*, p. 165.
[35] Daniel G. Williams, *Ethnicity and Cultural Authority: from Arnold to Du Bois* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 159.
[36] Williams, *Ethnicity and Cultural Authority*, p. 159.

output, like a glass pyramid, refracts his oeuvre into its component elements at the cost of a consideration of the links and connections which run though it. Variety of vocation is of course a feature of the Victorian man of letters, the writer who turns his hand to a variety of tasks and the figure who, as Terry Eagleton remarks, 'yoked sage and critical hack uneasily together'.[37] Eagleton's description of the man of letters captures the versatility required of him in the nineteenth century if he was to live by his pen, and that the term is both 'broader and more nebulous than "creative writer" [and] not quite synonymous with scholar, critic or journalist'.[38] Ultimately, argues Eagleton, the man of letters' role encompasses each of these designations while refusing to be reduced to any single one. The man of letters is hailed for his 'synoptic vision' and ability 'to survey the whole cultural and intellectual landscape of his age',[39] though his wide-ranging scope is attributed by Eagleton to the man of letters' need to make a living in the commercial literary marketplace rather than to his innate sage-like wisdom.

The description sketched above aligns the man of letters with the figures to whom Smith attributes the task of inventing national traditions. It is the role of Smith's educator-intellectuals to bring about this invention of traditions. The very term, educator-intellectual, carries with it echoes of Eagleton's definition of the man of letters as a synoptic observer of culture as well as a dilettantish jack of all trades.

The variety of Rhys's work – as editor, writer, novelist and poet – speaks of the man of letters' task to undertake commissions of all kinds. Rhys recounts in the first volume of his autobiography, *Everyman Remembers* (1931), how his first literary commission came about due to a case of mistaken identity when he had just arrived in London. The

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[37] Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), p. 45.
[38] Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism*, p. 45.
[39] Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism*, p. 45.

publishers knocked on Rhys's door expecting to be greeted by Professor John Rhys, student of Matthew Arnold and the first Oxford University Professor of Celtic. Ernest Rhys 'explained that Professor Rhys, famous Celtic scholar, lived at Oxford, and I was not he!'[40] He recalls that the aim of the publishers' visit was to commission Professor Rhys to edit an edition of poems by George Herbert, an undertaking which Ernest himself took up and which, having been refused a contribution by Edmund Gosse, he introduced himself. Rhys's readiness to undertake the work intended for his eminent and far more illustrious namesake gives an indication of the ways in which the late-nineteenth-century man of letters is a combination of the critical and the dilettantish, the high-literary and the practical-minded.

Rhys's role as first general editor for the Everyman Library perhaps remains his most notable literary achievement. Nevertheless, he was also a writer in his own right; his oeuvre encompassed poetry and literary criticism, novels and journalism. While the attention of critics has been drawn predominantly to Rhys's editorial work, the place of his creative work with reference to Pan-Celticism is much less well considered. His novels, poems and weekly newspaper column for the *Manchester Guardian* engaged strongly with the late-century construction of a romanticised Celtic ideal. Indeed, much of this movement's impetus was derived from London, and the exile's position in the great city is a factor of some importance to the construction of a Celtic myth. The Everyman Library, for example, bears the imprint of Rhys's self-avowed Celtic identity, where two texts – Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of *The Mabinogion* and Matthew Arnold's *On the Study of Celtic Literature* – feature incongruously early on in the series of classics of English literature. Rhys's journalism is similarly inflected: his weekly column for the *Manchester Guardian* was entitled 'Celtic Notes' and consisted of all manner of

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[40] Ernest Rhys, *Everyman Remembers* (New York: Cosmopolitan Book Corporation, 1931), p. 78.

Celtic musings, from reports of eisteddfodau to book reviews. Three of Rhys's works of non fiction – his *Readings in Welsh History* (1901), *Readings in Welsh Literature* (1924) and *The South Wales Coast from Chepstow to Aberystwyth* (1911) – are each preoccupied with the continued impact of the past on contemporary experiences of Wales. Most notably, however, it is Rhys's poetry which is mainly responsible for his work's association with a sense of Welsh and/or Celtic identity.

Rhys's depictions of Wales and Celtic themes centre on the connection between present-day Wales and a mythical constructed past. Yet this past is never moribund or ineffective: on the contrary, the Welsh and Celtic themes in Rhys's texts are endowed with a newly waxing power, presenting his readers with a Wales in which residual cultural forces are made newly emergent. On the page immediately preceding the title-page of the second edition of Rhys's *Readings in Welsh History* (1909) is an illustration by Lancelot Speed of 'A Harper Playing in a Welsh House'.[41] It depicts an idealised image of a medieval Welsh house or *aelwyd*: a family, or community, of a dozen or so members, as well as a young child and a baby at its mother's breast, are gathered together in what seems to be a stone-floored wooden structure, adorned with deer antlers, bull horns and various decorated fabrics and other items of furniture. Elevated among the group, on an ornate, throne-like carved chair decorated with ornately carved Celtic design, are the heads of the family: the patriarch sits in a position of authority, looking on. To his right, also elevated, sits a woman who is ostensibly his wife, with a young girl, presumably their daughter, between them, held close by her mother. In the foreground are two other women, one holding a wooden crib and the other feeding a baby. At the centre of the group sits the harpist, old, bearded, possibly blind hands plucking the strings of his instrument while his gaze is fixed upwards, above and seemingly beyond the physical space and human company. It is

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[41] See Ernest Rhys, *Readings in Welsh History*, 2nd edn (London; New York; Bombay and Calcutta: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909), p. ii.

towards the harpist that the gaze and attention of each of the collected party is turned: the musician is the focal point of the picture. The harpist himself seems otherworldly in comparison to the assembled congregation, a source of mystic knowledge in the community. The faces of his audience are all attentive and engrossed, as if the figure of the musician is a source of important wisdom unattainable in the altogether more physical world of their community. The furniture and architecture of the scene – with details including crockery and ewers, the impressive throne-like seat of the master of the house, the bull-horns and deer antlers mounted on the broad wooden beams of the building, the curtains, the crib, the stone floor – all create a sense of a very physical and real environment. The solidity of the material scene throws into sharper contrast the ethereal qualities of the harpist, whose gaze – and, presumably, music – transcends the mundane reality of the earthly lived experience yet nevertheless inspires and enraptures it.[42]

The image of 'A Harper Playing in a Welsh House' sets the book which follows it off on a trajectory of myth-making: it is an example of how *Readings in Welsh History*, like much of Rhys's work, is engaged in a textual invention of tradition. The image itself is an idealised depiction of the Welsh house; instigating the tone and ideological bent of the text which is to follow, the image immediately signals an intention to cultivate what Anthony D. Smith describes as the cult of the Golden Age. While the image signifies the importance of the sense of the past which Gwyn A. Williams sees as an indicative characteristic of Welsh identity, the 'Harper Playing in a Welsh House' also attests to the constructedness of that very historical narrative. For the image is undoubtedly, perhaps even self-consciously, gesturing towards precisely the kind of Golden Age towards which

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[42] Indeed, the harpist depicted in the image can be read as a Merlin figure: positioned inside, though not a part of, the house and its social order, the harpist is a source of knowledge to those in power. See Stephen Knight, *Merlin: Knowledge and Power through the Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009).

Smith and others refer as the concept sought by every generation of nation-builders. The nation-to-come, the quest for the promised future which nationalists see stretching gloriously out before them, always derives its impetus from an imagined Golden Age which (inconveniently) is always just out of reach yet which (conveniently) embodies and manifests many present-day ideals and aspirations. The Golden Age depicted in the image of the Welsh harpist is, for Rhys and his illustrator, one of social order and stability. The gender roles are clearly demarcated: the female figures in the image are all engaged in maternal contact of some sort: the wife of the head of the family holds a young child in an embrace while another slightly older girl sits at her side; the woman nearest in the foreground holds a child's crib while another holds a baby to her breast. The male characters, by contrast, are all (with the exception of the harpist himself) rugged, broad men, sitting in postures of strength or power. Almost everyone assembled is listening intently to the harpist: there is a sense of social harmony where each member is duly respectful of the influence and benefit which is to be gained from the harpist's song. Despite the implied strength of the male characters (the ornately carved throne; the horns and antlers mounted around; the pose struck by the patriarch), there is also a sense of decorum and peace: all the men look at the harpist, while the male figure nearest in the foreground sits with his back to the viewer, looking at and listening to the harpist with his sword visibly sheathed. The viewer sees the harpist over the shoulder of this nearest male, while the other assembled figures of the picture are arranged around the room. It is as if the viewer – the reader of Rhys's book – is positioned as a similar spectator to the harpist's performance; the reader is thus invited to complete the circle physically and figuratively. While the harpist sits to the left of the picture, a bearer of poetic wisdom, the head of the house is enthroned in the centre, a strong modern-day ruler. To the right of the image, concealed beneath blankets and shawls, is a baby, a signifier perhaps of a

future to come. The unseen contemporary viewer completes the physical and temporal cycle.

Poetry and music, or the cultural realm, as signified by the wizened, wizard harpist, provides the galvanising force uniting this community. The stability of the 'Welsh House' is based on clearly demarcated gender roles, a hierarchy of social power and status, a secure notion of home or a hearth and, ultimately, the inspirational and stirring influence of culture. Men are rugged and bold, and women are maternal and domestic, yet everyone is brought together by the sense of a shared culture engendered by the harpist. This is an unquestionable fabrication. The curtains or draped textiles in the background of the scene are emblematic of the fabricated sense of history constructed by this image. Like Yeats's coat, this is a version of national identity woven from old mythologies: the 'Harper Playing in a Welsh House' makes no gesture towards historical accuracy or verisimilitude. Instead, the impression created is one of a Golden Age not inhibited by verifiable chronology: though it seems set in medieval Wales, there are few specific details to lend it any grounding in a knowable past. The image is a rendering of a historically distant period onto which is projected the collective ideological features which Rhys and his illustrator, Speed, see as central to an early twentieth-century imagining of Welsh identity. The title, 'A Harper Playing in a Welsh House', distances the scene – and Rhys's ensuing account – from any historical specificity. The use of the indefinite article – '*A* Harper Playing in *a* Welsh House' – suggests that this is a scene which, because of its myth-making manoeuvres, depicts no Welsh house and every Welsh house at the same time. This medieval scene represents twentieth-century ideals: Wales in the middle ages is thereby endowed with the qualities of order, stability, culture and authenticity seen perhaps to be lacking in Rhys's present-day society. The harpist and

his audience are similarly unspecified – they are any and every group gathered around any and hopefully every Welsh hearth.

Benedict Anderson, as discussed earlier, stresses the importance of the temporal element which goes into the forging of a national consciousness. He emphasises that the idea of the nation can lend a sense of continuity between patriots of the past, present, and future. Expanding on his famous definition of the nation as an imagined community, Anderson notes how the nation 'is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.'[43] It is the idea of the nation which is responsible for yoking these strangers together. Yet, as Anderson goes on to argue, it is not merely the living population which is brought together under the banner of the nation; it is also the means of extending this 'communion' so as to encompass the dead and the as-yet unborn. Anderson describes this as the nation's ability to transform 'fatality into continuity';[44] that is to say, the idea of the nation is able to extend over seemingly disparate groups of people and bring them together, lending meaning, or 'continuity', to the coincidence, or 'fatality', of their birth. This is why Anderson (and others) have identified the importance of past and future to the nation. Anderson begins his chapter with reference to the symbolic potential of cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers, arguing that there are 'No more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism'.[45] Such tombs are powerful symbols, argues Anderson, precisely because they are either empty or because the identity of the entombed soldier is unknown. The tomb or cenotaph functions purely as a signifier of national identity with little concern for the identity of the interred individual. 'Yet', Anderson continues, 'void

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[43] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 6. Emphasis in original.
[44] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 11.
[45] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 9.

as these tombs are of identifiable remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly *national* imaginings.'[46]

This is the extent of the symbolic element underlying national consciousness: the nation itself is a structure of symbols, of signifiers which (as in the case of cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers) are shorn of their original signified concepts and cast onto a broader, symbolically grander scale. Hence a tomb no longer signifies solely the death of a single individual, or even a single, dateable historical event (though it may do so still, under certain circumstances). Rather, such a tomb invokes a communion with the ghosts of the nation, a spooky, spectral contract with members of the nation still living, long dead and yet to be born – even, or perhaps especially, if these various individuals remain unknown to one another.

The image of 'A Harper in a Welsh House' invokes a similar kind of communion with ghosts. Indeed, there is little to suggest that the image is based on any particular historical figures or event: those individuals depicted in the image are ghostly figures with whom the reader seems invited to commune. Rhys's *Readings in Welsh History* signals immediately the ways in which it is engaged in constructing the Welsh history it aims to describe. Speed's illustrations are included to lend an authenticity to the history the book endeavours to read. Yet its first images are imaginings of a constructed past. As if to reinforce this effect, the scene of the harpist is faced on the title page opposite by 'The Standard of the Cross of King Cadwaladr Vendigaid Supported by the Red Dragon of Wales'.[47] The juxtaposition of the image of the Welsh family with the image of the red dragon confirms the myth-making ideological agenda of Rhys's study. *Readings in Welsh History* thus announces, even ahead of its title page, its intention to exercise poetic licence

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[46] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 9. Emphasis in original.
[47] The accompanying caption is taken from the book's front cover, where the same image also appears.

in its historiography. *Readings in Welsh History* reads into Welsh history whatever it wishes to retrieve. From the first illustration, it places the creative artist at the centre of Welsh society: the harpist is always playing in the Welsh house. In terms of the image's formal composition, the viewer's eye is drawn by two lines suggested by the arrangement of the principal characters' heads towards an apex in a large shield carved with Celtic design which is mounted on top of the throne-like seat and elevated just behind the patriarch's head. The harpist himself sits left of the centre of the picture, his hands (playing the harp) halfway up the frame of the picture. The source of edification and inspiration to the group thus sits in the midst of Welsh society, but not at its centre; though the harpist's music provides his audience with stimulation and fascination, his gaze is raised above the stare of anyone else there present: poetry and music seem to derive from an altogether higher source. The figure of the harpist here sets a precedent for the methodology of the book which is to follow: namely, culture, and the Welsh musical and poetic tradition, is immediately positioned as a motivating and stimulating source of inspiration which, although serving as motivation to Welsh society, when in its midst is nevertheless not *of* that society. The society's place in a Welsh past is clearly important; it is depicted as pre-modern, and traditional, rural and as thoroughly 'old' (with all the positive connotations wished for by the term) as the Old Welsh Way of Life, *yr Hen Ffordd Gymreig o Fyw*, could possibly be. The centrality of culture, as a driving force behind this Welsh way of life, is begun in Speed's initial image, but is continued throughout Rhys's study. Time and again his accounts of Welsh history are drawn from or illustrated by an appeal to Welsh literature. Geoffrey of Monmouth, the *Gododdin*, the *Mabinogion*, the Laws of Hywel Dda, *Brut y Tywysogion*, William Morgan's Bible, the 1847 Blue Books Report, right up to the charter of the newly-formed University of Wales: Rhys's study very self-consciously positions culture at the centre of Welsh life, and Welsh literature as such is firmly embedded alongside non-literary texts in his account.

Wales, London, and the Invention of Literary Tradition: *A London Rose and Other Rhymes*

While Rhys's *Readings in Welsh History* are conducted to the accompaniment of the harpist playing in the Welsh house, it is important to note that the score to a great deal more of Rhys's published work, from its very beginning, is played on the same instrument. Much like *Readings in Welsh History*, Rhys's poem 'On a Harp Playing in a London Fog', from his 1894 collection *A London Rose and Other Rhymes*, similarly unfolds to the dulcet, magic tones of harp music:

> What Ariel, far astray, with silver wing
> Upborne with airy music, silver-sweet
> Haunts here the London street?[48]

The arresting sound of harp music meets the speaker of the poem immediately, its sound all the more incongruous given the context in which it is encountered. Daniel Williams has noted that '[t]he image of the "laughing" Celtic harp offering a much needed source of revitalisation for a foggy imperial city reconstitutes the Arnoldian relationship between an idealised Celtic periphery and a "sulking" English centre'.[49] Williams is here referring to Matthew Arnold's depiction of the Celt as a figure of emotion and superstition whose ethos is at odds with the march of British imperialism and who therefore needs to be assimilated into the British-imperial order, for the benefit of all concerned. As Williams points out, Rhys's poem inverts this Arnoldian dichotomy; it is the Celtic element which is celebrated and juxtaposed with the imperial metropolis, here sleeping. The first stanza continues:

> And from the fog, with harping string on string,
> Laughs in the ear, and spurs the lagging feet

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[48] Ernest Rhys, 'On a Harp Playing in a London Fog', in *A Welsh Rose and Other Rhymes* (London: Elkin Mathews & John Lane; New York: Dodd Mead and Co., 1894), pp. 9-10 (p. 9).
[49] Williams, *Ethnicity and Cultural Authority*, p. 164.

While Caliban-like, London sulks, though all the stars should sing.[50]

The foggy London streets are of course a famous feature of late-nineteenth-century writing, much as they were a lived reality for the Londoners of the 1890s. Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) is a famous example of late-century gothic which employs the trope of the miasmic London fog as a means to heighten both the atmosphere of the story and to confound and confuse the characters. Arthur Machen, Rhys's fellow London Welshman, made use of the London fog in his 1907 novel *The Hill of Dreams*: the city is thick under fog and thus proves impenetrable to the protagonist, Lucian, who struggles to negotiate his way around the city in much the same way that he struggles to articulate through his writing the 'form and mystery of the domed hills' and 'the magic of occult valleys' of his native Gwent border country.[51] The *London Kelt* newspaper, described by Rhys as 'the vigorous weekly organ of the Welsh in London',[52] often contrasts the enormous imperial city with the wholesome, restorative homeland: this opposition is put forward even at the level of the *Kelt*'s marginalia, as in the example of the advertisement for the Welsh cough mixture which claims to soothe the throats and clear the airways of the suffocated London Welsh.[53] Jerry White notes that 'the smoke nuisance in London had got worse as the century grew older, smoky fogs ever more common until they peaked in the early 1890s'.[54] So, just as the fog was causing late-century Londoners physical inconvenience, and was very much a physical reality, so too is the smog presented in much of the literature of the *fin-de-siècle* as an impediment to a Welsh literature in London.

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[50] Rhys, 'On a Harp Playing in a London Fog', p. 9.

[51] Arthur Machen, *The Hill of Dreams* (Aberteifi: Parthian/Library of Wales, 2010), p. 37. Though the novel was published in 1907, Machen had begun work on it by the mid-1890s.

[52] Ernest Rhys, endnote to 'To the River Towy', in *Welsh Ballads and Other Poems* (London: D. Nutt; Carmarthen: Spurrell & Son; Bangor: Jarvis & Foster, 1898) p. 177.

[53] See Tomos Owen, 'The *London Kelt* (1895-1914): Performing Welshness, Imagining Wales', *Almanac: Yearbook of Welsh Writing in English*, 13 (2009), 109-25, (pp. 118-20).

[54] Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century: A Human Awful Wonder of God* (London: Vintage, 2008), p. 474.

Set against this context, Rhys's harp sings through. Daniel Williams notes that 'Rhys's

Celticism was fundamentally connected to an idea of Britain, with his poems idealising a

generalised and romanticised Celtic past that would appeal to a London readership'.[55]

Yet, as with the wizard harpist in the image of the Welsh house, 'On a Harp Playing in a

London Fog' conjures a ghostly communion – this time overtly with Merlin – through

the sound of the harp. The poem gestures towards the ghostliness of this communion in

its first verb, 'haunts'. Just as the image in *Readings in Welsh History* linked the music of the

harp with what Williams describes as the idealised Celtic past, so too does Rhys's poem

conjure up spirits:

> Such mystic harping once its silvery scale
> Ran in grey Harlech, and on Merlin's Hill
> Where listening fancy still
> Can hear it, like some song in fairy-tale.[56]

Line seventeen of the poem identifies this as 'the song of Merlin', and, from the city, the

poem invokes connections with a Wales left behind. Indeed, Wales has been left behind

in a temporal as well as physical sense: the song encountered in the London fog is

connected with Harlech in the North and Carmarthen in the South West (Merlin's Hill is

in Carmarthen, where Rhys spent his childhood). The reference to the fairytale confirms

Williams's sense of the romanticised and idealised Celtic past in Rhys's work. The figure

of Merlin here, much like the harpist in the later image, is a mythical figure whose song

provides inspiration and enlightenment through the murkiness of the present. The

'mystic harping' indicates that the poem is constructing a self-consciously mythical – as

opposed to factual or verifiable – past, as does the word 'harping', with its double

meaning indicating both the sound of the harp being played and relating a subject at great

length. In the contemporary moment, it is by harping on about the music of the harp

that the 'mystic noise' is made to echo. Merlin and his song, and the reference to the

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[55] Williams, *Ethnicity and Cultural Authority*, p. 164.
[56] Rhys, 'On a Harp Playing in a London Fog', p. 9.

'fairy-land', stand as details associated with the mythical past which nevertheless still continues to signify in the present. The imagined Celtic past can be categorised as a residual cultural force, a feature that is, as Raymond Williams notes, 'effectively formed in the past, but is still active in ... the present.'[57] Merlin's song is just such a residual force: its silvery scale *once* (upon a time) rang in Harlech. Yet, it is not to be confused with Williams's concept of the archaic, that which 'is wholly recognized as an element of the past',[58] because it still continues to signify in the present: it is still heard through the London fog, and can still be imagined echoing on Merlin's Hill.

There seems more to it, however. There is a sense in which this residual ideology carries with it the capacity to form a new, emergent, meaning. Such a power to create new meanings is attributed to the song of the harp in the London fog: 'Here harps the mystic noise should make the dead/Of London wake, and all its walls have ears'.[59] The *Lyra Celtica* is here able to resurrect, to open new possibilities in the future. As in the thinking of Anderson, Gellner, and Smith, the trope of reawakening, or indeed resurrection, is here employed to link the past with the possibilities of the future. Intriguingly, however, the poem suggests not that it is the Celtic identity which is set to reawaken, but, rather, that the ancient Celtic element will act as harbinger to a new, emergent British society. The Celtic song is, as Daniel Williams suggests, a reappropriated version of the London-British/Centre and Welsh-Celtic/Periphery (adumbrated by Arnold); the Celtic song is placed at the centre of the metropolis instead of at the margins. Yet there is also common ground between Rhys and Arnold at this point. The newly echoing Celtic harp here does not signify a politically radical Celtic challenge to the dominant British centre. On the contrary, the Celtic harp is put to the task of rejuvenating that very centre, to

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[57] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 122.
[58] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 122.
[59] Rhys, 'On a Harp Playing in a London Fog', p. 10.

'make the dead/Of London wake'. Following Arnold, the Celtic strain, or the strains of the Celtic harp, are here assimilated into a British ideology: rather than posing a threat, Celtic difference is incorporated into a British dominant culture. This is how, as Daniel Williams notes, 'Rhys's Celticism was fundamentally connected to an idea of Britain': as proclaimed by Rhys's poem 'Autobiography', and condensed in the title of his second volume of autobiography, *Wales England Wed.*

The references to Ariel and Caliban in 'On a Harp Playing in a London Fog' connect the poem in unexpected ways to William Shakespeare's *The Tempest.* In Shakespeare's play Caliban and Ariel are both native inhabitants of the island on which much of the action takes place. The list of Dramatis Personae describes Ariel is an 'airy spirit, while Caliban is a 'savage and deformed slave'.[60] For this reason postcolonial critics have gleaned much from the play, reading the meeting of Caliban and the Duke of Milan, Prospero, as an account of a colonial encounter emblematic of an age of European expansion. With this in mind it is perhaps surprising that Rhys's poem should liken the music of the harp to Ariel ('airy, silver-sweet') while the city of London is associated with Caliban, sulking, 'though all the stars should sing'. The imperial metropolis, the hub of the largest empire in history, is endowed with the attributes of the colonised subject over whom that imperial influence extends. What is more, London, or Caliban, can only be awakened by the song of Ariel, or the Celtic harp. The kinds of national re-awakening identified by Anderson and Gellner as important and recurrent tropes in the forming of nationalist consciousness are here inverted: the Celtic harp is unexpectedly associated with Ariel (and imperial London with Caliban), but it is London which is woken from its slumber by the Celtic harp, rather than the Celtic element itself.

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[60] See the list of characters in William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman (London and New York: Norton, 2004), p. 3.

The mythic, literary past is an element Rhys draws heavily upon throughout his work. 'On a Harp Playing in a London Fog' is written in the present tense: the opening question – 'What Ariel [...]/Upborne with airy music [...]/Haunts here the London street?' – is arresting because of the direct interrogative; the opening is of a present presence, a here and now. Nevertheless, the picture is complicated because that very temporal and physical presence serves to link the experiences of the present with associations of precisely that mythic past. Rhys's present is inflected by the past, as the second stanza's references to 'grey Harlech' and 'Merlin's Hill' suggest. The actual, real, present-day London scene is contrasted with the mythical, literary Celtic past. Both merge imperceptibly into one another as a consequence: the reality of the present day is not easily distinguished from the myth of the past. The Celtic element extends beyond Wales as well when the song of the harp is said to sound 'like some song in fairy-tale;/And in Broceliaunde the oak-trees will/Repeat its lingering sighing strain to many a cold sea-vale'. Broceliaunde, or Brocéliande, is the forest of northern Brittany associated with magic in literature. According to James MacKillop, 'Brocéliande served as the scene of countless medieval travel narratives, Arthurian and non-Arthurian'; he also notes that '[a]ccording to some Arthurian traditions, Merlin was imprisoned in an oak tree in Brocéliande by the maiden Vivien'.[61] Indeed, the story of Merlin's imprisonment in the oak tree is described by the Welsh-language poet T. Gwynn Jones in his 1922 poem, 'Broséliàwnd'.[62] The inclusion of the Breton forest adds a Pan-Celtic dimension to the

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[61] James MacKillop, 'Brocéliande' in the *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) p. 54.

[62] See T. Gwynn Jones, 'Broséliàwnd':

    [...] Yno, bu dawel wyneb y Dewin,
    A mwy ni chlywyd, ni welwyd eilwaith,
    Na'i lais na'i wedd drwy lys a neuaddau [...].

    [There, quiet was the Wizard
    And no more was heard, he was not seen again
    Nor his voice or visage in court and hall...]

'Broséliàwnd', in T. Gwynn Jones, *Caniadau* ([1934] Caerdydd: Hughes, 1992), pp. 63-6 (p. 66). The translation is my own.

text: the ancient forest of Brocéliande is here incorporated into a Celtic literary tradition – for the purposes of this poem, at least. The poem blurs distinctions of time and space at this point; the real and mythical become blurred to the point where they intertwine.

Ernest Rhys's poem 'An Autobiography' begins with the line which was borrowed as the title for his second volume of autobiography: 'Wales England wed'.[63] The poem indicates the split nature of Rhys's identity as constructed in his work. Nevertheless, while gesturing towards the disparate components of his identity, Rhys aims at a reconciliation, a coalescing of the oppositions (Wales/England; country/city; tradition/modernity). Rhys's poetic autobiography is elaborated upon in his two volumes of memoirs, *Everyman Remembers* (1931) and the previously noted *Wales England Wed* (1940). Details from Rhys's biography bear witness to this split sense of identity. Rhys was born in Islington, a borough of Greater London, to a Welsh father, John, and an English mother, Emma Percival, on 17 July 1859.[64] Before the end of the year the family had moved to Carmarthen, where John had trained for the ministry but was now appointed manager, through a connection of his wife's, of a new wine shop in the town. In November 1865 the family moved to Newcastle-upon-Tyne and it was there that Rhys completed his school education and opted, to his father's chagrin, to become a mining engineer. Rhys's case is different from the other principal writers considered in this thesis because his journey to London is one which was traversed on a north/south axis, with Newcastle triangulating the journey to the capital, rather than along the east/west axis, or what is now termed, after the motorway, the M4 corridor. Rhys left Newcastle for London in January 1886 with the aim of pursuing a career by his pen. A Welsh speaker, Rhys cultivated many friendships with other members of the London Welsh, earning

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[63] Rhys, 'An Autobiography', in *A London Rose and Other Rhymes*, p. 97.

[64] See J. Kimberley Roberts, *Ernest Rhys* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press on behalf of the Welsh Arts Council, 1983), p. 1. Chapter 1 of Roberts's book, from the 'Writers of Wales' series, provides much of the biographical material on Rhys drawn on in this thesis.

commissions for various items of literary or editorial work. Rhys's circle of friends extended much further, across literary London. It is a remarkable feature of his career that he developed such an extensive network of contacts and connections. As previously noted, among his many notable and eminent acquaintances was W. B. Yeats, with whom he would later found the Rhymers' Club and establish a coterie of aesthete poets and men of letters. In *Everyman Remembers* Rhys recalls the soirées held at his Hampstead home, attended by the likes of the novelist and critic Ford Madox Ford (1873-1939), the novelist and poet D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930), the American-born poet Ezra Pound (1885-1972) and Yeats himself.

While developing his prospects as a man of letters, Rhys took up a number of journalistic and editorial commissions. Nevertheless, he continued to write his own creative work, including both poetry and fiction. His first novel, *The Fiddler of Carne*, was published in 1896 but it was in 1894, with the publication of *A London Rose and Other Rhymes* that Rhys made his debut as a creative writer. The poem which lends the collection its name describes an encounter between a lover and his beloved, Diana; in presenting the rose to her, the speaker muses on its provenance, how 'no one knows,/A penny bought it in the Strand!'[65] It is in some senses a poem of the Cockney school: the conceit of the poem pivots on the contrast between the natural rose and the 'motley sight' of London in the 'driving rain', even though this rose is bought on the Strand, a busy thoroughfare of central London. J. Kimberley Roberts remarks that '[t]o discover the delights and the miseries of the city as appropriate subject-matter was a contribution made by many "Nineties" poets to the emancipation of poetry as they saw it'.[66] 'A London Rose' fits this mould, speculating on the city as point of contrast with nature: the 'loveliness' of the rose is contrasted with the gaslights of the urban metropolis. Authors who have written on

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[65] Rhys, 'A London Rose', in *A London Rose and Other Rhymes*, p. 3.
[66] Roberts, *Ernest Rhys*, p. 28.

London have often identified a canny, streetwise quality, and this quick-wittedness is seen in Rhys's poem's relish that neither the beloved, Diana, nor any one else, knows that the rose is not picked from the country, but bought for a penny on the Strand.

But, as Roberts observes, 'the "other poems" were mainly on Welsh themes',[67] and that to combine the London poems 'with another prevailing literary interest, that of "Celticism", by including a section of "Welsh Rhymes and Ballads" was to place the author at the centre of current tendencies'.[68] 'On a Harp Playing in a London Fog' is but one of several poems in the collection to compare Wales and London or, indeed, to *imagine* Wales from London. 'The Mountain Cottage' is a poem dated 'Gaenen Hir, 1892-3'.[69] Writing in *Wales England Wed*, Rhys recalls how he and his wife, the Irish writer Grace (*née* Little, 1865-1929) moved from London to Wales, 'where cottages were cheap' and 'I could carry on by reviewing and editing'.[70] Rhys recalls how he and his wife had become tired of London life, and to both of them 'the Welsh mountains meant an escape, and the programme I had sketched – stories, poems and Celtic plays, to be written – they all assumed a rosy colour in the vista'.[71] Wales here offers for Rhys the prospect of a restorative escape from the city. There is a sense in which the retreat into Wales is a retreat from the oppressive conditions of life in London. A significant detail of Rhys's account seems to be the plans drawn up for writing once returned to Wales: there are 'stories, poems and Celtic plays, *to be written*' (italics added). The look to the future here suggests that Rhys's conception of Welsh literature and Celtic culture remain somehow deferred, put off, an intention never finally reached. Rhys proceeds to describe his mountain cottage:

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[67] Roberts, *Ernest Rhys*, p. 6.
[68] Roberts, *Ernest Rhys*, p. 28.
[69] Rhys, 'The Mountain Cottage', in *A London Rose and Other Rhymes*, pp. 22-7 (p. 27).
[70] Ernest Rhys, *Wales England Wed* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1940), p. 128.
[71] Rhys, *Wales England Wed*, p. 128.

Before the winter was over we found at Gaenan Hir, in a side glen leading off from the valley of the Dee, a quarryman's cottage for a rent of £3 10s. a year – a sixteenth-century cottage with solid oak beams that you could hardly drive a nail into. [...]

The rooms were small and inconvenient, the walls immensely thick hewn stone, but the house commanded a wonderful view of the Dee valley and the mountains beyond. Living in such a scene we hoped to put a mountain strength into our writings.[72]

The house overlooking the beauty and splendour of a Welsh landscape is a trope which recurs throughout much of the work of London-Welsh writers in this period. Many of the novels of Arthur Machen, discussed in the next chapter, present a Welsh landscape overlooked by a house. In Machen's *The Great God Pan* it is the house of the scientist Dr Raymond which overlooks the western landscape, but this motif is traceable also in *The Three Impostors* and *The Hill of Dreams*. In the poetry of W. H. Davies too there is a lingering description of the Gwent border country. As with Rhys's work, the image of the house overlooking the beautiful rural idyll appears in both writers' creative work, but also in their memoirs and autobiography: Davies's *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* and two volumes of Machen's autobiography, as well as his introduction to the 1916 edition of *The Great God Pan*, speak of their authors' fascination with the landscape as viewed from the house. So here with the Rhys's Gaenan Hir overlooking the valley of the river Dee. Rather than concentrating mainly on the rural idyll, however, 'The Mountain Cottage' bears the trace of the city, and a contrast with London. There is an oscillation from the wilderness to the town, between Wales and London, which takes place at the level of the poem's very language:

> Far below the gold and green
> High on Moel Morvyth seen,
> Where more rarely thrusts the heather
> Through the gorse its purple feather;
> Far below, yet far aloft
> From the wayward wizard Dee;
> Secret in its garden croft,
> Fenced with rural mystery

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[72] Rhys, *Wales England Wed*, p. 130.

> By the homely mountain-sides:
> There a lonely cottage hides.[73]

The 'homely mountain-sides' lend a double security and insulation to the sense of safety derived from the Welsh mountain cottage. The rural mystery in which the scene is couched is also a significant feature of the verse: while the landscape remains mysterious, the way of life contained within it seems securely protected, lodged in the mountain cottage. The contrasting of high and low in the opening couplet anticipates W. H. Davies's 'Hill and Vale' (discussed later in this thesis), another text which uses the opposition of hill and vale, high and low, as a means to explore the contesting (but seemingly co-dependent) notions of home and exile. 'The Mountain Cottage' uses similar techniques: there is mention of the Dee valley, the location of the cottage of the poem's title; but there is also mention of the implied contrast with London. As with Davies's 'Hill and Vale' the rural idyll in which the mountain cottage is located depends for its sense of homeliness on a contrast with, and a difference from, London: this is the classic trope of the pastoral mode. Indeed, the poem, perhaps surprisingly, speaks of a play of difference between Wales and London, a continual alternation between one and the other. While the opening lines of the poem, quoted above, enumerate images drawn from the natural world (the heather, gorse, garden and 'rural mystery') surrounding Moel Morfydd, in Denbighshire, there is also, later, a section comparing the scene with London:

> Too remote the mountain life
> From the modern noise and strife,
> It may seem.[74]

If the mountain cottage, an emblem for an authentic (if mysterious) rural Welsh way of life, is described as being 'too remote', it is too remote from London: the city penetrates this rural idyll and forms an important feature of the cottage's status as emblematic of the

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[73] Rhys, 'The Mountain Cottage', p. 22.
[74] Rhys, 'The Mountain Cottage', p. 25.

rural way of life. Yet the contrast between the Welsh mountain-side and the modern

metropolis is brought about not only by a contrast between the country and the city; the

opposition is also collapsed, and each is also shown to interpenetrate the other.

The initial description of the landscape surrounding the mountain cottage mentions 'the

wayward wizard Dee'. While this refers to the river Dee, which flows from Snowdonia

into England, the description of the river Dee as 'wizard' invokes associations with one

of the more famous of all London Welshmen, the mathematician, astrologer, antiquary

and alchemist Dr John Dee (1527-1609), consul to Queen Elizabeth I. Dee accumulated

a vast personal library, the largest in England and one of the largest private collections in

all Europe, at Mortlake, in Surrey. Dee was one of the leading European Renaissance

Men, whose learning, as Stephen Knight has noted, 'merged into magic' from the

medieval period onwards; more than most men of his kind, Dee was a 'magus who was

also a magician'.[75] W. P. Griffith has noted that though Dee 'was a first-generation

Londoner', he 'had not been so assimilated to London or English life as to ignore his

Welsh background in Radnorshire. That he was patriotically Welsh was indicated in his

naming his son Arthur.'[76] Dr Dee, then, like the namesake river, is also a Welsh wizard-

like figure who meandered his way to England. Rhys's description of the Dee valley not

only endows Wales with magical qualities, but more specifically with a London-Welsh

association: each location – London and Wales – is viewed *through* the other.

By the same token, the heather is said to 'thrust' its purple feather through the gorse; it is

a verb echoed again later in the poem to describe the 'thrust' of the weary hands of

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[75] Knight, *Merlin*, pp. 52-3. Knight refrains, unlike other scholars before him, from attributing to Dee the status of a verifiable historical Merlin; nevertheless, Knight is one of many to identify the possibility of considering Dee a Merlinesque figure.

[76] W. P. Griffith, 'Tudor Prelude' *The Welsh in London 1500-2000*, ed. by Emrys Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press on behalf of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 2001), pp. 8-34 (p. 24).

Londoners 'to find the gold' beneath London's dust. The repetition of the same word within the poem in two completely different contexts – rural and urban – suggests how Wales and London are co-dependent on each other: the essential core of the 'rural mystery' of 'the ancient Kymric state' cannot ultimately be accessed. The play of difference between Wales and London renders undecidable the primacy afforded to each and the other.

Wales, as the repository of some essentialised identity contrasted with the modernity of London might be interpreted in this poem in terms of what Raymond Williams describes as a residual cultural mode: the mountain cottage is of the past, but still holds an allure to the speaker of the poem in the present. Along with several Welsh writers of his period (in both languages), Rhys invokes the figure of Owain Glyndŵr as a figure from the past who nevertheless carries with him the promise of an inspirational return:

> As of old Glendower turned
> To his vale whose name is his,
> To his pastoral house of peace,
> From the field where battle burned.
> Now is sheathed that ancient sword,
> But its song remains, and still
> Sounds from lonely field and hill [...][77]

E. Wyn James has traced the representation of Owain Glyndŵr in Welsh-language literature, and notes how the late-nineteenth century witnesses a return of Owain Glyndŵr in popular consciousness at a period of an emergent cultural nationalism, centred especially on the *Cymru Fydd* movement. Though James does not mention Rhys, he nevertheless discusses several figures with whom Rhys was associated, most notably the historian Owen M. Edwards. James argues that

> [...] erbyn diwedd Oes Victoria gwelwn rai megis O. M. Edwards yn mynd ati i orseddu Owain Glyndŵr yn un o brif arwyr y Cymry a'i adlunio i gyd-fynd â delfrydau'r oes honno.

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[77] Rhys, 'The Mountain Cottage', pp. 26-7.

> Yr un peth, wrth gwrs, yr oedd y rhamantiaeth a'r dirgelwch a gysylltid ag ef yn apelio at ysbryd oes O. M. Edwards.[78]

> [...] by the end of the Victorian Age we see the likes of O. M Edwards attempting to enthrone Owain Glyndŵr as one of Wales's great heroes and to re-cast him in line with the ideologies of that period.
> Similarly, of course, the romanticism and mystery associated with him appealed to the spirit of O. M. Edwards's age.

Rhys could easily be incorporated into this assessment. His books of non-fiction, including *Readings in Welsh History* (mentioned earlier) and his travel book *The South Wales Coast from Chepstow to Aberystwyth* (1911), discussed below, both make mention of Owain Glyndŵr, hailing the establishment of the University of Wales in 1893 as the culmination of a movement initially set in train by Owain Glyndŵr himself in the early fifteenth century. Rhys's *Readings in Welsh History*, a book commissioned by the Welsh School Board Federation, names O. M. Edwards when acknowledging his indebtedness 'to the writings of the pioneers of our history, late and early'.[79] O. M. Edwards's own *A Short History of Wales* (1906) similarly heralds the establishment of the University of Wales as the culmination of a 'dream of many centuries', beginning with how 'Owen Glendower had thought of establishing two new universities'.[80] Rhys and O. M. Edwards can both be thought of as of Anthony D. Smith's educator-intellectuals: both look back to history in order to mobilise a convenient narrative which, as Benedict Anderson would argue, turn chance into destiny. Invoking the figure of Owain Glyndŵr as the source of a historical trajectory which reaches its culmination in their own era is a means for Edwards and Rhys to tailor an historical narrative to their own ideological ends. Glyndŵr here represents an authentic, heroic figure from the past – romantic and mysterious according to E. Wyn James – who embodies an unquestionable Welsh identity: he is hailed from

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[78] E. Wyn James, *Owain Glyndŵr a Gobaith y Genedl: Agweddau ar y Portread o Owain Glyndŵr yn Llenyddiaeth y Cyfnod Modern* (Aberystwyth: Cymdeithas Lyfrau Ceredigion, 2007), p. 40. The translation is my own.

[79] Ernest Rhys, 'Author's Note', in *Readings in Welsh History*, p. viii.

[80] Owen M. Edwards, *A Short History of Wales* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1906), p. 115. See the chapter 'Education', pp. 112-17, and pp. 115-17 on higher education.

the present as a figure from the past, but is nevertheless celebrated as a figure still able to galvanise a nation and mobilise an emergent cultural nationalism.

To follow Raymond Williams, Glyndŵr is hailed as a residual element of Welsh identity, complete with his tenacity to maintain an authentic and uncorrupted Welsh essence. Nevertheless, despite (or perhaps because) of Owain Glyndŵr's position as emblematic of a previous Golden Age, he can also carry within him the symbolic potential of a new Wales. He is both residual *and* emergent, with both designations respectively constituting a challenge to the prevailing dominant order. Raymond Williams's original essay is quite clear on how the residual, dominant, and emergent elements of a culture are always at play: the status of none of the three elements is fixed or secure, and each may wax and wane in accordance with the social and historical conditions attendant upon that particular cultural system. With this in mind, it is appropriate that 'The Mountain Cottage' considers the cottage over the course of a day, from dawn until dusk. The changing light over the course of the day suggests the interplay of residual and emergent ideologies acting upon and within a culture – sometimes increasing, sometimes diminishing, it is always 'a changing harmony'.[81]

The poem opens with an account of how the dawn's 'morning light [...]/Brings such greeting to our glen/[...] That the lurking day again/Seems with sudden life to leap'.[82] The energising effect of the morning is here an image of awakening or reawakening. Though the poem is not strictly an aubade, there is nevertheless a cluster of positive sentiments about the rising of the dawn: such a detail is an appropriate poetic device with which to articulate the formation of a newly emergent consciousness. Yet, the 'changing harmony' later becomes a twilight scene – perhaps the scene of a Welsh (or Celtic)

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[81] Rhys, 'The Mountain Cottage', p. 23.
[82] Rhys, 'The Mountain Cottage', p. 23.

Twilight. Unexpectedly, the withdrawal of light and warmth of the setting sun serves only to bring more strongly to the fore those ideas of home:

> [...] if chill the twilight falls,
> High we pile the fragrant hearth,
> And the presence of all the earth
> Settles on our lonely walls.[83]

Even at the end of the day the absence of sunlight serves to signify the homeliness and warmth of the cottage's hearth. Significantly, the poem uses the word 'pastoral' to describe the landscape. The late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries witnessed the emergence of the Georgian poets to the forefront of the poetic scene. Although the Georgian movement was ultimately short-lived, and gave way to the altogether more radical break with tradition seen in the work of the modernists, it nevertheless enjoyed a brief period of influence and popularity, with nature poetry, and a return to pastoral themes, forming much of the subject-matter for its work. W. H. Davies's work was collected in the *Georgian Poetry* anthologies, and while the Georgian poets are remembered for their focus on rural and pastoral themes, their work still betrays the presence and influence of the city. Rhys, though not affiliated with the Georgian Poetry movement, is nevertheless occupied by similar concerns; his poetry, though, particularly in *A London Rose* and *Welsh Ballads*, is geared towards cultural-nationalist ends. 'The Mountain Cottage' does concentrate on the landscape of rural Wales, but, implicitly, engages with the urban and the modern as a point of contrast. The poem's interplay of past, present, and future, its 'changing harmony' of residual, dominant, and emergent ideologies, is a method of imagining the nation, in an Andersonian sense. With this in mind, a feature of the poem which becomes an increasingly important aspect of Rhys's poetics as a whole is the role of writing and literature to the identity ascribed to a given location.

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[83] Rhys, 'The Mountain Cottage', p. 24.

In 'The Mountain Cottage', the later collection *Welsh Ballads and Other Poems*, and in his writings on Welsh history and literature, Rhys identifies a figure from the past as a continued influence on the present, and indeed one who carries the prospect of an inspiration for the future. As well as Owain Glyndŵr, Rhys's poetry generally – and 'The Mountain Cottage' in particular – looks to Dafydd ap Gwilym, the medieval Welsh poet, as a figure of both poetic and nationalist inspiration. Furthermore, in other poems, Rhys constructs his own Welsh literary tradition, with Dafydd ap Gwilym representing an important figure in its development. Rhys conjures the image of the feast – an important trope in Welsh poetry – as a means of breaking bread with his more illustrious poetic forbears:

> Many a long-gone poet, then,
> In our feasting lives again:
> Herrick, and old Henryson,
> Milton, Marvell, Campion, [...]
> Heine's note and Shelley's song
> Lead us round to Burns ere long,
> Or with Keats we turn and hark
> His April eve of old St. Mark,
> Or Wordsworth, with austerer rhyme,
> Mountainous, sets thought to climb.[84]

The poets listed here are Robert Herrick (*bap.* 1591-1674); Robert Henryson (*d. c.* 1400); John Milton (1608-74); Andrew Marvell (1621-78); Thomas Campion (1567-1620); Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), the German Romantic poet; Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1882); Robert Burns (1759-96); John Keats (1795-1821); and William Wordsworth (1770-1850). They are all major figures in European poetry, and all – with the exceptions of Heine, a German, and Burns and Henryson, who were Scottish – English poets. Rhys offers a corrective to this version of literary and poetic history:

> But of all whose hearts have sung
> One there is, of older tongue,
> Tunes his woodland note apart
> Still more near to touch the heart:

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[84] Rhys, 'The Mountain Cottage', pp. 24-5.

> Davyth of the leafy line
> Pours for us his lyric wine[85]

Dafydd ap Gwilym is included as a greater voice than those aforementioned poets. His work is hailed by Rhys as more authentic and affecting than those others: it is Dafydd ap Gwilym – whose name has an Anglicised spelling in this poem – who can boast the ability to 'touch the heart'. Indeed, Dafydd is granted almost supernatural status: his is an 'elfin melody', a 'strain of old romance'.[86] He is afforded mythic status as a conjurer of the spirit of a Welsh identity which is connected to the land and to nature, while also maintaining something of the supernatural about it – the 'elfin' quality of his verse suggests a connection with the Tylwyth Teg, the fairy folk of Welsh mythology. The 'older tongue', Welsh, is here a guarantor of cultural authenticity which, because it pre-dates the work of those other listed poets, is somehow a transcendental, genuine medium. The reference to Dafydd ap Gwilym serves in the poem as a literary equivalent to Owain Glyndŵr: his work represents a residual cultural force which can be invoked as a source of current-day inspiration. The setting of the mountain cottage is 'Moel Morvyth', or Moel Morfydd, in Denbighshire, a peak whose very name carries associations with Dafydd ap Gwilym: Morfudd is the name of the poet's most famous sweetheart, to whom many of his poems are dedicated. The form of the poem, written predominantly in seven-syllable lines and, in the main, in rhyming couplets, seems to mimic the *cywydd*, a form of which Dafydd ap Gwilym was a major architect in its development. The form of the poem itself matches its content in this regard: formed in the past, as an early form of Welsh poetry, the *cywydd* is here mobilised by Rhys as a renewed form, a vehicle for an emergent sense of Welsh identity in English in the late-nineteenth century.

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[85] Rhys, 'The Mountain Cottage', p. 25.
[86] Rhys, 'The Mountain Cottage', p. 25.

Mr and Mrs Rhys, with their young son, found life at Gaenan Hir incompatible with the career of the man of letters. Rhys confesses that '[i]t was clear that I must run up to London and find commissions for fresh work, and get an advance out of some editor or other',[87] and ultimately they had to go back to London on a more permanent basis. Wales and London again interact, and the Rhyses' return to the city is characteristic of the development of an emergent Welsh writing in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Rhys's endeavour to journey into Wales to discover 'within our mountain gate,/All the ancient Kymric state',[88] can be read as an attempt to discover an essential, authentic Welsh identity in the heart of the country itself: Rhys's aim to write his stories, poems, and Celtic plays is emblematic of a search undertaken by many Welsh writers for an authentic Welsh 'secret'. Nevertheless, equally significant is the return to London to execute those lofty aspirations. Unable to play his Welsh harp at Gaenan Hir, he must take it with him to the foggy, imperial metropolis, there to awaken the sleeping, Caliban-like city. There are of course material considerations attendant on this return to the city: as Rhys reveals, it is in London that the commissions for work were to be found in the offices of the editors and men of letters. But there is also a sense that the distance, the space opened up by the train to Paddington, affords the perspective from which a Welsh writing can articulate the concerns of an emergent Welsh identity. London is the begetting force which makes possible the conditions for a Welsh writing in English moving forward into the twentieth century.

Ernest Rhys's perambulations through Welsh literature lead him again in Dafydd ap Gwilym's footsteps. Later in *A London Rose and Other Rhymes* Rhys finds himself in

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[87] Rhys, *Wales England Wed*, p. 132.
[88] Rhys, 'The Mountain Cottage', p. 27.

Dafydd ap Gwilym's birch grove, the 'purest parlour framed of leaves'.[89] 'The Birch Grove' is a poem 'from Davyth ap Gwilym', signifying its indebtedness to Dafydd ap Gwilym rather than being about the medieval poet himself. Rhys's subsequent collection of poems, *Welsh Ballads and Other Poems*, contains several poems which are direct translations of Welsh poetry: these are the works alluded to by Yeats in his autobiography. 'The Birch Grove' in *A London Rose* is different, however: it is a creative reworking of Dafydd ap Gwilym's 'Offeren y Llwyn', a *cywydd* celebrating the experience of walking through a copse of hazels. Rhys's poem is not a paraphrase of the *cywydd*, but is nevertheless based on elements of it. So, 'The Birch Grove' begins

> Ah, the pleasant grove of birches,
> A pleasant place to tarry all the day
> Swift green path to holiness [...][90]

can be compared with Dafydd ap Gwilym's:

> Lle digrif bûm heddiw
> Dan fentyll y gwyrddgyll gwiw[91]
>
> I was in a pleasant place today
> Under the mantles of fine green hazels [...][92]

Similarly, Rhys's poem describes how

> The sweet-voiced nightingale beneath the green boughs,
> Is the herald inhabitant of the wood,
> Endlessly pouring his song within the forest,
> From the jutting hill and the glistening green tree-top;
> And so I pour forth songs in praise of my green enclosure,
> My purest green parlour framed of leaves.[93]

This is a rendering of the closing lines of Dafydd ap Gwilym's *cywydd*:

> Ac eos gain fain fangaw
> O gwr y llwyn ger ei llaw,
> Clerwraig nant, i gant a gân

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[89] Ernest Rhys, 'The Birch Grove (from Davyth ap Gwilym)', in *A London Rose and Other Rhymes*, pp. 47-48 (p. 48).

[90] Rhys, 'The Birch Grove', p. 47.

[91] Dafydd ap Gwilym, 'Offeren y Llwyn', in *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym*, ed. by Thomas Parry, 3rd edn(Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru: 1979), pp. 323-24 (p. 323).

[92] The translation is taken from www.dafyddapgwilym.net, a complete edition of the work of Dafydd ap Gwilym prepared by a group of scholars under the leadership of Dafydd Johnston.

[93] Rhys, 'The Birch Grove', pp. 47-48.

Cloch aberth, clau a chwiban,
A dyrchafael yr aberth
Hyd y nen uwchben y berth,
A chrefydd i'n Dofydd Dad
Â charegl nwyf a chariad.
Bodlon wyf i'r ganiadaeth,
Bedwlwyn o'r coed mwyn a'i maeth.[94]

[...] with a fine slender resonant nightingale
From the edge of the grove nearby,
Poetess of the stream, ringing for all
The sacring-bell, a piercing whistle,
And the Host was raised up
Towards the sky above the grove,
And the Lord our Father was worshipped
With a chalice of desire and love.
I am content with the music
It was nurtured by a birch-grove in the sweet woods.[95]

Wales is the land of song here, albeit the song of the nightingale. Rhys's poem again endows Wales with the qualities of the edenic rural idyll. The description of Wales's 'fair breasted hill' lends the countryside a maternal, or perhaps erotic, quality which draws the speaker to its bosom: representations of Wales as mother and a life-giving force are common in the literature of this period, implying a healthy, nourishing influence on her children. This seemingly is an unspoilt rural scene, one of authentic closeness to nature. Nevertheless, there is a constructedness to the scene which is at odds with the natural-seeming grove. The poem is peppered with images of society and order – monarchy, religion, enclosure. On a broader level, the constructedness of the poem is revealed by its citing of Dafydd ap Gwilym as an inspiration in the first place. The poem is a reconstruction of Dafydd ap Gwilym's *cywydd*, or of Welsh literature more generally, which crosses the language border while reconfiguring the text.

Raymond Williams describes as 'archaic' that 'which is wholly recognised as an element of the past, to be observed, to be examined, or even to be consciously "revived", in a

[94] Dafydd ap Gwilym, 'Offeren y Llwyn', pp. 323-24.
[95] www.dafyddapgwilym.net.

deliberately specializing way',[96] and there is a sense in which it seems appropriate to Rhys's description of Dafydd ap Gwilym's birch grove. Rhys, in writing about it, 'revives' the image of the birch-grove and the connotations associated with it: feudal, pre-industrial society; the pastoral; a simple, authentic, uncomplicated way of life. Nevertheless, the poem is harking back to an age and a society which has passed: there is little indication that the way of life suggested in 'The Birch Grove' still exists in a residual form at Rhys's time of writing, except of course in the self-consciously archaic form of Rhys's poetry itself. The figure of Dafydd ap Gwilym, however, might be interpreted as a residual force in the poem. In imitating his literary forbear, Rhys aligns himself with Dafydd ap Gwilym, positioning his own work at the end of the nineteenth century as the culmination of a literary tradition stretching back to the medieval *cywyddwyr*. Rhys's paraphrase of, or engagement with, Dafydd ap Gwilym sets a precedent for many of the poems of the later collections, which engage more directly with the Welsh-language literary and cultural tradition.

A poem from Rhys's next collection, *Welsh Ballads*, again follows the trail of Dafydd ap Gwilym. 'The Poet of the Leaves' detects the residual trace of the medieval poet; the speaker muses on how

> The wall flower grows on Rhosyr walls,
> Where Morvyth's roses grew below,
> When Davyth sang: the cock-thrush calls, -
> The clear sweet note he used to know.[97]

Rhosyr is one of the cantrefs of medieval Wales, on Anglesey, which is also known as ~~Niwbwrth~~ Niwbwrch (or Newborough). Dafydd ap Gwilym composed a *cywydd* to the town which describes Rhosyr as a 'cornel ddios',[98] a 'cosy corner'.[99] Rhys is engaging

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[96] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 122.

[97] Ernest Rhys, 'The Poet of the Leaves: Davyth ap Gwilym', in *Welsh Ballads and Other Poems* (London: D. Nutt; Carmarthen: Spurrell & Son; Bangor: Jarvis & Foster, 1898), pp. 54-55 (p. 54).

[98] Dafydd ap Gwilym, 'Niwbwrch', in *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym*, pp. 356-57 (p. 356).

again with Dafydd ap Gwilym's work, invoking the reputation of his illustrious forebear

and identifying his continued presence. Dafydd ap Gwilym is here again a figure who

embodies an emergent ideology. Rhys's poem remarks that the age of the trees with

which the speaker is greeted 'was youth when Davyth sang';[100] the speaker is sensitive to

the presence of the medieval poet still lingering in the contemporary moment. Dafydd ap

Gwilym is summoned as a ghostly figure, the ghost of a Welsh poetic tradition:

> The soul of such undying words
> Still haunts the place were Davyth sang.[101]

Rhys's poem presents a description of Wales which is endowed with associations of

nature and beauty and also a connection to an ancient language and a supernatural

poetry: this is a recurring pattern in much of Rhys's work. Wales is a natural idyll where

every location, every place of interest, is haunted by, or associated with connections to

literary forbears. In this poem, it is the connection with Dafydd ap Gwilym by means of

his physical presence – the fact that he verifiably visited the area – and also the fact that

he composed a poem about the place. Machen's work is also concerned with the layering

and overlayering of historical periods in a particular location. So too is the fictional work

of Raymond Williams: his novel *The People of the Black Mountain* (1989) is constructed

around just such an idea.

But London, too, is one of these 'layered' locations in Rhys's work. *A London Rose and*

Other Rhymes contains a poem which thinks through the connection between country and

city in direct terms. 'London Feast' employs the language of the pastoral mode in order

to throw into sharper relief the contrast with the city. While the city is always,

identifiably, London, the countryside or rural locations are varied or generalised. One

stanza mentions the 'Cumbrian fells' when addressing the 'ancient dalesmen of the

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99 www.dafyddapgwilym.net
100 Rhys, 'The Poet of the Leaves', p. 55.
101 Rhys, 'The Poet of the Leaves', p. 55.

north',[102] while the other stanzas gesture towards rural locations – country villages, farming country, even the open sea – in contrast to the 'London feast'. The poem is organised like a ballad, with the verse asking why the various country-dwelling people are leaving their native areas, and the refrain answering – as in six of the eight verses – *We go to taste/Of London feast.*' The opening interrogatives of each verse recall the ballad 'Lord Randal':

> O where do you go, and what's your will
> My sunburnt herdsmen of the hill [...]?[103]

The questioner warns against the quest for the city. Though Wales is not mentioned explicitly, the voice of the questioner makes mention of how s/he 'now released [from the city]/Make westward from its very gate',[104] referring to London. A similar reference warning the 'sailor lads, that love the sea' against moving to London on the grounds that 'The shifting wind's no longer east' mobilises the poem along the east/west axis.[105] Indeed, the sailors are encouraged to 'put the helm about',[106] and return to the sea, rather than be lured to the metropolis. The poem is structured around the questions of the speaker, who seems in possession of knowledge of the difficulty or undesirability of the London feast, owing to his/her sad first-hand experience. There is a sense of resignation surrounding the poem as the speaker realises that those drawn towards London will not heed his/her warning, and merely repeat the precedent.

The London feast, it transpires, is not all that it initially promises to be, and the lavish

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[102] Rhys, 'London Feast', in *A London Rose and Other Rhymes*, pp. 4-6 (p. 5).

[103] Rhys, 'London Feast', p. 4. Compare with the opening verse of Lord Randal:
'O where ha' you been, Lord Randal, my son?
And where ha' you been, my handsome young man?
'Lord Randal', in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, ed. by Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter and Jon Stallworthy, 4th edn (New York and London: Norton, 1996), pp. 83-84 (p. 83).

[104] Rhys, 'London Feast', p. 6.

[105] Rhys, 'London Feast', p. 4. W. H. Davies's super-tramp describes his journeys on board cattle ships criss-crossing the Atlantic, a career which ends with a return to the metropolis.

[106] Rhys, 'London Feast', p. 6.

array promised from afar in reality 'Cannot one crumb to you afford'.[107] The shabby reality of London seems unable to dim the city's appeal and allure. Indeed, the weary speaker of the poem seems to invert the idealisation by bestowing upon the country the attributes of the simple, satisfying provincial way of life of village maidens, Maypoles, bleating lambs and singing blackbirds. As Rhys's confession in *Wales England Wed* suggests, however, the cheerful contrast between idyllic countryside and fallen, corrupted city was in reality far from clear. Rhys, Machen, Davies, and Caradoc Evans all made their way to London to pursue a career in literature but also, to varying extents, to escape the very real conditions of poverty in their native areas. This was by no means confined to the lot of aspiring men of letters in the provincial areas of Wales. John Davies has noted that between 1881 and 1901 'more than 160,000 people left the rural areas of Wales', with London accounting for 35,000 of them.[108] Those fleeing the poverty of rural areas would have had no truck with the poem's assertion that 'London Feast is past and gone'.[109]

But being in London did not silence the Welsh writers' interest in Wales, nor its value for them as a subject, and they contributed to an existing English interest in Wales. In the introduction to his study of Welsh fiction in the twentieth century, Stephen Knight adopts the term 'first-contact' to describe those early texts which engage with Wales, often from an outsider's perspective, but almost always with a non-Welsh readership in mind. The outsider's perspective is often provided by the traveller-figure journeying into Wales. Much of the fiction of this early period of Welsh writing uses the genre of romance to mobilise this trope: as Knight notes, the plot structure of the Englishman journeying into Wales, there to fall in love with both the landscape and a native peasant

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[107] Rhys, 'London Feast', p. 6.
[108] John Davies, *A History of Wales* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), p. 443.
[109] Rhys, 'London Feast', p. 6.

girl, recurs frequently. Romance is not the only genre which can allow this kind of interaction: travel writing is another genre which introduces an outsider figure to an encounter with a new environment. Knight extrapolates his thesis to argue that by incorporating the various structural elements from both travel and romance writing, Welsh fiction in English was at the start of the twentieth century a way for English readers to experience Wales without the inconvenience of leaving their armchairs.[110] The vicarious pleasure of the encounter with Wales (a colonial encounter, in Knight's reading) is afforded to the English reader by means of a literary journey.

The work of Welsh writers in London in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries can help refine Knight's perspective. London-Welsh writing and cultural activity more generally can help show how pre-existing forms are inherited and recast in a new mould. The trajectory of Welsh writing in many ways constitutes a reversal: where, in its early stages, the literary perspective looks in towards Wales from the outside, later developments in Welsh writing up to the contemporary period look outwards with a greater degree of confidence and self-awareness. Welsh writing in London made a fundamentally important contribution to that development. Significantly, two of the authors who form the principal focus of this thesis produced travel books about Wales. W. H. Davies's *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* contains sections about Wales, London and America, among other places. Less well known, however, is Davies's volume of travel writing and memoir, *A Poet's Pilgrimage* (1918), a text which outlines the journey through south Wales. Rhys's travel book ploughs a similar furrow to Davies's: Rhys's *The South Wales Coast from Chepstow to Aberystwyth* follows a similar route further along the coast, and predates Davies's text by some years.

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[110] Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press 2004), p. xi.

Another narrative which documents a journey into Wales is Alfred Thomas's *In the Land of Harp and Feather*, which was published in book form in 1896. It is an example of the kind of travel narrative which Knight characterises as a first-contact tale: a gentleman narrator journeys into Wales, there to encounter the peculiar traits of the peasantry as well as the strange and unfamiliar landscape. It is important to note, however, that Thomas's text first appeared in the *London Kelt*, beginning in 1895. As Rhys himself acknowledges, the pages of the *Kelt* provide the Welsh community in London with the space in which it could be represented and could also represent itself. In this regard it is interesting to see a London-Welsh newspaper bring within its ambit a text which in its formal qualities appears to be a guide-book to Wales. Suddenly, in late nineteenth-century London, there are stirrings – emergent impulses, perhaps – which are beginning to re-appropriate a literary form, impulses which continue through Davies and Rhys's grappling with the form and beyond. Where once was the external perspective of the traveller from elsewhere, there is now an internal perspective which seems more conversant with the people and settings of Wales.[111] This work may still aim towards an English readership, but the tour-guides are no longer drawn to the 'travel, topography and the quaint, even mysterious, habits of the natives',[112] but look rather to Welsh history, literature and culture as features ingrained in the landscape. It is a shift in emphasis rather than an overhaul of the structure of feeling, but its effects are crucial, and the London context plays an important part in this shift. As the case of Davies, Rhys and the *London Kelt*'s publication of Alfred Thomas all demonstrate, the travel narrative is gradually re-appropriated: the structure of the journey into Wales from the outside is retained, but with the journey being undertaken by writers who know more of the lie of the land. London provides the important starting-point for the journey into Wales, and

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[111] O. M. Edwards's *Cartrefi Cymru* (1896) is a text which is emblematic of this shift: it is comprised of chapters about the homes of notable figures from Welsh history and public life.

[112] Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. xi.

this cultural correspondence in the travel writing stands emblematic of the dynamic of much Welsh writing of the period. Welsh writers in London are involved in a symbiotic relationship which seems mutually beneficial: London, as in the case of Rhys, Machen, Davies, and Evans, provides a means of escape from varying levels of poverty at home; their work also admits that London is the magnetic north on the compass of all aspiring writers. Indeed, as Rhys and Davies describe in their autobiographies, London is the place where a Welsh writer may earn a living by the pen. This move opens up a distance which affords a new perspective on the Wales left behind, a perspective also influenced by the material requirements of writing for a London (or at least a non-Welsh) audience. London is the begetting force for the work of these writers: their work is made possible by London and also takes an element of that London context back into Wales.

Rhys's 'The Poet of the Leaves' bears this imprint, along with another poem from *Welsh Ballads*, 'Envoi', which is dedicated '[i]'r Cymry ar Wasgar', 'to the dispersed Welsh'.[113] The poem develops the mythmaking bent of Rhys's work by addressing the exiled Welsh men and women; its effect is to attempt to galvanise this exiled populace and shape it into something like a community:

> The old Land of our Fathers, where they sleep
> Their waiting sleep of earth in perfect peace, -
> The Land of our Last Prince and strong Glyndwr,
> Of Davyth, Ceiriog, Kyffin, Salesbury, -
> Bequeathed these tales, where here in other rhyme
> Are winged afresh, that far o'er foreign fields
> Their names and fames may fly![114]

The poem reads like a check-list of images and tropes associated with emergent cultural nationalism. There is the initial image of the sleeping nation, here rendered mythical (and patrilineal) as 'Land of our Fathers', taken from the national anthem, 'Hen Wlad Fy

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[113] Ernest Rhys, 'Envoi: I'r Cymry ar Wasgar', in *Welsh Ballads*, pp. 159-60 (p. 159). The translation is my own.

[114] Rhys, 'Envoi', p. 159.

Nhadau', or 'Land of My Fathers': the national anthem is the kind of cultural artefact which Anderson has theorised as one of the more effective devices by which the nation may be imagined.[115] The national anthem links patriots in its present-day choir with those from the past and indeed the future. Rhys's poem extends this idea by describing Wales as the Land of *our* Fathers, in the second person plural: this, coupled with the poem's dedication to the Welsh scattered across the globe makes the text's readership a self-selecting audience. Reading the text qualifies its readers for inclusion in the lineage which the poem describes. It is a sleeping nation which is 'waiting' to reawaken, a residual ideology awaiting re-emergence. Here again is Owain Glyndŵr, this time alongside the 'Last Prince', Llywelyn ap Gruffydd – both of whom are historical figures linked to Welsh independence, particularly in terms of independence from English rule. Alongside these two soldiers 'Envoi' also posits a cultural component to the Welsh patrilinear inheritance, with 'Davyth' (ap Gwilym, again), Ceiriog (John Ceiriog Hughes, 1832-87), Edward Kyffin (c. 1558-1603)[116] and William Salesbury (c. 1520-1584?) all featuring. Their names still 'fly': their associations of the past still carry the potential to return in the future. Indeed, the seventh line (quoted above) carries a near- *cynghanedd sain*: 'Their names and fames may fly!'[117]

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[115] 'Take national anthems, for example, sung on national holidays. No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance.' See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 145.

[116] Edward Kyffin was a poet and cleric. His brother, Morris Kyffin (1555-98) was an author and soldier. Though the poem does not specify which of the two brothers it cites, Edward is the greater poet, whose work included translations of the Psalms into *cynghanedd*-metre forms. Salesbury, who follows Kyffin in the list, was translator of the New Testament into Welsh.

[117] *Cynghanedd sain* requires that a line be split into three feet, with a rhyme at the end of the first and second, and alliteration between the second and third. In this example the *l* in 'fly' disqualifies the line from being a bona fide *cynghanedd sain*, but nevertheless, the line carries that echo from strict-metre Welsh poetry. The stress on names, fames and fly enact the sentiment of the line, bringing the name and reputations of these Welsh figures to the present, 'winged afresh' as a new emergent ideology.

The poem proceeds in the same vein, and makes explicit several of the themes implicit in Rhys's other work. The 'kind fellow countrymen'[118] (again masculine) are summoned to carry the names of the glorious dead of the nation. Members of the Welsh diaspora are imagined 'in the red Orient, far from your green hills,/Or in the motley streets below St Paul's,-/That dreams of falling waters and the grass/Which grows along the meadows of the Dee'.[119] The 'red Orient' is briefly mentioned but it is London which forms the important point of contrast with Wales here. As with Rhys's earlier poems, Wales is imagined from London: it is in the streets around St Paul's cathedral that the rivers of Wales are recalled. Rhys is not the only poet to have seen St Paul's Cathedral and been transported back to Wales. W. H. Davies's 'The Mind's Liberty' recalls how the sight of the 'dome and crowd' conjures the image of Twm Barlwm, 'that green pap in Gwent/With is dark nipple in a cloud'.[120] The title of Davies' poem suggests that Wales is an imagined community conjured into being by the mind's liberty. The quotation indicates that Wales is both imagined from London and imagined through London: the famous landmark in the skyline of the great city is a conduit to the (maternal) Welsh border country. There is a sense in both 'The Mind's Liberty' and 'Envoi' that the experience of Wales is the more vivid for being precipitated by the condition of exile. The tone of 'Envoi' rises to a climactic crescendo in which the 'spirit of eternal life' is 'set free' and 'those slain heroes of the past may tell/How they attained' until, ultimately, they 'By their red Death, enable us to live!'[121] This is altogether more rousing than Davies's 'The Mind's Liberty'; Rhys's poem bears the imprint of late-century Celtic cultural nationalism and is much more prominently engaged in the invention of tradition. Nevertheless, both poems attest to the peculiar influence of London on the Welsh

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[118] Rhys, 'Envoi', p. 159.

[119] Rhys, 'Envoi', p. 159.

[120] W. H. Davies, 'The Mind's Liberty', in *The Collected Poems of W. H. Davies* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1942), p. 205. The poem originally appeared in Davies's 1914 collection, *The Bird of Paradise and Other Poems*.

[121] Rhys, 'Envoi', p. 160.

imagination. Rhys's poem, with its self-conscious invocation or summoning of a Welsh identity is a very deliberate attempt to transform residual cultural artefacts into emergent ideologies.

The pattern develops. 'Envoi' imagines Wales from London; it is a literary, mythical, cultural space which offers peculiar access to city dwellers. Following on from this pattern are other poems in Rhys's *Welsh Ballads*. 'A Castle in Wales' varies the London-Wales dynamic by inverting it. Like 'The Mountain Cottage' it locates itself firmly in Wales, and records 'Midsummer 1895' as the date.[122] Wales is hailed as the mythical location of this 'castle of old romance'.[123] There is another reference to Merlin and also to 'Elias o Von',[124] John Elias (1774-1841) the Anglesey Nonconformist minister. As with 'London Feast', 'A Castle in Wales' suggests interaction between Wales and London but in the case of the latter poem this manifests itself in the form of the poem. While maintaining the ballad form, the poem contains two 'Cockney Cadences' of 'Banjo Obligato'. In musical direction sections of manuscript marked 'obligato' are to be played precisely as written and directed, with no room for variation or interpretation by the musician. The 'motley minstrel' is a figure in the poem whose 'note fills the castle square':[125] the 'Banjo Obligato' section of the text is a deliberate, unavoidable element of the poem which stresses a threat to 'Merlin's art' and the romance of the castle. The 'Cockney's better part'[126] threatens to overwhelm the residual cultural associations of the Welsh castle, and the poem's ironic endorsement of the 'new-found god' seems to be an ironic refutation of the 'conquering cosmopolitan'.[127] Yet, while the old 'ancient mountain clan' seem to be valorised and the 'motley minstrel' damned with mock-praise,

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[122] Ernest Rhys, 'A Castle in Wales', in *Welsh Ballads and Other Poems*, pp. 106-08 (p. 106).
[123] Rhys, 'A Castle in Wales', p. 106.
[124] Rhys, 'A Castle in Wales', p. 106.
[125] Rhys, 'A Castle in Wales', p. 107.
[126] Rhys, 'A Castle in Wales', p. 108.
[127] Rhys, 'A Castle in Wales', p. 107.

the form of the poem nevertheless affirms the presence of Wales and London side by side, together. Wales and England wed, although not seamlessly or wholly harmoniously in the form of Rhys's work.

Rhys was naturally familiar with the *London Kelt* newspaper and, by extension, with the wider literary, cultural London-Welsh milieu for which the newspaper spoke. A poem like 'Envoi' might be profitably compared with the first editorial of the *Kelt*, published in January 1895. In it, the newspaper speaks of its double objective to serve both the London Welsh as a publication around which they might all unite, and also to represent the London Welsh to the 'good old folks back home'.[128]

A similar double vision and dual address is implicit in Rhys's poem 'The Ballad of the Buried Sword', which again features Owain Glyndŵr. The poem tells of the vision of its speaker:

> In a winter's dream, on Gamélyn moor,
> I found the lost grave of Lord Glyndwr.[129]

The poem tells of the moor of dreams, where the speaker of the poem is positioned in the ''marish reeds' where 'with a rustling sound,/ [...] a thousand grey swordsmen were turned around'.[130] It is a vision very similar to that witnessed by Lucian Taylor in Machen's *The Hill of Dreams*: the individual is overwhelmed, 'assailed', by the sudden appearance on a lonely landscape of a spectral host. Yet, though both visions are similar, the function of the ghostly vision in their respective texts is very different. Lucian is overwhelmed by his encounter on the hill of dreams, and his subsequent career as a writer is geared towards capturing the 'magic of those domed hills' in his prose. It is a haunting vision which inspires what has often been described as 'the most decadent book

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[128] 'To our Readers', *London Kelt*, 12 January 1895, p. 3.
[129] Ernest Rhys, 'The Ballad of the Buried Sword', in *Welsh Ballads and Other Poems*, pp. 3-5 (p. 3).
[130] Rhys, 'The Ballad of the Buried Sword', p. 4.

in the English language'.[131] The speaker of Rhys's poem is by contrast motivated towards

nationalist ends:

> But still his sword before me shone
> O'er Gamélyn moor, as I crossed alone.
>
> And still it shines, - a silver flame
> Across the dark night of Norman shame.
>
> Oh, bright it shines, and shall brighter gleam,
> For all that believe in the Cymraec dream.[132]

The lone figure at the end of the poem, moved and inspired by the intensity of the vision

recently witnessed is fixated by the image of Glyndŵr's sword and the promise it holds

for the Welsh language ('the Cymraec dream'). It is a conclusion not dissimilar to that of

T. Gwynn Jones's *awdl* of 1902, 'Ymadawiad Arthur', 'Arthur's Departure'. In Jones's

awdl, Bedwyr is left alone after Arthur's departure, sad and despondent, to return to the

battle:

> Ac yno'r llong dano a dodd,
> A'i chelu; fel drychiolaeth,
> Yn y niwl diflannu a wnaeth.
>
> Bedwyr, yn drist a distaw,
> At y drin aeth eto draw.[133]
>
> [And then the ship came underneath him,
> And concealed it; like a vision,
> It disappeared into the mist.
>
> Bedwyr, sad and silent,
> Turned back again to the battle.'][134]

Both poems conclude in an encounter with a mythical figure (Owain Glyndŵr is a

historical figure here endowed with mythical, supernatural qualities), with a note of

sadness at the fleeting nature of their appearance, yet also hope for the future which they

somehow promise. The 'Cymraec dream' is a phrase which is defamiliarised to a non-

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[131] See David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Harlow: Pearson, 1996) II, 24.
[132] Rhys, 'The Ballad of the Buried Sword', p. 5.
[133] T. Gwynn Jones, 'Ymadawiad Arthur', in *Caniadau*, pp. 3-22 (p. 22).
[134] The translation is my own.

Welsh-speaking audience.[135] The 'Cymraec dream', the Welsh language, is an element of the poem which can be identified as residual, rather than archaic: the speaker maintains that there are some who still believe in it; it remains active in the cultural process. Yet there is also a sense in which the poem is advancing an emergent ideology: the 'Cymraec dream' is still a vehicle of hope, and the possibility of its return still serves as an inspiration.

Daniel Williams has written about the pan-Celtic movement of the 1890s as a 'lost cause' which might yet be worth defending. Williams takes his cue from Slavoj Žižek's argument that many of history's most odious or violent regimes may nevertheless contain a kernel of revolutionary potential which should be defended or preserved. By rejecting the ethnic exclusivity of the pan-Celtic ideology, Williams argues that by preserving a core of 'linguistic nationalism', pan-Celticism can be redeemed as a coherent challenge to British imperial hegemony. Following Žižek, Williams concludes by arguing that 'linguistic difference – the issue which lies at the heart of the "lost cause" of Pan-Celticism – exposes the intolerance of anglophone multiculturalism'.[136] Rhys's 'Cymraec dream' – ephemeral, mythical, residual – is the kernel of the lost cause theorised by Williams. The choice of 'Cymraec' is significant because it is the Welsh word for the Welsh language which nevertheless appears here in an English-language poem. The form of 'The Ballad of the Buried Sword' suggests that the Cymraec dream is one which can still exist alongside an English-language description of Wales. Standing representative of Rhys's work, the poem advances a Welsh nationalist perspective through an English-language poem; more specifically, it is a Welsh *linguistic* nationalism which finds its expression in an English-language text. Again, the impact of London is significant: the

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[135] However, the correct spelling for the Welsh word for the Welsh language is Cymraeg.

[136] Daniel G. Williams, 'Another Lost Cause? Pan-Celticism, Race and Language', *Irish Studies Review*, 17.1 (2009), 89-101 (p. 98). See also Slavoj Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* (London and New York: Verso, 2008).

ideology of the poem simultaneously uses and critiques the dominant English-language medium to advance the cause of the Cymraec dream. Rhys himself adopts the position of the London man of letters in order to re-imagine and refashion a Welsh identity. Indeed, his work is analogous to that of other London Welshmen – and London Kelts – in that London, despite being the capital of the imperial and political enterprise against which their work is pitted, nevertheless offers both the creative perspective and the material opportunities for a residual/emergent Celtic identity to be developed. This is the transformative agent which 'Turned the grave's dark gate to a radiant door'.[137]

Nation and Translation

'The Ballad of the Last Prince' sees Rhys turn to Welsh history for his subject matter. The Last Prince is Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, and his executed body, his 'dabbled death's-head',[138] at the Tower of London is observed by two Londoners. As John Davies has noted, following his execution, '[w]hen Llywelyn was recognized, his head was sent to London as proof of the king's success.'[139] The sight of Llywelyn's head forms part of a conversation between two citizens outside the Tower of London: their conversation concerning the identity and provenance of the Welsh body in their midst echoes from their thirteenth-century context down the centuries to that of Ernest Rhys at the turn of the twentieth. Reading the poem in the context of 1890s cultural nationalism in the Celtic nations makes the conversation between the two Londoners regarding the Welsh prince a convenient historical bridge. According to John Davies, Llywelyn's death meant that 'the Welsh polity which he and his ancestors had fostered was uprooted [...]. Henceforth, the fate of the Welsh in every part of their country would be to live under a political system in which they and their characteristics would have only a subordinate

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[137] Rhys, 'The Ballad of the Buried Sword', p. 4.
[138] Ernest Rhys, 'The Ballad of the Last Prince', in *Welsh Ballads and Other Poems*, pp. 94-105 (p. 94).
[139] Davies, *A History of Wales*, p. 160.

role, a fact which would be a central element in their experience until this very day and hour.'[140] Davies writes in the last decade of the twentieth century; Rhys writes in the last decade of the nineteenth: both men attribute tremendous significance to Llywelyn's demise, reading it as something of a turning-point in the course of Welsh history. Llywelyn, for Rhys, is another figure from the past who, like Glyndŵr and King Arthur, is endowed with mythic significance and who can yet carry the prospect of the glorious future of the nation to come by inspiring the patriots of the present day.

This linking of temporalities is, as noted by both Smith and Anderson, a feature of emergent nationalisms. The symbolic currency of Llywelyn's death is invested in the construction of a useable past, a narrative drawn from history which can be put to work in the present. The two voices at the start of the poem discuss the fate of Llywelyn as they behold his severed head. Identifying the head, the second speaker declares that it is

> Their last Prince, crown'd and made a king,
> With ivy leaves on a silver string
> (Archbishop John calls him Leolin) [...]
>
> His fallen head that he held so high,
> Looks vainly now for the banks of Wye,
> Between the smoke and sulky sky:
> But his heart is left in a greener grave,
> Than you, O London, ever gave!
>
> His heart is left to sounder sleep,
> In the pleasant land he sought to keep:
> On Irvon side may his grave be deep!
>   But his voice shall yet, like the voice of Brân,
>   End the mystic music it began![141]

The contrast between Wales and London is here focused on the head of Llywelyn. The 'smoke and sulky sky' is an indicator of the polluted city as compared to the 'pleasant land' on 'the banks of Wye', yet there is a sense that this contrast has as much to do with Ernest Rhys's late-nineteenth-century moment as it does with Llywelyn ap Gruffydd's in

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[140] Davies, *A History of Wales*, p. 161.
[141] Rhys, 'The Ballad of the Last Prince', pp. 94-95.

the thirteenth century. The wholesome rural Welsh idyll bespeaks an imagined nation, endowed again with all the life-giving properties associated with home and security. Present here also is the familiar image of sleep and reawakening: the voice of the Welsh leader is silenced temporarily, but will return to complete its 'mystic music'. The metaphorical tone of the 'mystic music' endows Wales with a mythical, spiritual characteristic: the descriptions of nature and the countryside's verdure are at odds with the city's dirt and pollution, while the concrete physicality of the city – with its Tower and great throng – is in contrast to the mythical Welsh countryside of Bendigeidfran.[142]

Yet the ballad also has links in Welsh history. It is a relatively long poem which narrates the story of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd from his marriage to Eleanor to his death. Formally the poem begins with the conversation between the two London citizens at the sight of Llywelyn's disembodied head in 1282, before cutting back to 1275; the story then builds up to the present. After the London 'Prelude' the first section of the poem describes Llywelyn's 'Green Parliament' in 'Aber glen',

> [...] a secret place,
> Where the hills know never a Norman face.[143]

Drawing here on the language of ethnicity, the poem develops the notion of Wales as a place containing a 'secret'. As becomes clear in Rhys's engagement (along with the other pan-Celticists) with the writings of Matthew Arnold on the subject of Celticism, Wales's credentials as a mythical, spiritual nation containing a mysterious 'secret' or genius is a reclamation of traditional conceptions of the Celt as superstitious and irrational.

In his devotion to his wife, 'The Lady Elin', as the title of the second section of the poem has it, Llywelyn is seen to kneel and pray: the ballad form incorporates the genre of

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[142] Bendigeidfran is of course another Welsh ruler whose severed head makes its way to London, where it was placed, in the White Hill, facing France to protect the island from invasion.

[143] Rhys, 'The Ballad of the Last Prince', p. 97.

romance to make the Welsh prince a noble, devoted, pious figure. In describing the death

of Eleanor during the birth of her daughter, Gwenllian, the poem notes how

> In love to the lady of Snowdon knelt
> The hearts of all that around her dwelt
> From Druid Mon to Caerléon:
> > By love she led our mountain men
> > Like lost sheep to green fields again.[144]

Eleanor, Elin, or perhaps more specifically her womb, is a point of focus for the poem

which unites the nation. Reference to the physical geographical locations of Wales sees

the poem imagining the physical boundaries of the nation from its northernmost to its

southernmost extremities. The notion of bringing together factions from north and

south Wales was of course a pressing concern for Welsh politics in Rhys's own late-

nineteenth-century period (as, arguably the persistence of the 'A470 question' remains to

this day). Daniel Williams among others has described the Young Wales/*Cymru Fydd*

movement's influence in the 1890s:

> *Cymru Fydd* mustered considerable support as it began to establish branches
> throughout the length and breadth of Wales between 1894 and 1896. Lloyd George
> believed that the aim of uniting the Welsh organisation of the Liberal Party with
> that of *Cymru Fydd* would be easily achieved.[145]

The *Cymru Fydd* movement sought greater political independence for Wales from

England. As Kenneth O. Morgan comments, '[i]ts very name suggested a forward-

looking optimism of a new, rebellious generation' and that '[a]s in so many nationalist

revivals of the later nineteenth century in central and eastern Europe and in Scandinavia,

Cymru Fydd conceived its national mission in terms of a native cultural and linguistic

tradition.'[146] Williams's quotation is relevant to the Rhys poem because in it he stresses

Cymru Fydd's span across the length and breadth of Wales – or, as in 'The Ballad of the

Last Prince', from 'Druid Mon' (i.e. Anglesey, in the north west), to Caerleon (in the

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[144] Rhys, 'The Ballad of the Last Prince', p. 99.
[145] Williams, *Ethnicity and Cultural Authority*, p. 136.
[146] Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics 1868-1922*, 3rd edn (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), pp. 104-05.

south east). Rhys's poem suggests the difficulty of achieving and maintaining this level of

national unity following the death of Llywelyn; given the 1898 publication of *Welsh*

Ballads Rhys's poem seems to invite comparisons with its own period following the

acrimonious dissolution of the *Cymru Fydd* movement owing to irreconcilable differences

between the movement's north- and south-Wales factions. As Morgan describes, '[t]he

decisive clash between the Cymru Fydd League and the South Wales Federation came in

the notorious conference at Newport on 16 January [1896]'.[147] The conference, 'packed

with enemies of Lloyd George',[148] shouted down the north Walian, with Robert Bird,

chairman of the Cardiff Liberal Association, telling the meeting that '[t]here are, from

Swansea to Newport, thousands upon thousands of Englishmen, as true Liberals as

yourselves [...] who will never submit to the domination of Welsh ideas.'[149] Morgan,

unlike Daniel Williams and John Davies, fails to note that Bird was a native of Bristol,

describing him as 'a sober and moderate politician'[150] and concluding ultimately that 'the

growing divergence of outlook between the rural areas and the industrial coalfield [...]

was [...] the immediate cause of the collapse of Cymru Fydd'.[151] Morgan outlines a

contrast between a parochial Lloyd George and the 'cosmopolitan population of the

great towns of south Wales'.[152] Williams and Davies offer a counter-reading to Morgan

by quoting Lloyd George's response to Bird, published in *Y Faner* (*The Banner*), which

asked

> A yw lliaws y genedl Gymreig yn mynd i ~~gymryd~~ gymryd eu harglwyddiaethu gan
> glymblaid o gyfalafwyr Saesneg sydd yn dyfod i Gymru, nid i ddyrchafu'r bobl, ond
> i wneud eu ffortiwn?

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[147] Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p. 163.
[148] Davies, *A History of Wales*, p. 466.
[149] Quoted in Davies, *A History of Wales*, p. 466.
[150] Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p. 163.
[151] Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p. 164.
[152] Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p. 163.

[Are the majority of Welsh people going to be dominated by a coalition of English capitalists who have come to Wales not to benefit the people but to make their fortune?][153]

These tensions and anxieties are represented in Rhys's 'The Ballad of the Last Prince' in the—: clash between Llywelyn and Edward I, King of England, as well as in the fragmentation of Welsh interests following the death of Llywelyn.

The poem concludes by placing Llywelyn himself in a lineage, stretching back as far as the earliest of all Welsh poets, Taliesin:

> The Bard-of-the-Shining Brow, of old,
> Wrote our testament in triple gold: -
> 'Their ancient speech they still shall hold!
>   Of their ancient Land still keep a part!
>   Their Lord still praise with fervent heart!'[154]

Taliesin, the Bard of the Shining Brow, is invoked here as a prophet whose words still echo with Rhys at the end of the nineteenth century, much as they did for Llywelyn in the thirteenth. The prophecy to which Rhys's ballad refers is contained in the lines from the *Book of Taliesin*:

> Eu Ner a volant,
> Eu hiaith a gadwant,
> Eu tir a gollant
>   Ond gwillt Walia![155]

> Their Lord they shall praise,
> Their language they shall keep,
> Their land they shall lose,
>   Except Wild Wales.[156]

By invoking Taliesin the poem asserts the credentials of Wales as an ancient repository of culture and memory. Even though it is prophesied that they shall lose much of their land

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[153] Quoted and translated in Williams, *Ethnicity and Cultural Authority*, p. 136.

[154] Rhys, 'The Ballad of the Last Prince', p. 105.

[155] *Ystoria Taliesin*, ed. by Patrick K. Ford (Cardiff: Univeristy of Wales Press, 1992), pp. 83-6..

[156] The translation is taken from the title page to George Borrow's *Wild Wales* (1901). See George Borrow, *Wild Wales: Its People, Language, And Society* (London: John Murray, 1901), title page.

there is a sense that the Welsh people cling to their culture and language by dint of this same prophecy. Linguistic identity is here again advanced as a challenge to the forces which threaten from without. It is a residual element, a lost cause, to which 'The Ballad of the Last Prince' still clings. Indeed, the 'song' of the Last Prince is protected and cherished 'as we press on,/Led forth by starry Destiny!':[157] it carries the transformative potential to turn what is a residual lost cause to a newly-emergent ideology.

Indeed, the precise nature of this re(sidual)-emergence repays closer scrutiny. Anderson, Gellner, and Smith have all noted the important contribution of language and a common idiom to the way a nation is imagined. The 'residual' elements which in Ernest Rhys's work are made newly emergent are the Welsh language and indeed Welsh-language literature – though their reanimation comes through the English language. *Welsh Ballads* contains Rhys's reworkings of Welsh poetry, and this becomes a significant feature of his writing, as indeed it does in much turn-of-the-century London-Welsh writing. Daniel Williams's polemical essay, which aims to retrieve the baby of language (or bilingualism) from the thrown-out bathwater of ethnic nationalism, provides a useful way of reading Rhys's translations of Welsh poetry. In the act of translating the text, a residual cultural element becomes translated to an emergent one; Rhys's poems are written with an English (or non-Welsh-speaking) audience in mind, and on the face of things his simple and formally uncomplicated lyrics and ballads might be read as a reductive rendering of Welsh poetry. Nevertheless, in summoning up the spirit of Dafydd ap Gwilym and Taliesin, among other texts and figures from Welsh poetry, Rhys's *Welsh Ballads* injects a new energy into what would otherwise remain a residual element – i.e., identifiably belonging to the past and waning in the face of the dominant ideology.

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[157] Rhys, 'The Ballad of the Last Prince', p. 105.

In his brief note on Ernest Rhys, W. B. Yeats in his autobiography alludes to the fact that he was aware of Rhys's work as a translator of Welsh poetry. It is, arguably, this element of Rhys's creative work which succeeds best in bringing the residual forms of Welsh poetry to a new audience as an emergent force. Rhys played a significant role in bringing Welsh literature to a broader audience. The translations from the Welsh language appear in collections like *Welsh Ballads*, *Lays of the Round Table and Other Lyric Romances*, *Lyra Celtica* (edited by Elizabeth Sharp and with an introduction and notes by William Sharp). One literal re-emergence from the Welsh literary tradition is 'The Coming of Olwen: from Kilhwch and Olwen in the Mabinogion'.[158] As Rhys himself notes, the poem is '[a] paraphrase of the well-known and oft-quoted passage in her praise, so beautifully set amid the romantic pages of "Kilhwch and Olwen", in the *Mabinogion*.'[159] In the story of 'Culhwch ac Olwen', Olwen is the daughter of the giant, Ysbaddaden Bencawr, and the beloved of the hero Culhwch who, with the aid of Arthur and others, must travel far and wide in the accomplishment of many daunting and elaborate tasks in order to win her hand. Rhys's poem renders an account of the description of Olwen.[160]

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[158] Ernest Rhys, 'The Coming of Olwen: from Kilhwch and Olwen in the Mabinogion', in *Welsh Ballads and Other Poems*, pp. 61-2.

[159] Rhys, 'Note', in *Welsh Ballads*, p. 171.

[160] The description reads as follows:

> Anfonwyd amdani. A daeth hithau a mantell sidan fflamgoch amdani a thorch drwchus, ruddaur am wddf y forwyn, a pherlau gwerthfawr ynddi a gemau coch. Melynach oedd ei gwallt na blodau'r banadl. Gwynach oedd ei chnawd nag ewyn y don. Gwynnach oedd ei dwylo a'i bysedd nag egin ffa'r gors ynghanol graean mân ffynnon fyrlymus. Nid oedd llygaid hebog wedi bwrw ei blu na llygad gwalch wedi bwrw ei blu deirgwaith yn decach na'r llygad a oedd yn eiddo iddi. Yr oedd ei dwyfron yn wynnach na bron alarch gwyn. Cochach oed ei dwy rudd na'r ffion. Fe fyddai'r sawl a'i gwelai yn gyflawn o serch tuag ati. Tyfai pedair meillionen wen o'i hôl lle'r âr, ac oherwydd hynny y gelwid hi Olwen.

See 'Culhwch ac Olwen' in *Y Mabinogion*, ed. by Dafydd Ifans and Rhiannon Ifans (Llandysul: Gomer, 2001), pp. 89-126 (p. 103). Sioned Davies offers the following translation:

> And she was sent for. And she comes –
> with a robe of flame-red silk about her,
> and a torque of red gold about the maiden's neck
> with precious pearls and red jewels.
> Yellower was her hair than the flowers of the broom,
> Whiter was her flesh than the foam of the wave.
> Whiter were her palms and her fingers
> than moist cotton grass amidst the fine gravel of a bubbling spring.
> Neither the eye of a mewed hawk,
> nor the eye of a thrice-mewed falcon –

According to Sioned Davies the passage of the *Mabinogion* which describes the coming of Olwen, achieves its 'bombastic' effects due to 'the elaborate structure of the description', 'dividing the prose into lines based on repetition of syntactical patterns'.[161] Rhys's 'The Coming of Olwen' is ordered in heroic couplets, with each couplet describing a feature of Olwen's appearance. The thrust of the poem describes the effect that sighting Olwen has on those who see her:

> The forest flowers made a name:
> They murmured OLWEN and she came.
>
> Who sees her once cross the forest floor,
> Must follow pale Olwen for evermore.[162]

Rhys's poem itself is but the most recent to follow in Olwen's flowery trail, and certainly positions itself and its readers in a lineage stretching back to the *Mabinogion*. This poem, and others, in rewriting Welsh and Celtic mythology, characterise that Celtic mythology as both natural and super-natural, material and magical. 'The Coming of Olwen' is followed in a later collection, *Lays of the Round Table and Other Lyric Romances* (1905), by poems to Blodeuwedd, ('The Flower Maiden'[163]) and to the birds of Rhiannon.

'The Birds of Rhiannon' is a short lyric based on the magical birds which appear in the Second Branch of the Mabinogi – the tale of Branwen – and also in the story of Culhwch

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no eye was fairer than hers.
Whiter were her breasts than the breast of a white swan.
Redder were her cheeks than the reddest foxglove.
Whoever saw her would be filled with love for her.
Four white clovers would spring up behind her wherever she went.
And for that reason she was called Olwen.

See 'How Culhwch Won Olwen', in *The Mabinogion*, trans. and ed. by Sioned Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 179-213 (p. 192).

[161] Davies, 'Explanatory Notes', in *The Mabinogion*, pp. 227-80 (pp. 267-68).

[162] Rhys, 'The Coming of Olwen', p. 62.

[163] Ernest Rhys, 'The Flower Maiden', in *Lays of the Round Table and Other Lyric Romances* (London: Dent, 1905), p. 71.

and Olwen.[164] They are associated with Rhiannon, daughter of Hefeydd Hen (Hefeydd

the Old) and 'possess magical qualities'.[165] In the Second Branch the birds are described

singing above the feast at Harlech.[166] In the story 'How Culhwch Won Olwen' Culhwch

is charged by Ysbaddaden Bencawr with the task of fetching 'the birds of Rhiannon, they

that wake the dead and lull the living to sleep, to entertain me that night'.[167] Rhys's lyric

describes how 'Seven years in their singing/Are gone like a day.'[168] The mention of seven

years refers to the duration of the feast at Harlech at which the birds flew overhead. The

poem proceeds to describe the sorrow and the sense of loss which inevitably and

immediately follow the conclusion of their singing: such is the ecstasy induced by their

song that its ceasing brings about

> [...] all the sorrow
> You had to your cost
> All the loss, - yes, remember
> All the friends you have lost![169]

The magic of this Celtic song (Rhiannon's name 'derives from that of the Celtic goddess

Rigatona', and the birds' 'marvellous powers [is] a motif found also in Irish literature'[170])

is enchanting and beguiling, but is also, ultimately, associated with an absence, a sense of

loss or an aporia. Another poem of Rhys's contained in *Lays of the Round Table* based

upon a figure from Celtic mythology is 'The Flower Maiden'. The poem describes the

fashioning of Blodeuwedd by Gwydion and Math, as described in the tale of Math Son

of Mathonwy, the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi:

> They took the blossom of the oak,
> The blossom of the broom,
> The blossom of the meadowsweet,

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[164] Ernest Rhys, 'The Birds of Rhiannon', in *Lays of the Round Table*, p. 15.

[165] Davies, 'Explanatory Notes', p. 230.

[166] 'They went to Harlech, and sat down, and were regaled with food and drink. As soon as they began o eat and drink, three birds came and began to sing them a song, and all the songs they had heard before were harsh compared to that one.' See 'The Second Branch of the Mabinogi', in *The Mabinogion*, pp. 22-34 (33).

[167] 'How Culhwch Won Olwen', in *The Mabinogion*, p. 196.

[168] Ernest Rhys, 'The Birds of Rhiannon', p. 15.

[169] Rhys, 'The Birds of Rhiannon', p. 15.

[170] Davies, 'Explanatory Notes', p. 230 and p. 236, respectively.

To be her body's bloom.[171]

Here again, however, despite the beauty and magical provenance of this Celtic woman,

she is still connected with a feeling of absence. As James Mackillop notes, Blodeuwedd is

fashioned from flowers because Lleu Llaw Gyffes is cursed by Arianrhod 'that he should

have no wife of any race on earth', and though her name 'bears testimony to her beauty',

Blodeuwedd 'brings her husband little joy':[172] she betrays Lleu and falls in love with

Gronw Pebr, for which crime she is turned into an owl by Gwydion the magician. Rhys's

poem concludes:

> But they forgot from mother-earth
> To beg the kindling coal:
> They made him a wife of flowers, -
> But they forgot the soul.[173]

Again, there is a sense of absence, of incompleteness, with which the Celtic material is

associated. This loss often corresponds with the promise of a return, as in the case of

Llywelyn the Last Prince, Owain Glyndŵr, the 'Cymraec dream', or, as in another poem

from *Lays of the Round Table*, King Arthur.[174] As the next chapter will discuss, Arthur

Machen is another London-Welsh writer who identifies this characteristic, arguing as he

does that 'it is the sense of a great loss which lies at the root of all the Celtic magic, the

Celtic mysticism, the Celtic wonder.'[175]

While both Rhys and Machen in their various ways engage with Celtic themes, the

paradigm for engagement with Celtic literature in the nineteenth century stems from the

work of Matthew Arnold. As Daniel Williams has argued, it is Arnold's '1866 lectures *On*

the Study of Celtic Literature which formed a useable, if problematic, template for the

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[171] Rhys, 'The Flower Maiden', p. 71.
[172] James Mackillop, 'Boeduedd', in *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*, p. 39.
[173] Rhys, 'The Flower Maiden', p. 71.
[174] See Rhys, 'Arthur's Grave', in *Lays of the Round Table and Other Lyric Romances*, p. 63.
[175] Arthur Machen, 'Celtic Magic', in *Notes and Queries* (London: Spurr & Swift, 1926), pp. 59-66 (p. 61).

construction of a Celtic identity in the 1890s'.[176] As we have seen, these lectures, delivered from the Chair of the Oxford University Professor of Poetry, depict the Celt and the Celtic nature as

> [a]n organisation quick to feel impressions, and feeling them very strongly; a lively personality therefore, keenly sensitive to joy and to sorrow [...]. If the downs of life too much outnumber the ups, this temperament, just because it is so quickly and nearly conscious of all impressions, may no doubt be seen shy and wounded; it may be seen in wistful regret, it may be seen in passionate, penetrating melancholy; but its essence is to aspire ardently after life, light, and emotion, to be expansive, adventurous, and gay.[177]

Rhys himself published *On the Study of Celtic Literature* for the Everyman Library in 1910 and contributed an introduction to the volume too. Yet his own work – like that of the other pan-Celticists – bears the most indelible imprint of Arnold's thesis. Arnold's quotation above, like Rhys's poetry, presents the Celtic as something emotional and sensitive yet also linked to sorrow or melancholy. The Celt who is 'keenly sensitive to joy and sorrow' is also seen as 'shy and wounded'. As the introduction has outlined, Arnold's Celt is an irrational, superstitious, errant, and feminised figure, much in need of being brought into line by Arnold's argument. Rhys's Celt by contrast seeks to reclaim and recast Arnold's: where Arnold sees irrationality and superstition, Rhys sees emotion, romance and spirituality. While Arnold's argument wishes for the demise of the Welsh language for the benefit of England (and Wales), Rhys argues for the continued celebration of that 'Cymraec'/Celtic element in order that it may contribute to British society.

Rhys's direct engagement with Arnold in the pages of the Everyman edition of *On the Study of Celtic Literature* is interesting in evaluating his debt to and divergence from his great precursor. Describing Arnold as 'Oxford in person trying to break into the

[176] Williams, 'Pan-Celticism and the Limits of Post-Colonialism', p. 5. Arnold's lectures appeared in book form in 1867.
[177] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature and other essays* (London and Toronto: Dent, 1910), p. 81.

wilderness',[178] Rhys positions Arnold as belonging to what might be called the dominant social order of his day. Matters Celtic are untamed and unexplored, despite their being a seductive curiosity. Celtic literature is, in Rhys's description of Arnold, a jungle-like space: it is likened to an 'adventure' through 'thickets' and 'wilderness'.[179] Rhys's introduction is symptomatic of the attitude of many of the pan-Celticists towards Arnold in that it calls into question many of his findings, but is nevertheless deferential and respectful to Arnold for having created a space in which a Celtic identity could be re-imagined at the turn of the twentieth century. Rhys is full of admiration for Arnold's intervention against 'the noise of the Philistines, his darling enemy, crying down the Celtic host'.[180] Rhys also acknowledges Arnold's role in establishing the Chair of Celtic at the University of Oxford, a step which Arnold called for in the final lecture on Celtic literature: Ernest Rhys became firm friends with Professor Sir John Rhys, a student of Arnold's and the first incumbent of the Chair of Celtic who had 'adopted the very method he [Arnold] desired to see applied in attacking the subject from the Welsh and Irish side.'[181] Arnold is in Rhys's reading an outsider figure drawn to Celtic literature from the centre, though also, possibly, because of a Celtic strain.[182] Rhys's introduction compares the study of Celtic literature and culture in his own period to that of Arnold's time, noting that 'The clue to the hidden world of Celtic romance is one that may be much more easily followed today.'[183] Rhys positions Arnold in the role of the detective figure who attempts to piece together the clues that lead to the hidden Celtic secret.

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[178] Ernest Rhys, 'Introduction' to Matthew Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature and other essays*, pp. vii-xv (p. vii)

[179] Rhys, 'Introduction', p. vii.

[180] Rhys, 'Introduction', p. viii.

[181] Ernest Rhys, 'Introduction', p. ix.

[182] As well as describing Arnold as 'Oxford in person', Rhys notes that '[h]e had, too, thanks partly no doubt to the Cornish strain in him, a temperamental feeling for Celtic things.' See Rhys, 'Introduction', p. vii.

[183] Rhys, 'Introduction', p. viii.

More than any of the other principal writers considered in this thesis, Ernest Rhys is a figure committed to a self-conscious invention and promotion of a Welsh literary tradition. Central to his project is the role of culture and, especially, literature. Rhys's creative work, in its reclamation of Welsh-language literature, invokes residual cultural ideologies and yet mobilises them as part of an emergent cultural-nationalist aesthetic. Rhys's status as one of the most eminent men of letters in the London of his day provides him and other London Celts the platform from which to reinvent and recuperate Arnold's residual Celtic detritus and make it speak anew. This thesis now shifts its focus from the romanticised invention of a pan-Celtic tradition to an imagined community of an altogether ghostlier kind. In aesthetically different, yet structurally similar ways, the work of Arthur Machen, Rhys's fellow London-Welsh man of letters, is both assailed and haunted by the return of Arnold's Celt.

Chapter Two
Arthur Machen: The Gothic London Celt

Gothic Contexts; or, The Ghostly Nation

While this thesis looks at the literary-cultural sector of Welsh life in London it is important to bear in mind that this is a sphere which is always connected, never separate, from the other aspects of Welsh life in the city at this period - political, religious, social and cultural. Anthony D. Smith and Benedict Anderson have suggested, civic, governmental elements of national identity go hand in hand with broader, more populist elements. The nation is imagined, driven forward, by the efforts of an intellectual elite, but this intelligentsia is dependent on the support of more popular, participation. The work of building the nation, pulls in two opposing directions. The emergence of a 'new', 'young' nationalism relies on the invocation of an imagined, mythical past. While the emergent strands of a progressive national identity may come in the form of the establishment of civic institutions or the increased activity of political parties, such an undertaking is always accompanied by the idea of an ancient past stretching back to time immemorial.

The late-nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of several 'new' European nationalisms following this trend. Contemporaneously, British *fin-de-siècle* literature is dominated by the return, the reanimation, of the Gothic genre. Texts such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Grey* (1890), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (both 1897) are all representative of this Gothic return: each of these texts is, in its own way, concerned with a social order which at the late-Victorian moment is threatening, or indeed beginning, to disintegrate. The threat posed to the position of Man at the centre

of a divine creation by the Darwinian theory of evolution by natural selection is manifested in the literature of the period by the figure of the monster. The emergent field of Freudian psychoanalysis similarly responds and contributes to debates surrounding similar cultural and social phenomena. The trope of the de-centred, bifurcated self is found in many of the period's texts, from Freudian case studies to *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *The Picture of Dorian Grey*. Arthur Machen's writing is frequently viewed in this late-Victorian Gothic context, though usually without reference to late-century nation-building discourses.

Yet it is illuminating to read Machen's *fin-de-siècle* fictions in the context of emergent forms of national identity. Indeed, the Gothic mode very often deals with the threat of a national break-up: Marsh's *The Beetle* and Stoker's *Dracula* are two such texts which feature a threat to British society as manifested in the form of an alien, invading, Other. Imperial values are no longer as secure in this period as they once seemed, and Gothic texts such as these do not allow these values to remain unquestioned. Joseph Chamberlain's 1897 speech, 'The True Conception of Empire', delivered at the Hotel Metropole in London at a dinner of the Royal Colonial Institute may stand as an example of how the dominant ideology of the *fin de siècle* attempted to shore up the values pertaining to the imperial project. Yet, in the very act of celebrating the durability of the 'true conception of empire', Chamberlain's speech betrays the sense in which those values are threatened. Following a toast to 'Imperial Patriotism', Chamberlain elaborates on how what he regards as the third stage in Britain's imperial history now brings about a 'sentiment of kinship', rather than possession, between Britain and her colonies.[1] Despite

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[1] See Joseph Chamberlain, 'The True Conception of Empire', in *Empire Writing: An Anthology of Colonial Literature 1870-1918*, ed. by Elleke Boehmer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 212-5 (p. 213). According to Chamberlain, the first stage of British Imperial history was characterised by a desire that Britain treated her colonies 'as possessions valuable in proportion to the pecuniary advantage which they brought to the mother country'; (p. 212); the second period was, according to Chamberlain, characterised

his spirit of kinship, Chamberlain nevertheless acknowledges that '[y]ou cannot have omelettes without breaking eggs',[2] and that 'bloodshed, and loss of life among the native populations, loss of still more precious lives among those who have been sent out to bring these countries into some kind of disciplined order, [...] it must be remembered [...] is the condition of the mission we have to fulfil.'[3] Applying Raymond Williams's terms, Chamberlain's anxiety is that the dominant ideals of the imperial project as he sets them out will come under threat from the residual settlements already existing across the globe or from newly emergent opposition to the current imperial occupation, and kinship is his consolation.

In the specific London context, the late-Victorian period is also a moment when an emergent range of national movements from Ireland, Wales and Scotland was gaining momentum. These movements were to a greater or lesser extent co-ordinated, but, as Daniel G. Williams and Kenneth O. Morgan have suggested, each movement certainly drew momentum, inspiration and support from the others.[4] Hand-in-hand with the political lobbying and campaigning of Irish nationalists, such as Charles Stewart Parnell, and Welsh nationalists, such as Tom Ellis and the young Lloyd George, was a project of broader cultural construction, the invention of tradition. National civic institutions such as museums, libraries and universities may speak of a progressive, forward-looking nation, but each of these institutions must, for justification of the nation's current existence, be filled with artefacts, texts, and knowledges which speak of a national past. In the case of the 'Pan-Celtic' movement of the late-nineteenth century, the cultural

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by the opposite opinion, owing to the fact that the desired spoils were harder to come by than had initially been anticipated.

[2] Chamberlain, 'The True Conception of Empire', p. 214.

[3] Chamberlain, 'The True Conception of Empire', p. 213.

[4] Morgan argues that 'The major force in transforming disestablishment and the other demands of Welsh Liberals into something resembling a nationalist programme [...] was the tumultuous history of Ireland. To most Englishmen and to many Scots, events in Ireland were an ominous warning; to a growing body of younger Welshmen, they were an inspiring example.' See Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics 1868-1922*, 3rd edn (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), p. 68.

elements of the respective national movements focused on the recovery (or invention) of a national literature and, often crucially, a national language. E. J. Hobsbawm has identified the contribution of men of letters forming an intellectual elite in the 'invention' of new nationalisms: it is this elite which revives or resuscitates the more popular elements of a national identity which can be practiced by the broader community. Hobsbawm argues that nations

> are, in my view, dual phenomena, constructed essentially from above, but which cannot be understood unless also analysed from below [...] The view from below [is one of] the nation as seen not by governments and the spokesmen and activists of nationalist (or non-nationalist) movements, but by ordinary persons who are the objects of their action and propaganda.[5]

Similarly, and as Anthony D. Smith has identified in the case of Ireland especially, the popular cultural activities brought about by the rejuvenation of national sports, dance, customs, and games injects a mass, participatory appeal to the project of imagining and performing the nation. Smith echoes Hobsbawm's top-down/bottom-up dichotomy with reference to Ireland, arguing that '[f]rom the rediscovery of epics like the *Edda* and *Kalevala* to the revival of hurling in Ireland and folk singing in Brittany, the leading role of educators, artists and journalists is evident'.[6] This participatory element of a national identity – identified by Anderson in what he terms the simultaneity of acts like the singing of a national anthem, or the reading of a national daily newspaper – brings the imagined community into being. What is less well remarked upon by Anderson himself and those who have followed him to write about nationalism is the Gothic, spectral nature of the (imagi)nation. There is, in Anderson's nation, a communion between the past, present, and future: the imagined community is shared not only by the current, living population, but also by its glorious dead and its sons and daughters yet to be born.

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[5] E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 10-11.

[6] Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), p. 141.

There is something spooky about this spectral imagined community, the communion between past, present, and future. Similarly to Williams' components of the residual, dominant and emergent in culture, the ghosts of the Nation Past, Present and Future are always at play, never wholly present and yet never wholly absent either. Many of the Gothic texts produced in and focusing on late-nineteenth-century London can be said to incorporate elements of the past, present, and future as residual, dominant, and emergent. Taking a text like *Dracula* as an example, the figure of the count can be read as a haunting presence, connected with and emerging from the past. Yet the text is also deeply concerned with the advent of new, emergent technologies and fashions.[7]

Turning to Machen, we can see that his works are both Gothic and engaging with the modern city, but they are also infused with emergent Celtic discourses; indeed, Machen's work may be newly illuminated when read by Celtic Twilight. The Celtic Twilight and 'Pan-Celticist' movements, under the driving impetus of nationalists in Ireland and Wales, embraced and revived the figures of the Celt and the peasant as being connected with an ancient, mythical, romantic, and authentic past. Though Machen's work has more often than not been read alongside *fin-de-siècle* Gothic texts, his work has been less thoroughly considered in terms of its relation to the return of the Celt and the advent of Pan-Celticism in the London of his day. Machen's status as a Welsh writer in London would suggest such a connection, as would his relationship with other Welsh and Irish writers in London at the time. Machen's work makes frequent use of Wales and Welsh characters: furthermore, Wales is often incorporated in Machen's work as a counterpoint to London. Indeed, Machen's work often oscillates along the axis between Wales and London to an extent where each location is inflected by the trace of the other. Machen's

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[7] The narrative voice of Stoker's *Dracula* is comprised of excerpts from letters, diaries, and log books, but also from telegrams, transcripts and phonograph recordings. The eighteenth-century epistolary novel may be a residual component of the narrative voice; however, by the same token, present also are emergent, new technologies.

own position as a Welsh writer in the city, writing about Wales, places him in a similar

bracket to many other exiled Welshmen of his day, including W. H. Davies, Ernest Rhys,

and Caradoc Evans, among others. Wales is imagined from the perspective of the urban

exile, given the distance afforded by that condition of exile. It is often constructed as a

place connected with an ancient, mythical past, a place of spiritualism, authenticity and

magic; Machen's work makes use of the associations between Wales – and particularly

the Gwent border country – and Roman history, Welsh myth, and Arthurian legend. In

many respects, Machen's Wales can be read in line with what Stephen Knight has termed

a first-contact location, suitable for consumption by literary tourists.[8]

But Knight's view does not tell the full story. Machen's work may well depict a

mysterious and intriguing setting, appealing to a London audience, but also acting upon it

is the influence of the Pan-Celtic movement – achieving the peak of its influence in

London at this time. Machen himself, perhaps appropriately for the author of works so

imbued with a split, border consciousness, moved in and out of the circles of literary

London – from his notoriety as a Fleet Street and Grub Street journalist, via a brief and

short-lived career as an actor, to membership of the Hermetic Order of the Golden

Dawn, the order to which the most famous 'Celtic' cultural nationalist of the day, the

Irish poet W. B. Yeats, also belonged. This is not to suggest that Machen and his work

can be read as the output of an ardent cultural nationalist, bearing the flag for Wales.

Such an impression would be misleading; from a nationalist-ideological perspective there

is much to separate Machen from Yeats. The strand which connects Machen's work with

that of more unambiguous cultural and political nationalists is that his texts construct a

Wales representative of a romantic and ancient past – a Wales in line with the historic

associations often constructed by nationalists which this thesis, following Raymond

[8] Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. xi.

Williams, terms 'residual' cultural forces. A further factor linking Machen's work with that of other more identifiable nationalists such as Yeats and his friend Ernest Rhys, is an engagement with the idea of Celticism, and, particularly, a reassessment and reappropriation of Matthew Arnold's thesis on the Celt.

As mentioned above, however, Machen should not be unproblematically incorporated into the Celtic Twilight/Pan-Celtic movement. His work, in terms of its geography, genre, and context, makes problematic such an attractively straightforward reading. This difficulty in placing Machen's work may indeed be the reason why he has attracted so little sustained critical interest. There is more to Machen than his traditional tag of late-nineteenth-century Gothic writer has hitherto suggested. It is the aim of this chapter to read Machen's work in light of the interconnectedness of these two categories: the Gothic and the Celtic. It will argue that what distinguishes Machen's brand of *fin-de-siècle* Gothic is the ghostly presence of Celticism in his work. Further, it argues that Machen's work constitutes the interface, the subtle and complex meeting point, of these various influences: Wales and London, Celtic and Gothic. By examining and rereading his more familiar works alongside some of his lesser-known journalism, this chapter suggests that just as Machen's brand of Gothic is inflected by the Celtic, so too is his brand of a Celtic imagined community inflected by the Gothic. It becomes increasingly clear that each context is inflected, haunted, by the other.

Machen and the Celtic Gothic

A spectre is haunting the work of Arthur Machen – the spectre of Celticism. Critics often remark that Machen is a Welsh- or Gwent-born writer, but seldom suggest how the texts themselves are conditioned by the London-Welsh context. Works like *The Great God Pan*

(1894), *The Hill of Dreams* (published in 1907 but begun in 1895),[9] *The Three Impostors* (1895) and *The Terror* (1917) have been viewed through the lens of what Fred Botting describes as the return of the Gothic from the 1890s onwards.[10] As Botting and others have described, London is the metropolis of this late-century moment,[11] and the city provides an important setting for much of Machen's work. Positioned in the same fold as the works of more famous writers such as Stoker, Stevenson, and Wilde, Machen's texts have been neglected or overshadowed by those other texts which have come to represent *fin-de-siècle* Gothic writing. Yet Machen's work also belongs to another context, and perhaps it is owing to the fact that this secondary context is less well appreciated by scholars of Gothic writing. Both Gwent and London appear as important locations in his works, and, indeed, several of his texts alternate between these two symbolic spaces. Though not directly affiliated with the cultural-nationalist agenda of the Celtic Twilight, Machen's work nevertheless hovers around it. His oeuvre incorporates themes, references to, and locations from Welsh legend and Celtic mythology. In a connected way to the Celtic revivalists, Machen engages with Celtic mythology and legend, though Machen's Celticism is an altogether more spectral, ghostly affair than the more self-conscious nation-building agenda of Celtic revivalists.

Machen's 1894 novel, *The Great God Pan*, is the text which established his reputation as a writer of Gothic and horror stories. It remains, alongside *The Hill of Dreams*, as Machen's most lastingly famous work, and is the text which has attracted the most scholarly and

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[9] See the 'Chronology of Machen's Life and Times' by Rita Tait in Arthur Machen, *The Three Impostors* (London: Everyman, 1995), viii-xv (p. x). Tait's chronology notes, confusingly, that Machen 'Begins *The Hill of Dreams*' in 1895, 'Starts *The Hill of Dreams* in February' of 1896 and 'Finishes *The Hill of Dreams*' in 1897 (p. x), before publishing the book in 1907 (p. xii). Machen's most famous book itself seems to have a complex relationship with time, running as a residual presence in his oeuvre for a decade before being re-animated and made newly emergent upon its publication.

[10] See the chapter 'Gothic Returns in the 1890s' in Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 135-54.

[11] See, for example, Linda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) and Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century: A Human Awful Wonder of God* (London: Vintage, 2008).

critical attention owing to its ready incorporation into the field of late-Victorian Gothic

studies. Glennis Byron, for example, has noted how the novel engages with *fin-de-siècle*

anxieties surrounding science, degeneration and the New Woman. As she observes, 'The

threat here [in *The Great God Pan*] then, as in much 1890s Gothic, seems to reside within

human nature itself, a nature potentially deviant and destructive when freed from the

fetters of social and ethical taboos and codes of behaviour, taboos and codes that, the

text ultimately suggests, are necessary for the stability of both society and the

individual.'[12]

The field of late-Victorian science is another context which has been identified as

pertinent to *The Great God Pan*. There is in the literature, suggests Fred Botting, an

'ambivalence towards scientific issues' at the end of the nineteenth century.[13] Late-

Victorian developments across a range of scientific disciplines – phrenology,

physiognomy and psychology – constitute a turn inward, away from the outside real

world and towards the sphere of human consciousness. Darwinian evolutionary theory,

for example, was taken up by criminologists such as Cesare Lombroso (author of

Criminal Man, translated into English in 1887) and Max Nordau (author of *Degeneration*,

translated into English in 1895) in an attempt to establish a connection between race,

physiognomy and criminality. This context suggests a particular tension between a

narrative of forward-moving scientific progress on the one hand and the inward-looking

object of study – the human mind – which provides its impetus. To follow the ideas of

Raymond Williams discussed in the first chapter, science and progress are, at least

ostensibly, part of the dominant ideology of their contemporary context in the late-

Victorian era. Nevertheless, anxieties concerning degeneration and atavism, taken up

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[12] Glennis Byron, 'Gothic in the 1890s', in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), pp. 132-42 (p. 135).
[13] Botting, *Gothic*, p. 136.

from Darwinian evolutionary theory, and the connections made by the likes of Lombroso and Nordau between long-established racial characteristics and the prevalence of criminality within their societies, suggest that the object of this study belongs to the residual mode – of the past yet somehow connected with, and still perceptible, in the present.

The Great God Pan opens with a description of the rural countryside in the Gwent border country:

> The sun still hung above the western mountain-line, but it shone with a dull red glow that cast no shadows, and all the air was quiet; a sweet breath came from the great wood on the hillside above, and with it, at intervals, the soft murmuring call of the wild doves.[14]

This rural setting is something of a false dawn – or false dusk, perhaps. Unexpectedly, the setting evoked in such lyrical and weighted prose is to be the scene of a scientific experiment (the title of the chapter is 'The Experiment'). The action of that first chapter takes place at the house of Dr Raymond, a brain surgeon who performs what he describes as 'a trifling rearrangement of certain cells, a microscopical alteration that would escape the attention of ninety-nine brain specialists out of a hundred',[15] upon the brain of his female patient, Mary. The figure of the scientist is, of course, a familiar presence in much of the Gothic writing of the late-nineteenth century. This thesis seeks to make a case for the influence of the late-nineteenth-century London-Welsh literary milieu on subsequent generations of Welsh writing; indeed, for a host of reasons, Welsh writing in English has always been conditioned by the influence of London, and many of the more famous Welsh writers in English were themselves numbered among the London Welsh. The work of Dylan Thomas, himself later a London-Welsh writer, bears the impression of Machen's early-century Gothic, not least in the figure of the scientist.

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[14] Arthur Machen, *The Great God Pan* ([1894] Aberteifi: Parthian/Library of Wales, 2010), p. 3.
[15] Machen, *The Great God Pan*, p. 5.

The mad doctor experimenting on humans and animals who forms the focus of Thomas' story 'The Lemon' is arguably a literary descendant of Machen's Dr Raymond. Chris Wigginton has detected the influence of Machen on Thomas's later 'Gothic Surrealism', remarking on Thomas's 'devotion' to Machen's work.[16]

Scientific inquiry in this period, as also manifested by the works of the criminologists Lombroso and Nordau, constitutes a turn inward, and, in attempting to chart the relationship between the physical and the psychological, late-Victorian science seeks to read the physical form as an indication of internal content. As Glennis Byron notes, 'The scientists at the centre of Victorian Gothic, like latter-day Frankensteins, are frequently shown dabbling with forces that are better left alone. During the *fin de siècle*, what the scientist tends more and more to dabble with is the mind.'[17] Raymond in *The Great God Pan* is clearly such a dabbler.

Present also in the body of late-Victorian Gothic writing is an almost mystical and metaphysical element to the scientific enterprise. Fred Botting describes this as a 'strange' realignment

> of the relationship between science and religion, a relationship shaped by spiritualism and the continuing popularity of the ghost story. [...] Supernatural occurrences, also, are more than manifestations of a metaphysical power: they are associated, in scientific and quasi-religious terms, with the forces and energies of a mysterious natural dimension beyond the crude limits of rationality and empiricism, exceeding the reductive and deterministic gaze of materialistic science. These forces, seen as both unhuman and inhuman, are also in-human, embedded in the natural world and the human mind.[18]

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[16] Wigginton notes that 'Parallels [of *The Great God Pan*] with 'The Lemon' and other works by Thomas might be drawn, but the important link lies in the resemblances between Machen's biological and physical emphases and Thomas's own concern with cycles of inter-involved growth, biologic recapitulations, and pre-human states of consciousness.' See Chris Wigginton, 'Birth and copulation and death': Gothic Modernism and Surrealism in the Poetry of Dylan Thomas' in *Dylan Thomas*, ed. by John Goodby and Chris Wigginton (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 85-105 (p. 97). For 'The Lemon' see Dylan Thomas, *Collected Stories* (London and Melbourne: Dent, 1984), pp. 54-58.

[17] Byron, 'Gothic in the 1890s', p. 135.

[18] Botting, *Gothic*, p. 136.

If science is to be seen as the dominant mode of progress in the late-Victorian period, associated in this quotation with notions of 'rationality', 'empiricism' and materialism, it is also not completely dissociated from a more irrational, mystical, superstitious element. Science must contend with the natural and the supernatural: the dominant notion of 'rationality and empiricism' is also at play with the mystical and the spiritual; there is always something behind the veil.[19] It is a residual 'truth' which evades easy description. *The Great God Pan* demonstrates what Botting suggests, that the categories of the rational and the mystical cannot be kept safely apart: one is always inflected by the other – the spiritual and the material, the residual and the dominant. Byron suggests a move between the two, more and more closely implicated in the actual transgression of boundaries.'[20] Indeed, if the transgression of boundaries, and the crossing of borders, are appropriate images to describe the central preoccupations of Gothic writing, they are particularly appropriate in describing Machen's work, focusing so closely as it does on the Wales-England border county of Gwent.

The focus on the border country is inevitably a focus on the two entities which are separated by that border. In the case of the Gwent border, it is the relationship between Wales and England which is inscribed. The border constitutes an interface between two nations, two ways of life, two cultures. David Punter and Glennis Byron have identified the national dimension present in many Gothic texts, and how the Gothic writing of the late-nineteenth century can be seen to interrogate the integrity of 'Britain' as a nation, the centre of an empire and indeed a concept. By the end of the nineteenth century, they argue,

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[19] Machen's *The Great God Pan* uses the idea of 'lifting the veil', or seeing the god Pan, as an image describing the presence of the supernatural and spiritual which is both beyond, and also accessible through, rational science. See Arthur Machen, *The Great God Pan*, p. 5.

[20] Byron, 'Gothic in the 1890s', p. 136.

England was an imperial power in decline, threatened by the rise of such new players as Germany and the United States, experiencing doubts about the morality of the imperial mission, and faced with growing unrest in the colonies.[21]

There is a national and colonial dimension to the Gothic, as the frequent references to a specifically foreign, alien other testify: the terror wreaked on London – the great world metropolis and the fulcrum of a globe-straddling empire – by the alien, monstrous figure of the Count in Stoker's *Dracula* stands as an example of how the threat of invasion and contamination by an outside agent (a foreign body) is never far away from late-century Gothic. Punter and Byron link the late-imperial focus of Gothic texts – alongside similar concerns around the impact of the Industrial Revolution, crime and disease, family structures and the assumed moral superiority of the middle class, as well as emergent social categories such as the New Woman and the homosexual – to the idea of degeneration. It is a term which could be useful to consider the context into which Machen's work emerged. Degeneration, in the context of *fin de siècle* Gothic texts, seems to be threatening the very fabric of British life, in all its various forms. The threat of invasion from outside, particularly as manifested in an attack on the London metropolis, comes to represent a more deep-rooted insecurity about both the nation and its colonies.

If, as Punter and Byron suggest, the imperial mission was 'faced with growing unrest in the colonies', there was also, as we have seen, a suggestion of unrest from the Celtic fringe of the British Isles. Degeneration can be seen to extend to the domestic national and political settlement in the United Kingdom at the *fin de siècle*, though this has not been critically explored, for late-Victorian Gothic is normally read in terms of evolution, not devolution.

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[21] David Punter and Glennis Byron, *The Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 39. See more broadly the chapter from which this quotation comes, 'Gothic and Decadence', pp. 39-43.

In *The Great God Pan* there is, as in so many of Rhys's contemporary works, a contrast between country and city. More specifically, this contrast is mapped on to Wales and London. During the opening chapter of the novel, in the scene where Mary is operated on, Clarke, who is visiting and observing,

> lay back in his chair and wondered. It seemed as if he had passed from one dream into another. He half expected to awake in London, shuddering at his own sleeping fancies.[22]

Clarke finds himself in a rural landscape which, though not named explicitly in the opening passage of the book, is nevertheless identifiably the Gwent border country. Having found himself outside the city, and witness to an unsettling scientific experiment, Clarke's comforting fancy is to wake up back in the great metropolis: these experiments are outside normal experience, and the location is suitably ex-centric.

Dr Raymond's experiment can be incorporated into a wider tradition of the scientific – and particularly the ethically suspect – endeavour as represented in Gothic literature. Mary Shelley's Frankenstein is the Gothic scientist nonpareil, but, in Machen's own period, Wells's Dr Moreau, as well as Stevenson's Jekyll, stand as representatives of the trope of the Gothic scientist. But, as Botting has observed, the realm of science in Gothic fiction of the 1890s is endowed with a spiritual, mystical and 'quasi-religious' level of significance stretching beyond the reach of rational, empirical experimentation. The aim of Dr Raymond's experiment is to enable Mary to experience a moment of mystical transcendence. Borrowing from another Dr Raymond of the Welsh border country, Raymond Williams, 'The Experiment'[23] which forms the focus of the novel's opening chapter can be read in terms of his thesis concerning the interplay of residual, dominant, and emergent forces and ideologies.

[22] Machen, *The Great God Pan*, p. 11.
[23] 'The Experiment' was originally published as a short story in its own right in 1890. Machen added further chapters as he pursued the (elusive) central character, with 'The Experiment' subsequently serving as the novel's opening chapter.

By the time of the publication of *The Great God Pan* in 1894, the perception of the

Victorian scientist seems to have changed rather markedly from the earlier Victorian ideal

of the rational empiricist; on the contrary, Raymond's methods and practice belong on an

altogether more mystical, 'transcendental' level.[24] Such a concern with the spiritual or the

mystical, it could be argued, belong to the residual element of Victorian science:

Raymond stands as an almost druidic figure, with a young woman laid before him and his

aims and objectives placed firmly on the mystical, spiritual level, despite his status as a

man of science. His language strikes a metaphorical register, claiming that, using his own

peculiar methods,

> 'I will level utterly the solid wall of sense, and probably, for the first time since
> man was made, a spirit will gaze on a spirit-world. Clarke, Mary will see the god
> Pan!'[25]

Such talk, from a man of science, about 'lifting the veil',[26] gazing on a spirit world and

seeing the god Pan can be read as an attempt at a paradigm-shift for the figure of the

late-Victorian scientist. Away from the city, in the countryside, science serves to re-

animate a residual ideology – 'for the first time since man was made' – in order to

dismantle the dominant ideology of the period, to 'level utterly the solid wall of sense'.

Another important context for this mystical element in Machen's text is spiritualism:

indeed, as Darryl Jones has argued, spiritualism, too often dismissed by contemporary

analysis as at best a pseudo-science presided over by quacks, held powerful sway in the

late-Victorian era and numbered several of the leading literary figures of the day –

including Arthur Conan Doyle and Yeats – among its devotees.[27]

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[24] Raymond describes himself as a devotee of 'transcendental medicine' in the novel's opening passage, explicitly rejecting the terms 'quack and charlatan and impostor' as descriptions appropriate to him. See Machen, *The Great God Pan*, p. 4.

[25] Machen, *The Great God Pan*, p. 7.

[26] Machen, *The Great God Pan*, p. 5.

[27] See Darryl Jones, 'Borderlands: Spiritualism and the Occult in Fin-de-siècle and Edwardian Welsh and Irish Horror', *Irish Studies Review*, 17.1 (February 2009), 31-44.

The result of Dr Raymond's experiment is that Mary does indeed see the god Pan, and even conceives a child, Helen, who is half-devil. Helen, the child of a virgin birth to a character called Mary, is the figure who forms the elusive focus of the following chapters of the novel, and who represents the familiar Gothic trope of the dangerous, sexually voracious woman, the *femme fatale*. Byron has noted how the *femme fatale* in *fin-de-siècle* fiction is a literary device which implicitly engages with contemporary debates surrounding the emergence of the New Woman: 'The breakdown of traditional gender roles, the confusion of the masculine and the feminine [which] was seen as a significant indication of cultural decay and corruption, an attack on the stability of the family structure.'[28] 'Machen's Helen in *The Great God Pan*', continues Byron

> provides a notable instance of the threatening aggressive female who rejects her traditional role and usurps male power, a crime that is made particularly clear by her appropriation of the violence and aggression of the Ripper.[29]

Byron also notes how the danger posed by Helen is her 'disturbing embodiment of multiplicity';[30] the novel describes the various identities adopted by Helen, guises and disguises which enable her to seduce menfolk the world over and culminating in the West End Horrors, her attack upon aristocratic bachelors of well-to-do districts of London. The inspiration for the West End Horrors in the text is clearly the Jack the Ripper murders, which were centred on the East End of London. *The Great God Pan* transposes these murders from the working-class East End crimes (whose victims were prostitutes), to the altogether more affluent West End. The text seems to suggest that the incursion of this terror from east to west constitutes the truly horrifying culmination of social degeneration.

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[28] Byron, 'Gothic in the 1890s', p. 139.
[29] Byron, 'Gothic in the 1890s', p. 139.
[30] Byron, 'Gothic in the 1890s', p. 139.

No longer, as in the Ripper murders, do prostitutes and the homeless fall victim to the violence. In *The Great God Pan* the victims are all upper-class wealthy male aristocrats. In keeping with the class politics of many Gothic texts, the working classes are invisible – most obscene kind of terror which, according to the text, can be visited upon London (and, by extension, to British society more generally) is an attack on its most privileged young men. Yet, what is even more significant, we can see that even this class of noble male aristocrat, as represented by the character of Clarke, is seen to be dabbling with forces which are beyond rational, scientific explanation. Clarke is engaged in the project of writing his 'Memoirs to prove the Existence of the Devil'.[31] Indeed, such a project suggests the presence of this residual ideology in the consciousness of the dominant social class:

> In his sober moments he thought of the unusual and the eccentric with undisguised aversion, and yet, deep in his heart, there was a wide-eyed inquisitiveness with respect to all the more recondite and esoteric elements in the nature of men. The latter tendency had prevailed when he accepted Raymond's invitation, for though his considered judgement had always repudiated the doctor's theories as the wildest nonsense, yet he secretly hugged a belief in fantasy, and would have rejoiced to see that belief confirmed.[32]

The residual mystical powers are what fascinate Clarke, especially in the face of dominant rational science. Clarke seeks to repress his belief in occultism – a feature of 1890s aesthetics and, indeed, a movement with which both *The Great God Pan* and its author are acquainted. Nevertheless, in the case of Clarke, this fascination with the occult – with residual ideologies – cannot be fully repressed. Indeed, the greater Clarke's desire to repress and dismiss these systems, the more evidently fascinating they become. Unexpectedly, such residual forces and elements, by virtue of being repressed by the dominant order within a cultural system, are re-animated and revived so as to become newly emergent.

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[31] Machen, *The Great God Pan*, p. 15.
[32] Machen, *The Great God Pan*, p. 13.

Machen's work may be seen to be more distinctive in its engagement with these residual ideologies than other late-Victorian Gothic texts in its treatment of national distinctions. Machen's work identifies its Welsh locations as repositories of residual forces and ideologies, which can be re-animated and reinvigorated. The spectral, ghostly Celticism may be what ultimately haunts the work of Arthur Machen. It is, as we have seen, the context of 1890s London which brings about the return of the Gothic, but which also brings back the figure of the Celt (by means of the Celtic Twilight and the Pan-Celtic movements). As the title of the third chapter of *The Great God Pan* has it, London is 'The City of Resurrections'. Using the methodology hitherto outlined, this chapter will now turn to Machen's texts and examine the way the spectre of Celticism comes to haunt the work – how Machen's texts conjure and are haunted by residual-cum-emergent ideologies and influences.

Machen's introduction to the novel, as well as his autobiographical writings, note that Machen's boyhood home served as the emotive landscape which provided the imaginative inspiration for the novel's opening, particularly the white house just visible beneath the Wood of Gwent called Bertholly. 'And for some reason, or for no reason', says Machen,

> this house which stood on the boundaries and green walls of my young world became an object of mysterious attraction to me. It became one of the many symbols of the world of wonder that were offered to me, it became, as it were, a great word in the secret language by which mysteries are communicated.[33]

This Welsh landscape is clearly redolent with spiritual and mystical significance, a repository of a mysterious and almost cosmic force. Machen's description gestures towards the notion that the landscape is both haunted and haunting. Beyond the setting sun over the 'western mountain-line', however, and despite Machen's own suggestion

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[33] Arthur Machen, 'Introduction', in *The Great God Pan*, pp. 169-76 (p. 171).

that it was inspired by a Welsh location, there is nothing explicit in *The Great God Pan* to

suggest that the location of the story, in the novel, is that same Gwent border country.

Nevertheless, that Gwent borderland is hauntingly present. Contained in Clarke's

'Memoirs to Prove the Existence of the Devil' is an account of 'Helen V' – who is

suspected of being, and later revealed as, the child conceived by means of Dr Raymond's

ghastly experiment in the opening chapter of the novel – and her activities in 'a village on

the borders of Wales'. Helen arrives in the village – a 'place of some importance in the

time of the Roman occupation, but now a scattered hamlet, of not more than five

hundred souls' – 'under rather peculiar circumstances', having been orphaned and then

adopted by a male relative.[34]

Wales is here imagined as a location rich in historical associations: the Roman settlement

at Caerleon is a source of recurring fascination and reference in Machen's works as a

space which connects or unites the temporal and the spatial. Indeed, Raymond Williams,

who came from the same Welsh border territory, in an interview with *Poetry Wales* in

1977 makes much of the presence of this residual historical connection in his own home:

> I have become very preoccupied by the prehistory and early history of this part of
> the world [i.e., the Welsh border country], particularly in my own specific part.
> And the problem about it is that I find I'm thinking not only of the Celtic past but
> the pre-Celtic past.[35]

Williams in this interview is speculating about the way history is layered over a particular

location. His interlocutor, John Powell Ward, alludes to Williams's own suggestion in his

book *The Country and the City* that each century looks back on the one which preceded it

for a paradigm of a unified, organic society. Ward's question makes reference to how the

Celtic inheritance in Wales, now 'overlaid by the industrial capitalist culture',[36] still

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[34] Machen, *The Great God Pan*, p. 16.
[35] Raymond Williams, 'Marxism, Poetry, Wales: Interview with Poetry Wales' in *Who Speaks for Wales?: Nation, Culture, Identity*, ed. by Daniel Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 81-94 (p. 91).
[36] Williams, 'Marxism, Poetry, Wales', pp. 90-91.

represents a source of comfort or identity at the contemporary moment. Williams's answer incorporates the combination of residual, dominant, and emergent elements and identifies the interplay between stages of history over a specific physical location. In his interview, Williams shows an awareness of these interrelations: the transitions from pre-Celtic to Celtic, then onwards eventually to industrial and capitalist cultures. What is striking to Williams is the way in which these cultures are overlaid, one giving on to the other, in one specific location – in this case Wales, and specifically Williams's (and Machen's) Welsh border country. It is a specific example of what Williams describes in *Marxism and Literature* as the 'complex interrelations between movements and tendencies both within and beyond a specific and effective dominance.'[37]

This overlaying is detectable in *The Great God Pan*, and Machen's work more generally. Helen Vaughan is one of the inhabitants of this village 'on the borders of Wales'.[38] It is important to remember that this detail in the text occurs in Clarke's 'Memoirs', which constitute the narrative frame of the novel's second chapter, made presumably after Clarke's wish that he return to his London home. In the episode, he recounts the story featuring characters inhabiting the Welsh village on the border, which is connected with Roman history. The way in which this chapter frames its action – and is itself a part of its framing device – is an important precedent in Machen's work. Wales – the Welsh location and the Welsh characters (Helen V, it is later revealed, bears the surname 'Vaughan') – is associated with the past. Clarke himself is drawn back to his memoirs by his visit to Raymond's laboratory. His story, furthermore, is set in the Welsh border country replete with associations with pre-Celtic ancient history, a history which has its own mythical and legendary inheritance. The village in its present period overlays that ancient historical association – in much the same way as described by Williams.

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[37] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 121.
[38] Machen, *The Great God Pan*, p. 16.

Yet what is also significant is that this version of Wales, and its associations with a mythic and ancient past, is imagined and constructed by a London writer – Clarke. London frames the narrative's construction of Wales as a repository of mystical and residual ideologies: London is the location from which this Welsh culture is constructed, and forms the implicit physical and imagined counterpoint to the version of Wales depicted in the novel. On a broader level, and extending the framing devices of the novel further, Machen himself is a Welsh writer constructing a novel from his exiled position as a London resident. Indeed, as this thesis argues, Machen himself is framed by a broader London-Welsh cultural and literary milieu engaged in the project of raising and amplifying a Welsh voice in the city, the Great Metropolis. In each case, and at each level of the narrative, Wales is associated with the past – and particularly with a mythic, mystic or ghostly past. Wales is the crucible of residual ideologies and cultures, yet it is also the locus of a residual force which becomes reactivated, transformed into a newly emergent energy.

There are also some residual artefacts, some residual *detritus*, to recall Arnold's term, in *The Great God Pan*. The owner of a local house

> had recently made alterations in his premises, and on digging the foundation for some offices, the men found a curious head, evidently of the Roman period, which had been placed in the hall in the manner described. The head is pronounced by the most experienced antiquarians of the district to be that of a faun or satyr.[39]

In this Welsh border village the residual is still detectable, even in the face of such a progressive step as the building of new offices. The Roman faun's head, found on the Welsh border, is just the kind of detritus to which Arnold and Raymond Williams refer. Machen mobilises this residual element and incorporates its associations with the past

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[39] Machen, *The Great God Pan*, p 20.

into his own brand of late-nineteenth-century Gothic. The mythic connotations of the Roman artefact create an unsettling, haunting effect in *The Great God Pan* to the extent that Clarke writes, in a footnote to his memoirs, that 'Dr Phillips tells me that he has seen the head in question, and assures me that he has never received such a presentiment of intense evil.'[40] The town of Caermaen, where Helen V lived as a child, is shown to be a border-zone of many different kinds. Located on the Welsh side of the border, and with its name signifying its Welshness,[41] Caermaen constitutes an interface between the present day and past societies and cultures which have inhabited the area, whose histories have been overlaid in the course of several generations.

Machen's imagined Wales is thus a repository for residual cultural forces. It could be argued that Machen's spectral border country is haunted by the ghosts of history, by the ghost of history. Machen's work, in a way in keeping with the ghostly or supernatural as manifested by the Gothic, conjures this Welsh borderland into phantasmal existence.

Spectres of Arnold: *The Three Impostors*

The Great God Pan imagines a Wales, and specifically a Welsh border country, as a space connected and associated with the ancient, mythic past. More specifically, the Welsh borderlands as conceived in the novel are redolent with associations to the Roman age, with the remains of the Roman fort at Caermaen standing as an exemplification of the continued presence of residual cultural systems within the dominant mode of the present day. What Machen's writings show, however, is that, in keeping with the writings of Matthew Arnold previously and, later, those of Raymond Williams, these layers of history are laid over each other like palimpsests. The layer of history which is most frequently

[40] Machen, *The Great God Pan*, p. 76 (footnote).
[41] Caermaen is a fictional location, but its name signifies, in Welsh, a fort of stone: 'Caer', fort + 'maen', stone.

invoked with reference to Wales in *The Great God Pan* is that of the Roman period, and, particularly, the Roman military settlement in the Welsh border country. Publication of *The Great God Pan* was followed in 1895 by Machen's next novel, *The Three Impostors*. Again, as is a feature of Machen's oeuvre, the locations of the text are endowed with a connection and association with previous historical occupation. In *The Three Impostors*, though, Machen's work shows an awareness of another historical level to the Welsh border-country, that of the Celtic inhabitation of the area.

The Three Impostors, as well as pursuing Machen's engagement with the relationship between Wales and London, is also in keeping with many of the texts in his oeuvre in that it has a convoluted, almost impenetrably complex plot, consisting of various shorter stories narrated by different characters. *The Three Impostors* gestures towards a more complex layering of these residual ideologies, and how the inclusion of a Celtic seam of history becomes an important residual force which is re-animated in the present. The presence of this Celtic element in Machen's imagination is especially significant given his own specific historical context. For the residual Celtic ideology becomes newly powerful in *The Three Impostors*; indeed, by the publication of *The Hill of Dreams* in 1907, these forces from the past have attained a gripping, mesmeric power in the present. Given the way in which the notions of Celticity were becoming increasingly prominent at the end of the nineteenth century, the increased presence of the Celtic strain in Machen's work is clearly important. The London context of his reconfiguring of the Celt is also important, as it was in London that movements like *Cymru Fydd*, the Irish Home Rule movement and the Pan-Celtic endeavour as a whole gained momentum and exercised the most influence.

In 1895, when *The Three Impostors* was published, the *Cymru Fydd* movement was at the peak of its influence. Dewi Rowland Hughes has argued that the popularity of the Pan-Celtic movement can be incorporated into other avant-garde movements of the day:

> Yr oedd mudiad Cymru Fydd ar ei ben llanw yn Ionawr 1895. Yn y mis hwn y cyhoeddwyd rhifyn cynraf Young Wales, cylchgrawn newydd dan olygyddiaeth J Hugh Edwards. Roedd y 'Nawdegau Nwyfus' yn ddegawd da i gylchgronau avant-garde. Yn 1895 dechreuwyd pythefnosolyn yn Llundain gan Thomas John Evans (1863-1922) dan y teitl Celt Llundain; parhaodd y cylchgrawn hyd 1915. Yn y cyfnod 1894-7 cyhoeddwyd y *Yellow Book* (lliw rhyddfrydiaeth), cylchgrawn llenyddol chwarterol a gyhoeddwyd yn Llundain gyda darluniau gan Aubrey Beardsley (1872-98) a chyfraniadau gan Oscar Wilde (1854-1900).

> [The Young Wales movement was at the peak of its influence in January 1895. This month witnessed the publication of the first number of Young Wales, a new magazine under the edirtorship of J. Hugh Edwards. The 'Naughy Nineties' was a good decade for avant-garde magazines. In 1895 in London Thomas Evans (1863-1922) began publication of the fortnightly *Celt Llundain* [the *London Kelt*]; the magazine lasted until 1915. The period 1894-7 saw the publication in London of the quarterly literary magazine the *Yellow Book* (the colour of liberalism), complete with illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley (1872-98) and contributions by Oscar Wilde (1854-1900).][42]

Hughes's analysis provides an interesting context for Machen's *The Three Impostors*. The above quotation links the emergent national movement of Young Wales/*Cymru Fydd* with the decadent and avant-garde movement manifested most notably by the *Yellow Book* series.[43] It is also interesting to note how Hughes considers the publications of the period – Young Wales, *Celt Llundain* (the *London Kelt*) and the *Yellow Book* respectively – as the most striking manifestations of the cultural nationalist and decadent movements respectively. Publications, newspapers and periodicals, so crucial in their contributions to the constructions of imagined communities, are also important and influential in their relationship to the decadent aestheticist culture of the time.

[42] Dewi Rowland Hughes, *Cymru Fydd* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Pifysgol Cymru, 2006), p. 153. The translation is my own.

[43] Daniel Williams has also made a connection between the spheres of cultural nationalist and decadent aestheticist movements in London at the *fin de siècle*, most notably with reference to W. B. Yeats. See Williams's *Ethnicity and Cultural Authority: From Arnold to Du Bois* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), and especially the chapter 'W. B. Yeats: Celticism, Aestheticism and Nationalism', pp. 121-75.

The Three Impostors begins and ends with a deserted house in London. A familiar trope in

Gothic fiction and art, this particular 'Deserted Residence' serves as a plot device

redolent of mystery and horror.[44] From its opening and closing scenes at this deserted

London residence the novel travels far and wide: to the Rockies in America, to Italy, and

to Wales. It is symptomatic of the almost gravitational influence of London on the

popular imagination of the period that it is to the Great Metropolis that the novel is

inescapably drawn. Wilkins, the narrator of 'The Novel of the Dark Valley' notes how,

from his upbringing in the West of England, 'London drew me like a magnet'.[45]

Machen's autobiographical writings also make reference to the way London as a physical

and imagined metropolitan urban space exercised a great influence over his

impressionable young mind. Machen is not the only Welsh writer from the late-

nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries to feel this influence. *The Autobiography of a Super-*

Tramp (1908), by W. H. Davies, is another text drawn from the period which sees the

figure of the young man, seeking his fortune, journey to North America – in the case of

Davies's super-tramp, and Caradoc Evans's working-class Londoners, to the Klondyke in

search of gold. It seems more than mere coincidence that three London-Welsh writers of

the same period should have their imaginative faculties drawn to the American gold rush

and the London metropolis. Such, it could be argued, were the dominant influences of

their day. Nevertheless, there are striking similarities between the action of 'The Novel of

the Dark Valley' and Davies's *Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* which would reward closer

and more thorough analysis. Just as Machen's characters, like Machen himself, are drawn

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[44] The last chapter of *The Three Impostors* is entitled 'The Adventure of the Deserted Residence'; this, the scene which closes the novel, returns the narrative to the same deserted residence which featured in the prologue. See Arthur Machen, *The Three Impostors* ([1895] London: Dent, 1995), pp. 150-54.

[45] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 19.

to the city by its gravitational pull, so too does Davies's super-tramp find himself in the orbit of the Great Metropolis.[46]

One of the episodes of which *The Three Impostors* is comprised is 'The Novel of the Black Seal', which is itself framed by 'The Adventure of the Missing Brother'. In it, the London dilettante Phillips encounters a young woman at Leicester Square, a woman in a state of distress owing to having lost her brother. She then proceeds to narrate her story – 'The Novel of the Black Seal' – telling how she worked as a maid and governess for the great scientist, Dr Gregg. It is revealed to the girl, Miss Lally, that Dr Gregg is in search of a rare stone, a search which sees them move to Wales. There follows a series of episodes involving a local boy, Jervase Cradock, who is associated with, and able to speak the language of, the 'Little People', the strange fairy folk connected with the area. These 'little people', it is revealed, are the *Tylwyth Teg*,[47] a fact which is revealed by a further framed narrative, 'The Statement of William Gregg, F. R. S., etc'.[48]

Again, the action of Machen's narrative moves to the Welsh border country. Though Dr Gregg's visit is to a location on the English side of the border, it is noted explicitly that it is a location 'not far from Caermaen, a quiet little town, once a city, and the headquarters of a Roman legion'.[49] The party's arrival at Caermaen is described in a similar way to the description of the landscape in the opening passage of *The Great God Pan*: there is the lonely country house, the broad river and captivating countryside, the misty, mysterious valley. Present also is the association between the Welsh-English border country and the

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[46] See also W. H. Davies's description of the pull and push of the city in *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*: 'In two or three days I was again back on the outskirts of London, walking around it in a circle; sometimes ten miles from its mighty heart, or as far distant as twenty miles; but without courage to approach nearer, or break away from it altogether.' W. H. Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* ([1908] London: Jonathan Cape, 1942), p. 228.

[47] *Y Tylwyth Teg* is Welsh for 'The Fairy Folk'.

[48] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 74.

[49] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 54.

historical connection of the area with its previous inhabitants: it is identified as an old

Roman military fortification, in much the same way as the Roman connection to the

Welsh border is alluded to in *The Great God Pan* (and, indeed, in Machen's

autobiographical writings, with the history of the old Roman settlement at Caerleon

forming a strong imaginative impression). *The Three Impostors* extends this historical

connection, laying and overlaying several periods and historical associations on top of

each other. The text establishes the history of the Roman legion at Caermaen, 'the

Augustan Legion' and its connection with what is now a 'forgotten village' with deserted

streets.[50] Further,

> The long, lovely valley, with the river winding in and out below, crossed in mid-vision by a mediaeval bridge of vaulted and buttressed stone, the clear presence of the rising ground beyond, and the woods that I had only seen in shadow the night before, seemed tinged with enchantment, and the soft breath of air that sighed in at the opened pane was like no other wind.[51]

The passage quoted above extends the description of the border-country landscape as a

place of mystical attraction. Significantly, the sense of the historical associations of this

space, already Roman, is strengthened by the reference to the 'mediaeval bridge'. There is

consequently a strong sense of a layering of history on top of the previous settlement.

Further to this mediaeval and Roman connection, for the first time in Machen's fiction

the Celtic connection appears, established by the reference to the *Tylwyth Teg*. The border

country in Machen's work thus becomes a repository of memory, an intersection of time

and space. It is appropriate that the above quotation from *The Three Impostors* includes a

reference to the mediaeval bridge, a historical structure which forms a link – a bridge – to

the present.

As previously noted, Matthew Arnold's method in characterising the features of Celticity

may be to speak in line with the dominant ideology of his day, but his subject – and

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[50] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 54.
[51] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 54.

consequently his own style – comes to be inflected by the residual. The same

metaphorical allusiveness of style can be detected in the above quotation from *The Three*

Impostors: shadowy woods, the tinge of enchantment and the soft breath of air all belong

to a register of metaphor and allusion, of myth and the past. The way in which the house

is indistinguishable from the landscape which surrounds it is suggestive of the way in

which the landscape of the border country is redolent of the presence of the past:

habitation in the area is naturalised, incorporated into the landscape itself in much the

same way as fascinated Raymond Williams. In *The Three Impostors*, this past habitation is

endowed with a Gothic air of mystery and foreboding.

Professor Gregg's project in searching for the Gold Tiberius in the border-country

setting can be read analogously to Arnold's study of Celtic literature. Both are educated

English academics looking to Wales for traces of residual and ancient civilizations; both

are also exponents of a rational quasi-scientific discourse. Upon arrival in the border

country, Gregg suggests to Miss Lally that the peasantry of the area is far from civilized:

> 'By the way, Miss Lally, [...] I dare say you may have heard that some of these
> country lads are not over bright; idiotic would be a harsh word to use, and they are
> usually called "naturals", or something of the kind. I hope you won't mind if the
> boy I am after should turn out not too keen-witted[...]'[52]

The boy hired by Professor Gregg is Jervase Cradock, a local youth whose father is dead

and whose mother is mad, 'quite off her head'.[53] Cradock embodies many of the qualities

attributed by Arnold to the Celt: he is, described as a 'natural', can speak with the *Tylwyth*

Teg and is notably a feminised character, as well as being poorly and 'merely a little

weak'.[54] Arnold, in his Celtic lectures, cites femininity as one of the defining

characteristics of the Celt, suggesting that 'the Celt is thus particularly disposed to feel

the spell of the feminine idiosyncrasy'. Indeed,

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[52] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 60.
[53] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 62.
[54] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 61.

he has an affinity to it; he is not far from its secret. Again, his sensibility gives him a peculiarly near and intimate feeling of nature and the life of nature; here, too, he seems in a special way attracted by the secret force before him, the secret of natural beauty and natural magic, and to be close to it, to half-divine it.[55]

Cradock is seen, later, in fits and convulsions, 'an inconceivable babble of sounds bursting and rattling and hissing from his lips.'[56] He

> seemed to pour forth an infamous jargon, with words, or what seemed words, that might have belonged to a tongue dead since untold ages [...] 'Surely this is the very speech of hell,' and then I cried out again and again, and ran away shuddering to my inmost soul.[57]

Cradock, it could be argued, is very much in possession of what Arnold describes as the 'peculiarly near and intimate feeling of nature and the life of nature'[58] which is characteristic of the Celt. Indeed, Machen's text here makes use of the potential for the idiosyncratic qualities of Arnold's Celt to function in a Gothic or horror context. Cradock's body and strange language present a curious challenge to the characters of the novel, particularly Miss Lally and Professor Gregg. Indeed, the figure of Cradock presents the reader with an interpretative challenge – as it would have done to Machen's contemporary readers. The framing of the novel by an urban London context implies an urban readership; the character of Cradock brings before this readership the peculiar problem of reading the Celt, a figure who, seemingly inexplicable, is speaking 'a tongue dead since untold ages'. How could this figure still be articulating itself in a language which should be dead and forgotten? This is a problem with which Machen's readership, like his characters (and indeed Arnold before them), is confronted.

Like Arnold, 'Professor Gregg had carried Cradock to his study', where he arranges for the boy to sleep that he may 'get over' his affliction.[59] The threat posed by the boy is

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[55] Matthew Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1910), p. 86.
[56] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 64.
[57] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 64.
[58] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 86.
[59] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 64.

seemingly neutralised by means of rational, empirical treatment. Raymond Williams's notion of the residual, here re-animated into a newly emergent energy, is an alarming threat to Professor Gregg, representative of the metropolitan, scientific, dominant ideology. Cradock's body seems to be a site of contestation between these ideologies; he represents the way that the past is always at play within the present. Jervase Cradock's name itself speaks of this overlaying of historical periods within the present. Deriving from the English form of Gervasius, which itself in turn may have derived from a Latinised form of a Germanic name, Jervase/Gervase is a name introduced to the British Isles by the Normans. The first element of the name, 'Ger-', derives from the word for spear. Cradock (sic)[60] is a variation on the Welsh name Caradog, stemming from the Welsh word Cariadus, meaning beloved. Caradoc was also the name of a first-century British chieftain who mounted a rebellion against the Romans. Embedded within Jervase's own name, then, is an interplay or contestation between various levels of historical civilization. Indeed, looking at these layers of the past reveals that these levels of past occupation are of a military or colonial dynamic: from Roman, to Norman, to British; from spears to early Celtic rebels, Jervase Cradock and 'Jervase Cradock' etymologically and physically embody this historical contestation between residual and dominant ideologies.

Cradock is a character whose peculiarity in the eyes of the other characters derives from his ability to speak the language of the *Tylwyth Teg*. His strange tongue is indeed alarming to the other characters as it seems to overwhelm Cradock's body to the point where he is taken to Gregg's study for analysis by the Professor. Following Cradock's strange convulsions, the Professor consults Mr Meyrick, the local rector, to attempt to ascertain the language Cradock is able to speak. 'The parson', we are told, 'was expounding the

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[60] The Anglicisation of 'Caradoc' usually takes the double d, giving 'Craddock'.

pronunciation of the Welsh ll, and producing sounds like the gurgle of his native brooks,

when Professor Gregg struck in.[61]

Connecting the parson, and his Welsh speech specifically, with the natural landscape

links closely to Arnold's pronouncement on the Celtic proximity to the 'secret' contained

in the natural world. Cradock's body is a source of fascination and wonder to those who

encounter him – a mystery to those attempting to learn his secret. Gregg, like Arnold, is

keen to probe and scrutinise this mystery, and his conversation with the parson is

indicative of this: describing Cradock's speech as possessing 'an odd sound, half-sibilant,

half-gutteral, and as quaint as those double ls you have been demonstrating.'

> 'I do not know whether I can give you an idea of the sound; "Ishakshar" is
> perhaps as near as I can get. But the k ought to be a Greek chi or a Spanish j.
> What does it mean in Welsh?'
> 'In Welsh?' said the parson. 'There is no such word in Welsh, nor any remotely
> resembling it. I know the book-Welsh, as they call it, and the colloquial dialects as
> well as any man, but there's no word like that from Anglesea [sic] to Usk. Besides,
> none of the Cradocks speak a word of Welsh; it's dying out about here.[62]

Such close scrutiny of the language, its pronunciation and its status as a living and viable

means of communication connect this passage with Arnold's thesis in *On the Study of

Celtic Literature*. This truly is a strange tongue – a strange language, but also tongue-

twisting, defying precise pronunciation. Similarly, and seemingly in compliance with

Arnold's wishes in his *Celtic Literature* lectures, the Welsh language is dying out,

disappearing, as Arnold would have it, 'as an instrument of the practical, political, social

life of Wales'.[63] Meyrick, the parson, however, still does speak the language, and

possesses both the literary and colloquial inflections. Meyrick himself, though still

professing to speak the language, can be read as an embodiment of this shifting from

Welsh to English: his surname is, etymologically, derived from the Welsh name Meurig,

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[61] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 66.
[62] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 66.
[63] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 20.

but has been Anglicised to give the current form, Meyrick. Further, in a feature not uncharacteristic of Arnold's systematic study of Welsh language and literature, both Meyrick and Gregg occupy themselves in a discussion of Welsh pronunciation. There is a sense here, also, that, though the discussion of Welsh amounts to a conclusion that the language is 'dying out', Machen's very inclusion of the language in his texts suggest a level of animation on the part of Welsh in the late-nineteenth century, particularly in London.

Another striking feature of the parson's description of the status of Welsh is that he is, despite his talk of the waning of the language, engaged in using the language to create an imagined community. 'There's no word like that from Anglesea to Usk' is a statement which creates that Andersonian link between the most north-westerly and south-easterly areas of Wales. The parson seems to create this link by means of the extent of the Welsh language, and the territories or areas where it is spoken. Yet, obviously, the conversation is conducted, and the passage is narrated, in English. Relating this to Machen's London context it could be argued that the late-nineteenth century sees the Welsh community in London engaging in the process of negotiating the nature of the relationship between Wales and London. Machen's text shows how this relationship is conducted bilingually, or at least with the acceptance of the simultaneous presence of both Welsh and English as viable and useful instruments which can be employed in the imagining of Wales. Through the Welsh and English languages, literary ('book-Welsh') and colloquial, from within the borders or from without (in London), this linguistic crossing and re-crossing recalls Anderson's imagined community in terms of the mental/psychological connections existing between the speakers of any given language. The parson and the Professor, in their discussions over living, dying, dead, colloquial, literary and mythological languages, testify to the extent to which *The Three Impostors* is haunted by a spectral, imagined, community. The characters themselves, and the context in which the

book was produced, speak of the spectral Celticism which haunts Machen's specific brand of late-century Gothic. Attesting to this diversity is Machen himself; his fellow Welsh writer and Fleet Street journalist Caradoc Evans is the figure responsible for advising Machen – who was not a Welsh speaker – on the various Welsh words and phrases which pepper his work. Furthermore, an organ like the *London Kelt*, the London-Welsh newspaper which began production in the same year as *The Three Impostors* was published, and contained both Welsh- and English-language content, shows how the *fin de siècle* witnesses an idea of Wales which celebrates the presence of both languages side by side.

It should be borne in mind, however, that the language spoken by Cradock in *The Three Impostors*, and the language over which Professor Gregg and Mr Meyrick pontificate in the passage quoted above, is not Welsh. Indeed, the parson's suggestion is that 'if it [i.e., the mysterious language spoken by Cradock] belongs to any language, I should say it must be that of the fairies – the Tylwydd Teg [sic], as we call them.'[64] It is this face of fairy folk, that Gregg has been searching for on his journey to Wales.[65] Further consideration of this element of Machen's work gives an indication of the way late-century London provides the context for the Celtic and the Gothic to overlap. Machen's text here makes full use of the ways in which Celtic myths, at the end of the nineteenth century, come to be revived and re-animated. The work of Professor John Rhŷs, a

[64] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 66. The usual spelling for the Welsh name of the Celtic fairy folk to which the parson alludes is *Tylwyth Teg*. It seems that the fairies, in possessing Cradock's body have also taken possession of one of the ds in his surname.

[65] Gregg is not the only literary tourist to Wales to have come in search of fairyland. Bertha Thomas's 'The Madness of Winifred Owen' is framed by the journey of a London spinster into Wales 'nominally to look up the tombs of forgotten Welsh ancestors in undiscoverable churchyards; more truly for the treat of free roving among strangers in a strange land. So much I knew of the country I was in – that Wales, the stranger within England's gates, remains a stranger still.' The story was originally published in Thomas's 1912 collection, *Picture Tales from Welsh Hills*; this quotation is taken from the recent reprinting of Thomas's stories. See Bertha Thomas, 'The Madness of Winifred Owen' in *Stranger Within the Gates: Short Stories by Bertha Thomas*, ed. by Kirsti Bohata (Dinas Powys: Honno, 2008), pp. 1-20 (p. 1). For the narrator, like Arnold, Wales is the 'stranger within the gates' of a dominant English ideology.

student of Arnold's and by 1877 Professor of Celtic at Oxford University, stands as evidence of the renewed interest in Celtic mythology and literature at the end of the nineteenth century.[66]

The *Tylwyth Teg* who feature in *The Three Impostors* are a spectral, Gothicised presence of Celtic mythology in the late-century literary context. They are associated – as are many fairytale creatures – with a more sinister and malevolent quality. Indeed, they are not so far removed from the layers of history bound up in Jervase Cradock's name. The *Tylwyth Teg* are, according to legend, addressed as such in order to avoid causing offence to the fairy folk – an important consideration given that they are a race known for abducting healthy children and leaving, in their place, sickly or ailing replacements. Machen's text here makes use of the malevolent quality associated with the *Tylwyth Teg* in order to reanimate his Gothic text.

Professor Gregg, as we have seen, can be read as an embodiment of the dominant ideology, associated as he is with academia, science, and rational forms of knowledge. Machen's novel dramatises the contestation between residual (or newly-emergent) ideologies and that of present-day dominant discourses by means of the Professor's demise. Jervase, having been turned into a mysterious serpentine beast by the fairies (and their harnessing of the power of the mysterious Ixaxar stone), prompts the Professor to venture out in search of the full explanation: it is the letter left by him for Miss Lally which confirms his fate. His demise connects to the myth that the paths of the *Tylwyth Teg* often spell death for any mortal who follows in the fairies' footsteps.

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[66] Indeed, Rhys was the first incumbent of the Chair of Celtic set up on Arnold's recommendation, as articulated in the closing passage of *On the Study of Celtic Literature*.

Jacques Derrida notes that there is always a temporal element to the notion of ghostliness and the supernatural: he argued that it is always somewhat uncertain as to whether the ghost emerges from the past or from the future. 'There are', says Derrida

> several times of the specter [sic]. It is a proper characteristic of the specter, if there is any, that no one can be sure if by returning it testifies to a living past or a living future, for a *revenant* may already mark the promised return of the specter of living being. [… A] ghost never dies, it remains always to come and to come-back.[67]

The spectre, for Derrida, is one time and several, simultaneously: there is always a temporal dimension to the notion of haunting. As becomes evident from looking back at Anderson's work, the spirit (or Geist, as Derrida terms it) of the nation is always looking back to an ancient and glorious past and forwards to the future-to-come. Jervase Cradock – his own body, his own tongue, even – is the site where layers of history are overlaid on top of each other: he is haunted by such a burden of historical inheritance. Raymond Williams's notion of the residual comes to bear on the idea of this inheritance, so crucial to Derrida's argument, in that, within the living present, these ideologies and influences from the past are all at play with each other. The malevolent fairies are the feature which attracts Professor Gregg's backward-looking search through history, but they are also the feature which comes back – and with dire consequences for the Professor. We can never be sure whether this is the return of a living past or a living future.

Professor Gregg's statement is discovered and read by Miss Lally, who opts to read the manuscript: 'At last I resolved that, though knowledge should haunt my whole life and all the days to come, I must know the meaning of the strange terrors that had so tormented me, rising grey, dim and awful, like the shadows in the wood at dusk.'[68] Miss Lally

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[67] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf ([1994] London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 123. Emphasis in original, as is Kamuf's American spelling of 'specter'.

[68] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 77.

embodies the Derridean notion of the spectral: her fear, her foreboding, is of the 'terror' inflicted upon the Professor by the malign fairy race; but it is also a fear of the haunting that will ensue, the 'knowledge [that] should haunt my whole life and all days to come'. It is the Professor's account, or rather Miss Lally's reading of it, which is the intersection between past and future versions of the ghostly. The circumstances surrounding Miss Lally's reading of the Professor's statement are themselves convoluted: Miss Lally initially comes across a letter from the Professor instructing her, in the case of his disappearance, to seek out another manuscript which will, by then, have been deposited in the drawer of his desk:

> 'MY DEAR MISS LALLY,' it began, - 'To quote the old logic manual, the case of your reading this note is a case of my having made a blunder of some sort, and, I am afraid, a blunder that turns these lines into a farewell. It is practically certain that neither you nor any one else will ever see me again [...] The fate which has come upon me is desperate and terrible beyond the remotest dreams of man [...] But if you must know the history of what has happened, it is all written down for you to read.'[69]

At the time of writing, the Professor has yet to meet with his fate; at the time of reading the letter, Miss Lally is aware that the Professor is dead. The letter as Miss Lally reads it, is haunted by the Celtic, Gothic, past and by the Celtic, Gothic, future-to-come. The Professor, at the moment of composing the letter, is conscious of the fact that he is haunted by the fairy folk, both in their connection with a Celtic past but also with the future which lies before him and which contains such unspeakable terror.

The end of Professor Gregg's statement describes his encounter with Jervase Cradock, who has in him 'something of the blood of the "Little People"'.[70] Professor Gregg also discovers how Cradock 'had more than once encountered his kinsmen in lonely places in that lovely land. [...] I heard bursting from his lips the secrets of the underworld, and the

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[69] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 73.
[70] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 82.

word of dread, "Ishakshar", the signification of which I must be excused from giving.'[71]

It is interesting to note that Cradock's possession of the secret of the 'Little People' is attributable to his ethnicity, being as he is of the same blood as the fairy folk. The power of the stone, Ixaxar, is harnessed by the *Tylwyth Teg* as a means of transforming Cradock into the snake-like, tentacled creature described by Gregg.[72] His 'final encounter' is a quest from which he is destined never to return, to 'meet the "Little People" face to face. I shall have the Black Seal and the knowledge of its secrets to help me, and if I unhappily do not return from my journey, there is no need to conjure up here a picture of the awfulness of my fate.'[73] Gregg is here haunted by the grotesqueries of the past and of the future: the horror which lies before him is something he himself is forced mentally to envisage.

Turning to more theoretical accounts of the spectral shows that the Professor's text, Machen's novel, and the London-Welsh context more broadly can be read as haunted by just such burdens from the past and the future. The specific nature of the haunting presence in the Professor's text is that of the secret of the Little People, the Fairy Folk. Such, as we have seen, was the secret which so fascinated Matthew Arnold in 1867: the Celtic attraction to, and affinity with, 'the secret of natural beauty and natural magic'.[74] Jacques Derrida's notion of the spectral makes an important point concerning the nature of performative acts in what he terms the hauntology. 'A specter', he says, 'is always a revenant. One cannot control its comings and goings because it begins by coming back.'[75] Later in the book, Derrida notes the etymological link between the notion of

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[71] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 82.

[72] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 82: 'Yet the sight I had to witness was horrible, almost beyond the power of human conception and the most fearful fantasy. Something pushed out from the body there on the floor, and stretched forth, a slimy, wavering tentacle, across the room, grabbed and bust upon the cupboard, and laid it down on my desk.'

[73] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 83.

[74] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 86.

[75] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 11.

conjuring – a performative speech act – which means to summon or to call forth, or the notion of conjuring, which 'means also to exorcise: to attempt both to destroy and to disavow a malignant, demonized, diabolized force, most often an evil-doing spirit, a specter, a kind of ghost who comes back or who still risks coming back post mortem'.[76] Where Derrida's notion of the performative is significant is the way in which the characters in *The Three Impostors* themselves conjure the image and presence of the Celt.

Professor Gregg's statement, in its final sentence, is proof of the twin implications of Derrida's notion of conjuring. Even in attempting to exorcise the spectre of Celticism, the Professor succeeds only in calling it to mind. This spectral Celticism, which haunts the Professor's statement, and indeed Machen's novel and oeuvre more generally, is a particular kind of Celtic horror or Celtic Gothic: it is an 'awfulness of [...] fate',[77] 'horrible, almost beyond the power of human conception and the most fearful fantasy'.[78] The Professor actually makes use of the word 'conjure' in his concluding sentence: the particular brand of malevolent, malign Celticity is conjured – brought into being and exorcised simultaneously – by his text. It could be argued that the Professor's text, and the way that it conjures the image of his death – still to come – is an example of Derrida's own kind of conjuring trick. His statement constitutes an example of what Derrida might have described as 'the reflexive return of a conjuration'.[79] Derrida continues by suggesting that 'those who inspire fear frighten themselves, they conjure the very spectre they represent. The conjuration is mourning for itself and turns its own fate against itself.'[80] Professor Gregg's statement conjures the horrid, horrific image of the Celt, even in attempting not to and, in due course, it becomes an image which frightens

[76] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 59.
[77] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 83.
[78] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 82.
[79] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 145.
[80] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 145.

him. Derrida, in *Specters of Marx*, makes much of the German verb meaning 'to spook'. Proposing the equation that 'Ego = ghost', Derrida extrapolates, venturing that, 'Therefore "I am" would mean "I am haunted". [...] Wherever there is Ego, *es spukt*, "it spooks"'.[81] Pursuing the implications of the verb Derrida plays with its nuances, noting that even the translation 'it spooks' always 'fails': it fails, says Derrida, 'to render the link between the impersonality or quasi-anonymity of an operation [*spuken*] without act, without real subject or object, and the production of a figure, that of the revenant [*der Spuk*]: not simply "it spooks," as we just ventured to translate, but "it returns", "it ghosts", "it specters".[82] Written ahead of the fate which is to befall him, Professor Gregg's letter is nevertheless prone to the spooky, phantasmal Celticism which has drawn him from London to the Welsh border country. This spectre spooks and ghosts back to the Professor from the future to come. In conjuring the image of the fate which is to befall him, Professor Gregg brings about the reflexive turn, the reflexive return: he is spooked even as he attempts to exorcise. In attempting to destroy or dis-avow, to master or to understand the spectre, the ghostly presence of the Fairy Folk comes back, a revenant. Gregg, and Matthew Arnold before him, are haunted by the forces their respective texts seek to contain and understand. The spectre of Celticism haunts the text by coming back: it is a revenant, returning from the past, the residual mode, and haunting the dominant mode of the present with a newly animated, newly emergent power.

The Hill of Dreams and the Death of the (London-Welsh) Author

The Hill of Dreams ends with the death of the author. More specifically, the novel ends with the London-Welsh writer Lucian Taylor slumped over his indecipherable manuscript, discovered by his landlord.

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[81] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 166.
[82] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 166.

> The man took the blazing paraffin lamp, and set it on the desk, beside the scattered heap of that terrible manuscript. The flaring light shone through the dead eyes into the dying brain, and there was a glow within, as if great furnace doors were opened.[83]

Lucian is dead, expired from the fury of the creative process which overwhelms him and, in this description, seemingly overwhelmed by the physicality of the act of writing – his inks, papers and writing materials loom over his dead body. The endeavour to articulate the mystical, residual forces – which are in this novel closely associated with Wales and the Gwent border country – results in the death of the author. *The Hill of Dreams* is perhaps the most striking example in Machen's oeuvre of how this residual ideology returns and haunts the present in a newly emergent, reanimated form. It is the novel which is most notably haunted by the spectre of Celticism; its plot and the context of its own production attest to how, at the turn of the twentieth century, Welsh writers are engaged in the physical project – what Roland Barthes might have described as a performative act – of articulating and reinvigorating the mythical and historical ideologies connected with Wales within a London context. The remainder of this section will analyse Machen's 1907 novel, *The Hill of Dreams*, and argue that this text may stand as the crucible where the interplay between residual, dominant and emergent is most clearly visible.

Jacques Derrida's idea of the spectral, and the connection between his notion of hauntology and the performative can be mapped in turn on to Barthes's discussion of the performative in his famous essay 'The Death of the Author'. This section will conclude by suggesting that Machen's brand of 'Celtic Gothic', given its London context, may be taken as representative of an underexplored and perhaps unappreciated element of the conscious self-fashioning of a London-Welsh identity at the start of the twentieth

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[83] Arthur Machen, *The Hill of Dreams* (Aberteifi: Parthian/Library of Wales, 2010), p. 219.

century. This is a process of self-fashioning which comes into being in the performance

of Lucian Taylor's (and Arthur Machen's) writing – a performance which comes to

completely overwhelm *The Hill of Dreams*. Lucian, in the guise of the aesthete London

writer, becomes a reanimated version of Matthew Arnold's Celt, a figure whose pen

conjures that Celticity and whose ink is drawn afresh from a well of buried, residual

energies and ideologies.

There is an almost uncanny familiarity about the evocative description of the Gwent

border country which opens *The Hill of Dreams*. The verdant, atmospheric landscape is

familiar from *The Great God Pan* and *The Three Impostors*, and recurs throughout Machen's

autobiographical and other writings:[84]

> There was a glow in the sky as if great furnace doors were opened.
> But all the afternoon his eyes had looked upon glamour; he had strayed in
> fairyland. The holidays were nearly done, and Lucian Taylor had gone out resolved
> to lose himself, to discover strange hills and prospects that he had never seen
> before. The air was still, breathless, exhausted after heavy rain, and the clouds
> looked as if they had been moulded of lead. No breeze blew upon the hill, and
> down in the well of the valley not a dry leaf stirred, not a bough shook in all the
> dark January woods.[85]

This landscape of 'strange hills and prospects', stock still, is revealed to be the

countryside surrounding 'Caermaen', the site of an old Roman military settlement; this is

a detail of the text which has led the novel to be read as a semi-autobiographical

reflection on Machen's own childhood upbringing in Caerleon. The novel itself, later,

establishes its setting as the Welsh border country: 'Caermaen', as noted previously,

suggests a Welsh etymology. Further, Machen mimics the Welsh language by rendering a

conversation, in English, using Welsh syntax. Again, this opening extract links Wales

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[84] See the two volumes of Machen's autobiography, *Far Off Things* (1922) and *Things Near and Far* (1923), collected together as *The Autobiography of Arthur Machen* (1951). Machen also wrote an introductory essay to Fred Hando's *The Pleasant Land of Gwent*, in which he declares his affection for this border country. See Arthur Machen, 'Introduction, to Fred Hando, *The Pleasant Land of Gwent* (Newport: R.H. Johns, 1944), pp. 11-13.
[85] Arthur Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 1.

with a mythic, magical past: Lucian is said to have 'strayed in fairyland'. Looking back at the view of the Welsh proposed by Matthew Arnold in his Celtic lectures, Machen's description of Lucian's wandering in fairyland positions Wales as a location where 'the past still lives', connected with emotion, superstition and the supernatural. Moreover, Machen's own prose is inflected by what Arnold may have termed the Celtic sentiment, 'quick to feel impressions, and feeling them very strongly'.[86]

Arnold's formulations on the Celt are particularly resonant to Machen's *The Hill of Dreams*. Not only does Arnold's text articulate his theorisation of the distinctive characteristics which belong to the Celt, but, further, contains a description of Celtic literature and the means of a Celtic literary production. Replete with imagery and allusion connected with Celtic (and also pre-Celtic) history and mythology, *The Hill of Dreams* is also deeply engaged with the mode of literary production: the protagonist, Lucian Taylor, is overcome by a quasi-spiritual experience in his Gwent home countryside and then moves to London, where, as a writer, he attempts to articulate and conjure this spiritual energy. The novel is haunted – spooked – by the spectre of Arnold and his conception of the Celt; it is the novel's implicit engagement with Arnold at the turn of the twentieth century which enables it to be opened to new readings in line with the movements of Pan-Celticism and the Celtic Twilight. Such an intertextual dynamic makes a reading of Barthes's seminal exposition on how all writing is 'a fabric of quotations, resulting from a thousand sources of culture',[87] weigh heavily on *The Hill of Dreams*'s almost obsessive attention to the process of becoming a Welsh writer in London.

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[86] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 80.

[87] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *The Routledge Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*, ed. by Neil Badmington and Julia Thomas (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 121-25 (p. 123)

As noted previously, the Celt, for Matthew Arnold, is a figure of scarcely-decipherable mystery: 'I say, then, what we want is to know the Celt and his genius; not to exalt him or abase him, but to know him.'[88] Arnold's endeavour in his study of Celtic literature is to arrive at a greater understanding of the figure of the Celt: in so doing, he advances many of the stereotypes which have come to be associated with the Celt. His very attempt at understanding, 'knowing', the Celt suggests that Celticity is an unknown, mysterious quality.

According to Arnold, it is sentiment which best describes the Celtic peoples: 'sentimental, if the Celtic nature is to be characterised by a single term, is the best term to take'.[89] In turn, this characteristic gives rise to the stereotype of the Celt as irrational, emotional and somehow romantic: these are qualities which Arnold has mined from his reading of Celtic literature and which he then projects on to the Celtic nations as he finds them at his mid-Victorian moment. As the work of Daniel Williams in particular has shown, this stereotyped view of the Celtic nations was reappropriated by the Pan-Celticists of the late-nineteenth century, and the romance and 'sentimentality' belonging to the Celtic peoples was reclaimed as a marker of distinctiveness.

The Hill of Dreams is the text in Machen's oeuvre which is 'haunted' most obviously by the spectre of Celticism: in its own way the novel could be said to engage and enter into a dialogue with Arnold's thesis on Celtic literature in a similar way to that of Ernest Rhys and the Pan-Celticists, although Machen, unlike Rhys, makes use of the Gothic as a mode to achieve this aim. Speaking of the Celt, Arnold remarks that, constituent in the Celt's sentiment is

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[88] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 61.
[89] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 80.

[a]n organisation quick to feel impressions, and feeling them very strongly; a lively personality therefore, keenly sensitive to joy and to sorrow; this is the main point. [...] The impressionable Celt, soon up and soon down, is the more down because it is so his nature to be up – to be sociable, hospitable, eloquent, admired, figuring away brilliantly. He loves bright colours, he easily becomes audacious, overcrowing, full of fanfaronade.[90]

'The impressionable Celt', on the evidence of this extract, has himself made quite an impression on Arnold. Arnold's model of the emotional, impressionable Celt can be seen in Machen's *The Hill of Dreams* and can arguably be seen most clearly in the figure of the protagonist of the novel, Lucian Taylor. His visions and spiritual experiences around the Gwent countryside chime with the kind of impressionable, multicoloured properties which Arnold saw as characteristic of the Celtic genius some forty years earlier.

The story of *The Hill of Dreams* centres on the experiences of Lucian, from his Gwent boyhood, through his move to London, to his eventual death, slumped over his indecipherable manuscript. It is his visionary, hallucinogenic experiences as a boy in Gwent, and Machen's phantasmagoric descriptions of them, which have made this particular *Künstlerroman* such a notorious specimen of Machen's oeuvre. The novel, as we have seen, opens with a vision: the 'glow in the sky as if great furnace doors were opened'. This recurring phrase in the novel, from the opening sentence, attests to the role of vivid imagery in its construction. It becomes clear from an early stage in the novel that these images, and the sensuous language through which they are described are – as we have seen in the case of *The Three Impostors* – associated with Wales and the past:

> He had seen himself, in a dream, within the Roman fort, working some dark horror, and the furnace doors were opened and a blast of flame from heaven was smitten upon him.
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> [...]

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[90] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, pp. 80-81.

> He liked history, but he loved to meditate on a land laid waste, Britain deserted by the legions, the rare pavements riven by frost, Celtic magic still brooding on the wild hills and in the black depths of the forest.[91]

In the first of these two extracts we can see, as in *The Three Impostors*, the associations between a location and its past are foremost in the narrative voice. The novel makes use of free indirect discourse to bring about a description which is seemingly objective, empirical, detached, belonging to a dominant, Arnoldian mentality; nevertheless, free indirect discourse linking to Lucian's thoughts demonstrates, on the level of the novel's language, how such an empirical, dominant discourse is always inflected by the emotional, subjective perspective – what may in this thesis be described as a residual cultural ideology. Time and again, *The Hill of Dreams* juxtaposes these two contesting ideologies, and demonstrates how they are constantly at play with each other.

As the opening passage states, Lucian had 'strayed in fairyland': the Gwent countryside is described in terms of its historical and mythopoeic qualities as much as it is described in terms of its physical geography. Indeed, the landscape functions and becomes in the novel a kind of text, laden with meaning and signification. Lucian's attention is drawn to the Roman fort, in much the same way that the border country in *The Three Impostors* is associated with that Roman history, and indeed, in a similar way to that Roman settlement which so fascinated the young Raymond Williams. 'The old Roman fort', reads the novel, 'was invested with fire'.[92] The word 'invested' seems a particularly interesting choice, capturing as it does the notion of how the historical, residual element can be reactivated as an emergent force, re-invested with significance and signification. The evocative prose and the association of the fort with the language of dreams places this historical feature within the residual sphere.

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[91] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 6.
[92] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 5.

Alongside the Roman settlement, layered below it, is the Celtic connection of the area. The notion of layering each seam of history on top of the last is a corollary to Arnold's description of Welsh literature, as containing, 'mixed [...] with the newer legend, a *detritus*, as the geologists would say, of something far older'.[93] As noted in the introductory chapter, Arnold's language makes use of the language of geology and archaeology – prominent, 'dominant' Victorian sciences – in order to 'mine' Celtic literature of its 'secret'. What Arnold describes as 'the secret of Wales and its genius' becomes, in *The Hill of Dreams*, the 'Celtic magic still brooding on the wild hills and in the black depths of the forest'.[94] Such a metaphorical phrase as 'Celtic magic' attests to the link made by Machen's – and many other – London-Welsh texts between Celticity and the past, and particularly that romantic, mythical and even magical past which Arnold describes in his lectures. This Celtic magic belongs to Raymond Williams's notion of the residual, and in many ways Lucian's story in *The Hill of Dreams* is a story of how that residual force can be made to speak again within the present, dominant discourse. Indeed, beyond the level of *The Hill of Dreams*'s plot, it could be argued that Machen's text itself, along with a host of texts by other Welsh writers in London are, at the turn of the twentieth century, haunted by the influence of this residual cultural force and are engaged in the project of making it speak anew.

Machen himself describes and elucidates the nature of this residual Celticity. In an article entitled 'Celtic Magic', written in 1908-9 and first published in *T. P.'s Weekly* (a publication which was, for a period, edited by Caradoc Evans), Machen characterises this residual force as 'the sense of a great loss which lies at the root of all the Celtic magic, the

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[93] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 57. Emphasis in original.
[94] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 6.

Celtic mysticism, the Celtic wonder'.[95] Machen's piece, taken in its entirety, reads like a

condensed version of Arnold's second lecture on Celtic literature. Machen and Arnold

both preface their comments on Celtic magic or Celtic genius (respectively) by narrating

long plot summaries from the story of Branwen. Like Arnold's, Machen's essay suggests

that things Celtic are characterised by intangible, mythical and romantic qualities –

'magic', 'mysticism' and 'wonder'. Machen's text identifies a 'sense of loss' at the heart of

the Celtic spirit: the story of the Head of Bran, it is argued, is analogous to that of the

Holy Grail, or San Graal, and, argues Machen, 'the whole legend of the Graal is a tale of

great and woeful loss'.[96] Machen himself, it could be argued, is attempting to disentangle

the Celtic myth from those others which have overlaid and intertwined with it.

> The companions of Bran were like Adam and Eve; they fell through disobedience
> to a direct command; and the Holly Vessel was withdrawn from Britain by reason
> of the wickednesses of the Britons. In the Norman-French legends [...] the Graal
> is withdrawn finally; the Celts, I think had a vague hope that it would return in the
> great day of Redemption [...]. Still the sense of loss lay deep in the Celtic heart;
> lost were the magic rarities of the Isle of Britain, for Merlin bore them with him to
> the House of Glass, where he himself lies lost to the world. And it is the sense of
> this loss that lies at the heart of Wordsworth's wonderful Ode [...][97]

It seems from the basis of this extract that Machen, like Arnold, is in search of the Celtic

magic, or the secret of Wales and its genius: Machen is in some ways following Arnold's

instructions and excavating from Celtic mythology all that it contains. 'Celtic Magic' can

be read as a response to Arnold's claim that the 'newer legend' is in contact with a *'detritus*

[...] of something far older'.[98] Machen is following orders and is 'disengaging' this

detritus from the other material to which it is now attached. Machen's article, in this

extract alone, references a host of different layers of history and myth which intersect

and intertwine with Celtic literature as he reads it. The Celtic myth of Branwen, it is

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[95] Machen, 'Celtic Magic', in *Notes and Queries* (London: Spurr & Swift, 1926), pp. 59-66 (p. 61). The author's note at the start of the book states that 'All the papers in 'Notes and Queries' originally appeared in *T.P.'s Weekly* in the course of the years 1908-09' (p. v). That Caradoc Evans also published in, and edited for, *T.P.'s Weekly*, and formed both a personal and literary acquaintance with Machen will be discussed below.

[96] Machen, 'Celtic Magic', p. 62.

[97] Machen, 'Celtic Magic', p. 62.

[98] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 57. Italics retained.

suggested, is analogous with that of the Holy Grail, early Christianity, Norman-French mythology, Roman History, even up to and including Wordsworth's poetry in the nineteenth century. Machen's notion of the interconnectedness of these various strands not only follows Arnold's lead from the Celtic lectures but also attests to the way in which residual ideologies are always at play with each other as well as those other, more contemporary, dominant forces. Machen's early-twentieth-century concern with Celtic mythology attests to a context in which the kind of loss of which he speaks was being scrutinized and interrogated more closely.[99] Indeed, the notion of loss speaks as much of Machen's attempt to recover it as it does of any quality which is detectable in the literature itself. Machen, like Arnold, argues that Celtic literature, as well as documenting the process of loss, is itself somehow a lost literature. Machen, like Arnold, also argues that 'If we are honest we must confess that, in a sense, the Celts have been ineffective; in Celtdom there is no Homer, nor Dante, nor Shakespeare, nor Milton'.[100] If, however, this is a literature characterised by loss, Machen is also aware of the prospect of a recovery, as the extract above suggests: 'The Celts', notes Machen, 'I think had a vague hope that it [i.e., the Graal] would return in the great day of Redemption', adding that 'King Arthur "changed his life", and passed into the enchanted region of Avalon, where he awaits the signal that he is to return and to restore all things.'[101]

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[99] Sir John Rhys published several important works of Celtic scholarship during in the late nineteenth century, including *Studies in the Arthurian Legend* (1891) and *Celtic Folklore Welsh and Manx* (1901). For an overview of Rhys's contribution see Juliette Wood, 'Folk narrative research in Wales at the beginning of the twentieth century: the influence of John Rhys (1840-1916), *Folklore*, 116 (2005), 325-41. Elsewhere Wood identifies the contribution of Alfred Nutt to the linking of Celtic mythology and the Grail legend, a connection which Machen is also keen to establish. Wood describes Nutt's *The Holy Grail with Especial Reference to its Celtic Origin* (1888), as the 'seminal' work which 'examined material in Irish, Welsh, and Scots Gaelic relating to Otherworld vessels which had magic properties.' See Juliette Wood, 'The Holy Grail: From Romance Motif to Modern Genre', *Folklore*, 111 (2000), 169-90 (p. 181). Wood notes that, for Nutt, 'human intellect, while progressive, never left the past entirely behind', and '[t]he Celts seemed the ideal embodiment of this' (Wood, 'The Holy Grail', p. 182).

[100] Machen, 'Celtic Magic', p. 63.

[101] Machen, 'Celtic Magic', p. 62.

As we have seen, emergent nationalisms invariably project themselves on to a glorious future to come, drawing inspiration from a constructed or imagined Golden Age. Machen's references in his 'Celtic Magic' essay to the coming of the 'great day of Redemption' and King Arthur's wait, in Avalon, for 'the signal that he is to return and to restore all things' can be incorporated into this line of thought. Celtic magic, for Machen, describes a condition of loss, of incompleteness, of a lack: this is why 'the Celts have been ineffective' in the construction of a world literature, and why those Celtic myths which Machen chooses to describe in this essay refer to an experience of loss, or exile. This notion of Celtic magic is an aporia, a gap which Machen and Lucian in *The Hill of Dreams* attempt to bridge.[102] It is the tension between the physical and the metaphorical, the dominant and the residual, between the signifier of fixed and ordered discourse and a signified of unquantifiable and mystical intangibility. Little wonder that Machen suggests that 'To the Celt, and to those who have the Celtic spirit, the whole material universe appears as a vast symbol; and art is a great incantation which can restore, to a certain extent, the paradise that has been lost.'[103]

Just as the above quotation, drawn from Machen's journalism, stresses the significance of literary and cultural production to the attempt to reconcile the Celtic loss, so too does his fiction. *The Hill of Dreams* is the foremost example of this in Machen's oeuvre. Arrived in London from Gwent, and pursuing the ambition of becoming a writer, 'Lucian was growing really anxious about his manuscript':[104]

> The book had taken a year and a half in the making; it was a pious attempt to translate into English prose the form and mystery of the domed hills, the magic of

[102] The difficulty of capturing and expressing this notion of Celtic magic, the one which preoccupies much of Machen's work, is a reversal of Arnold's own thesis on the Celt. The Celts, characterised by their emotion and sentiment by Arnold, are 'ineffectual in politics' and that 'for ages and ages the world has constantly been slipping, ever more and more, out of the Celt's grasp' (*On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 89). Writing from the centre of this imperial and empirical world, Arnold's grasp of the Celtic magic also seems to be loosening, ever more and more: Machen's 'Celtic Magic' articulates this.
[103] Machen, 'Celtic Magic', p. 65.
[104] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 34.

the occult valleys, the sound of the red swollen brook swirling through the leafless woods.[105]

Lucian's project is to bridge the gap, to recover the loss. His own position as a Gwent writer in London also speaks of a gap, the condition of exile which must be negotiated. *The Hill of Dreams* devotes a great deal of energy in describing the ways in which Lucian is constantly engaged in the struggle to articulate this Celticity, to bring the brooding of residual ideologies to bear on his work.

Sixty-one years after the publication of *The Hill of Dreams*, the French poststructuralist Roland Barthes was to publish his most famous essay, 'The Death of the Author'. In it, he proposed that intertextuality is the condition of all writing, that present always in any writing is a gap, the 'destruction of every voice'.[106] The gap of which Barthes writes is that between a signifier and its signified: it is the gap between Lucian Taylor's English prose and the 'form and mystery of the domed hills', the 'Celtic magic', of which he writes.[107] Barthes's essay notes that a text is never a means of arriving at a single, final meaning – Barthes even makes use of the word 'secret'[108] – but is rather a 'fabric of quotations, resulting from a thousand sources of culture'.[109] Lucian Taylor shows just how these intertexts, these residual associations, come to bear on his writing – indeed, come into being though his writing.

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[105] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 37-8.

[106] Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p. 121.

[107] Indeed, Barthes' essay mentions the work of Marcel Proust, referring to the unnamed narrator of Proust's own novel about an aspiring writer, *À la recherche du temps perdu* as 'the one who *is going to write*' (Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p. 122, italics retained). Lucian's quest to become a writer in *The Hill of Dreams* is analogous to Barthes' reading of Proust, and, as we shall see, it is Lucian's death, slumped over his manuscript, which shows just how the gap 'between the idea and the work' (*The Hill of Dreams*, p. 38) remains unbridgeable.

[108] Writing, says Barthes, 'by refusing to assign to the text [...] a "secret" [...] liberates an activity we may call countertheological, properly revolutionary.' See 'The Death of the Author', p. 124.

[109] Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p. 123.

For Lucian, like Proust's unnamed narrator to whom Barthes's essay refers, is the one who '*is going to write*';[110] *The Hill of Dreams* is a novel dealing with how he is going to write, how – to borrow from the ideas of Williams and Anderson et al. – the residual experiences and ideologies drawn from an imagined past come to be articulated in a future to come, always deferred. As seen in the quotation above, Lucian's aim as a writer is to give adequate expression to the Celtic magic he feels and experiences; Lucain's quest is to 'translate' the form and mystery of the hills into English prose. Barthes's essay reminds us that this future-to-come is always a future to come, forever delayed and deferred. 'The writer', argues Barthes, 'can only imitate an ever anterior, never original gesture; [...] he knows that the interior "thing" he claims to "translate" is itself no more than a ready-made lexicon, whose words can be explained through other words, and this ad infinitum'.[111] Lucian in *The Hill of Dreams*, looking over his manuscript, confesses to himself that

> he had moulded his copy in such poor clay as came to his hand; yet, in spite of the gulf that yawned between the idea and the work, he knew as he read that the thing accomplished was very far from failure.[112]

The thing accomplished, though not a failure, nevertheless does not fully correspond to Lucian's intentions. Time and again, Lucian's writing routine is described with an almost obsessive level of detail: *The Hill of Dreams* attests to the very physical process of becoming a Welsh writer in London, attempting to capture the essence of the Celtic mystery of the Gwent border country.

> Every path about his home, every field and hedgerow had dear and friendly memories for him; and the odour of the meadowsweet was better than the incense steaming in the sunshine. He loitered, and hung over the stile til the far-off woods began to turn purple, til the white mists were wreathing in the valley.[113]

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[110] Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p. 122. Emphasis in original.
[111] Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p. 123.
[112] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 38.
[113] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 11.

This evocative description is, literally, of a Celtic Twilight, and, in keeping with an Arnoldian view, Wales is associated with the past — a mystical, romantic condition. The language itself is heavy and loaded, almost over-ripe with meaning and signification. The Gwent border country is an intersection of time and space where every path, field, and hedgerow carries associations of past experiences. There is a spiritual, mystical association to the ethereal mist in the valley below: it is almost as if, for Lucian, the Gwent countryside is an area 'where the past still lives, where every place has its tradition, every name its poetry'.[114] Though not describing the Gwent border country, Arnold is nevertheless evoking his impressions at another point, on the north-Wales coastline, of an interface between Wales and England. As this question suggests, and as Machen's description of Lucian's Gwent furthers, Wales is the place connected with mystery, romance and the past; Wales is the place where residual elements of Williams's cultural settlement, and Anderson's myths of national identity, are brooding.

These myths and historical associations are vividly evoked in the text by virtue of Lucian's hallucinatory experiences in the countryside around his home. The intense feeling of the myth of the past is everywhere to be perceived in *The Hill of Dreams* and moving on from this comes Lucian's own attempt to articulate his experiences through his writing. Walking aimlessly through the Gwent countryside, like some rural version of the London *flâneur* he is later to become, Lucian is overwhelmed and assailed by a hallucinatory power. The Roman fort at Caermaen is the source of his attraction, and holds an almost magnetic power over him; as the novel notes, 'The ring of the fort drew him with stronger fascination during that hot August weather.'[115] This attraction is what precipitates the passage in the novel describing Lucian's hallucinatory experience:

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[114] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 14.
[115] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 12.

> He turned for a moment, and looked down towards the stream which now seemed to wind remote between the alders; above the valley there were small dark figures moving in the cornfield, and now and again came the faint echo of a high-pitched voice singing through the air as on a wire. He was wet with heat; the sweat streamed off his face, and he could feel it trickling all over his body. But above him the green bastions rose defiant, and the dark ring of oaks promised coolness.[116]

So begins Lucian's hallucinatory experience. There is an elemental quality to the descriptions: Lucian is wet with sweat, almost becoming a part of this ancient Welsh landscape, an effect which is extended by the description of his crawling 'up the vallum, on hands and knees, grasping the turf and here and there the roots that had burst through the red earth.'[117] Indeed, as well as becoming a part of the landscape, Lucian becomes a part of the history of that landscape: the vellum which he grasps carries, on an etymological level, a link with the Latinate, Roman occupation of the area represented by the fort. Later in the same passage Lucian grabs the nettles growing in the area. It is a literal rendering of the uncomfortable challenge with which Lucian is faced, to reconcile the intensity of his experience of the area of his childhood on the one hand, and his ability to comprehend it on the other. The passage also reveals how Lucian shares his blood with the landscape and, by extension, its history and its inhabitants, in the way his body becomes cut and pierced by thorns and brambles. His mention of the green bastions looming over him connects to both the hallucinatory perception of the trees and landscape, and also his conception of the Roman legions who would once have occupied the fort at Caermaen: it is a neat combination of both the landscape and the historical connections of which it is redolent; time and space, or place, intersect at the very level of Machen's language.

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[116] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, pp. 12-13.
[117] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 13.

Lucian's dream, on the hill, in which visions of the mystical, mythical associations of the landscape appear to him, as in a vision, can be read as an act of imagination – an imaginative creation.

> And then he began to dream. To let his fancies stray over half-imagined, delicious things, indulging a virgin mind in its wanderings. [...H]e was alone upon the fairy hill, within the great mounds, within the ring of oaks, deep in the heart of the matted thicket. [...] And just above ground, where the cankered stems joined the protuberant roots, there were forms that imitated the human shape, and faces and twining limbs that amazed him. Green mosses were hair, and tresses were stark in grey lichen; a twisted root swelled into a limb; in the hollows of the rotted bark he saw the masks of men.[118]

Again, Lucian's perceptions of the landscape are here inflected with the associations of the societies which previously occupied it. He also seems to become the landscape, a part of it:

> His eyes were fixed and fascinated by the simulacra of the wood, and could not see his hands, and so at last, and suddenly, it seemed, he lay in the sunlight, beautiful with his olive skin, dark haired, dark eyed, the gleaming bodily vision of a strayed faun.[119]

There are indications in these passages that Lucian can be linked to the classical associations between the area and its previous Roman occupation. He seems almost like a character out of classical literature: his olive skin, dark hair and comparison to the figure of the faun – a creature drawn from classical mythology and characterised by the features of a goat and a human – position him in line with such tradition. Yet, as the references to the fairy hill also suggest, Lucian can be read as a Celtic figure: the hill itself is noted for its 'fairy' connections, and Lucian's visions of the part-human, part-natural animal figures lurking in (and from) the landscape are suggestive of the little people, or *Tylwyth Teg*. Such a link with Celtic mythology would, of course, echo from *The Three Impostors*. Such communion between Lucian and both the landscape and the mythopoeic Celtic heritage of that landscape recalls to mind Matthew Arnold's thesis on Celtic literature, and particularly that association between the Celt and nature:

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[118] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 15.
[119] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 15.

[...H]is sensibility gives him [the Celt] a peculiarly near and intimate feeling of nature and the life of nature; here, too, he seems in a special way attracted by the secret b before him, the secret of natural beauty and natural magic, and to be close to it, to half-divine it.[120]

Based on the extracts from the novel quoted above it can be argued that Lucian's 'feeling of nature' is certainly 'peculiarly near and intimate' – indeed, there is a quality to the language and the writing which is thoroughly peculiar. Lucian's experiences on *The Hill of Dreams* situates him in the line of one of Arnold's emotional, sentimental Celts. The free indirect discourse which is employed to describe his experience seems to blend the seemingly objective experience of viewing the landscape and the deeply subjective and personal responses which that act of observation elicits. Lucian's visions of figures in the undergrowth, his physical relationship with the land, his dreaming while lying naked on the site of the hill-fort all point to a version of Arnold's peculiar communion with nature, particularly when considered alongside the connections with Celtic myth which the narrative invites. A close connection with nature, physicality and emotion as hallmarks of that relationship, association with both Celtic and Roman mythology: these are all features which point to a connection between the Gwent border country, as presented in *The Hill of Dreams*, and what Raymond Williams terms residual forces and ideologies still existing within a culture. What also emerges from these passages from the novel is that these residual cultural elements constitute a haunting presence in Lucian's consciousness: as we have seen earlier (and will develop below), the challenge for Lucian, the nettle which he must grasp, is to attempt to articulate the experience of this brooding historical and mythical residual force. Haunted as he is by the spectral trace of both Celtic and Roman inheritances, Lucian's task as a writer is to capture a ghost. The Gwent-born, London-based novelist must seek to articulate the intangible, natural, mystic features of a residual culture in a way which belongs to the dominant mode of his present day. In

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[120] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 86.

attempting to speak of, or speak to, these ghosts and spectres, Lucian (and Machen, and the wider, more diverse, Welsh milieu to which he is connected) imagines Gwent, or the spectre of Gwent, into existence; in trying to contain and articulate the ghosts of the residual past, he conjures them afresh with a newly emergent power. It is to Lucian's status as a writer, and how his vocation as a writer can be read as paradigmatic of a wider London-based conjuration of notions of Celticism and Welshness, that the remainder of this chapter now turns.

Conjuring Celticism

In concluding his essay on 'Celtic Magic' Machen, speaking of the condition of loss which he reads as characteristic of Celtic literature and Celtdom more broadly, speculates that

> [...] perhaps in the first ages of man art was indeed an incantation in the literal sense of the word; it was an effort to bring back that which had been lost, to renew the delights which no material pleasures can give.[121]

The passage suggests on the part of Machen a respect for the role of the reciter, the scriptor or the shaman – he or she who is responsible for the act of incantation. This is the medium by means of which that which has been lost in Celtic culture is attempted to be recovered. Barthes is also aware of the peculiar significance of this figure – the narrator as distinct from the author – and suggests how

> in ethnographic societies, narrative is never assumed by a person but by a mediator, shaman or reciter, whose 'performance' (i.e., his mastery of the narrative code) can be admired, but never his 'genius'.[122]

As Barthes elucidates in his essay, the function of the scriptor always defers meaning, for 'the modern *scriptor* is born *at the same time* as his text':[123] that is to say, the *scriptor*'s hand is not slower than his passion in the generation of meaning, but, on the contrary, that

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[121] Machen, 'Celtic Magic', p. 65.
[122] Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p. 121.
[123] Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p. 123. Emphasis in original.

writing is itself a kind of performative act, generating – or conjuring – its meanings by means of its own construction. The meanings generated by the text are brought about by the text's own production, and the *scriptor* and his meanings come into existence at the same time. As Barthes famously says, the *scriptor* 'is not furnished with a being which precedes or exceeds his writing [...]; there is no time other than that of the speech-act, and every text is written eternally *here* and *now*.'[124] Barthes's essay points towards the notion of a performative act of conjuration inherent in the very act of committing pen to paper. It is important to bear Barthes's words in mind when turning to Machen, because *The Hill of Dreams* is a text which time and again makes reference to Lucian's own ambition and attempt to become a writer. Furthermore, and of particular importance to a reading of *The Hill of Dreams* alongside 'The Death of the Author', is the way in which Machen's text is almost obsessive in its documenting of the writing practices of its protagonist. It becomes increasingly clear that Lucian's writing (in both the sense of the word as a noun, i.e., as a product off his efforts, the work he produces, and also as a verb, i.e., the physical activity of committing pen to paper) is the very thing, the very process, by which the spectral, ghostly, connotations associated with the residual forces acting upon him are both articulated and conjured anew.

> But after the first breath the aspect of the work changed; page after page was tossed aside as hopeless, the beautiful sentences he had dreamed of refused to be written, and his puppets remained stiff and wooden, devoid of life or motion. [...] If only he could get away, and join the sad procession in the murmuring London streets, far from the shadow of those awful hills.[125]

This passage has much to reveal about the nature of Lucian's vocation as a London writer. There is a hint of physicality to the description of Lucian's writing: there is mention of his 'breath' and his 'tossing' of inadequate drafts to the waste-paper basket. Despite the beautiful sentences which exist in the nebulous realm of his consciousness,

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[124] Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p. 123. Emphasis in original.
[125] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, pp. 39-40.

Lucian remains unable to commit them to the written page: this is the gap which appears

and into which the origin of every voice disappears, according to Barthes's essay.

Lucian's writing process correlates with the Barthesian notion that the beautiful

sentences in Lucian's mind do not exist beyond the level of his writing; 'he is not

furnished with a being which precedes or exceeds his writing'.[126] His writing is always a

work in progress, always deferred: he conjures a vision which is always that of a future to

come, or indeed a future to come back. Present also in this extract is the familiar trope of

wishing to become lost in the city. The desire for Lucian to escape his Welsh upbringing

and flee to the anodyne anonymity of the London streets is a familiar one in Welsh

history and culture,[127] and is reflected in Welsh writing. The peculiar transformative effect

created by this distance comes to bear on Lucian's construction of Wales (from his

position of exile) more and more.

The description of one of Lucian's hallucinations extends this notion:

> he himself was in truth the realisation of the vision of Caermaen that night, a city
> with mouldering walls beset by the ghostly legion. Life and the world and the laws
> of sunlight had passed away, and the resurrection of the kingdom of the dead
> began. The Celt assailed him, becoming from the weird wood he called the world,
> and his far-off ancestors, the 'little people', crept out of their caves, muttering
> charms and incantations in hissing inhuman speech, he was beleaguered by desires
> that had slept in his race for ages.[128]

Lucian's experience of Caermaen is a 'vision'; somehow, the word succeeds in extending

the effect of how this is a location which is imagined, conjured, into existence. The

notion of conjuring is also present in the 'ghostly legion' which appears to Lucian.

Lucian's 'resurrection of the kingdom of the dead' re-awakens those historical

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[126] Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p. 123. Barthes, of course, is not referring to Machen's text, but is rather speculating on the *scriptor* of any piece of writing, born at the same time as his or her text.

[127] Emrys Jones has described how the continuing Welsh presence in London 'for at least six hundred years', and that the Welsh claim to both anonymity and distinctiveness within the city meant that 'to the Londoner they were slightly odd – they were strangers, albeit familiar strangers'. See Emrys Jones, 'Conclusion', *The Welsh in London 1500-2000*, ed. by Emrys Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press on behalf of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 2001), pp. 193-204 (p. 193).

[128] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 52.

associations of the area. 'The Celt' which assails him might be Arnold's – Lucian is connected with the emotional connotations, and the communion with nature, which characterise Arnold's Celt – but it might also, more broadly, be a wider notion of Celticity impacting on Machen's own particular London context.

The weird wood of Gwent and Caermaen become the repository of these residual cultural associations. Here are the little people of Welsh and Celtic mythology; here, as in *The Three Impostors*, Machen uses the fairies' malign and malevolent qualities as a device for his own brand of *fin-de-siècle* Gothic. More widely, however, the re-emergence of the little people from their caves and woods can be read as an allegory of the re-emergence of a Celtic identity at the end of the nineteenth century, an identity which had strong connections with the London context. A wider notion of a Welsh or Celtic identity, gaining new momentum at this particular historical juncture, may stand as the signified concept denoted by the reawakening of the 'desires which had slept in his race for ages'.

Present also in this passage is the notion of incantation, to which Machen refers in his 'Celtic Magic' essay and which is analogous to Barthes's notion of the figure of the reciter, or shaman. Lucian's writing further illuminates this notion of the role of the author-as-conjurer. It is Lucian's writing which conjures these residual cultural ideologies back into being. The references in the novel to the supernatural, mystical quality of this process extend this notion. Upon seeing his work Lucian 'laughed to himself when he saw the magic of print';[129] again, it is clear that it is the writing process – what Barthes identifies as the performative quality of all writing – that generates this 'magic':

> A page caught his attention: he remembered how he wrote it while a November storm was dashing against the panes; and there was a queer blot in one corner; and he got up from the chair and looked out, and all the earth was white fairyland [...]

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[129] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 55.

He wrote rapidly, overjoyed to find that loving phrases grew under his pen; a particular scene he had imagined filled him with desire; he gave his hand free course, and saw the written work glowing.[130]

Lucian is not 'furnished with a being which precedes or extends his writing, he is not the subject of which his book would be the predicate'.[131] It is Lucian's reading which conjures the association of Wales as a place of wild, Gothic landscapes (the storm lashing against the house, the 'white fairyland') in the Arnoldian sense. Likewise, it is his pen's movement across the page which generates, conjures, the 'magic' he perceives. He may be the *scriptor*, but it is the language which speaks, not him: it is the 'phrases' which are the grammatical subject of the sentence; it is the phrases which grow and are given agency. It is also his pen which is given 'free course' to generate the writing, a writing which ultimately glows with a mysterious magic.

It is noted, later in the novel, that '[i]t was this magic that Lucian sought for his opening chapters; the quality that gives to words something beyond their meaning'. He strives for 'hieroglyphic sentences, for words mystical, symbolic', and he admired the books on his shelves for their 'curious quality of suggestion [...] in that sphere which might almost be called supernatural.'[132] Barthes's shaman from 'The Death of the Author' is a useful figure to employ with reference to this passage from Machen. Barthes describes the shaman as a mediator or reciter whose mastery of the narrative code is his performance. Machen's Lucian Taylor is struck by the 'magic' of his text in its printed state, the writing which Lucian sees glowing before his eyes. There is a supernatural, magical element to the performance of writing which, arguably, connects Lucian to this shamanistic figure. The shaman, after all, is a figure who has access to, and influence in, the realm of the

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[130] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, pp. 59-60.
[131] Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p. 123.
[132] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 132.

supernatural and the spiritual, and it is to the realm of the supernatural that Lucian is transported by means of his writing.

This shamanistic discourse is often that of the witch-doctor, a traditional, tribal figure within what Barthes describes as an ethnographic society. The shaman is not a man of science, but, rather, a kind of conduit to the spiritual world. It is possible to read him as a figure belonging to the residual cultural mode of the period; his is a discourse which is outside, and altogether more primitive than, the dominant discourse of society. In the nineteenth century the dominant discourse of the day can be seen as embodied by the figure of Matthew Arnold, yet Lucian's shamanistic Celticism – if it may be described as such – is within the residual mode of discourse, and this mode is again, in *The Hill of Dreams*, contrasted with a larger dominant discourse. In *The Hill of Dreams* this dominant discourse is again characterised by the institution of Oxford University:

> Therefore when he [Mr Taylor, Lucian's father] saw Lucian loitering and sauntering, musing amorously over his manuscript, exhibiting manifest signs of that fine fury which Britons have ever found absurd, he felt grieved at heart, and more than ever sorry that he had not been able to send the boy to Oxford.
> 'B.N.C. would have knocked all this nonsense out of him,' he thought. 'He would have taken a double First like my poor father and made something of a figure in the world. However, it can't be helped.'[133]

There is more at stake in this passage than a mere regret over Lucian's lack of an Oxonian alma mater. Rather, bound up in Mr Taylor's regret at not being able to send his son to Brasenose College is an anxiety that this constitutes a generational changing of the guard. This shift is a contrast between 'loitering and sauntering' and the tradition and precision which constitute a humanist education. It seems that Brasenose College, in the University of Oxford, enjoyed a strong reputation for the prowess of its sporting teams, and, if so, there is an appropriate physicality to the language of Mr Taylor's wistful

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[133] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 73.

lament that his aesthete son has yet to have the nonsense 'knocked' out of him. In some senses this can be read as a contrast between a dominant discourse and those other residual and emergent ideologies. Arnold's essays *On the Study of Celtic Literature* were delivered from the Chair of the Professor of Poetry at Oxford University. Though Arnold's discourse may belong to the dominant ideologies of his society, the subject of his study, Celticism and Celtic literature, may be said to belong to the residual. Arnold concludes his final lecture by proposing the establishment of a Chair of Celtic at Oxford University, concluding his lectures by proposing the following:

> Let us reunite ourselves with our better mind and with the world through science; and let it be one of our angelic revenges on the Philistines, who among their other sins are guilty authors of Fenianism, to found at Oxford a chair of Celtic, and to send, through the gentle ministration of science, a message of peace to Ireland.[134]

Arnold's views are those of the dominant political discourse of his day – a discourse which espouses the values of order and rationality – in order to contain and bring order to an unruly Celtic fringe. Mr Taylor's anxieties concerning his son seem to be in the same vein: the unruliness, romanticism and aestheticism which characterise Lucian's behaviour are regrettably contrasted with the order and good sense which would be instilled by an Oxford education. Indeed, Lucian's father seems to suggest that this dominant discourse is not only at play with the residual past from which it stems and the emergent future on to which it gives, but, rather, is actively engaged in preserving its authority and centrality, by knocking all other nonsense out of its way.

Yet, significantly, a change has occurred in the intervening years between Arnold's *On the Study of Celtic Literature* and Machen's *The Hill of Dreams*. As suggested earlier, the late-nineteenth century is a period of emergent Celtic cultural nationalisms: it is the period of Young Ireland and *Cymru Fydd* and, as far as the Celtic nations are concerned, a period of

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[134] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 136. The peace sought by Arnold is the quelling of the Fenian rebellion in Ireland against British rule, which took place in 1867.

emergent ideologies which nevertheless make use of, or construct, a residual past from which they derive impetus and inspiration. Lucian's reawakening of the long-dormant desires of his race, and his attempt at the discovery of the secret of the mystical Celtic forces which assail him suggest that the dominant discourse represented by the reference to Oxford University is contesting with a Celticism which is by now emergent rather than residual. Arnold's text concentrated on what the Welsh and Celtic genius '*has* been, what it *has* done'[135] and the Wales 'where the past still lives, where every place has its tradition'.[136] Lucian's texts, by contrast, and by extension those of Machen (and his London-Welsh milieu as well) are concerned with a Celticism which belongs more certainly to the emergent ideology of the period. Theirs is a literature which is conjured by, and conjures, a residual Celticism, but reactivates it in so doing, making it newly emergent.

Derrida's *Specters of Marx* identifies and expands upon the notion of performativity alluded to by Barthes' 'The Death of the Author'. While Barthes refers to the shamanistic quality of the narrator, Derrida develops the implications of this supernatural element even further by speculating on the conjuration which takes place in a performative move: a performative speech- or script-act conjures something into existence by virtue of its of utterance. Lucian Taylor in *The Hill of Dreams* can be read, in line with Derrida's thinking, as just such a conjurer.

Lucian's hallucinatory experiences come to full effect in – indeed through – his writing. Derrida writes of the act of conjuration as a performative act, noting that 'Conjuration says in sum the appeal that causes to come forth with the voice and thus it makes come,

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[135] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 22. Emphasis in original.
[136] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 14.

by definition, what is not there, at the moment of the appeal.'[137] This definition of

conjuration seems especially relevant to a discussion of Machen's *The Hill of Dreams* as it

identifies how it is an act combining the dialectic between presence and absence, past and

future. Lucian's vision in *The Hill of Dreams* is evidence of such a complex trick:

> There beneath him lay the huddled cluster of Caermaen, the ragged and uneven
> roofs that marked the winding and sordid streets [...]; beyond he recognised the
> piled mounds that marked the circle of the amphitheatre, the dark edge of trees
> that grew where the Roman wall whitened and waxed old beneath the frosts and
> rains of eighteen hundred years. Thin and strange, mingled together, the voices
> came up to him on the hill; it was as if an outland race inhabited the ruined city and
> talked in a strange language of strange and terrible things.[138]

Lucian's mind is conjuring these visions, bringing the voices 'up'. The voices and the

'outland race' correlate to the notion of the layering of history over a specific location,

and the interplay between the various discourses belonging to the area. The Roman

history of the area, represented in this extract by the image of the old Roman wall,

'waxes'. It is an interesting choice of word, suggesting that the Roman heritage of the

area, though old, is still 'speaking' – waxing old – in the present, while also suggesting

that this past, residual presence is now waxing, becoming newly emergent. Eighteen

hundred years are present within the Roman wall: these are the voices which speak to

Lucian on the hill, and their being mingled together is indicative of the way that these

influences are always at play, that residual forces are inevitably and always mingled

together. Lucian's visions summon the strange race into vision, conjuring it into

existence.

James Loxley, reading Derrida's thinking on the nature of performative speech acts,

notes how, for Derrida, an absence, a fissure or aporia, is always present within any

attempt at communication:

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[137] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 50.
[138] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 47.

> [For Derrida] communication is not even thinkable without the resort to a certain notion of absence or breach. In order to do this, he emphasises what he calls the *iterability* of the linguistic elements necessary for the communication of meaning. [...] The notion of iterability points to [...] the repeatability of which linguistic elements must be capable.[139]

Any meaning, any mode of communication, in its very being, is always a part of a network of citations and intertexts. Any ideology or meaning must, inevitably, imply the possibility of being repeated in the future. A statement, a 'strange language of strange and terrible things' is of necessity capable of being repeated at another, later, point in the future: and language or meaning, even if (as is the case with the 'strange' language heard by Lucian) belonging to a residual register, is capable of being re-iterated, re-activated, repeated in an emergent future-to-come. As a writer in London, Lucian seems almost to anticipate the later reflections of the likes of Anderson and Derrida on the spectrality of the imagined communities of texts and nations by reflecting on 'the manner in which men are continually led astray by the cheat of the senses.' Continuing, Lucian notes how,

> In order that the unborn might still be added to the born, nature had inspired men with the delusion that the bodily companionship of the lover and the beloved was desirable above all things, and so, by the false show of pleasure, the human race was chained to vanity, and doomed to an eternal thirst for the non-existent.[140]

The passage shows an awareness of the nature of the imagined communion between living and dead, the born and the yet-to-be-born. Lucian's claims to have escaped the folly of such a fanciful existence seem questionable however. Though renouncing the aspirations of romantic love, Lucian himself is nevertheless occupied in a search for a transcendental essence, a kind of intangible experience connected with his childhood. Musing on a childhood sweetheart, Annie, and noting that any affection between them would only be of a fleeting, temporary nature, Lucian claims that 'Truly now, and for the first time, he possessed Annie, as a man possesses gold which he has dug from the rock

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[139] James Loxley, *Performativity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 77. Emphasis in original.
[140] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 125.

and purged from its baseness'.[141] The metaphor of digging for gold harks back to Arnold's description of the study of Celtic literature by means of the language of geology and archaeology. It is an image which combines both of the two main registers of Arnold's, Williams's and Anderson's work as it applies to their various theses on culture. On the one hand is the notion of the phantomic or phantasmal – the intangible, metaphoric-mythopoeic side of cultural or national identity. On the other, though, the notion of possessing gold relates to a very physical, materialist basis for that metaphorical language.

Just as Arnold's Celt is fond of bright colours, Lucian Taylor is overwhelmed by a phantasmagoria on *The Hill of Dreams*. Yet the way in which Lucian's very writing re-conjures the intangible quality which Arnold, and indeed Machen himself, describe as the Celtic magic, or Celtic secret, is indicative of the romantic quality which may be said to characterise Arnold's Celt. The fifth chapter of *The Hill of Dreams* is the section of the novel which offers the clearest example of the way in which Lucian's writing becomes a performative conjuration of this so-called Celtic secret: it is the chapter which offers the clearest indication of how Lucian is a London-Welsh writer and how the distance between Wales and London conditions that act of writing. Speaking of Wales, from London, Lucian 'felt that he had escaped'.[142] The condition of exile, the distance from home, is what offers Lucian the perspective from which to assess his relationship with his home. 'He could now survey those splendid and lovely visions from without, as if he read of opium dreams, and he no longer dreaded a weird suggestion that had once beset him, that his very soul was being moulded into the hills'.[143] Lucian's conception of Gwent, from its very beginning, invokes a kind of exile; an appreciation of Gwent only

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[141] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 126.
[142] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, p. 129.
[143] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, pp. 129-30.

comes into view from without. In this sense, implicit in Lucian's very idea of 'Gwent'

and his home – and the 'magic' of literature which his journey to London pursues – is

the notion of exile.

Lucian's journey to London to become a writer soon sees him more directly in dialogue

with Matthew Arnold's most famous critical work, *Culture and Anarchy*, and Lucian's is an

engagement which develops the notion of exile which is present in his work. Lucian

laments that

> [...H]e had lost the sense of humanity, he was wretched because he was an alien
> and a stranger amongst citizens. It seemed probable that the enthusiasm of
> literature, as he understood it, the fervent desire for the fine art, had in it
> something of the inhuman and dissevered the enthusiast from his fellow-creatures.
> It was possible that the barbarian suspected as much, and that by some slow
> process of rumination had arrived at his fixed and inveterate hatred of all artists. It
> was no doubt a dim unconscious impression, by no means a clear reasoned
> conviction; the average Philistine, if pressed for the reason of his dislike, would
> either become inarticulate, ejaculating 'faugh' and 'pah' [...], or else he would give
> some imaginary and absurd reason, alleging that all 'literary men' were poor, that
> composers never cut their hair, that painters were rarely public-school men.[144]

This lengthy extract encompasses much of the speculation and critical debate

surrounding the figure of the Taylorian or Machenian man of letters. This late-

nineteenth-century figure is the inheritor of a long lineage, stemming back through

Arnold's own figure in the middle of the century.[145]

More than merely featuring the image of a literally dead author at the conclusion of the

text, the dénouement of Machen's novel anticipates and embodies the kind of

performativity and intertextual communion with ghosts suggested by Barthes and

pursued by Derrida.

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[144] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, pp. 160-61.
[145] For a cultural history of the figure of the man of letters, see Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism* ([1984] London and New York: Verso, 2005).

> For all his effort the impression would not leave him, and as he sat before his desk looking into the vague darkness he could almost see the chamber which he had so often imagined [...]
>
> Lucian again shivered with a thrill of dread; he was afraid that he had overworked himself and that he was suffering from the first symptoms of grave illness. His mind dwelt on confused and terrible recollections, and with a mad ingenuity gave form and substance to phantoms [...H]e would return to those long struggles with letters, to the happy nights when he had gained victories.[146]

Giving form and substance to phantoms could be said to be the defining project of London-Welsh writers at the turn of the century. The quotation given above carries the inflection of the Gothic and the occult. As the work of Derrida and Barthes has suggested, this figure – Lucian, the maniacal writer who is giving form to phantoms, is a conjurer, summoning the spectral into being through 'those long struggles with letters'. Lucian's hand, in this closing section of the novel, is tracing a field without any origin but language itself, constantly calling any origin into question.[147] Derrida is in accord with the likes of Anderson et al when he notes that 'beyond even the alliance with a chosen people, there is no nationality or nationalism that is not religious or mythological, let us say "mystical" in the broad sense.'[148] Derrida's notion is that the nation is mystical – in much the same way as it makes use of, or invents, myths of origin or a past golden age. Derrida speaks of the 'promise' made to the nation, and how the

> form of this promise or of this project remains absolutely unique. Its event is at once singular, total and uneffaceable – uneffaceable except by a denegation and in the course of a work of mourning that can only displace, without effacing, the effect of a trauma.'[149]

The 'trauma' of which Derrida speaks is analogous to the gap identified by Barthes, and Machen, between past – that is to say, the invented past - and the future. The project of writing the nation is, in some senses, a 'work of mourning' for a moment which is always

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[146] Machen, *The Hill of Dreams*, pp. 207-208. .
[147] See Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p. 123.
[148] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 113.
[149] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 113.

just out of reach. Machen's Lucian is indeed struggling in his work of mourning, his backward glance and the attempt to dwell on 'confused and terrible recollections'.

Derrida's idea of hauntology is a famous pun on the word 'ontology', i.e., the branch of study which deals with the nature of being. The nature of being, according to the notion of hauntology, is itself haunted: it is a communion with ghosts. What Machen's late-century Gothic demonstrates is that this hauntology is at play, at work, in the way that Wales is imagined from London. The imagined community is a ghostly community: it is haunted by the ghosts of an imagined past, conjured anew by the return of the residual.

Chapter Three
'A City's Noise and Nature's Quiet Call': W. H. Davies

Davies, the Welsh Georgian Poet

> [...A]nd if Davies was *not* always well-bred and gentlemanly, he'd written a lot of nice poems about cows and flowers and *hiraeth* for the sweet days that have been, with a lot of Welsh place-names in them – and on the occasions when he wasn't nice, well, he was half-English, wasn't he?[1]

So writes Gwyn Jones in *The First Forty Years*, his assessment of the development of Welsh writing in English in the first half of the twentieth century. Jones's text famously argues that it is the arrival of Caradoc Evans, and the publication of his first book, *My People*, which sets in train the development of a distinctive Anglo-Welsh literature. *The First Forty Years* proved an important early work of canon building in Wales, giving little attention or status to Welsh writing in the English language prior to 1915. The above quotation constitutes the sum total of Jones's dealing with W. H. Davies: it places Davies's work alongside that of other writers whose work was published prior to *My People*. The romances of Allen Raine, for example, famously represented what Jones described as a 'sandcastle dynasty';[2] her work, alongside that of Joseph Keating, is unread or unheard of at his time of writing in the 1950s. Also 'alive and writing' prior to *My People* 'were Arthur Machen and W. H. Davies at another and a higher level' but, as the above quotation indicates, Jones has reservations about incorporating them into his definition of 'Anglo-Welsh' as a term which refers to 'those authors of Welsh blood or connexion who for a variety of reasons write their creative work in English.'[3] Jones is reluctant to consider Davies as this kind of authentic writer, writing from the inside in the manner Caradoc Evans was to do: the quotation indicates Jones's reservations about Davies's ethnicity, class and modernity.

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[1] Gwyn Jones, *The First Forty Years: Some Notes on Anglo-Welsh Literature* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1957), pp. 7-8. Emphasis in original.
[2] Jones, *The First Forty Years*, p. 9.
[3] Jones, *The First Forty Years*, p. 9.

Davies is a figure of divided sensibilities in all manner of ways. His work (like his own life) moves back and forth across regional and national boundaries: Davies was born in Newport, and much of his nature poetry is based in the Gwent border country. He himself moved to London, and the contrast between country and city forms an important part of his work. Indeed, Davies's work goes further than juxtaposing rural Wales and urban London: at the level of language and form, Davies's poetry in particular demonstrates how each is inflected by the other; as we have seen in the work of both Ernest Rhys and Arthur Machen, in Davies's ouvre, too, Wales is imagined in contrast to London, but is also imagined from London, or even, as in the case of a poem like 'The Mind's Liberty', conjured *through* the prism of London. Despite Davies's popularity, Gwyn Jones dismisses his claims to a place at the fountain-head of Anglo-Welsh writing because of ambiguities of ethnicity and class. Noting that Davies was 'half-English' suggests that, for Jones, the originator of a distinctive Anglo-Welsh writing needed to be a figure who without doubt wrote from an insider's perspective. Davies and his fellow Gwent writer Machen (a 'Monmouthshire man' 'a well-bred, gentlemanly sort of person'[4]) clearly did not fit the bill. In the figure of Caradoc Evans, Jones was to see things very differently, arguing that with Evans 'the war-horn was blown, the gauntlet thrown down, the gates of the temple shattered.'[5] Evans represents for Jones a writer from the inside of Welsh (and perhaps even Welsh-speaking) culture – all the better to explode the pomposity and bombast emblematic of that culture:

> [...] The Anglo-Welsh had arrived.
> I think they arrived in the best possible way, with the maximum of offence and the maximum of effect. The majority of the Anglo-Welsh have been quite painfully modest and deferential in the face of native Welsh criticism: we would no more talk back to a proper Cymro than we would cheek our mother.[6]

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[4] Jones, *The First Forty Years*, p. 7.
[5] Jones, *The First Forty Years*, p. 8.
[6] Jones, *The First Forty Years*, p. 8.

Caradoc Evans, as a 'proper Cymro' is thus able to act as midwife to the arrival of the Anglo-Welsh. Being himself a Welsh-speaker from the rural West, Evans's credentials for a sustained attack on 'philistinism, Welsh provincialism, and the hopelessly inhibited standards of what little Anglo-Welsh literature there was' are unimpeachable. Jones's account, though, is in need of modification on two scores. Firstly, the false distinction made between 'Anglo-Welsh' and 'native Welsh': several critics have contested Jones's point of departure by noting that Welsh writers are not necessarily ethnically or politically Anglicised by writing in English – though other factors may be attendant, the difference is linguistic.[7] The implications of the first point impacts on the second, namely, that Davies can be newly considered as a writer whose engagement with Wales is every bit as sustained as that of Caradoc Evans and post-*My People* writers. In fact, Davies's hybridity – rather than diminishing his claims, as in Jones's assessment – can be regarded as an enabling context to his work's engagement with Wales. Furthermore, the very origins of Jones's 'First Forty Years' of Anglo-Welsh writing are in a hybrid situation. Caradoc Evans, while being a Welsh speaker from rural Ceredigion, was also a London Welshman who wrote first for a London audience. There are important structural links between both writers: Davies's rhapsodising for the rural Welsh idyll might be read as the obverse of Evans's corrosive satires of the peasantry in *My People*. By the same token, Evans's early work bears the trace of Davies's writings on working-class urban poverty and tramp life. They were personally acquainted with each other, and each helped shape the reception of the other's writing.

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[7] Stephen Knight justifies his use of the term 'Welsh writing in English' because 'the once-used term "Anglo Welsh" is found unacceptable by most authors, and indeed many others, on the grounds that it refuses Welsh status to Welsh people who, not speaking Cymraeg, nevertheless do not feel at all English.' See Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004) p. xv. Jeremy Hooker, in an introduction to his study of Welsh writing in English, sets out his aim to 'explore the uses certain writers make of the different possibilities available to them by virtue of the fact that they are *Welsh* writers in *English*, with access to Welsh and English literary traditions.' See Jeremy Hooker, *Imagining Wales: A View of Modern Welsh Writing in English* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), p. 2. Emphasis in original.

Davies's poetic reputation has for some time rested on the perception of him as a 'nature

poet' of the Georgian movement. The Gwyn Jones quotation at the start of this chapter

positions Davies as a writer of simple, nostalgic nature poems. Yet, as Davies's inclusion

suggests, the Georgian poets themselves were a diverse and disparate circle of writers

who were grouped together as a consequence of the inclusion of their work in the

Georgian Poetry anthologies, published by the Poetry Bookshop between 1912 and 1922.

'Georgian Poetry' has been traditionally regarded as a movement characterised by rural

themes, simple style, and, more often than not, use of the lyric form. In introducing his

own recuperation of the Georgians, Myron Simon takes stock of the history of critical

reaction to Georgian poetry. Grant suggests that, for many critics, 'Georgian Poetry' is

largely a negative term: in its later phase particularly, Georgianism is characterised by 'a

vacuous nature-worship, a false *naïveté*, the resurgence of a "romantic" vocabulary'; these

are characteristics which 'were apparent in the third volume, and inescapable in the two

that followed'.[8] Other critics have noted how Georgian poetry has suffered from a bad

reputation; Georgian poetry seems particularly timid when compared with the more

radical experimentations with form and content evident in the work of the exponents of

the Modernist movement which superseded it. Grant argues that '[w]ith the publication

of *Georgian Poetry* there came a hardening of the division between radicals and

moderates':[9] the implication of this statement is that Georgian Poetry as a movement was

instrumental in the development of imagist poetry by demarcating the division between

the traditional, conservative lyric poetry of the Georgians and the altogether more

experimental, avant-garde brand of poetry practised by Des Imagistes, under the

leadership of Ezra Pound.

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[8] Joy Grant, *Harold Monro and the Poetry Bookshop* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1967), p. 97.
[9] Grant, *Harold Monro*, p. 99.

In light of this contrast between old and new, subsequent critics have described the general low regard in which Georgianism has been held. Myron Simon suggests that

> For the past fifty years, the Georgians have been invoked chiefly for the purposes of deprecation; comparisons of them to other spokesmen for contemporary poetry have been predictably invidious. Clearly, the designation 'Georgian' has been pejorative.[10]

Perhaps unexpectedly, Grant makes the claim that the development of Imagist poetry, and the Imagistes as a group was a reflex reaction to the non-inclusion of poets such as Pound, F.S. Flint and T.E. Hulme in the *Georgian Poetry* anthologies. Edward Marsh, the editor of the *Georgian Poetry* volumes, was, claims Grant, 'moderate-to-conservative in tendency, and was sufficiently exclusive to provoke the rumour of bad feeling'.[11] Grant proceeds to quote a letter written by Edward Marsh to Rupert Brooke in June 1913, suggesting that 'there's a movement for a "Post-Georgian" Anthology, of the Pound-Flint-Hulme school, who don't like being out of GP, but I don't think it will come off'.[12] The volume that eventually 'came off' was Pound's anthology, *Des Imagistes* (1914), published first in the New York periodical *The Glebe*, and then by Harold Monro's Poetry Bookshop. It seems a peculiar detail, given Grant's suggestion that battle lines were being drawn between the radical and traditional schools of poetry, that Monro should have been involved in the publication of both the *Georgian Poetry* anthologies and *Des Imagistes*. Yet, it is a fact which can be incorporated into an understanding of the literary climate in London in the early decades of the twentieth century. Significantly, these writers and movements, located as they are in a metropolis which is both bewildering and liberating, share a widespread anxiety for a group belonging and a collective identity. Grant's accounts position the Poetry Bookshop of Harold Monro at the fulcrum – indeed, depict the Poetry Bookshop *as* the fulcrum – between two opposing yet mutually influenced

[10] Myron Simon, *The Georgian Poetic* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), p.1.
[11] Grant, *Harold Monro*, p.99.
[12] Quoted in Grant, *Harold Monro*, p.99. See also Robert H. Ross, *The Georgian Revolt: Rise and Fall of a Poetic Ideal 1910-22* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), p. 129.

movements. The bookshop itself is a liminal space, physical yet symbolic, connecting yet

separating the old and the new, the conservative and the radical, the pastoral Georgian

movement and the increasingly urban Modernist poetic.

Davies's status as nature poet, suggests John Powell Ward, 'is often held to have come

from James Reeves's Penguin anthology *Georgian Poetry* (1962), where Davies's twenty-

two poems were a higher number than any other contributor received'.[13] A glance at the

titles of Davies's poems suggests how he came to be labelled in this way: 'The Cuckoo',

'The Happiest Life', 'Robin Redbreast', 'Jenny Wren', 'In the Country' and 'The

Kingfisher' all contribute to the sense of the idealised natural world which is presented in

Davies's poetry. By now, however, critics have come to qualify and complicate Davies's

reputation as a nature poet. Indeed, the reputation of the Georgian Poets as a group is

being revised. Critics of early-twentieth-century poetry have noted the difficulty of

defining the Georgian poetic, or indeed what the term 'Georgian poetry' means. Robert

H. Ross asks:

> Who, in fact, were the Georgians? Was the word to be used denotatively, as a
> historical tag, that is, to describe those poets who wrote by and large in the second
> decade of the century? Or should it be used connotatively, to describe a poetic
> school?[14]

Ross identifies a problem with the term. 'Georgian Poetry' was coined by the editor of

the *Georgian Poetry* anthologies, Edward Marsh, who, in his 'Prefatory Note' to the first

anthology (*Georgian Poetry 1911-2*), expresses the view that 'English poetry is now once

again putting on a new strength and beauty'.[15] Georgian poetry, for Marsh at least,

connotes newness – a newness drawing on an historical inheritance: the first anthology is

'drawn entirely from the publications of the past two years, [and] may if it is fortunate

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[13] John Powell Ward, 'Borderers and Borderline Cases', in *A Guide to Welsh Literature: Welsh Writing in English* ed. by M Wynn Thomas (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 91-119 (p. 115).

[14] Ross, *The Georgian Revolt*, p. 13.

[15] Edward Marsh, 'Prefatory Note', in *Georgian Poetry 1911-2*, ed. by Edward Marsh (London: Poetry Bookshop, 1912), n. p.

help the lovers of poetry to realize that we are at the beginning of another "Georgian

period" which may take rank in due time with the several great poetic ages of the past."[16]

Georgian poetry here signifies a new age in English poetry distinct from that of a

previous age – the Victorian and/or Edwardian period and, indeed, the studies of Ross

and Simon both argue that Georgian poetry, despite its reputation for being old-

fashioned and conservative, did in fact constitute a revolt against or rejection of the

mores of the previous generation. Marsh's prognosis for the Georgian movements

invites a suggestive connection with Raymond Williams's ideas concerning the interplay

of residual, dominant and emergent ideologies: Marsh's preface suggests that the present

movement, in its novelty and currency, constitutes an emergent new poetic; nevertheless,

its emergence is positioned in relation to a residual aesthetic drawn from the past.

Georgian poetry by Marsh's account is positioned in an imagined communion with past

and future. Robert Ross's assessment of Edward Marsh's contribution to the *Georgian*

Poetry anthologies intimates this interconnectedness of past influence and future

possibilities; Ross argues:

> [i]ntensely certain that English poetry stood on the threshold of a new age,
> convinced that vital new voices were not getting the hearing they deserved, Marsh
> set out to secure for several possible young poets an adequate and, if possible,
> enthusiastic audience. Though that was his aim (and in the beginning his only aim),
> he achieved more. He gave the poetic age a new name. 'Georgian', it would be
> called. But by 'Georgian' Marsh did not intend to describe, strictly speaking, a new
> school of poetry much less a coterie. His proud adjective was more connotative
> than denotative. It was intended to distinguish his own poetic era from the
> Edwardian decade which had preceded it and, in its context, to suggest the widely
> held assumption that by 1912 poetry was beginning to strike out on new and
> exciting paths.[17]

'Georgian' poetry, in spite of its reputation as a movement of simple nature poetry, is in

fact a more elusive term, as Ross and Simon suggest. Ross's difficulty in distinguishing

between the connotative and denotative meanings of the term indicate that the term is in

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[16] Marsh, 'Prefatory Note'.
[17] Ross, *The Georgian Revolt*, p. 27.

many respects an awkward fit, not necessarily representing the diversity of the work

produced by the writers so labelled.

Contrastingly, the more experimental group of poets known as the Imagists, as Jonathan

Barker notes, 'had chosen their collective name',[18] *Des Imagistes*, under the leading figure

in the movement, Ezra Pound. The second collection of Imagist poetry, *Some Imagist Poets*

(1915) contained a preface by Amy Lowell (1875-1925) which was in many ways a

manifesto for the movement, proposing six central tenets to Imagist poetry: the language

of common speech; the creation of new rhythms; absolute freedom in the choice of

subject; presentation of an image (hence the name 'Imagist'); production of a poetry

'hard and clear', not 'blurred' or 'indefinite'; belief 'that concentration is of the very

essence of poetry'.[19] While Lowell asserts the wish that it 'be clearly understood that we

do not represent an exclusive artistic sect',[20] her manifesto is an element of the imagist

poetic which had no clear parallel in the case of the Georgians. Barker goes on to note

that the more experimental nature of the *Imagistes* poets was eventually to carry the day,

and indeed to have much impact on the development of the dominant artistic movement

of the first half of the century, Modernism. Despite enormous popularity during the

years of the conflict,[21] in the shadow cast by the First World War, the simple, lyrical work

[18] Jonathan Barker, 'Introduction', in W. H. Davies, *Selected Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp.xix-xxxii, (p. xxv).

[19] Amy Lowell, 'Preface' to *Some Imagist Poets* [1915], in *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*, ed. by Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman and Olga Taxidou (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), pp. 268-69 (p. 269).

[20] Lowell, 'Preface', p. 269.

[21] Lawrence Normand suggests that '[t]he public's appetite for poetry was increased by the war, and the Georgian poetry volumes offered a world to escape to from the comfortless reality of wartime Britain.' See Lawrence Normand, *W. H. Davies* (Bridgend: Seren, 2003), p. 114. Ross notes that '[a]lmost alone, [Rupert] Brooke's death [in the First World War] resuscitated the lagging poetic revival' which brought about 'an unmistakable increase in the quantity of verse published but an equally unmistakable decrease in the quality.' See Ross, *The Georgian Revolt*, pp. 162-63. Ross notes also that '[b]y mid-1916 booksellers were reporting that the public was eagerly buying slender volumes of works by the less well-known poets' (*The Georgian Revolt*, p. 165). See Ross's chapter, 'War and the Georgians', in the same volume, pp. 160-87. Katie Gramich cites A.E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* (1896) as a text which, '[i]n gender terms, [...] is achingly masculine, chronicling in a sequence of lyrical, elegiac poems the loss of male youth, a theme that would make this slim volume extremely popular among soldiers during the First World War.' See Katie Gramich,

of the Georgian poets lost its appeal and popularity: 'Georgian Poetry 1920-1922, the fifth

and last in the series, was unsuccessfully launched on an indifferent public in 1922, the

year that saw the publication of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*, two

masterpieces of the modernist movement which, to some extent, had its roots in

Imagism'.[22] The direct, 'plain' style of the Georgians, in the wake of the unprecedented

carnage of the First World War was no longer appropriate; language itself had now lost

its innocence, and could no longer be relied upon as a trustworthy and uncomplicated

medium of expression.

Yet this supposed simplicity and serenity of expression overlooks significant internal

tensions in the works of the Georgian poets, most significantly that between the country

and the city. The writing of the poets themselves, most famously that of the Dymock

poets – among them Robert Frost, Lascelles Abercrombie, Rupert Brooke, Edward

Thomas, Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, and John Drinkwater – extols the virtues of country life

and scorns the urban metropolis. Yet there are complications. Raymond Williams

identifies that:

> Rural Britain was subsidiary, and knew that it was subsidiary, from the late
> nineteenth century. But so much of the past of the country, its feelings and its
> literature, was involved with the rural experience, and so many of its ideas of how
> to live well, from the style of the country-house to the simplicity of the cottage,
> persisted and even were strengthened, that there is an almost inverse proportion, in
> the twentieth century, between the relative importance of the working rural
> economy and the cultural importance of rural ideas.[23]

By the late-nineteenth century, according to Williams, the country ('rural Britain') can be

characterised as a residual element of British society. At this juncture, notes Williams,

Britain was an urbanised, industrialised society in so far as urban, industrial life

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'"Those Blue Remembered Hills"': Gender in Twentieth-Century Welsh Border Writing by Men', in *Gendering Border Studies*, ed. by Jane Aaron, Henrice Altink and Chris Weedon (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), pp. 142-62 (p. 143).

[22] Barker, 'Introduction', p. xxv.

[23] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 248.

constituted the dominant mode of the period. By contrast, the rural life, formed in the past, continues to exert its influence over the dominant mode of society through the significance of the rural economy and the persistence of 'rural ideas'. Williams's argument identifies an interrelationship between a dominant, urban society with the continued influence of a residual rural way of life. Discussing Georgian poetry in particular, Williams notes how the Georgian poetic incorporates the influence of the city into the way the rural world is constructed: the Georgian poets 'brought with them from the cities, and from the schools and universities, a version of rural history which was now extraordinarily amalgamated with a distantly translated literary interpretation.'[24] This 'version of rural history' takes the form of an 'inrush of alien imagery', particularly in the form of a version of classical rural history:[25]

> Fauns, Pan, centaurs, the Golden Age, shepherds, Lycidas, swain, tryst, staunch peasants, churches, immemorial history, demigods, presences, the timeless rhythm of the seasons. [...] 'Back to the Land', some of the critics of industrialism had been saying. But when the Georgian poets settled near Ledbury [...] it was something else: a flight from the cities, certainly; an honest appreciation of the beauty and rest of the country; a respect for labour.[26]

Williams's listing of the different elements which are inclusive of the invented past of the Georgians is particularly apposite in its applicability to the work of Welsh writers in London at the turn of the twentieth century (even though W. H. Davies is the only one of the four writers discussed in this thesis who was a Georgian poet). The poetry of Ernest Rhys lauds an immemorial history and a Welsh Golden Age – all of which is connected with a mythicized Welsh landscape. Arthur Machen's work is full of Fauns, Pan, centaurs, Lycidas and demigods, and is also heavily inflected by both a Celtic past and the classical Golden Age. Instead of staunch peasants and churches, Caradoc Evans's work is populated by a brutal, violent peasantry practising the debased religion of the chapel – the obverse of Rhys's idealised and valorised peasantry. These writers also

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[24] Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 256.

[25] Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 255.

[26] Williams, *The Country and the City*, pp. 255-56.

betray the influence of the city on their construction of the rural world and the peasantry: the Golden Age is not that of classical Greece or Rome but is often the Golden Age of the Welsh past, an age slipped beyond reach yet which continues to provide inspiration in the present and the promise of an enlightened future.[27]

A closer look at the context of Georgianism with reference to Williams's observations sheds further light on this town/country contrast. Rupert Brooke is another poet of the Georgian movement, whose work appeared alongside Davies's in the early *Georgian Poetry* anthologies and which oscillates regularly between town and country. Indeed, a poem of Brooke's which appeared in the first anthology, *Georgian Poetry 1911-12*, is called 'Town and Country'.[28] The poem is spoken from an urban perspective, from the 'Here' where a 'million pulses to one centre beat'. The 'straight lines and silent walls of town' are described as a source of comfort to the speaker, a means of organising experience sharply contrasted with the 'tangled foliage', 'remote winds' and 'unwalled loves' of the country. Another poem of Brooke's, 'The Old Vicarage, Grantchester', is subtitled '*Café de Westens, Berlin*'.[29] The poem consists of the speaker's memory of his favourite part of Cambridgeshire, the 'lovely hamlet of Grantchester'. The memories of Grantchester are contrasted with descriptions of the sights and sounds of the foreign city, Berlin: the speaker draws a contrast between the 'German Jews / Drink[ing] beer around' and the dews on the fields of his rural idyll. This is a poem of exile, and in a similar sense to the work of W. H. Davies, home is imagined, even created, from this exiled perspective. Brooke's poem concludes with a series of questions regarding Grantchester as the

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[27] Anthony D. Smith has identified the persistence of the trope of the Golden Age in the rhetoric of nationalism and emergent national identity, citing the use of the golden age of St Patrick by the Gaelic Revival of the 1890s. See Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), pp. 66-67.

[28] Rupert Brooke, 'Town and Country', in *Georgian Poetry 1911-2*, ed. by Edward Marsh (London: Poetry Bookshop, 1912), p. 43-44.

[29] Rupert Brooke, 'The Old Vicarage, Grantchester: *Café Des Westens, Berlin*', in *Georgian Poetry 1911-2*, pp. 33-37.

speaker's mind's eye looks back to his home, imagining the sunsets, the cool waters, the church clock and the 'honey still for tea'. A rural view of home is constructed from urban exile. In each writer's works the glory of the countryside is contrasted with the sprawl and pollution of the industrial city, inheriting a feature of the pastoral mode central to much London-Welsh writing in this period. Crucially, country and city seem to be in dialogue in these poems to the extent that Georgian poetry becomes the forum for this communication. The indebtedness of this rural poetry to the city becomes clear in the way that each perspective seems to inform the other: a view of the country is strengthened and legitimised by a contrast with the experience of the city. Surprisingly, the state of exile becomes characteristic of this apparently rural, apparently settled, poetic: the city, by direct or implied contrast, figures strongly in the poetry of the country.

A Poetics of Exile

Several critics have identified exile as an important catalyst to much of the influential writing of the twentieth century.[30] Terry Eagleton, for example, has argued that '[w]ith the exception of D. H. Lawrence, the heights of modern English literature have been dominated by foreigners and émigrés: Conrad, James, Eliot, Pound, Yeats, Joyce.' He argues that 'If the creative literature of a society is dominated over a specific period by foreigners and expatriates, then it is reasonable to assume that this fact is as revealing of the nature of that society as it is of the writers who approached it from a foreign viewpoint'.[31] Edward Said has theorised the condition of exile, arguing that '[t]he achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever'; 'no sooner does one get accustomed to it than its unsettling force erupts

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[30] See, for example, Edward W. Said, 'Reflections on Exile', in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 173-86.

[31] Terry Eagleton, *Exiles and Émigrés* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1970), p. 9. Eagleton's focus is on the deficiencies of English culture, and his study is concerned with the responses of certain English writers – exiles of class or culture – and their attitude to their own society.

anew.'[32] Malcolm Bradbury gives specific attention to the confluence of writers including

Henry James, Joseph Conrad, Ezra Pound, W. B. Yeats, and T. S. Eliot around the turn

of the twentieth century.[33] These approaches suggest that the Modernist movement is led

by exiled artists and writers. More surprisingly, however, it could be argued that

Georgianism is also indebted to a kind of exile or disconnection – if not expatriation

then certainly a movement between country and city, a movement which can be both

liberating and constrictive. Georgianism's return to a lyrical, pastoral poetic can be

sharply contrasted by the metropolitan movement which gave it impetus. Bradbury

identifies the contribution of these two elements – exile and the city – to the Modernist

project. 'Much Modernist art', he notes, 'has taken its stance from, gained its perspectives

out of, a certain kind of distance, and exiled posture – a distance from local origins, class

allegiances, the specific obligations and duties of those with an assigned role in a cohesive

culture.'[34] Bradbury here notes some of the various kinds of exile which can face the

Modernist artist, and how these factors – exile from class, community, region and nation

– can all combine to bring about a fruitful environment for creativity. Yet if exile is a

prominent feature of Modernist art, it is not a condition exclusive to it. Displacement

and transition between home and exile can also be detected in the work of Georgian

poets, not least W. H. Davies. His dislocated status as a Welshman arrived in London

after a nomadic young adulthood feeds directly into the imagining of home from exile

which is present in his work. In this light, Georgian poetry's treatment of the theme of

exile can be interpreted as a precursor to the centrality of exile to the Modernist

movement which followed it. It could be argued that the work of Davies, the Welsh

Georgian, foreshadows themes central to the work of Caradoc Evans, the Welsh

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[32] Said, 'Reflections on Exile', p. 173 and p. 186.

[33] Malcolm Bradbury, 'London 1890-1920', in *Modernism 1890-1930: A Guide to European Literature*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 172-90.

[34] Malcolm Bradbury, 'The Cities of Modernism', in *Modernism 1890-1930: A Guide to European Literature*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (London: Penguin, 1991) pp. 96-104 (p. 100).

Modernist, who was to follow.

From the early 1900s, Davies demonstrates the kinds of exile and displacement which are symptomatic of the Modernist period which was to follow his own, the kind of tensions which, as Bradbury suggests, come to be characteristic of much twentieth-century writing. His life in London is the chief reason for this; ironically, the move toward the central metropolis serves only to displace him in terms of his social status, community, and nation. In terms of his class, Davies's social network in London, in which he became a prominent literary personality, contrasts sharply with the extreme poverty he had endured as the Super-tramp depicted in his famous autobiography.[35]

His critique of the city and status as a rural poet do not wholly negate the fact that Davies's work is also in some senses an urban literature. Indeed, there is a sense in which the more rurality there is present in his work, the more urban it becomes; Davies's references to the city bring the multi-faceted nature of his displacement to the surface. Myron Simon has suggested that the contrast between country and city is an example of the Georgians' 'realism'. He suggests that the Georgians 'wished to cultivate and to receive a naked vision of the world's continuing revelation'.[36] By contrasting a poem of Walter de la Mare's with the '"unpleasant"' poems of the likes of John Masefield, Gordon Bottomley, Wilfrid Gibson and Rupert Brooke, Simon suggests that '[i]t is in this sense that Georgian realists found the world both joyous and doleful, dealt with both primroses and urban grayness, celebrated both hard fact and airy fantasy.'[37] Simon identifies the contrasts inherent in Georgian realism: those between the pleasant and 'unpleasant', happy and sad, country and city. Yet this account separates these contrasting

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[35] For more on Davies's circle of acquaintances in London see the chapter 'London Life among Writers, Artists and High Society 1914-1923' in Normand, *W. H. Davies*, pp. 99-128.

[36] Simon, *The Georgian Poetic*, p. 53.

[37] Simon, *The Georgian Poetic*, p. 54.

elements from each other. The impression created is of a series of binary oppositions between the constituent thematic characteristics. W. H. Davies's work foregrounds the limitations of this reading in that much of Davies's poetry is indeed concerned with the joyous and doleful, and the urban and the rural, but many of the poems seem to move beyond a mere contrast of one with the other; rather, Davies's work seems to focus on the interface between them. The poem 'Hill and Vale', in one of Davies's later collections, *The Poet's Calendar* (1925), is one such poem which, while contrasting the hill and the vale – home and displacement – seems to pay more attention to the interaction between the two:

> Day by day the man in the vale
>   Enjoyed his neighbour's hill above;
> Day by day the man on the hill
>   Looked down on his neighbour's vale with love.
>
> If either one would see how fair
>   Was his own home, at any hour,
> He, walking up the hill or down,
>   Enjoyed it from his neighbour's door.
>
> So, down the vale and up the hill,
>   These neighbours travelled, to and fro;
> One man to see his own green hill,
>   And one to see his vale below.[38]

The driving force behind this poem is the act of movement from one location to another: it is the transfer from hill to vale, and vice versa, which preoccupies the speaker. Yet this physical movement also carries an important psychological element, because it is exile, it seems, that is the precondition for an assessment, and appreciation, of home. Distance and perspective afford the individual an opportunity to reflect on (enjoy, even) his or her own home environment, and that individual is never as happy and aware of his/her own habitat as when he/she is in exile. Each neighbour recasts his own home from the perspective afforded him by his displaced situation. The seemingly disparate and

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[38] W. H. Davies, 'Hill and Vale', in *Collected Poems of W. H. Davies* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1942), p. 394.

exclusive concepts of home and estrangement are juxtaposed in the poem and are actually shown to be mutually dependent: home can only be fully appreciated from an outsider's perspective. The exchange between the two ('He, walking up the hill or down') implies that this idea of home is always most fully appreciated through an interchange between that home and a retrospective view afforded by the condition of exile. In this poem the words 'vale' and 'love' are linked by virtue of sharing all but one letter: the place nearest the character's heart is the rural idyll. 'Vale' and 'love' are almost anagrams of each other, but not quite; something slightly different must be introduced to link one with the other. In this way, identity and belonging are always concepts which carry with them the condition, or possibility, of exile.

Davies can be read as a poet embodying the contrast between country and city in this way. By looking more closely at his work, however, it becomes clear that, for Davies at least, this distinction between country and city carries more complex connotations, not least between Wales and London. Such contrasts abound in Davies's work, both in poetry and prose: London, and particularly its deprived and impoverished areas such as the slums, is contrasted with the rural, idealised countryside – often Gwent. Yet there are complications: as Meic Stephens suggests, 'there is a darker side to W. H. Davies';[39] despite Davies's reputation as a nature poet, the contrast between rural idyll and urban nightmare is not always clear-cut in his work. With this in mind it can be argued that Davies's work, rather than existing in the liminal space between Wales and London, country and city, actually constructs this liminality. Katie Gramich has identified Davies's importance as a writer of the Welsh border: Davies, argues Gramich, 'frequently writes of his native "Gwent" in nostalgic terms, juxtaposing its unspoilt countryside with the

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[39] Meic Stephens, ed., *Poetry 1900-2000: One Hundred Poets from Wales* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2007), p. 2.

poverty, injustice and suffering of London.'[40] While Davies is not shy in documenting the squalor and depravity of slum life in London, Gramich suggests that 'the spiritual core of Davies's writing remains in the south Welsh rural borderlands.'[41] The general theme of 'Hill and Vale' is also articulated through Davies's more specific London-Welsh context; just as the hill is re-imagined from the vale, so too is the Welsh border country imagined from the London metropolis.

Finding Utterance

While Davies has come to be regarded among the most prominent members of the Georgian Poetry movement, Georgianism, in turn, has come to be viewed as the poetic movement of rural England and a celebration of the nature of the English countryside, or, if not a named English countryside, then a constructed, essential rurality. His work, as seen in the previous section, draws strongly on the city, not only as a contrast to the country, but as a location in his poetry in itself. This city is also unmistakably London, and is a constant source of fascination. Further, the nature poems, when located in an identifiable place, are invariably placed in Wales. It emerges that Davies, a figurehead for Georgianism, invests place with a particular significance which is at odds with the movement he has come to represent.

Lawrence Normand, one of Davies's recent biographers, lists two writers at opposite ends of the twentieth century who have ascribed Davies's poetry with an essential English ideology: Normand records that 'John Press writing in 1981, suggests Davies was "English". In 1920 Harold Monro, the publisher of the Georgian Poetry volumes, wrote

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[40] Gramich, 'Those Blue Remembered Hills', p. 145.
[41] Gramich, 'Those Blue Remembered Hills', p. 145.

of Davies, "He is typically English".[42] It is strange that this essential, or essentialised, Englishness requires no further or specific definition. Particularly strange in this respect is Normand's conclusion that what '[t]hese comments [i.e. those of Monro and Press] suggest [is] that although Davies was a Welshman, born and educated in Newport, his writing is imaginatively English'.[43] The word 'although' almost suggests a regret that Davies does not fit into a convenient model, an impression which is furthered by the lame codicil regarding an unspecified 'English' imagination which is no sooner invoked than abandoned.

Indeed, even Davies's earliest work qualifies any initial impression of him as an English poet. A description of London forms the opening passage of the title poem of Davies's first book, *The Soul's Destroyer and Other Poems* (1905). This, combined with the poem's soaring, Miltonic blank verse might invite a reading of Davies as an English poet: he certainly draws on an English poetic tradition (perhaps prompting Normand's description of him as being 'imaginatively English'). Nevertheless, the poem's content and its poetic techniques embody an interaction between Wales and London, between English poetry and residual Welsh cultural modes, which speaks of the riven, hybrid condition of the displaced writer. Davies's first book, *The Soul's Destroyer and Other Poems* (1905), is, as Gwyn Jones suggests, certainly not a well-bred and gentlemanly collection of poems. The title poem bewails the ruinous effects of alcoholism, the soul's destroyer, and includes descriptions of urban squalor in the London slums: it is a significant contribution to Davies's tramp-writing. As Normand notes,

> [i]n December 1904 he finally returned to London after five months on the road. [...] In the first week of January 1905 the loan of thirty pounds [borrowed on his future inheritance from his grandmother's estate] came through from Newport. As agreed, Davies would forego all his income during that year. On 12 January Davies arranged for C. A. Watts and Co. of Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, to print two

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[42] Quoted in Normand, *W. H. Davies*, p. 7.
[43] Normand, *W. H. Davies*, p. 7.

hundred and fifty copies of his volume of poems, entitled *The Soul's Destroyer and Other Poems*, at a cost of nineteen pounds.'[44]

'The Soul's Destroyer', and the determination of its author to see it published, earned Davies his breakthrough popularity. As Normand notes, initially, 'reviewers ignored it, and Davies was faced simply with a resounding silence and no income from this book that had cost him so much time and suffering to see published.'[45] Nevertheless, popularity did follow when A. St John Adcock, a journalist for the *Daily Mail*, received a copy of *The Soul's Destroyer* and an accompanying letter and tracked its author down to a London doss-house. Adcock interviewed Davies and published an article in the *Daily Mail* on 22 July 1905 describing Davies's exploits as beggar and tramp: as Caradoc Evans describes the incident, Mr Adcock 'went and interviewed Davies, and wrote a column article for an evening newspaper on how he found a great poet living in a common dosshouse.'[46] The story of the tramp becoming a poet clearly appealed to readers of the *Daily Mail*: there is a sense in which Davies's circumstances as an individual exiled from his Welsh origins and also, as a tramp, from society at large, chime with the popular idea of the romantic artist who, away from the world, is able to stand, stare and be inspired to create.

The poem's origins in a London lodging-house, and its evocation of the life of the poor in the London slums make it an important contribution to the literature of the city. Nevertheless, the poem establishes a contrast between London and Wales. 'The Soul's Destroyer' features several of the recurrent tropes of literary London: the city as a centre of trade, empire, culture, and also as a New Jerusalem. There is also reference to the dark side of the metropolis, to the poverty and the slums, repeated throughout the literature

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[44] Normand, *W. H. Davies*, p. 40.
[45] Normand, *W. H. Davies*, p. 43.
[46] Caradoc Evans, 'Tramp and Poet: How Fame Came to a Newport Man: Adventurous Career', *Western Mail*, 15 January 1916, p. 7.

of the city. Given Davies's status as a tramp-poet, the dramatic opening line of the poem

is a breakthrough, and the poem enacts its opening sentiment, as London catalyses the

emergence of a new voice: the early lines of the poem celebrate the city in soaring blank

verse:

> London! What utterance the mind finds here!
> In its academy of art, more rich
> Than that proud temple which made Ophir poor,
> And the resources famed of Sheba's Queen.
> And its museums, hoarding up the past,
> With their rare bones of animals extinct;
> And woven stuffs embroidered by the East
> Ere other hemispheres could know that Peace
> Had trophies pleasanter to win than War [...][47]

The city is the begetting force behind this poem's creation, behind the emergence of this

poetic voice. It is quite a voice: it is fair to speculate that an unexpected initial

discrepancy might have occurred to its readers between the poem's lowly origins and its

magisterial cadences. There is an appropriateness to the dramatic opening line,

exclaiming the name of the city and hailing the discovery of a poetic voice which has

found its utterance. While the poem later shifts its focus from London back to a Wales

associated with youth and adolescence, it is the city which is the begetting force that gives

momentum to the poem. It is London which engenders the discovery of the aspiring

writer's voice, and which makes possible a new Welsh (or London-Welsh) poetic. The

blank verse, with its references to the Queen of Sheba and the wealthy biblical region of

Ophir, is almost Miltonic. As with Dickens's *Bleak House* – also an influence on the early

work of Caradoc Evans – the name of the city is the first, arresting word confronting the

reader.[48] The iambic pentameter of Davies's blank verse suggests that the opening section

of 'The Soul's Destroyer' is placing itself in a poetic tradition of writing about London.

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[47] W. H. Davies, 'The Soul's Destroyer', in *Collected Poems of W. H. Davies*, pp. 41-52 (p. 41).

[48] Tony Conran has identified a 'sub-Dickensian sentimentality' in 'The Soul's Destroyer' which enabled Davies to '*justify* the sort of poetry he wants to write – full of ambition to get himself out of the human dustbin he was in, as well as nostalgia for his childhood and delight in the countryside.' See Tony Conran, *Frontiers in Anglo-Welsh Poetry* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), pp. 14-15.

For example, as a long poem, in blank verse, encompassing the city's majesty and squalor, 'The Soul's Destroyer' might be compared to John Gay's *Trivia; or, The Art of Walking the Streets of London* (1716). Gay is an important point of comparison to Davies's work: Davies wrote a libretto, *True Travellers: The Tramp's Opera*, in 1923 based on his own experiences and inspired by a recent production of Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* and its sequel, *Polly*, in London's Hammersmith Lyric Theatre.[49]

The imagery of the opening lines of 'The Soul's Destroyer' link it also to William Wordsworth's famous sonnet, 'Composed upon Westminster Bridge', an aubade of sorts which describes London early on the morning of 3 September 1802:

> Earth hath not anything to show more fair:
> Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
> A sight so touching in its majesty:
> This City now doth, like a garment, wear
> The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
> Ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples lie
> Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
> All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.[50]

Davies, like Wordsworth, refers to the city's temples among other buildings of culture and learning. Similarly, the arresting effect of the city on the speakers of both poems becomes clear: London gives utterance in 'The Soul's Destroyer', and in Wordsworth's sonnet touches the soul of the observer with its majesty. The iambic pentameter of both texts endows the city with grandeur and magnificence. Surprisingly for two poems which deal ostensibly with the city, 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge' and 'The Soul's Destroyer' both indicate an awareness of the contrast between the country and the city. Wordsworth's sonnet remarks that 'Never did sun more beautifully steep/In his first

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[49] Normand notes that 'the subtle tones and points of view of his [i.e. Davies's] prose accounts of tramping were unsuited to a theatrical form like Gay's', though the 'dud libretto' did eventually make it into print thanks to drawings and illustrations by William Nicholson, making it 'one of Davies's most handsome books'. See Normand, *W. H. Davies*, p. 141.

[50] William Wordsworth, 'Lines Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802', in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. by M. H. Abrams and others, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London and New York: Norton, 1993), I, 198.

splendour, valley, rock, or hill;/Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!'[51] 'The Soul's

Destroyer', by the same token, contrasts city and country:

> Now, one who lives for long in London town
> Doth feel his love divided 'tween the two –
> A city's noise and Nature's quiet call:
> His heart is as a mother's, that can hear
> Voices of absent children o'er the sea
> Calling to her, and children's words at home.[52]

Wordsworth and Davies, both known predominantly as poets of nature, nevertheless

suggest an awareness of a dichotomy between the rural and the urban. Indeed, Davies's

lines suggest that the tension between country and city manifests itself as a division of

the self. The poem reveals that the contrast with the country is an important element of

urban consciousness: the speaker suggests that 'one who lives for long in London town'

is able to recall the pleasant life of the country. Indeed, this city-dweller is living 'Now' in

the city: the urban scene is modern and modern-day, while the implied contrast with the

country is based on an association with the past – from London, Nature's call is like the

call of a lost child, a lost childhood. The suggestion that the city dweller is not a native of

London can be historicised, not merely by Davies's own biography. Jerry White notes

that in 1901, 1.3 million Londoners were born in Scotland, Wales and England outside

London, compared with 750,000 in 1851.[53] Given the urbanisation of the period it is

likely that rural life, and 'Nature's quiet call', was an actual memory shared by Londoners

– including the London Welsh.

Another detail in 'The Soul's Destroyer' which can be linked to urban constructions of

the country comes later in the poem:

> E'en when old Thames rolls in his fog, and men

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[51] Wordsworth, 'Lines Composed Upon Westminster Bridge', p. 198.
[52] Davies, 'The Soul's Destroyer', p. 42.
[53] Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century: A Human Awful Wonder of God* (London: Vintage, 2008), pp. 101-102.

> Are lost, and only blind men know their way;
> When Morning borrows of the Evening's lamps,
> Or when bewildered millions battle home
> With stifled throats, and eyes that burn with pain
> Still there are lovers faithful to such moods.[54]

Considering Davies's work's insistent concern with deconstructing boundaries of class and location, there is an appropriate liminality about the image of the fog over the Thames and the city of London. This particular passage of the poem is characterised by an overturning of natural distinctions, suggesting that life in the city is governed by different rules and forces from life in the country. Further to the indeterminacy which is created by the fog on the Thames, the poem overturns the difference between night and day, with Morning borrowing the artificial light of the Evening. City life alters the human condition: those regarded as having a disability under previous circumstances, the blind, are now the only people able to navigate their way around the city; perfect vision, in the city, will only cause a person to be lost. There is a chaos to the city which leaves millions of commuters 'bewildered', having to battle home. Indeed, urban life in some senses constitutes a physical attack on the body, impeding vision and breathing: the foggy miasma of the city assaults its inhabitants violently. The 'stifled throats' of the masses recalls the advertisement in the *London Kelt* for the Welsh cough mixture. Here again, the city inhibits respiration and, by extension, the voice. London in 'The Soul's Destroyer' is just that: a metropolis which actively alters body and soul.

Despite this alarming depiction, the speaker of the poem acknowledges that there are still those who are unperturbed, those who, aware of the horrors of the city, 'are still faithful to such moods'. Both country and city at times repel and attract Davies; it is possible to consider his work as an exploration of these influences. 'The Soul's Destroyer' is an early example of a Davies poem laying great importance by the idea of place – London, in this

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[54] Davies, 'The Soul's Destroyer', p. 42.

case. As the poem describes the contrasts between country and city, it is noticeable that it is only the city that is concrete and recognisable in Davies's poetry at this early stage of his career. Numerous London landmarks and districts are named in the poem, anchoring the urban scenes in a familiar, 'authentic' city. The unnamed rural landscape, by contrast, is often described as 'Nature', and can be read in line with other contemporary poets of the Georgian movement, as an attempt to get at an essential quality to nature, an attempt which involves the creation of an almost mythical pastoral idyll rather than a depiction of an actual, real landscape.[55] Nevertheless, Davies's poetry and prose feature several more identifiable locations, and in a curious sense by localising his nature poetry in this way Davies can be said to construct a myth of the Welsh border in much the same way as is the case in his poems about the city.

'The Soul's Destroyer' describes the process by which the persona of the poem is called back home to the 'purer life'.[56] Hung-over and weary, the speaker of the poem awakes after a night of revelry around London – or a dark, drunken, night of the soul – and is compelled to flee the city and return home:

> One morning I awoke with lips gone dry,
> The tongue an aching obstacle to choke the throat,
> And aching body weighted with more heads
> Than Pluto's dog; the features hard and set,
> As though encased in a plaster cast;
> With limbs all sore through falling here and there
> To drink the various ales the Borough kept
> From London Bridge to Newington, and streets
> Adjoining, alleys, lanes obscure from them,
> Then thought of home and of the purer life [...]
> I still had vision clear of Nature's face,
> Though muddled in my senses to the ways

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[55] Significantly, however, it is a Welsh location where the Cymry toil in coal mines. Tony Conran suggests that the speaker of 'The Soul's Destroyer' returns to the 'half-country, half-town around Newport'. See Conran, *Frontiers in Anglo-Welsh Poetry*, p. 14. The speaker confesses to six days' travel before arriving home from London, which, at just over twenty miles a day, would cover the distance between London and Newport.

[56] Davies, 'The Soul's Destroyer', p. 44.

And doings of the days and nights before.[57]

The down-at-heel figure of the poem, exhausted by the unfixed, polluted, nature of life in the city and its labyrinthine network of streets and alleys, is drawn home from the city to the country. From the confusion and chaos of the exile's city life, home, and Nature (capitalised so as to suggest an essentialised, Edenic quality) is envisaged very clearly. Much of the London-based constructions of Wales operate using this distinction: Wales is vividly imagined from the exile's point of view. Of the four discussed in this thesis, Davies, appropriately for a tramp poet, is the writer who describes in most detail the physical journeying between London and Wales. A passage from 'The Soul's Destroyer' demonstrates this:

> As with a shipwrecked seaman cast ashore,
> And carried to a land's interior
> By the rude natives, there to work and slave
> Quarries and mines of their barbaric king;
> Who after years escapes his servitude
> To wander lost, at last to see before
> Him mountains which he climbs to see beyond,
> When on their top he stands - beholds the sea
> And, wonders more, a fleet of friendly flags
> Lying at anchor for his signalling -
> Such joy a hundred times a day was mine
> To see at every bend of the road the face
> Of Nature different.[58]

By this account London is compared with a desert island where the shipwrecked figure is interpellated to work and slave by the 'rude natives', presumably Londoners. It is a curious colonial image which recasts the implicit imperialist politics underlying the lines at the beginning of the poem praising London's 'museums, hoarding up the past/With their rare bones of animals extinct;/And woven stuffs embroidered by the East/Ere other hemispheres could know that Peace/Had trophies pleasanter to win than War'.[59] Instead of being lost in the labyrinthine city, the journey offers possibilities of being lost

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[57] Davies, 'The Soul's Destroyer', p. 44.
[58] Davies, 'The Soul's Destroyer', pp. 45-46.
[59] Davies, 'The Soul's Destroyer', p. 41.

in a more liberating sense, of being free from the captivity of the city. After six days'

travelling it is revealed that Wales is the destination, and especially an industrial Wales

'Where toil the Cymry deep in sunless pits,/And emptying all their hills to warm the

world.'[60] Davies's identification with 'the Cymry' is significant: 'Cymry' is the Welsh word

for the Welsh people (while 'Cymru' is the Welsh word for Wales), and Davies, who did

not speak Welsh, makes a deliberate connection with a native Welsh (and Welsh-speaking)

tradition.

The linking of the industrial settlements of south-east Wales with an older native Welsh

tradition is significant. Davies, like his fellow son of Gwent Machen, writes of the county

of 'Gwent', as opposed to Monmouthshire, which was the official contemporary

administrative name for the county: 'Gwent' seems to be a deliberate archaism, invoking

the name for the medieval kingdom of south-east Wales, and so rejecting British

governmental designation.[61] The mythologized name suggests that Wales, as viewed from

London, Wales is conceived of in romanticised and historicised terms, becoming a

location where time is as important as space. It is a residual influence, drawn from the

past but, crucially, still active in Davies's (and Machen's) imagination. Reclaiming an

industrialised and increasingly Anglicised area of Wales on behalf of an indigenous social

and linguistic culture is an important detail in the context of Welsh politics at the time of

Davies's writing. As discussed with reference to Ernest Rhys, the aspirations of the *Cymru*

Fydd/Young Wales movement (itself, like Davies, drawing much of its momentum from

London) collapsed ignominiously at a meeting in Davies's home town, Newport, in

January 1896. Lloyd George, leader of the *Cymru Fydd* movement, was shouted down by

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[60] Davies, 'The Soul's Destroyer', p. 48.

[61] As Katie Gramich notes, '[b]oth [Arthur] Machen and his successor, the Newport-born poet W. H. Davies, tellingly resurrect the ancient Welsh name of "Gwent" for their home territory, long before local governments revived the old names, endowing their native borderlands with a mythic reverberance, somewhat similar to the way in which [Thomas] Hardy resurrected and in a sense recreated the land of "Wessex".' Gramich, 'Those Blue Remembered Hills', p. 145.

the Chairman of the South Wales Liberal Federation, Robert Bird, who told the meeting

that '[t]here are, from Swansea to Newport, thousands upon thousands of Englishmen,

as true Liberals as yourselves [...] who will never submit to the domination of Welsh

ideas.'[62] 'The Soul's Destroyer', in its identification with the Cymry, suggests that 'Welsh

ideas' – or the toil of the Welsh industrial workforce – are overlooked or actively

exploited 'to warm the world'. This is not to argue that Davies was a cultural nationalist

of the *Cymru Fydd* mould (Davies's writing about working-class struggles, like Caradoc

Evans's, lean politically to the left). Nevertheless, 'The Soul's Destroyer' is one of many

examples in Davies's oeuvre of an engagement with a distinct Welsh consciousness. This

hybridity, of an English poetic form and tradition with a Welsh structure of feeling, is

made possible by the London-Welsh context of the work.

The prospect of meeting with a childhood sweetheart motivates the speaker's return to

Wales. She is, confesses the speaker, a woman 'now to another wed,/Whom I had secret

wish to look upon,/With sweet remembrance of our earlier years';[63] that sweetheart, it is

later revealed, is now married to 'one who was my friend'.[64] It is the condition of this

former friend which brings back into focus the theme of the poem:[65] finding the man in a

local pub returns the narrative to the dangers of alcohol, the soul's destroyer:

> He who had wed my love stood shaking there
> While to his lips another held the glass
> Which his own hand lacked power to raise unspilled;
> And there stood he, in manner of a beast
> That's drinking from a trough, but more the greed.
> We greeted as old friends; few moments passed
> When I inquired of her, in casual way,
> On which a fearful change came over him:
> 'Why, she hath filled the house with merry men

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[62] Quoted in John Davies, *A History of Wales* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), p. 466.

[63] Davies, 'The Soul's Destroyer', p. 43.

[64] Davies, 'The Soul's Destroyer', p. 43.

[65] Conran argues that 'The whole poem gravitates towards the final peroration against drink. The theme of the childhood sweetheart revisited seems no more than a device to arrive at it'. See Conran, *Frontiers in Anglo-Welsh Poetry*, p. 15.

> To mock her husband,' he replied, and turned
> His head in fear. And well I knew his thoughts,
> And of such demons in a drunkard's dream,
> The sleepless dream that wearies flesh and brain.
> This curse of drink, in village and in town,
> The curse of nations, their decline and fall,
> Ere they can question purpose of this life;
> And so 'twill be until the mind is reared
> To see the beauty that is in the world,
> Of science, art, and Nature at all times;
> To know that temperance and sobriety
> Is truer joy – e'en though the grave ends all –
> Than an unnatural merriment that brings
> A thousand tortures for its hundred joys.[66]

Such an image of the husband, reduced by alcoholism to a paranoid, pitiful wreck, is invoked to warn that the 'curse of drink' afflicts both the village and the town and, by extension, country and city, London and Wales. This depiction of rural life in Wales certainly has more to it than the mere *hiraeth* identified by Gwyn Jones. In this regard, 'The Soul's Destroyer' can be read alongside texts like Caradoc Evans's *My People* (1915) and *Capel Sion* (1916). More detailed discussion of these stories follows in the next chapter, but, significantly, the discussion of village life 'The Soul's Destroyer' is far from idyllic, and in this regard anticipates the savage satire of the peasantry contained in Evans's later work. The drunk husband's paranoia over his long-suffering wife's actions anticipates some elements of patriarchal tyranny in Evans's stories; yet what is different here is that, though it is clear that the wife has not cuckolded him by bringing 'merry men' to his house, blame is not wholly attributed to the husband. Achsah, terrorised wife of Sadrach Danyrefail in Evans's 'A Father in Sion', is another – admittedly extreme – victim of spousal oppression. Achsah, mother of eight children, is declared mad by her husband and incarcerated in the harness-loft and only let out once a week. Sadrach's motive for his mistreatment of his wife is the pursuit of a new partner; though he is not intoxicated by alcohol like the character from 'The Soul's Destroyer', he is drunk on his

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[66] Davies, 'The Soul's Destroyer', p. 49.

own authority as a senior figure in the chapel. Though there are differences, both texts

depict domestic spaces of tyranny brought about by the skewed outlook of the patriarch.

Sadrach Danyrefail of 'A Father in Sion' derives his authority from being in possession of

the language of Nonconformity. 'The Soul's Destroyer' also shows evidence of an

indebtedness to Nonconformity. Tony Conran has argued that at the time of writing

'The Soul's Destroyer', early in Davies's career, '[t]he sermon is clearly a dominant

form'.[67] Temperance, the antidote to the soul's destroyer, was a cause which had a

particular significance in the minds of working-class Welshmen like Davies. John Davies

notes that the 1881 Welsh Sunday Closing Act is an important legislative landmark in

that it was one of only a few examples of laws passed in Westminster with a specifically

Welsh remit.[68] Davies argues that 'the act of 1881 was largely negative in its results' for

several reasons which come to bear on 'The Soul's Destroyer': its effect on drunkenness

on the Sabbath was questionable; it precipitated the emergence of unregulated clubs; it

was aimed at the working-class pub-drinkers, rather than those of the middle class, who

mostly 'imbibed at home'.[69] Furthermore, '[t]he measure fostered hypocritical behaviour

– the Welsh Pharisaism which the *Western Mail* took such delight in unmasking':

ultimately, the act 'connected Welshness with negativity. In the twentieth century, when

the appeal of teetotalism and Sabbatarianism had declined, this symbol of specifically

Welsh legislation came to be unacceptable to the majority of the people of Wales'.[70] The

cadences of the iambic pentameter decrying the evils of alcohol reverberate with

preacherly indignation:

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[67] Conran, *Frontiers in Anglo-Welsh Poetry*, p. 15. Conran reads Davies's 1907 collection, *New Poems*, through the categories of the Welsh *beirdd gwlad*, or folk poets, arguing that Davies's work fits in with templates including *cerddi natur* (nature poems), *cerddi caru* (love poems), *cerddi cwrw* (beer poems), *cerddi moesol* (moral poems) and *cerddi coffa* (poems of memorial to the dead). See Conran, *The Cost of Strangeness: Essays on the English Poets of Wales* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1982), pp. 28-35. Welsh Nonconformity is not the only residual ideology influencing Davies's early twentieth-century poetic.
[68] Davies, *A History of Wales*, p. 446.
[69] Davies, *A History of Wales*, p. 446.
[70] Davies, *A History of Wales*, pp. 446-7.

> This curse of drink, in village and in town,
> The curse of nations, their decline and fall,
> Ere they can question purpose of this life;
> And so 'twill be until the mind is reared
> To see the beauty that is in the world[.][71]

Davies, argues Conran of 'The Soul's Destroyer', is surely 'acting the popular preacher'.[72]

Conran enumerates the various 'tricks of the trade' appropriated by Davies from preachers' oratory: tone and changes of tone, rhetorical questions and imagery are all analogous with the language of Nonconformity. The concluding lines of the poem anticipate 'an eternity of bliss with Him' and, giving thanks for God's mercy, ponder 'who can know the thoughts of him in hell,/Who sacrificed eternity of joy/To gratify this little life on earth!'[73] The speaker of Davies's poem, like Davies himself, returns to the rhetoric of the Nonconformist pulpit which carries a particular Welsh inflection: the effects of alcohol on the 'decline and fall of nations' suggests a link between social, religious, and national politics.

Much of the impact of Evans's *My People* was to debunk the myth (or, by some, the self-perception) of Wales as a godly nation of chosen people. Conran argues that the preacherly conclusion of Davies's poem is unironic, linking it to the Welsh nineteenth-century long, free-metre *pryddest*. Nevertheless, it is not solely a religious poem: the speaker laments that drink will remain a curse on humanity until humanity can appreciate the 'beauty that is in the world', namely, '[o]f science, art and Nature at all times'.[74] These are secular concerns, which are enough in themselves to warrant a life of sobriety, with no need of a religious motive. As well as its religious aspect, the poem evokes the struggle of the lives of the poor, in both the city slums and rural villages, as well as the exploitation of the Welsh workers at the hands of the industrialists. It is possible that

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[71] Davies, 'The Soul's Destroyer', p. 49.
[72] Conran, *Frontiers in Anglo-Welsh Poetry*, p. 15.
[73] Davies, 'The Soul's Destroyer', p. 52.
[74] Davies, 'The Soul's Destroyer', p. 49.

Davies's appropriation of the language of Nonconformity is a technique which cuts two ways: one reading could argue that it facilitates the Miltonic blank verse, while another might argue that the blank verse renders the Nonconformist voice pompous or bombastic.

There are plenty of other examples in Davies's work of dissatisfaction with the agents of religion, if not religion itself. Davies's super-tramp is scathing in his criticism of the hypocritical and oppressive Salvation Army (discussed below). Meanwhile, the poem 'Christ, the Man' professes admiration for Jesus's social conscience rather than his divine status:

> Lord, I say nothing; I profess
> No faith in thee nor Christ thy Son:
> Yet no man ever heard me mock
> A true believing one.
>
> If knowledge is not great enough
> To give a man believing power,
> Lord, he must wait in thy great hand
> Till revelation's hour.
>
> Meanwhile he'll follow Christ, the man
> In that humanity he taught,
> Which to the poor and the oppressed
> Gives its best time and thought.[75]

The paradox of the first stanza suggests faith in the existence of its addressee in the very act of denying his existence: this might stand as indicative of Davies's work's complex negotiations with Nonconformity. Nonconformity in Davies's work might be read in terms of Raymond Williams's residual ideologies: as in the case of both the speaker of 'The Soul's Destroyer' and the super-tramp (and/or Davies himself), Nonconformity is an ideology formed in the past which still exercises its influence in the present. The secular thrust of 'Christ, the Man' cannot detach itself from religious imagery: the poem

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[75] W. H. Davies, 'Christ, the Man', in *Collected Poems of W. H. Davies*, p. 145.

endorses a socialist politics and disavows faith in the Christian God and his Son; nevertheless, there is – according to the poem – no better socialist than Jesus.

Davies's poetry regularly switches affiliation between the country and the city. Just as country and city are juxtaposed in the verse, so the poems themselves – one celebrating nature, the other celebrating the city – are juxtaposed on the pages of Davies's collections. It becomes clear that Davies's is not a poetic of country and/or city, but a poetic of the interchange between the two. A striking example of this comes in the juxtaposition between the poems 'City and Country' and 'A Merry Hour' in Davies's 1908 collection *Nature Poems and Others*. 'City and Country' is another poem which draws upon familiar treatments of the rural and the urban in literature: the speaker of the poem, presumably male, addresses another subject, possibly a sweetheart, contrasting city and country. The city is viewed as a dark, unhealthy place with 'dull eyes', pale cheeks, 'black spit' and 'stale' breath, while the country is a place or 'red cheeks', bright eyes, 'sweet breath' whose 'spit is white'[76].

It is unclear who the subject, the 'thee' of this poem is; here again there is a sense in which the appeal of the city prevails despite its unpleasant qualities. The detrimental physical effects of city living – again featuring the eyes, as well as the skin and breath – do not completely discourage. Compared with this there is a rustic quality to the contrasting description of the country, comprising of bright eyes and ruddy cheeks. The milky spit may carry an echo of a biblical reference to a land of milk and honey, a place of sustenance and maternal nourishment. This is a common image in representations of Wales in the period, an image scathingly satirised by Evans with the publication of *My People* in 1915. The country is, despite everything, the choice of the poem's speaker.

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[76] W. H. Davies, 'City and Country', in W. H. Davies, *Selected Poems*, ed. by Jonathan Barker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 31.

'Now' is another poem which defamiliarises these distinctions:

> When I was in yon town, and had
>   Stones all round me, hard and cold,
> My flesh was firm, my sight was keen,
>   And still I felt my heart grow old.
>
> But now, with this green world around,
>   By my great love for it! I swear,
> Though my flesh shrink, and my sight fail,
>   My heart will not grow old with care.[77]

Strangely, this poem seems to overturn the reader's expectation that the country should be depicted as the health-giving entity; rather, it is in the town that the flesh is firm and the sight keen. The latter detail, regarding the keen sight of the speaker of the poem is at odds with the previous associations in Davies's work between the city and vision, which is usually detrimental; as such, 'Now' further problematizes Davies's approach to the country, for in this poem it is a place where sight might fail. Likewise, the opening lines of 'The Soul's Destroyer' had extolled the wonder of the capital city as a place of stimulation and excitement, yet, by 'Now', the metropolis is somewhere where the heart grows old. It is the 'green world around' which is connected with physical deformity and disability, the shrinking of the flesh and the failure of sight. Connecting the city with youth and the country with age can be read as another way in which Davies's poetry alternates between country and city: the energy of the city possibly relating to the pursuit of a career there followed by retirement in the country. Once again, it is the interchange between the two which is the driving force of the poem. The poem proceeds with a further four stanzas in praise of nature, but particularly significant is the penultimate stanza, in which the speaker claims that, in the country

> I see not now the great coke fire
>   With ten men seated there, or more,
> Like frogs on logs; and one man fall
>   Dying across the boarded floor.[78]

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[77] W. H. Davies, 'Now', in *Selected Poems*, pp. 40-1.
[78] Davies, 'Now', p.41.

The first line of this statement is oxymoronic. The speaker, 'now', must presumably see the 'great coke fire' and the one dying and ten seated men: these images are invoked in the very act of denying them. This paradoxical statement recalls the words of Malcolm Bradbury, quoted earlier, regarding 'that most enduring of literary modes, pastoral, which can be a critique of the city or a simple transcendence of it'.[79] The speaker of the poem, by seeking to transcend the city ('I see not now'), cannot but invoke and describe it. Similarly, Lucian Taylor, protagonist of Arthur Machen's *The Hill of Dreams* is immediately struck, in the opening sentence of the novel, by a glow in the sky as if great furnace doors were opened':[80] industrialism inflects each writer's perception of nature. In the light of Bradbury's brief description of the pastoral, 'Now' is a poem which implies that the city, by the early-twentieth century at least, is not an entity which can be transcended; by now, it is a pervasive influence on the consciousness of country- and city-dwellers alike.

A poem from the 1911 collection, *Songs of Joy and Others*, situates this preoccupation in a distinctly Welsh setting, namely rural Gwent, close to the river Severn. The poem 'Days that have Been' features an enumeration of identifiable places in the area; unsurprisingly, as contrasted with London, this Welsh landscape is distinctly rural. Yet also present, from the opening stanza of the poem, is a focus on the border, and a musing on the nature of life in a border country:

> Can I forget the sweet days that have been,
>   When poetry first began to warm my blood;
> When from the hills of Gwent I saw the earth
>   Burned into two by Severn's silver flood[.][81]

There is no direct contrast in this poem between rural Gwent and a more urban location,

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[79] Bradbury, 'The Cities of Modernism', p. 97.
[80] Arthur Machen, *The Hill of Dreams* (Aberteifi: Parthian/Library of Wales, 2010), p. 1.
[81] W. H. Davies, 'Days that have Been', in *Collected Poems of W. H. Davies*, pp. 142-43 (p. 142).

but implicit from its nostalgic title onwards is a yearning for a golden past in a rural area. Here again, this rural idyll and these halcyon days are connected with the development of voice and a means of expression; this is the time and place when poetry warms the speaker's blood. Even in this initial stanza, there is a gesture towards the complex nature of a border existence; images of certainty, such as hills, Gwent, the earth, are interspersed by language of surprising violence – the landscape is 'burned' by the river Severn's 'flood'. Furthermore, the scene is one in which further highlights the duality often present in Davies's work; the river burns the area 'into two', and this is an image of division which is characteristic of border writing.[82] Here again, what may seem to be a unified, rural landscape is defamiliarised, turned into a border-zone where the landscape, and man's name for the landscape is split into two. There is a sense in which the speaker of the poem, having been brought up in this border area back in the 'days that have been' is always aware of the split nature of the border existence: this is a landscape which is always forced to look reflexively at itself by virtue of its juxtaposition with a different culture, in this case a different nation.

The Welsh contexts of Davies's poetry complicate the impression of him as a Georgian poet. Yet another significant feature of his work is its contribution to Welsh writing in English, a field which at the turn of the twentieth century may be said to be in its infancy. Even at this early stage, before the publication of Caradoc Evans' *My People*, Davies's use of a Welsh landscape signifies a difference: as 'Days that have Been' can be seen to suggest, this difference is one not only of landscape, but of actual lived experience. It represents a departure from the often unspecified natural location – and by extension the all-encompassing and effacing term 'Nature' so often invoked by the Georgian poets.

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[82] Gramich has traced the gendered dimension of the trope of the river in men's writing of the Welsh border, noting that as far back as in the work of Daniel Defoe 'the relationship between Wales and England at the border [...is] one of sexual violence, either violent or intimate, but in both cases fruitful'. See Gramich, 'Those Blue Remembered Hills', p. 144.

Conran, as suggested earlier, has read Davies's *New Poems* (1907) by attributing each of its

poems into categories of poetry written by nineteenth-century Welsh-language *beirdd*

gwlad, or folk poets, citing similarities of approach and attitude.[83] For a poet who begins

his career in Miltonic blank verse, and proceeds to become affiliated with Georgian

poetry, Davies's secret affinity with Welsh-language poetry is an unexpected surprise.

The repeated references to the duality of border experience, and the preoccupation with

the crossing of borders suggests again that exile, and an interface between the condition

of home and exile, are central components in Davies's work. Further to this, Davies's

work, perhaps due to his position as a London Welshman at the height of his poetic

career, reflects and, in some cases, anticipates some of the other major themes and

tendencies which were to emerge in the early period of Welsh writing in English in the

twentieth century.

The second stanza of 'Days that have Been', for example, can be linked directly with the

work of Arthur Machen due to its reference to the 'old castle near Caerleon'; the Roman

fort at Caerleon – the centre of the ancient Kingdom of Gwent – is what so fascinated

Machen. Here, as in Machen, there is a sense that the poem is reflecting on the

relationship between humanity and the landscape: the fact that the castle stands

impassively 'While at its side the Usk went softly by'. Ernest Rhys also writes with

wonder about Caerleon Castle, recalling how he and is wife

> dimly made out the south-east side of the town what we took for the mound of the
> Castle, where the Norman keep had stood, and it recalled how the boy-king Arthur
> came out of his tower, and "under his gown a jesseraunt of double mail"; [and]
> when King Lot had laughed at him and called Merlin a witch.[84]

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[83] Describing W. Rhys Nicholas's analysis of the work of the Welsh-language poet Cerngoch's, Conran borrows the *schema* applied to the Welsh-language folk poet and applies it to Davies's *New Poems*. To his evident satisfaction, 'quite remarkably, the *schema* – allowing for the author's circumstances and the fact that he wrote in English – fitted like a glove.' See Conran, *The Cost of Strangeness*, pp. 24-35 (p. 27).

[84] Ernest Rhys, *The South Wales Coast from Chepstow to Aberystwyth* (London and Leipsic: T. Fisher Unwin, 1911), p. 46. Rhys's own quotation comes from Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*. See Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur: The Winchester Manuscript*, ed. by Helen Cooper (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 13.

In his chapter on Caerleon Rhys also mentions the remains of the Roman garrison there, and also advises a visit to the Hanbury Arms, where Alfred, Lord Tennyson wrote part of Idylls of the King.[85] Davies, Machen and Rhys are each struck by the overlayering of history in this one location, both in terms of the historical settlements of the Celts, Romans and Normans, and also in terms of the literary inheritance, from Arthurian legend up to Tennyson in the nineteenth century (and, of course, their own writings). It is no coincidence that in the works of Davies and Machen, (the two Gwent men), and Ernest Rhys, each of whom at various stages of their career found themselves in literary London, exile and the border go hand in hand: the hybrid identity of the exiled writer is particularly attuned to the split condition of the border country.

As has been suggested in other poems of Davies's, there is a strong sense in which his work, by means of his exiled position in London and his border-country upbringing in Gwent, divides not only landscapes but individual experience itself. With reference to the work of Yeats, Daniel Williams has noted how

> the concept of the bifurcated self is a common theme in the literature of the period, from Stevenson's Jekyll and Hyde doppelgänger, to the tension between the poles of the civilised and primitive worlds in Conrad's novels, to the notion of African-American "double-consciousness" explored in the writings of W. E. B. Du Bois.[86]

In the particular London-Welsh context this description of the period's split consciousness could also incorporate Machen's Stevensonian literary experiments with the split self and Davies's contrast between country and city within an individual consciousness. A poem of Davies's 1913 collection, Foliage: Various Poems, 'The Two Lives', demonstrates this. The opening stanza identifies the theme of the poem, once again extolling the virtues of rural life, yet also aware of the lure of the city. Indeed, 'The

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[85] Rhys, chapter four of The South Wales Coast from Chepstow to Aberystwyth (pp. 45-53), and, for the reference to the Hanbury Arms, p. 53.

[86] Daniel G. Williams, Ethnicity and Cultural Authority: From Arnold to Du Bois (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p.162.

Two Lives' suggests that the speaker of the poem may be well aware of the preferability of the country over city, represented in the poem as 'Nature' and 'Pleasure', yet he can still not avoid the lure of the latter. These are the opening and concluding stanzas:

> Now how could I, with gold to spare,
>   Who know the harlot's arms, and wine,
> Sit in this green field all alone,
>   If Nature was not truly mine?[...]

> Such, Nature, is thy charm and power –
>   Since I have made the Muse my wife –
> To keep me from the harlot's arms
>   And save me from a drunkard's life.[87]

Nature is all very well – indeed, it seems to be the most desirable place to be – but the speaker's appreciation of nature is one which is informed by the experience of the city; it is a pleasure which is the product of the difference between the urban condition and the rural. In order that Nature be 'truly' his, the speaker must first experience the 'harlot's arms', 'the drunkard's life' and, most interestingly, achieve financial security and gold enough to spare. Following the logic of this poem to a fuller conclusion, it could be argued that Nature and rural life are secondary to the urban experience: it is in the city where the speaker has presumably earned his pile of gold, and it is this which fully enables him to enjoy nature's bounty. The joys of the natural world are best experienced when there is money in the bank. Indeed, it is only when there is enough money in the bank, earned in the city, that the speaker is able to relocate to the country and condemn that same materialistic, pleasure-seeking culture. Ernest Rhys's own experience, in attempting (and ultimately failing) to relocate from London to Gaenen Hir and still continue with a literary career, bears this out.[88] As Terry Eagleton remarks, '[t]he contrast between the city and the country is not just one between smoke and sheep'.[89] For Davies, Rhys, Machen and Evans, the contrast between rural Wales and the London metropolis

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[87] W. H. Davies, 'The Two Lives', in *Collected Poems of W. H. Davies*, p. 183.

[88] After returning to London, '[p]lenty of commissions for articles came in' and London 'had us in its grip'. See Ernest Rhys, *Everyman Remembers* (London: Dent, 1940), p. 141.

[89] Terry Eagleton, *The English Novel: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p. 143.

is more than a literary trope: is a driving influence on both the work and the means of its production. London in the case of each writer represents a certain contact with modernity: it is in the city that each is able to forge a career as man of letters. Yet these writers' exile, and experience of modernity, while facilitating the development of a literary voice, also provides them with the opportunity to engage with the residual, pastoral, Welsh backgrounds (however differently imagined) from which they had come. The modern city affords the opportunity to recast residual Welsh ideologies or structures – including Nonconformity, the peasantry, rural life, 'Celtic' identity and Welsh language and culture – in a variety of new emergent modes.

The tension between residual and emergent ideologies is often the driving force behind the writing, a feature which critics have identified as a recurring and important feature of writing of the turn of the twentieth century in its engagement with modernity. Malcolm Bradbury comments on the influence of the city on Modernist writing by saying that

> Writers and intellectuals have long abhorred the city: the dream of escape from its vice, its immediacy, its sprawl, its pace, its very model of man has been the basis of a profound cultural dissent, evident in that most enduring of literary modes, pastoral, which can be a critique of the city or a simple transcendence of it…Yet writers and intellectuals have, after all, constantly gone there, as on some essential quest into art, experience, modern history, and the fullest realization of their artistic potential. The pull and push of the city, its attraction and repulsion, have provided themes and attitudes that run deep in literature, where the city has become metaphor rather than place.[90]

Bradbury mentions the attraction and repulsion of the city. A closer look at the context of Georgian poetry shows that the representation of the countryside often bears the metropolitan stamp – even as it scorns the city. Yet Bradbury is also aware that, however abhorred by these writers, the city retains its influence over them: 'writers and intellectuals have always gone there', even if only to decry it. *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, like 'The Soul's Destroyer', demonstrates the co-dependence of the home and

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[90] Bradbury, 'The Cities of Modernism', p. 97.

exile. Davies's super-tramp describes what Bradbury calls the pull and push of the city:

> In two or three days I was again back on the outskirts of London, walking around it in a circle; sometimes ten miles from its mighty heart, or as far distant as twenty miles; but without courage to approach nearer, or break away from it altogether.[91]

Here the city keeps Davies in some gravitational pull around it, to the point where the super-tramp himself can do nothing but remain in the orbit of the great Metropolis, like a satellite. It is from the city's streets and doss-houses that Davies would find inspiration for 'The Soul's Destroyer' and *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*: yet, also, the city is the location from which a Welsh rural world is imagined. As the super-tramp par excellence, though, there is a material basis to his fascination with the city:

> [t]his was a voyage of some delight, both aboard and ashore. Having been in London before, I knew what enjoyment could be had with but little expense – of museums, parks, gardens, picture galleries, etc.[92]

Here is London as one of the world's great cities, a city of culture and refinement. As a tramp, however, Davies's attraction to the city, and the prospect of visiting its landmarks and attractions, has an economic basis: these are places which can be visited, and in which the time can be passed unobjectionably, without spending any money. Later, Davies imagines that 'A far different Klondyke had opened up before my eyes, which corresponded with the dreams of my youth. I pictured myself returning home, not with gold nuggets from the far West, but with literary fame, wrested from no less a place than the mighty London.'[93] London is the location which makes literary fame possible, it seems, but that literary work, and the fame it engenders, always seems bound to home.

Having come into his grandmother's legacy, Davies's super-tramp is able to shift his focus from physical to mental exertion, stating: 'determined that as my body had failed, my brains should now have the chance they had longed for, when the spirit had been

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[91] W. H. Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968), p. 228.
[92] Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, pp. 109-10.
[93] Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, p. 184.

bullied into submission by the body's activity'.[94] It is now in London that the Welsh poet's mind can find utterance.

Endowed with 'its own eyes and ears', the mind is given this kind of freedom in a famous poem contrasting London and Wales, 'The Mind's Liberty', from Davies's 1914 collection, *The Bird of Paradise and Other Poems*:

> The mind, with its own eyes and ears,
>   May for these others have no care;
> No matter where this body is,
>   The mind is free to go elsewhere.
> My mind can be a sailor, when
>   This body's still confined to land;
> And turn these mortals into trees,
>   That walk in Fleet Street or the Strand.
>
> So, when I'm passing Charing Cross,
>   Where porters work both night and day,
> I ofttimes hear sweet Malpas Brook,
>   That flows thrice fifty miles away.
> And when I'm passing near St. Paul's,
>   I see, beyond the dome and crowd,
> Twm Barlum, that green pap in Gwent,
>   With its dark nipple in a cloud.[95]

The opening four lines of the poem anatomise the speaker; while the body remains anchored in the city, the mind is given license to roam beyond those emblems of urban life, the dome and crowd, back to the Welsh border country. This poem is peculiar in that it troubles the distinctions of town and country to an even greater extent than most of Davies's poetry. Here, the speaker's mind has the power and freedom to turn the London pedestrians into trees: the implication is that, though the countryside may be more peaceful and tranquil, these qualities are, in fact, stationary and static.[96] It may be

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[94] Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, p. 183.

[95] W. H. Davies, 'The Mind's Liberty', in *Collected Poems of W. H. Davies*, p. 205.

[96] This description is also possibly a reference to the New Testament, Mark 8:24: 23-25: '23And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he say ought. 24And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. 25After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.' This is the story of the blind man at Bethsaida. Appropriately, the reference to the men walking as trees occurs when the man's sight is partially restored: Davies's poetry is preoccupied with the

desirable to have the time and opportunity to stand in the field, but it is one not afforded

to city-dwellers, who are merely 'passing' by and through this urban architecture; instead,

the speaker's mind imagines itself 'a sailor', unfixed, without roots, always on the move.

The speaker is numbered among these city-dwellers in the poem, remarking that passing

by Charing Cross recalls his fondness for Malpas Brook. Appropriately, those porters at

Charing Cross station inhabit both night and day. The metaphor which concludes the

poem, associating the dome of St Paul's Cathedral with the Twyn Barlwm mountain in

Gwent is characteristic of Davies's poetic, and its fascination with the way in which

home and exile, country and city, Wales and London, overlap. St Paul's Cathedral

dominates the London skyline in the same way as Twyn Barlwm dominates the landscape

of Gwent. It is, however, the image of Twyn Barlwm (what was for Machen a hill of

dreams), with 'its dark nipple in a cloud', which gives imaginative sustenance to the mind.

In conjuring the fecundity of the country from the immediacy of the modern city, 'The

Mind's Liberty' might claim kindred with Yeats's 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree', from his

1893 collection, *The Rose*:

> I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
> And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
> Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
> And live alone in the bee-loud glade.
>
> And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
> Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
> There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
> And evening full of the linnet's wings.
>
> I will arise and go now, for always night and day
> I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
> While I stand upon the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
> I hear it in the deep heart's core.[97]

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liminal spaces between binary oppositions, and the man at Bethsaida sees men 'as trees, walking' when his sight is in the liminal space between blindness and restored vision.

[97] W. B. Yeats, 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree', in *The Poems*, ed. by Daniel Albright (London: Dent, 1990), p. 60.

Yeats's poem constructs a rural Ireland in the speaker's 'deep heart's core' imagined from

the city's roadways and pavements. As with Davies's 'The Mind's Liberty', the rural idyll

is imagined from the city and as an antidote to the city's oppressiveness. As Daniel

Williams points out, however, '[t]o read [...] 'Lake Isle of Inisfree' [sic] in terms of a

simplistic comparison between an Irish rural society contrasted to the alienations of an

urban, English society is to simplify the tensions between different sorts of allegiances

that Yeats's works embody and explore.[98] The same is true of Davies. Williams observes

that Yeats's alternative to the city is not a longing for the intimate 'face-to-face'

community of Ireland, but for 'a life of Thoreauvian isolation in a hut on the water.'[99]

The speaker of Davies's poem is similarly drawn to the landscape, and not the people or

community, of rural Gwent. Both poems imagine their rural idylls from the city: exile in

London is the catalyst for recalling (and constructing) the lapping of both Malpas Brook

in 'The Mind's Liberty' and the lake on its shore in 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree'. Yet both

poems also stop short of making the return. The ambiguity in the tense of the first line of

Yeats's poem – 'I *will* arise and go *now*' – suggests that this is always a journey to come.

Though it could be argued that the life of the rural peasant is a residual ideology

compared to the dominant ideology of the city and modernity, the return to Innisfree is

always deferred, even in the syntax of the first line of the poem. While considering

himself incarcerated in the city, the persona of 'The Mind's Liberty' does not articulate a

physical desire to return to Gwent; it is, rather, the imagined Gwent which provides his

relief. A significant difference between the two poems, however, is that, while 'The Lake

Isle of Innisfree' juxtaposes the Irish country with the London pavements and roadways,

'The Mind's Liberty' combines the two. Gwent is not merely imagined from the position

of exile, but, rather, is imagined through it. The incessant noise of Charing Cross station

is contrasted with the lapping of Malpas brook. Twyn Barlwm is contrasted with the

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[98] Williams, *Ethnicity and Cultural Authority*, p. 155.
[99] Williams, *Ethnicity and Cultural Authority*, p. 155.

dome of St Paul's Cathedral. Yet, crucially, it is the landscape of the city which triggers the image of home. 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' and 'The Mind's Liberty' are two poems of exile, but each expresses a different kind of exile. Yeats's Ireland is envisaged from the city as a space of complete contrast, a source of relief from the oppressiveness of the city. Davies's Gwent, meanwhile, is imagined through the prism of the city: the topography of London and Gwent become unexpectedly co-dependent, and Davies's vision becomes hybrid. Said argues that among the positive aspects of the exile's condition is a plurality of vision which comes from 'Seeing "the entire world as a foreign land"'.[100] Said describes this plurality of vision as contrapuntal, suggesting that '[f]or an exile, habits of life, expression, or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment. Thus both the new and the old environments are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally.'[101] Yeats's poem is certainly contrapuntal: 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' is presented as a counterpoint to the London streets. 'The Mind's Liberty', however, shows that the exile's voice in always internally riven, and that home and exile each always carries the possibility of the other.

The gendered imagery of 'The Mind's Liberty' reveals much about the construction of the relationship between Wales and London. The speaker is male: the voice imagines being a sailor, and compares Twyn Barlwm to a woman's breast with an image which suggests both the nurturing and also seductive qualities of the Gwent countryside. Gramich is aware of this gendered construction of the Welsh border, noting how in Davies's work – and that of other male writers of the Welsh border – 'nature is conceived of in female terms'.[102] Speaking of 'The Mind's Liberty', Gramich notes that 'Wales is here the lost mother but, simultaneously, an eroticized figure associated with

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[100] Said, 'Reflections on Exile', p. 186.
[101] Said, 'Reflections on Exile', p. 186.
[102] Gramich, 'Those Blue Remembered Hills', p. 146.

sexual desire and longing'.[103] The image of Wales as the mother is, in fact, a familiar trope in London-Welsh writing of this period. The *London Kelt* newspaper, for example, proclaims in its first editorial that

> In this journal from week to week, we hope to have a personal word with you all, and gather together on one homely hearth, the deeds and doings of the children of our land.
> To those in this metropolis we will endeavour to have short bright news from every district in Wales supplied by local correspondents; while the doings within our own circle in London will be chronicled for the information of the 'good old folks back home.'[104]

The London-Welsh are conceived of as children who have flown the nest, and the *London Kelt* seeks to write back to the 'homely hearth' to the 'good old folks back home'. Similarly, 'bright' news from Wales is catalogued for the purposes of enlightening the London Welsh; news about, and from, Wales is an almost maternal source of sustenance to the children in exile. The outlook is remarkably similar to 'The Mind's Liberty': both texts contrast home and exile while also showing the interrelatedness of each and the other. The eroticized image of Twyn Barlwm as a woman's breast indicates both the maternal sustenance and the seductive appeal of home from a position of exile.

Davies and Evans: Towards *My People*

Glyn Jones's *The Dragon has Two Tongues* contains an anecdote relating the last time Jones met Caradoc Evans, at the house of Gwyn Jones in Aberystwyth in 1944. The meeting took place a few months before Evans's death, and Glyn Jones's description of the evening depicts an aged Evans who nevertheless sought to hold court and entertain his audience with tales of his experiences as a writer in London:

> [h]ow Caradoc, in the ten intervening years since my first sight of him, had changed! [...H]is body at sixty-seven was old [...] But the day of this last meeting he set himself out to win us, he used all the Welsh charm and blarney he was master of, he listened with a concentrated pleasure that suggested he wanted to do nothing else, he acted, he told us scandalous tales about the literary eminent and,

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[103] Gramich, 'Those Blue Remembered Hills', p. 146.
[104] 'To our Readers', *London Kelt / Newyddiadur Cymry Llundain*, 12 January 1895, p. 3

mixing in the most comical way the accents of Aberteifi and London clubland, described encounters with Frank Harris, W. H. Davies, Sean O'Casey and others.[105]

It seems significant that Evans, one of the central figures in the establishment of a distinctive body of Welsh writing in the English language, should, in his last months, look back to his time in London and recount his experiences with, among others, Davies. The time of their both being in London, in the early years of the twentieth century, was a period when Welsh writers in the English language were still struggling to find a distinctive voice and position within the literary climate of the time. Evans's early stories are evidence of this, as will be discussed in the next chapter. It is not until 1915, and with the publication of *My People*, that the style and voice with which Evans caused such controversy (and with which he is still associated) emerges. This voice, of course, is one of scathing satire and condemnation for the rural communities of West Wales, the kind in which Evans was brought up. Though the work of Evans and Davies may seem diametrically opposed at first glance, a closer look reveals that there are several key links between the two, both specific and thematic. As we have seen, the two writers knew each other personally. Yet there are more significant similarities between them, common themes which, despite eliciting markedly different responses from each author, can be read in the light of Davies's and Evans's positions as exiled Welshmen, reassessing their view of home through the prism of their expatriation. Each also had an influence on the other's writing and reception. Not only are there important structural links between their writings but each influenced the means of the other's literary production; by extension, both writers between them were engaged in shaping a Welsh structure of feeling in English-language writing.

As two Welsh men living in London from the late-nineteenth century to the early

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[105] Glyn Jones, *The Dragon has Two Tongues: Essays on Anglo-Welsh Writers and Writing*, ed. by Tony Brown (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), p. 75.

decades of the twentieth, both Caradoc Evans and Davies were involved through their

work in a creative re-imagining of Wales from a position of exile in London. Despite

what is on the surface a radically different treatment of subject matter on the part of each

author, the versions of Wales imagined by each bear the hallmarks of their construction

in the metropolis. In the case of Davies, the country is usually a place of tranquillity and

beauty, while Evans takes aim at the hypocrisy and greed of the rural communities. It

could be argued that Davies's work represents a return to the pastoral mode, while

Caradoc Evans's work is aggressively anti-pastoral. Economic necessity and the pressures

of the London-based publishing industry are contributing factors to the work of both

men, regulating both the form and content of their work.

Both writers' London context manifests itself not only in a depiction of urban poverty

but also, as this section will show, in particular images, such as how the neglect and

oppression of women within the family unit is represented through a physical attack on

their bodies: both Davies and Evans use the image of a rat biting the woman's face as

one of ultimate horror.[106] Likewise, there is a scepticism regarding various manifestations

of Christianity in the work of both writers. There are examples to be found in the work

of Davies of a suspicious attitude, if not towards the Christian faith per se, then at least

towards its manifestations within society, be it in the form of chapels, religious leaders or

charitable institutions such as the Salvation Army. The speaker of Davies's poem 'Christ,

the Man', for example, professes to follow Christ as a champion of the 'poor and the

oppressed':[107] in this respect, Davies advocates Christ as one of the original socialists,

bringing into sharper relief the contrast between the figure of Christ and his latter-day

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[106] It is an image which also occurs, famously, in Room 101, in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949): Winston Smith's worst nightmare is to be attacked by rats; when captured by the state police, and threatened with this punishment for his indiscretions, Winston saves himself by begging that the punishment be carried out on his lover, Julia.

[107] Davies, 'Christ, the Man', p. 59.

followers. This kind of socialism can be detected in Evans's work: if nothing else, Evans's fiction depicts the oppression of marginalised figures by a hypocritical patriarchy using the rhetoric of religion and morality but, in reality, concerned with nothing but its own aggrandisement. Evans's scathing portrayal of the 'Respecteds' of the Nonconformist chapel is a more explicit depiction of Davies's implicit condemnation of those individuals responsible for the provision of charity. The impact of these criticisms is to draw attention to the gap between the actions of this religious patriarchy and the principles of the religion it purports to serve.

For both Evans and Davies, the reasons behind their attraction to London were various, but material necessity was an important contributing factor. Evans's writing, fictional and otherwise, makes clear the poverty which blighted the rural communities of West Wales like that in which he himself was raised; his early stories – like Davies's tramp writings – focus on the poverty endured by the London working class. On the face of it, Evans is among those who found themselves in London in search of work and an escape from poverty: London offered the best opportunity for social and personal advancement. Yet Evans's stories, and the distinctive, stylised narrative voice, are features which suggest that it is only in London, and from this exiled perspective, that such a unique voice could be nurtured. Contrastingly, thinking of Davies in London produces images of the man of letters which he became, enjoying something approaching celebrity status in London literary circles. Tony Conran argues that Davies 'learnt to become a successful middle-brow poet' in London (and, incidentally, that his work after adopting this persona 'can safely be ignored').[108] His poems, argues Conran, 'have a kind of obstinate charm about them that can be pleasing in small doses, like a village "character" in high society. W. H.

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[108] Conran, *The Cost of Strangeness*, p. 23.

Davies's status as a "primitive" was carefully, if perhaps unconsciously, cultivated.'[109]

Davies's work indicates that the opportunity for greater financial security is one of the strong attractions London holds for him. An image which links the two different attractions, of increased opportunity for financial security and greater freedom of artistic expression, occurs in Davies's *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*. The chapter entitled 'A Strange Cattleman' tells of Davies's return to London after working on the transatlantic cattle-ships. It is in Baltimore that Davies first becomes aware of the opportunity to set sail for London and its museums, parks, gardens, and picture galleries.[110]

This passage reprises Davies's fascination with the contrast between country and city. The parks and gardens recall the poem 'The Hill-side Park', a poem which discusses the ways in which metropolitan tastes are projected onto natural landscape: 'And everywhere man's ingenuity/On fence and bordering: for I could see/The tiny scaffolding to hold the heads/And faces overgrown of flowers in beds'.[111]

However appealing it may be to consider Davies as a pastoral writer, it becomes clearer that his work is continually alternating between country and city. Likewise, as Stephen Knight has noted, it is easy to overlook the pastoral element in the work of Evans. According to Knight, adopting an epithet by M. Wynn Thomas, Evans's stories 'have not been seen as romance because of their "ferocious" tone and the regularly dismal outcome of events'.[112] Knight is correct to identify the similarities between what he calls 'first-contact romances' and the 'rural anti-romance' of Evans. Davies's pastoral nature

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[109] Conran, *The Cost of Strangeness*, p. 23. A significant element in the careers of each of the writers considered in this thesis is the cultivation of a literary persona as a man of letters. Conran elsewhere writes of Rhys as a 'Cymro-Aesthete' whose name 'tend[ed] to crop up whenever a literature Welsh in spirit by English in language is mentioned at this time' (*The Cost of Strangeness*, p. 11). Evans revelled in the persona of being the 'best hated man in Wales' in the wake of the *My People* controversy, and also, like his friend Arthur Machen, became a famous Fleet Street personality. This kind of self-fashioning seems crucial to the persona of the man of letters, particularly the exiled writer in London.

[110] W. H. Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, p. 87.

[111] W. H. Davies, 'The Hill-Side Park', in *Collected Poems of W. H. Davies*, pp. 34-5 (p. 35).

[112] Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. 31.

poems could stand as representative of the rural romance to which Knight refers and, following Knight's line of argument to its conclusion, it can be seen that the dissimilarities between Davies's and Evans's work are not as great as may initially be supposed. As Knight states, 'Evans's stories are generically tales, often just sketches, of a folk, and his own location and approach to his distant setting is in its dark and belittling way another version of a London-based professional writing about "Tivyland".'[113] It can be argued that both Davies's Gwent and Evans's 'Manteg' are metropolitan constructions, albeit that one is an idealised version while the other is a nightmare vision.

Not only are Davies and Evans engaged through their work in a dialogue between the urban and the rural, they are also in a dialogue between Wales and London. Evans' *My People* is the text most often proclaimed to represent the starting point of a distinctive Welsh literature in the English language in the twentieth century. Though there are few texts which predate *My People* which imagine Wales so strikingly, Davies (and Machen) set important precedents. The London context shared by these writers prefigures their re-construction of the Wales from which they had come. Compared with the majority of critical work undertaken on Davies, which has tended to focus on the country/city dichotomy in his work in the context of the Georgian movement, less attention has been paid to the Welsh dimension.[114] Yet this Welsh element is significant and imparted considerable influence over many subsequent writers who are more strongly associated with a distinctively Welsh literature in English. In an important respect, Davies can be said to be clearing a route, creating the space for subsequent generations of writers to engage with Wales in their writing. Evans and Davies were acquaintances of each other's in London. Writing later in his career, and four years after Davies's death, Evans hails

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[113] Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. 31.

[114] This is a situation which is more recently being addressed. See, for example, Judy Kendal, '"A Poet at Last": William H. Davies and Edward Thomas', *Almanac: Yearbook of Welsh Writing in English*, (2007-8), 32-54.

Davies's status as a Welsh writer and his subsequent influence on Welsh writers:

> I asked William Davies the editor of the *Western Mail* – and the *Western Mail* was
> then, as it is now, the only newspaper in Wales that fostered Welsh literary talent –
> to tell Wales there was a genius of a poet named W. H. Davies. 'Write him up,' he
> said. My column write-up did not do him any good. Before he died Welsh poets
> spoke quite kindly about his work. Yet his work has influenced Welsh poets and
> produced two or three dreadful imitators.[115]

Evans's account surprisingly emphasises Davies's status as a Welsh poet. This article

suggests his eagerness for Davies's work to be appreciated in a Welsh context, and that

Davies come to be regarded as a Welsh poet. Evans goes so far as to describe Davies as

'a genius of a poet'. It is a description which shows Evans's admiration for Davies's

poetic work while also suggesting that Davies remains somehow on the margins,

underappreciated: Caradoc Evans's write-up, after all, 'did not do him [Davies] any good.

This article presents Davies as a great poet unheeded by his own countrymen. The

Western Mail article begins by stating that 'Mr W. H. Davies is a tramp and a poet. He is

also a Welshman, and his name is greater among all peoples than it is among his own.'[116]

Etymologically, the word 'genius' derives from the Greek, indicating a new birth or that

something has come into being, and also present in the description of Davies as a

'genius' of a poet is the sense that he represents a new birth for Welsh literature. It is

Evans's request, after all, that the *Western Mail* 'tell Wales there was a genius of a poet

named W. H. Davies'. Evans's twofold description of Davies, as both a genius and an

important Welsh writer, is particularly appropriate given that he formed this opinion in

1916. Evans's *Western Mail* article was published at the very time when he himself was

creating controversy following the publication of *My People*. Welsh writing in the English

language, regarded as a distinctive literary field in its own right, was still in its infancy at

this point. Yet Evans is uninterested in Davies's Georgian poetry or nature poetry;

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[115] Caradoc Evans, 'Men and Women, 2: W. H. Davies', *Welsh Review*, 3 (1944), 183-86 (p. 184).
[116] Evans, 'Tramp and Poet', p. 7.

instead, it is Davies's tramp writing which attracts him. The 1916 *Western Mail* article

gives a biography of Davies roughly analogous to *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*. Of

his poetic career, Evans notes that 'W. H. Davies became the most famous of English

poets. But begging and hawking brought him more riches than poetry', and that '[i]n his

heart Davies is still a tramp'.[117] Evans recalls Davies telling him that 'Wales is unkind to a

tramp who cannot speak Welsh; and he cannot', and that Davies learnt this to his cost,

when he was unable to quiet a dog which had attacked him on account of not being able

to communicate with the dog in Welsh: 'He still laments over this, because it is the only

occasion that he has failed to make friends of a dog.'[118] Evans's conclusion to 'Tramp

and Poet' identifies the elements of Davies's oeuvre which he sees as most indicative,

noting after the anecdote about the Welsh-speaking dog, '[s]uch is this Welsh poet who

sings of the heart of the drunkard and the soul of little children, of the temptation of

Nature and the aspiration of lost women.'[119] In Evans's estimation, Davies is

unquestionably a Welsh poet, yet it is not the *hiraeth* mentioned later by Gwyn Jones

which catches his eye. Jones, forty years later and admittedly with tongue in cheek, would

privilege the nice side of Davies which celebrated 'cows and flowers and *hiraeth* for the

sweet days that have been, with a lot of Welsh place-names in them';[120] meanwhile 'on

the occasions when he wasn't nice, well, he was half-English, wasn't he? and had a

wooden leg – or was it a cloven hoof? – into the bargain.'[121] Rather, it is Davies the

drunkard and friend of lost women which Evans describes in his article. It is the Davies

seduced, or tempted, by Nature, as in the erotic image of Twyn Barlwm in 'The Mind's

Liberty', which Evans praises. *My People* had also exposed a sexual temptation in the rural

society – coincidentally, an advert for the second edition of the book appears on the

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[117] Evans, 'Tramp and Poet', p. 7.
[118] Evans, 'Tramp and Poet', p. 7.
[119] Evans, 'Tramp and Poet', p. 7.
[120] Jones, *The First Forty Years*, p. 7.
[121] Jones, *The First Forty Years*, pp. 7-8.

same page of the *Western Mail* as 'Tramp and Poet'. Similarly, Evans's early work for the

London Chat magazine had dealt with drunkenness, lost women and working-class poverty.

In Evans's view, Davies is both a Welsh writer and a poetic genius, yet what makes his

comments remarkable is the way in which Evans combines these two features: by now,

Davies stands as a genius of a writer whose work is located at the origins of a new literary

enterprise. In this respect, both Evans and Davies can be regarded as figures engaged in

the project of bringing this new literary enterprise into being. The request of William

Davies, editor of the *Western Mail*, to 'write Davies up' could similarly be read as a

command to bring the idea of a distinctive Welsh literature into the popular

consciousness. Both men depart, therefore, from an uncomplicated view of Wales as a

godly, Edenic land of virtue.

While Evans recalled, later in his life, that the *Western Mail* article of 1916 was intended to

herald Davies's hitherto-overlooked genius to a Welsh reading public, John Harris argues

that Davies likewise had a hand in bringing Evans's *My People* before a wider audience.

Harris suggests that '*My People* had appeared under the imprint of Andrew Melrose Ltd, a

minor publishing house possibly recommended to Evans by the poet W. H. Davies who

had recently signed to the firm'.[122] This collaborative endeavour on the part of Davies

and Evans is a significant new insight: each is responsible for encouraging the wider

reception of a new Welsh writing found in the work of the other. Davies and Evans, it

seems, were concerned not only with developing a new Welsh writing in the content of

their work, but were also both committed to facilitating the means for that writing to

emerge, and also to disseminating it to a wider audience.

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[122] John Harris, 'Introduction: The Banned, Burned Book of War', in Caradoc Evans, *My People* (Bridgend: Seren, 2003), pp. 9-47 (p. 35)

There is a dark, sometimes gruesome side to Davies's work which can be productively

illuminated in light of comparison with Evans. Two poems which stand out are 'The Rat'

and 'The Rev. Ebenezer Paul'. Taken from *The Bird of Paradise and Other Poems* (1914),

'The Rev. Evenezer Paul' is a short lyric of two stanzas condemning the dishonesty and

hypocrisy of a 'gospel-monger, old and bland'.[123] The poem condemns the minister in

unequivocal terms:

> He begs from rich men for the poor,
>   And robs the poor of Christmas dinners.
> Ah, cruel Time, to keep alive
>   For all these years such hoary sinners![124]

This is a poem railing against the hypocrisy of organised religion as seen by the speaker.

In its content, though notably not in its form, this poem anticipates the dominant theme

of the fiction of Caradoc Evans: the exploitation of the weak and vulnerable by those in

an elevated status within the community, especially under the auspices of a selectively

interpreted religion. It is significant that the poem appears in a collection of 1914, pre-

dating Evans' *My People* by a single year. This is the concluding stanza:

> This stack of infamy, that keeps
>   Dark, greedy thoughts like rats within;
> This stack that harbours gently looks,
>   Like snakes with their cold, smiling skin;
> This gospel-monger, old and bland,
>   Who prays aloud for other sinners –
> He begs from rich men for the poor,
>   And robs the poor of Christmas dinners.[125]

The details of the poem's depiction and condemnation of the character Ebenezer Paul

mirror those identified by Evans in his *My People* stories: there is the voluble praying

which masks the corruption inherent in the system, and also the impulse for economic

gain at the expense of the poor. Davies's critique of religion, like that of Evans, stems

from a left-leaning politics which champions the poor and those downtrodden by

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[123] Davies, 'The Rev. Ebenezer Paul', in *Selected Poems*, p.94.
[124] Davies, 'The Rev. Ebenezer Paul', p. 94.
[125] Davies, 'The Rev. Ebenezer Paul', p. 94.

religious hypocrisy; this is the same impulse which praises Christ, the man, rather than Christ the son of God. The linking of greed and religious hypocrisy with the horrific image of the rat is here again, recalling old Nanni in 'Be this her Memorial'. So too is the image of the snake, a figure reworked in the *My People* story, 'The Devil in Eden'. The denomination of the character of Ebenezer Paul is unclear, as too is the location of his parish. Davies does make mention of his childhood dislike of attending chapel in *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, noting that '[l]ife was very irksome to me at this period, being led to chapel morning and evening on Sundays, and led back'.[126] The chapel is associated with captivity, in that Davies is 'led' there, an experience contrasted with the 'liberty' enjoyed by his peers.[127] Reading 'The Rev. Ebenezer Paul' in the light of such a statement as this may suggest that it is a condemnation of Nonconformity, though such a reading cannot be taken as certified proof either way. As is so clearly developed in Caradoc Evans' work, the figure of religious authority is also the figure who has direct access to a dominant discourse. Davies's use of the term 'gospel monger' also chimes with a common theme in Evans's work, in that the keepers of this religious discourse do so in order to achieve and maintain their own personal, financial aggrandisement. There is a sense in which the character of the Rev. Ebenezer Paul is a salesman as much as a man of religion; indeed, it is the rhetoric of religion which Paul is 'selling', though there is little sense of a fair exchange in the interaction between Paul and his congregations. Likewise in Evans's short stories, it is the 'Respecteds' who, from the position of authority in the chapel pulpit, are able to manipulate their congregation by means of their rhetoric.

The link with the later work of Evans is unmistakable. The image of the rat in the second line of the penultimate stanza is reused by Davies in the poem from his later (post-*My*

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[126] Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, p. 26.
[127] Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, p. 26.

People) collection, *The Song of Life and Other Poems* (1920). In the intervening six years since

his previous collection, the image of the rat had been connected with the hypocrisy and

corruption of Nonconformist chapel religion by Evans, most famously in the great story

of the *My People* collection, 'Be this Her Memorial'.[128] The story concerns an old woman,

Nanni, and her sacrifices in order to be able to afford a Bible as a leaving gift for 'The

Respected Josiah Bryn-Bevan', who is set to leave the area and take up a more lucrative

position in a chapel in Aberyswyth. Nanni is ultimately rendered so poor in her attempt

to save enough money that she is forced to eat rats, and, in the memorable climax to the

story, is found on the floor of her 'house of sacrifice'[129] with rats eating away at her face.

The conclusion to Davies's poem, 'The Rat', is equally chilling, and given both writers'

familiarity with each other, is quite possibly a deliberate echo of 'Be this Her Memorial':

> 'Now with these teeth that powder stones,
> I'll pick at one of her cheek-bones:
> When husband, son and daughter come,
> They'll soon see who was left at home.'[130]

The image of the downtrodden woman, neglected by her family and society, being

reduced to the prey of the rat echoes one of the most famous images in all of Evans's

stories. Almost uniquely, the rat is an animal which can be associated with both the urban

and the rural environment. It is unclear whether the poem is in a rural or country setting;

the references to the daughter winking at a soldier, the husband in the pothouse and the

son teasing the cobbler are not conclusive one way or the other. The non-specificity of

the poem means it can be read, not along the lines of the distinction between country

and city so often invoked in Davies's work, but along economic and gender lines, with

the poor woman bearing the punishment for her neglect by both society and the family

unit. Nanni's sacrifice finds a precedent in Davies's biography, too: as Normand recounts,

Davies also had to endure extreme sacrifice and near-starvation in his endeavour to

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[128] Caradoc Evans, 'Be this her Memorial', in *My People* (Bridgend: Seren, 2003), pp. 108-12.

[129] Evans, 'Be this Her Memorial', p. 112.

[130] W. H. Davies, 'The Rat', in *Collected Poems of W. H. Davies*, p. 273.

acquire a book – his own first book, *The Soul's Destroyer and Other Poems*. Davies was 'anticipating becoming a poet yet having to live as a beggar. [...] Although he would have to suffer extreme deprivation living on five shillings a week this was preferable to begging which he could endure no longer, and for which his courage was exhausted.'[131]

On a more thematic level, both writers suggest in their writing a link between discourse and power. This is at its most prominent in their engagement with the topic of religion. As noted above, the character of the Rev. Ebenezer Paul in Davies's poem could almost be taken from a *My People* short story: he is corrupt, hypocritical, manipulative of the poor and self-serving. The vehicle by means of which he achieves these ends is his own 'gospel-mongery', namely his use of the rhetoric of the Bible to achieve material gains. Yet the corruption of organised religion is present in other forms in Davies's work, forms which in significant ways resemble the debased religion of Caradoc Evans's short stories. The elite are able to manipulate the poor in order to preserve their own status. In Davies's work, institutions of charity come to represent the very opposite of generosity and sympathy with the oppressed; such charity is usually to be found among ordinary people, unaffiliated to the bureaucracy of organised aid or religion.

A particular *bête noir* for Davies, most notably depicted in *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, is the Salvation Army. *Super-Tramp* is Davies's autobiographical account of his early life, recounting his experiences from his youth to the early years of his adulthood and writing career. Clearly, a text engaged so explicitly with Davies's experiences as a tramp has much to say regarding the daily struggle to make ends meet and the ways in which society responds and reacts to those on the margins. In this respect, *Super-Tramp*'s presentation of the Salvation Army displays strong parallels with Evans's Nonconformist

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[131] Normand, *W. H. Davies*, p. 40.

Chapels. The officers of the Salvation Army, likewise, bear striking similarity with Evans'

chapel ministers, the 'Respecteds'. Chapter 22 of *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* relates

Davies's experience with the Salvation Army in London at a time when Davies he is

attempting to live frugally enough to provide an opportunity to pursue his literary

aspirations. The Salvation Army hostel, known as the Ark, is a place of oppressiveness

and bleakness, while the officers are tyrants. Politically, this critique of the methods of

the Salvation has much in common with Evans's early stories published prior to *My*

People. For example, Ted Young, the returning son in 'The Prodigal's Return', is allowed

to land a blow on the Salvation Army when he dismisses an officer's invitation to give his

heart to God by retorting, indignantly, 'It's as clean as yours, Gasbags'. [132] *The*

Autobiography of a Super-Tramp and Evans's *Chat* stories were published at precisely the

same time; though Evans's *My People* would become famed as the starting-point for

twentieth-century Welsh writing in English, Davies's writing (as well as Evans's own early

stories) give a sense of a movement taking shape. As the next chapter will argue, the

themes of religious hypocrisy, and the increasingly visible presence of Welsh material,

indicate that Davies and Evans are negotiating with a Welsh structure of feeling, a

movement which (after *My People*) develops into an emergent literature, but which for the

time being awaits definition and coherence.

Davies admits that 'after six months' experience at the Salvation Army Lodging House, I

am very sorry that I have nothing at all to say in its favour'.[133] The communal sleeping

areas of the Ark are reminiscent of the accommodation afforded the drapery assistants

'living in', as described in Evans' novel *Nothing to Pay* (1930). Davies describes how 'A

row of fifteen or twenty beds would be so close together that they might as well be called

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[132] Caradoc Evans (writing as 'D. Evans Emmott'), 'The Prodigal's Return', *Chat*, 8 December 1906, p. 197.
[133] Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* , p. 196.

one bed'.[134] In *Nothing to Pay* Evans's protagonist, Amos Morgan, describes the sleeping

arrangements by noting that 'There were yet twenty to thirty in the line', and the walls are

adorned with verses from the Bible and instructions not to expectorate.[135] Davies, like

Evans, sees his marginalised social outcasts herded together under the auspices of a

hypocritical organisation. Just as the Nonconformist chapels come to symbolise tyranny

and hypocrisy in the work of Evans, the Salvation Army in the work of W. H. Davies

demonstrates similar characteristics. Davies notes that '[t]he officers in charge were,

according to my first opinion, hypocrites; which seemed to be verified some time after

from Head Quarters, for both the Captain and his Lieutenant were dismissed from the

Army'.[136] The same kind of institutional hypocrisy is present in Davies's Salvation Army

as well as Evans's Nonconformist chapel, and in both places the key to the manipulation

of the weak lies in the privileging of a dominant religious discourse.

The rhetorical basis for this control is described explicitly by Davies in his descriptions of

the Salvation Army officers:

> As for the Lieutenant, he was very gentle and fervent in prayer, more so than any
> man I have ever heard, but in conversation he had not a civil word for any one,
> except, of course, his superior officer. He sometimes made his deceit so apparent
> that I have been forced to laugh out.[137]

Here, as in Evans, there is a contrast between public and private discourse, though,

unlike Evans, the language of prayer is the more reserved. This public language is the

religious discourse of the Salvation Army, structured hierarchically throughout the

establishment. Both the Lieutenant and the Captain are said to have been expelled from

the Army; their position in the ranks of the Salvation Army instils a sinister militaristic

atmosphere to what is purportedly a charitable institution. Linked with this exercise of

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[134] Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, p. 197.
[135] Caradoc Evans, *Nothing to Pay* ([1930] New York: New Directions, 1989), p. 164.
[136] Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, p. 197.
[137] Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, p. 197.

power is a rigid control of the dominant discourse of the institution. This operates on a hierarchical model: the lodgers are at the bottom, under control of the Lieutenant who in turn is under the control of his superior officer. The operations of these levels of hierarchy are ordered through the use of language; those in authority are also those who control and employ the religious discourse of the Ark, and those below temper their language in their dealings with their superiors. Such hypocrisy, as Davies describes it, elicits an involuntary, bodily response: the regime in the Salvation Army lodging house wrests power away from the lodgers. This is similarly a feature of Evans's work: communities in Evans's work are ordered very strictly by means of a hierarchy which often has religious discourse at its roots. At the top are the Nonconformist ministers, the Respecteds, below whom are the deacons of the Big Seat, below which are the congregation. At the bottom of the pyramid are usually the rural poor and/or the women of the community, struggling for existence and silenced and marginalised by the patriarchy above.

Davies's representation of the Salvation Army lodging house also contains the depiction of lone characters marginalised by patriarchal society; such characters recur elsewhere in his work. Evans also makes use of such characters on the margins of his society, often depicting them in grotesque terms, or depicting mental or physical disability, which serve to highlight yet further the extent to which such individuals have been manipulated, mistreated or expelled by society. Though not as frequent in Davies's work, such characters are detectable in his poetry and prose. *Super-Tramp*'s scenes at the Salvation Army lodge introduce the character of Horace, who is representative, an embodiment, of the negative effects of the patriarchal regime of the lodging house. As is characteristic of much of Evans's depiction of such marginalised characters, Davies's Horace is associated

with madness and poverty, 'a poor half demented lodger'.[138] Horace is depicted as a drunk who, following a period of absence from the lodging house, is assumed dead, only to return thereafter, much to the chagrin of the Salvation Army officers: 'Never, after this, did this Captain treat Horace as a living man, and all chaff and familiar conversation was at an end between them.'[139] Horace's punishment for embarrassing the Captain by returning to the lodging house is to be completely excluded from any discursive framework. The religious discourse, to which all the residents are subject(s), still offers the semblance of a framework of support. As punishment, however, Horace is completely excommunicated, in the sense that he is no longer able to communicate at all with the officers: he is put beyond the discourse of the establishment.

In the early years of the twentieth century London assumes significance in a Welsh context as the platform from which Wales can be re-imagined. The work of W. H. Davies and Caradoc Evans, when considered together, can be viewed as two sides of the same coin. From their exiled perspectives, both writers are engaged in a project of imagining Wales through their writing. Crucially, this distance from home enables both writers to reassess their relationship with that home. The recurrence of similar themes in both Davies's and Evans's work – madness, religious hypocrisy, mistreatment of women, poverty – is indicative of this reassessment. Yet there are also stark differences in approach towards other, similar, topics. Davies's idyllic Gwent countryside, as compared with Evans's nightmarish Manteg, demonstrates the way that the exiled writer may deploy a wide range of techniques and approaches through which to address his or her home.

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[138] Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, p. 198.
[139] Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, p. 199.

Both country and city inform the work of W. H. Davies, problematising any traditional view of him as singularly a nature poet. This binary is presented in his work as a contrast between Wales and London, yet the associations of Wales and London with the country and the city respectively are complicated and defamiliarised. A closer inspection of Davies's work shows that each carries with it the trace of the other, and that just as the urban scene in London is often viewed in terms of rural imagery, so too is Wales constructed from London. Davies's individual status as a London Welshman in this early period of Welsh writing in English sees him coming to terms with the Wales left behind through his work. When contrasted with the sinister, nightmarish vision of Wales put forward by Caradoc Evans, and, in Davies's work, too, a darker side is uncovered to both Wales and London, the country and the city, when viewed in juxtaposition, or through the prism of, the other. The recycling of similar images in the works of both men suggest that, in London, there is a body of writers thinking through the means of representing Wales in their writing: indeed, writing Wales into existence could be said to be the predominant project of Welsh writing in English in the twentieth century. With this in mind it can be argued that, at this early period in the history of Welsh writing in English, London is the ideal location for the means of representing a distinctive Welsh experience, and by means of this, the relationship between Wales and London – and the wider world beyond.

Chapter Four
'An Intransigence that is Not Easily Ignored':
Caradoc Evans prior to *My People*

A Prologue to History

This chapter, and indeed this thesis, ends with a beginning. It leaves Caradoc Evans, its

principal focus, on the brink of publishing *My People* (1915), the collection of short,

scathing stories which would make his name. By offering a prelude to Evans's own

literary notoriety, this chapter also concludes at a point where the trajectory of Welsh

writing in English was about to change. *My People* set in train a new development in

Anglo-Welsh writing, and it is no exaggeration to cite it as a foundational text in the

history of Welsh writing in English in the twentieth century. The argument of this thesis

explains the reason for leaving Evans, and the position of Welsh writing in English in his

period, on the cusp of a new development – a prologue to history. It argues that Evans's

work still stands as an important landmark in the history of Welsh writing in English,

and, while *My People* undoubtedly precipitated an important shift in the tone and content

of the subsequent fictions written in and about Wales, Caradoc Evans inherits several

important themes and tropes in his literary engagement with Wales, even if only in order

to subvert them. Evans himself can be positioned within the context of a specific

London-Welsh literary and cultural milieu, which modifies the understanding of *My People*

while still not diminishing its impact.

The work of other writers has provided a prologue to *My People*. As both poet and super-

tramp, W. H. Davies engages with Wales and develops an itinerant connection with

Wales from several different perspectives, including London and America. Arthur

Machen, like Davies a writer from Gwent, imagines a gothicised, spectral Wales,

especially around the border regions, which is at the same time inflected by the Pan-

Celtic movement which drew its own momentum from late-century London. Ernest

Rhys, among the leading figures of the Pan-Celtic movement, similarly engaged with

Wales through his writing, cultivating an identity and a reputation for himself as what

Anthony Conran describes as a 'Cymro-Aesthete'.[1] Each of these writers arrived in

London before Caradoc Evans, who moved to London in 1899, to become a draper's

assistant. Indeed, each of the other three writers had begun publishing their work before

Evans's arrival in the city. There is, therefore, for Evans already a literary context in

London of Welsh writers whose work depicts and imagines Wales in different ways: in

exploring a term coined by Raymond Williams this chapter argues that a Welsh structure

of feeling is taking shape in London about the time of Evans's arrival.

While these other writers form a context of London-based writing about Wales at the

turn of the twentieth century,[2] before *My People*, there is also a prehistory of literary

engagement with Wales even within Evans's own oeuvre. Evans's first publications were

short stories submitted to working-class newspapers and magazines. Most of these early

stories are about the lives of the London working class, and these so-called 'Cockney

stories' have received little attention from critics who, in the main, have preferred to look

at *My People* as the collection which launched its author's career. Nevertheless, a few of

these stories focus on Wales, and offer a contrast between rural Wales and the urban

existence. More broadly, several of the themes which would form the focus of Evans's

stories of Manteg — the ironically-named village that is the focus of his Welsh-set

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[1] See the chapter 'The Poetry of Ernest Rhys and the Celtic Revival in Wales', in Anthony Conran, *The Cost of Strangeness: Essays on the English Poets of Wales* (Llandysul: Gomer, 1982), pp. 1-20. The description of Rhys as 'Cymro-Aesthete' occurs in the section of the above chapter entitled 'The Cymro Aesthete: The Poetry of Ernest Rhys', pp. 11-20.

[2] It should be stressed that while Davies, Rhys and Machen may be representative of this context prior to Evans, the context itself is far from reducible to those three writers: in both languages and across a wide variety of forms and genres there exists a large body of writing negotiating the complex relationship between Wales and London.

material[3] – can be traced back to the early Cockney material. Furthermore, the material conditions of publication attendant upon these early stories speak of a search for an adequate voice: the fledgling exiled writer in London finds that the voice and life of his new environment – that of the London working class – is the most readily accessible vehicle for his work. It is only later that the work trains its focus – intensely, claustrophobically – on the peasantry of the rural west Wales village. This chapter argues that Evans's London stories form an important prehistory to his documented literary career, instead of stressing the suddenness with which *My People* emerged and erupted in controversy as more traditional accounts do. What the early stories reveal is that the stories of *My People* emerge from an important literary apprenticeship firmly embedded in the conditions of its own production yet at the same time thinking through complex questions of exile and a troubled relationship with home.

Sinker of the Sandcastle Dynasty

Caradoc Evans's position at the fountain-head of the twentieth-century tradition of Welsh writing in English was famously first asserted by Gwyn Jones when he delivered the W. D. Thomas Memorial Lecture at Aberystwyth on 8 February 1957. The lecture, 'The First Forty Years: Some Notes on Anglo-Welsh Literature', was published in the same year and has already been discussed as a landmark work of criticism because it is among the very first texts to consider, and theorise, the body of texts that might be seen to constitute an Anglo-Welsh literature.[4] It is in this regard a significant work of canon-building in the Welsh context, with all the complications and complexities that such a work entails. In it, as we have seen, Jones dates the start of Welsh writing in English to

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[3] Manteg means 'Fair Place' in Welsh. John Harris has identified aspect of the Manteg topography which confirm it as Evans's own native Rhydlewis. See John Harris, 'Introduction: "The Banned, Burned Book of War"', in Caradoc Evans, *My People* (Bridgend: Seren, 2003), pp. 9-48 (p. 18).

[4] Gwyn Jones, *The First Forty Years: Some Notes on Anglo-Welsh Literature* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1957).

1915. 'The present world', he argues, 'began just forty years ago, with the publication of

My People in 1915, a book which for Welshmen added a final horror to war as surely as

My Neighbours in 1919 and *Taffy* in 1923 robbed them of the peace that should have

followed.'[5] Jones's linking of *My People* and Evans's subsequent works with the seismic

and shattering effects of the First World War speaks of the impact of the book on Welsh

consciousness. Indeed, much of what Jones has to say about Evans in *The First Forty*

Years makes use of the language of war and soldiering:

> For he had a twofold significance: first, the quality of his best work, which I
> believe to be magnificent; the second, what I may call his war of liberation. His
> battles, let us admit it, were never disinterested, for he was a violent egoist, as
> ready to libel as to satirize, and by the mid-twenties had taken higher degrees in the
> theory and practice of hatred; but before most of us set pen to paper he had
> fought savagely and successfully against philistinism, Welsh provincialism and the
> hopelessly inhibited standards of what little Anglo-Welsh literature there was. For
> good (or, if anyone prefers, for bad) he destroyed the sandcastle dynasty of Allen
> Raine and the Maid of Cefn Ydfa, and sank it in the sea.[6]

The 'war of liberation', the 'battles' of the 'violent egoist', the 'theory and practice of

hatred', the savage fight against the small-minded 'inhibited' provincialism of Welsh

writing in English: Caradoc Evans is in Jones's description a violent aggressor and *My*

People is regarded as a combat engagement on its own bellicose terms. Jones attributes to

Evans the power of a revolutionary force, destroying the flimsy foundations of Welsh

writing in English as represented by the work of Allen Raine. Caradoc Evans, by this

account stands as a freedom fighter, and the casus belli of his 'war of liberation' is hatred

of the introverted, stunted nature of Welsh writing – and Welsh culture and society – as

he saw it. According to Gwyn Jones, before Evans, Welsh writing in English constituted

an introverted, philistine, inhibited provincial literature and Evans's achievement is to

have exploded this inadequate state of affairs. Jones employs an Arnoldian vocabulary

drawn from *Culture and Anarchy* in his analysis: Evans falls short of the status of

disinterested critic (the Arnoldian ideal), but nevertheless meets with approval in his

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[5] Jones, *The First Forty Years*, p. 7.
[6] Jones, *The First Forty Years*, pp. 8-9.

condemnation of philistinism.[7] Jones's vocabulary tells much of his own critical practice: Evans's position is at the source of a literary canon which rejects out of hand the work of Raine and similar writers of romance.

The violence which Jones here attributes to Evans's work seems both total and sudden: Evans is destroyer, freedom fighter, battler and 'violent egoist'. Clearly, Anglo-Welsh writing, as represented by Allen Raine and the Maid of Cefn Ydfa, did not anticipate the attack, nor subsequently did it know what had hit it. With the publication of *My People*, says Jones, 'the war-horn was blown, the gauntlet thrown down, the gates of the temple shattered'.[8] Jones offers what he terms a 'homelier' metaphor by comparing Evans's intervention to 'some new-style yahoo' throwing a bucket of dung through the window of the Welsh parlour (the most respectable and proudly-kept room in the house), and then throwing the bucket in afterwards for good measure.[9] By describing *My People* as an attack by yahoos on Welsh respectability, Jones likens Evans's satire to Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), and so elevates the Manteg stories to a canon of literary satire that extends beyond its initial Welsh context. Yet *My People* is firstly an unheralded yet devastating attack on Welsh respectability. Indeed, Jones is more specific as to the nature of this respectability: *My People* set in train a trend, which characterises much of Anglo-Welsh literature, to 'revolt against Nonconformity'.[10] While acknowledging that he is 'not blind to the benefits' that Nonconformity has given Wales, there seems little doubt, in Jones's account, that it is also responsible for stunting Welsh artistic and cultural creative enterprise in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Much of the Welsh literature written

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[7] Arnold uses the term 'Philistine' to describe the English middle-class, connoting as it does 'the notion of something particularly stiff-necked and perverse in the resistance to light and its children'. See Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism*, ed. by Samuel Lipman ([1869] New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 68.

[8] Jones, *The First Forty Years*, p. 8.

[9] Jones, *The First Forty Years*, p. 8.

[10] Jones, *The First Forty Years*, p. 12.

in English during Jones's 'first forty years' is by his reckoning a rejection of, and sometimes an attack on, Nonconformist Christianity as manifested in its Welsh form. At the root of the issue is Evans's *My People*. Scarcely a single critic of Evans's work fails to consider the savage, corrosive satire directed towards Welsh Nonconformist religion in *My People* and those books published by him afterwards: *Capel Sion* (1916), *My Neighbours* (1919) and the play *Taffy* (1923).

While *My People*'s attack on Welsh Nonconformity has been the main focus of critics' attention since the book's publication, it has also until comparatively recently been a mainstay of critical opinion that Caradoc Evans claims the title of founding father of Anglo-Welsh writing. Gwyn Jones, as we have seen, claims that it is with the publication of *My People* that 'the present world began',[11] with the eradication of the 'sandcastle dynasty'.[12] Belinda Humfrey, like Jones before her, yokes together Evans's *My People* and the First World War as epoch-making historical landmarks:

> There is no advantage in attempting to disguise the fact that [...] although there are Anglo-Welsh writers aplenty between the age of Shakespeare and the advent of the First World War (or Caradoc Evans's *My People*), only two writers can be described conscientiously as great Anglo-Welsh writes (and for a small, sparsely populated country, that is an achievement). They are both poets: Henry Vaughan (1621-95) and John Dyer (1699-1757).[13]

Despite the conciliatory caveat, Humfrey's reading follows largely a similar path to old-fashioned accounts of Anglo-Welsh literary history. Welsh writing in English as a self-conscious tradition (that critics like Humfrey can conscientiously describe as such) is founded at the time of the First World War, with the publication of *My People*. Despite citing Vaughan and Dyer, alongside a few other also-rans, Humfrey, like Gwyn Jones, attributes to them the status of preliminary figures and their work constitutes a 'prelude'

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[11] Jones, *The First Forty Years*, p. 7.
[12] Jones, *The First Forty Years*, p. 9.
[13] Belinda Humfrey, 'Prelude to the Twentieth Century', in *Welsh Writing in English*, ed. by M. Wynn Thomas (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 7-46 (p. 7).

to a twentieth-century movement, a prologue to history. Concluding her account, Humfrey argues that

> A moral satirist is usually a thwarted idealist; but, in his literary vision of Wales and his people, Caradoc would seem to be in a different world from the Anglo-Welsh writers of the three centuries before him and even from his near-contemporaries. His work makes difficult a coherent appraisal of Anglo-Welsh literary portrayal of Wales (mainly, south and west Wales) in this long period.[14]

Prior to the twentieth century, then, according to Humfrey, the history of Welsh writing in English is sporadic or, at least, the various Welsh authors writing in English can scarcely be considered together as constituting a tradition; it is with *My People* that this tradition is developed. *My People* is the furious text which simultaneously sinks the sandcastle dynasty in the sea and sets a new standard for Welsh writing in English.

Humfrey's thesis seems underdeveloped, and the three-hundred year aporia between the age of Shakespeare and Caradoc Evans's *My People* requires a more detailed consideration than is afforded by her essay.[15] While Humfrey notes the work of several writers earlier than Evans – including Ernest Rhys, W. H. Davies and Arthur Machen – it is only from Evans onwards that she sees anything like a tradition emerging. Raymond Williams's thinking may again help account for this gap and shape the scattered and sporadic figures which pepper the three centuries prior to Caradoc Evans. Williams's formulation of residual, dominant, and emergent cultural forms argues that each element is in constant negotiation with the others: rather than focusing merely on the dominant element of a particular society, it is important to consider the interplay of residual and emergent ideologies which give on to it from the past and the future respectively. A related line of Williams's argument encompasses what he calls 'structures of feeling', a term which

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[14] Humfrey, 'Prelude to the Twentieth Century', p. 45.

[15] Several important studies have brought to light material neglected or rejected by Humfrey's account. See, for example, Sarah Prescott, *Eighteenth-Century Writing from Wales: Bards and Britons* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008); Moira Dearnley, *Distant Fields: Eighteenth-Century Fictions of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001) and Jane Aaron, 'Seduction and Betrayal: Wales in Women's Fiction 1785-1810', *Women's Writing*, 1.1 (1994), 65-76.

Williams concedes is 'difficult' but which is nevertheless useful in capturing the sense of flux and dynamic change which is the defining characteristic of any society or cultural system (rather than its merely dominant characteristic).[16] Williams gives the term 'structures of feeling' to those elements within a society or a culture which are pre-emergent and await an identifiable status precisely because they are still taking shape. Williams argues that

> the actual alternative to the received and produced fixed forms is not silence: not the absence, the unconscious, which bourgeois culture has mythicized. It is a kind of feeling which is indeed social and material, but each in an embryonic phase before it can become fully articulate and defined exchange.[17]

If Evans is the instigator of a new, emergent literature, as inaugurated by *My People* and developed over the course of the twentieth century, then the scattered and incoherent corpus of Anglo-Welsh writing prior to 1915 is precisely the kind of embryonic, pre-emergent movement which Williams defines as a structure of feeling. Though Humfrey finds it impossible to make a 'coherent appraisal' of Welsh writing in English before Caradoc Evans, she nevertheless is able to identify several Welsh writers working in the English language; yet, in a somewhat bleak conclusion, she surmises that 'Caradoc would seem to be in a different world from the Anglo-Welsh writers of the three centuries before him and even from his near contemporaries'.[18] By this reading, Evans is an anomaly, a literary voice without precedent. Three hundred years of Anglo-Welsh writing does not amount to a tradition, and certainly does not amount to Caradoc Evans. Humfrey voices a problem for critics of Welsh literature in English by concluding that '*My People* is often interpreted as kick-starting the birth of the twentieth-century Welsh writing in English which followed it; but Caradoc Evans's work is different, too, from

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[16] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 130. See the chapter in the same volume entitled 'Structures of Feeling', pp. 128-35.

[17] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 131.

[18] Humfrey, 'Prelude to the Twentieth Century, p. 45.

what followed it, so I cannot see why this is observed as one of his merits.'[19] Evans's

work is so idiosyncratic that it becomes difficult to position it in relation to precedents

and antecedents.

Yet Evans's work has more in common with both the work of earlier writers, and that

which followed it, than Humfrey's account suggests, and Raymond Williams's notion of

structures of feeling can help draw out this development. The work of W. H. Davies,

Ernest Rhys and Arthur Machen has much in common with that of Caradoc Evans by

virtue of its thematic juxtaposition of Wales and London; to wit, what these writers' work

often brings to the fore is a contrast between a rural vision of Wales and the Welsh

peasantry on the one hand and the teeming urban metropolis on the other. To varying

degrees, the work of Davies and Machen juxtaposes a mythical or mystical rural idyll with

a dangerous and mysterious city, although both writers are aware of a darker side to life

in the country as well. Ernest Rhys's mythologised and romanticised countryside is

contrasted with a London setting which is both at odds with the Welsh way of life and

also the principal location from which that rhapsodised Welsh way of life can be

imagined. In what is admittedly a turn for the grotesque, Caradoc Evans's treatment of

the Welsh peasantry – from the perspective afforded him by his London writing desk –

follows the same structural pattern as his three contemporary counterparts. Evans was

personally acquainted with each of the other three London-Welsh men of letters and,

though this is not evidence of any kind of self-conscious thematic collaboration, it

nevertheless places their works in dialogue with each other, as well as with the Wales

imagined in those works. What emerge, from looking at the early stories, are similarities

to Evans's own later work (from *My People* onwards) and also formal links to the work of

Rhys, Davies and Machen. Looking back at the account of Gwyn Jones, it becomes

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[19] Humfrey, 'Prelude to the Twentieth Century', p. 45.
[21] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 132. Emphasis in original.

obvious that Caradoc Evans's work before 1915 is itself a part of what is swept away by *My People*. The dissimilarity between *My People* and its predecessors in Humfrey's view can be accounted for by reading the works of Rhys, Davies and Machen, as well as the early stories of Evans himself, as a structure of feeling: these writers' works constitute such a pre-emergent Welsh structure which is taking shape in the years prior to *My People*. As Raymond Williams himself argues, structures of feeling are best identified retrospectively, when connections have been made between them and the 'institutions and formations' they develop into:

> [structures of feeling are] a social experience which is still *in process*, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which in analysis (though rarely otherwise) has its emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies. These are often more recognizable at a later stage, when they have been (as often happens) formalized, classified, and in many cases built into institutions and formations.[21]

By their very nature, structures of feeling are 'social experiences *in solution*';[22] they are ideologies and forces which are taking shape or are awaiting definition. It is at a later stage that this is best categorised; that is to say, it is when that structure of feeling has developed, emerged, into a coherent and identifiable entity that its trace is most clearly discernible.

By this reading, the publication of *My People* might be construed as the moment when a Welsh structure of feeling in literature (perhaps especially London-Welsh literature) germinates into something more like an identifiable emergent tradition of Welsh writing. This is, after all, the point from which Gwyn Jones's understanding of Anglo-Welsh literature stems. Yet while the weight of critical attention may be said to have been devoted to this emergent tradition, Evans's *My People* also offers the opportunity to consider the nascent structures of feeling, or pre-emergent forces, gaining momentum

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[22] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 133. Emphasis in original.

and taking shape prior to its publication. As a result, *My People* is a text which both inherits and transforms questions of identity being thought through by earlier texts and writers.

Indeed, Raymond Williams's thinking on the residual, dominant, and emergent helps make sense of authors as much as works; each of the four writers who form the focus of this thesis had long careers spanning from the late-nineteenth century into the 1940s. While it is tempting and often convenient to consider authors as discrete from each other, the fact that so many of these writers occupy liminal spaces – between nineteenth and twentieth centuries, London and Wales, pre- and post-*My People* – means that the sense of internal flux is itself an important feature of their respective oeuvres. Following this line of thought also has the somewhat surprising effect of making Caradoc Evans himself a contributor to the Welsh literary structure of feeling taking shape prior to *My People*. Gwyn Jones is the first of many critics to have attributed to *My People* the status of foundation-stone for Welsh writing in English. This thesis argues that *My People* crystallises pre-existing Welsh literary structures of feeling and shapes them into an emergent tradition – a more coherent and self-aware Welsh writing in English. In many important ways, *My People* not only set in train a tradition of Welsh writing in English which followed in the twentieth century; it also created its own precursors.[23] By inaugurating an emergent literary tradition, *My People* casts light also on the pre-emergent structures of feeling from which it spawned.

Strangely, then, Evans himself is one of his own predecessors:

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[23] This argument is adapted from Jorge Luis Borges's reading of the work of Franz Kafka, in which he states: 'The fact is that every writer creates his own precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future.' See Jorge Luis Borges, 'Kafka and His Precursors', trans. by James A. Irby in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, ed. by Donald A. Yeats and James A. Irby ([1964] Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), pp. 234-6 (p. 236). Emphasis in original.

[After arriving in London] I joined a composition class at the Workingmen's College and I wrote Cockney stories in the manner of Edwin Pugh and Arthur Morrison. I showed them to a friend and he said: 'You don't know what you're writing about. Tell stories about people you know – the Welsh'. I filled a penny exercise book, both sides, with a Welsh love-story. 'This doesn't sound true,' I said to myself. 'Any Welsh preacher could have written it.' I let years go by.[24]

So writes Evans in a famous piece called 'Self-Portrait', first published in *Wales* in 1944 and recalled by Evans's widow, Marguerite, in her biography of her late husband. The piece gives an account of the aspiring exiled writer's arrival in London and the search for an appropriate form. Evans came from rural Ceredigion, yet the most easily available voice in fiction for him was that of the 'Cockney' writer. There is a sense of the struggle for voice in this passage: Evans initially does not know what he is writing about, and it takes a gestation period of several years for this voice to announce itself. Evans continues his 'Self-Portrait' by noting how he came to write:

Somehow I came to read Genesis again when I was at about the middle of it 'Jiw-jiw this is English writing' I said to me. On a Saturday night I went to the Hammersmith Palace and there I saw Marie Lloyd, and 'Jiw-jiw', I said to me, 'she tells a story not by what she says but by what she does not.' I kept up Genesis and Marie Lloyd.[25]

'Somehow', Evans returns, again, to a beginning: the Book of Genesis, foundational text nonpareil. *My People*, the text at the fountain-head of the myth of origin of Anglo-Welsh writing, leads back to another myth of origin: both are sudden, unpredicted beginnings, brought about unexpectedly by a powerful voice on an unsuspecting world.

Alongside the elevated rhetoric of the book of Genesis, Evans's 'Self-Portrait' gives equal admiration to the music-hall artist Marie Lloyd as a formative influence on his writing. Marie Lloyd (real name Matilda Alice Victoria Wood, 1870-1922) was a tremendously

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[24] Caradoc Evans, 'Self-Portrait' in *Fury Never Leaves Us: A Miscellany of Caradoc Evans*, ed. by John Harris (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1985), pp. 104-6 (p. 106). Caradoc Evans's wife, Marguerite Barkynska, writing under the name 'Oliver Sandys' embeds 'Self-Portrait' and details of its composition in chapter 14 of her biography of her late husband. See 'Oliver Sandys', *Caradoc Evans* (London; New York; Melbourne; Sydney: Hurst and Blackett, 1946), pp. 66-72 ('Self-Portrait' is on pp. 70-71).

[25] Caradoc Evans, 'Self-Portrait', in *Fury Never Leaves Us*, p. 106. All future references are to this edition. There are minor differences between the versions of the article anthologised by John Harris and incorporated into Sandys's biography.

popular music-hall entertainer, and it is Lloyd's sense of timing and innuendo in her storytelling which seems to have appealed to Evans. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Lloyd 'could play out the contrast between the persona of a song and her own stage presence: [...] she could add a top-spin of lewdness to the most innocent lyric and slip into amused contemplation of her own naughtiness [...] – the sense of sharing a secret with her audience rather than simply a smutty joke.'[26] It could be argued that Lloyd's subject matter lies behind several of Evans's Cockney stories (and, thematically, *My People*, even though the context is different): 'Lloyd articulated disappointments of working-class life, especially those of women. Some of her most famous songs were grounded in the realities of poverty: "My old man", despite its jolly chorus, is about the disorientation of a wife forced yet again to do a moonlight flit because there is no money for the rent.'[27] The heroic struggles of working-class women reappear throughout Evans's oeuvre, but the early *London Chat* stories are clearly similar to the kinds of characters who appear in Lloyd's bawdy songs. This confession, and its detectable influence in the work, forms an important point of contrast between Evans's 'Self-Portrait' and Gwyn Jones's assessment of his work. Jones's view of Evans as the destroyer of the sandcastle dynasty (represented by Allen Raine and the Maid of Cefn Ydfa) positions Evans as the expunger of the female voice. Nevertheless, Evans's work itself is deeply concerned with a recuperation of that silenced female voice: indeed, it could be argued that his work not only incorporates but actually imitates the voice of Marie Lloyd. While this is perhaps most obvious in the Cockney stories because of their similar setting, there are still important thematic links to be drawn between Marie Lloyd's treatment of the oppressed woman and Caradoc Evans's in *My People*.

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[26] 'Lloyd, Marie' in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [accessed 3 September 2010].
[27] 'Lloyd, Marie' in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [accessed 3 September 2010].

There is a traceable prehistory to Evans's literary debut, and his own self-portrait reveals much in that regard. Disconnection is certainly a theme which emerges strongly in accounts – by Evans himself, as well as by others – of the education offered to students in Welsh schools at the end of the nineteenth century. Stephen Knight notes that the Rhydlewis of Evans's youth was then – and remains today – a village set firmly within the Welsh-speaking heartlands of Ceredigion.[28] Evans's recollection of his youth in 'Self-Portrait' is of how one of his

> schoolins [schoolmasters] used to stand sadly in front of me, cut a bit of spanish, pop it into his mouth, scratch his back head [posterior, from the Welsh *pen ôl*] and say
> 'There will be whiskers on eggs before the twelve times in your head.'[29]

Later, Evans notes both that he 'never brought home a certificate merit or moved higher than the second from the bottom of my class and the porridge in the bottomer's head was not done' and that there was an intimate connection between the teachers at school and Nonconformist religion: this latter point was to fuel much of the satirical work he produced later in his career with the *My People* stories.[30] (Of course, while 'Self-Portrait' describes Evans's early life, it was written at the end of his career.) The journey from Rhydlewis schoolboy to Fleet Street man of letters was indeed a long and complex progression; the difficulty of Evans's search for an appropriate voice and an appropriate genre attest to this sense of early dislocation. The opportunities not afforded him, or many of his generation, in youth were to be compensated in London night-classes and, eventually, through working-class literature; the material circumstances attendant on Evans's writing have a direct impact on the texts themselves.

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[28] Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 32.

[29] Evans, 'Self-Portrait', p. 104. Evans notes that 'Another was a whipper-snapper who claimed to be able to count with his eyes shut and sing louder than any other man in the district. He said if there was a twp more twp than me he would rather be Son Prodigal' (p. 104).

[30] Evans, 'Self-Portrait', p. 104.

Added to this early disinclination for formal education at school in Cardiganshire,

Evans's biographers and critics of his work have noted a personal rankle borne by the

young Evans towards an uncle, his mother's wealthy brother, a doctor, who failed to

produce the funds required to send the nephew to secondary school. The uncle, Dr

Joshua Powell (who treated Allen Raine in her final illness in 1908), seems to have

inherited from a family will, while Evans's mother, Mary, received nothing: Evans's

biographer, T. L. Williams, notes that Evans invented a story about Dr Powell's non-

repayment of a loan to his sister, a story related often enough by Evans that he

internalised it and came to believe it to the extent 'subsequently to make Dr Powell into a

hate-symbol'.[31] According to John Harris, the leading scholar of Evans's work, 'He saw

his talents as thwarted for want of a proper education';[32] while his nephew was

apprenticed into drapery, 'Uncle Joshua gathered money and reputation: the two went

hand in hand, material prosperity and public standing.'[33] T. L. Williams notes that Powell

was worked into several of Evans's 'malevolent later characters'.[34] Inadvertently lending a

dimension of Shakespearean tragedy to this context, Williams notes that '[w]ith the father

dead, the family in straitened circumstances, the uncle well off and seeming to the boy to

be overbearing and superior, and, worst of all, to be taking the role of father (for Dr

Powell was kind to Caradoc's mother) we can easily imagine the adverse reaction in the

young mind.'[35] Clearly, something is rotten in the village of Rhydlewis. Much criticism

has focused on the precise nature of this rotten core in discussing Evans's stories as

exposés of the avarice of the peasantry and the hypocrisy of the Nonconformist chapels.

Yet the exposure of this rotten core did not come immediately: Evans initially lacked the

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[31] T. L. Williams, *Caradoc Evans* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press on behalf of the Welsh Books Council, 1970), p. 11.

[32] Harris, 'The Banned, Burned Book of War', p. 10.

[33] Harris, 'The Banned, Burned Book of War', p. 10.

[34] Williams, *Caradoc Evans*, p. 11.

[35] Williams, *Caradoc Evans*, p. 12

skills, the literary voice and also the material means to attack the dark underside and all-pervasive influence of Nonconformity.

When funds for his education were not forthcoming, Evans was apprenticed to the drapery trade. As John Harris relates, 'In early February 1893, soon after his fourteenth birthday, Caradoc left school to work as a draper's assistant in Carmarthen'.[36] Elsewhere, Harris describes that the drapery of Jones Brothers, Carmarthen, was 'owned by distant relatives [and was] where his elder sister, Mary, was already employed. From there he moved to Barry Docks, thence to the celebrated Cardiff establishment of James Howell. By 1899 he had reached London, working first in Kentish Town, next at Wallis's of Holborn, then at the vast Bayswater premises of William Whiteley.'[37] It was in London, 'the Mecca of all drapers',[38] that Evans eventually took up writing; Harris attributes this to a blossoming friendship Evans enjoyed with a fellow Welshman (and fellow native of Ceredigion) working at Whiteley's, Duncan Davies, who took Evans to theatres and second-hand bookshops.[39] Evans himself describes Duncan Davies as

> a very argumentative young man. But he could argue many subjects and was never hackneyed. He took me to the Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, the Cheshire Cheese, where I sat at Dr Johnson's chair, old City churches, Dickens's landmarks, Carlyle's house in Chelsea, and the houses where lived Irving and Ellen Terry and Mrs Patrick Campbell. He showed me the London he loved and seemed to be a part of: and there was born in me a deep and abiding love of London. He introduced me to Hardy's novels, Ragget's stout in a restaurant off Ludgate circus, Defoe's Plague, The Pilgrim's Progress, and to Robert Blatchford's writing in the Clarion. It was Blatchford's simple grandeur that led me to discover the English Bible. So what my schoolins failed to do this young shop-assistant did: educate me.[40]

[36] John Harris, 'Caradoc Evans, 1878-1945: A Biographical Introduction', in Caradoc Evans, *Fury Never Leaves Us*, pp. 9-45 (p. 21).

[37] John Harris, '"Gazing at an Inferno": An Afterword', in Caradoc Evans, *Nothing to Pay* ([1930] New York: New Directions, 1989), pp. 221-37 (p. 223).

[38] Harris, 'The Banned, Burned Book of War', p. 10.

[39] John Harris, 'A Biographical Introduction', p. 24.

[40] Caradoc Evans, 'Self-Portrait', 105-6.

Bound up in this disclosure is much that speaks of the process of becoming a Londoner and subsequently, a London writer. Evans notes that he is an autodidact and that London offers ample opportunities for the would-be writer: the city is imbued with literary landmarks; indeed the city with which Evans falls in love is a literary city – a city of Dickens, Poets' Corner, the Cheshire Cheese. As we have seen, Evans was just one of a mass of provincial immigrants to the city at this time; as Jerry White notes, 'over 1.3 million Londoners in 1901 [were] born in Scotland, Wales and England outside London, compared with 750,000 fifty years before.'[41] Evans's literary awakening links with another important factor in White's analysis, namely the 'momentous influence on the provincial mind of the London writer in the nineteenth century'.[42] Raymond Williams identifies the impact of nineteenth-century urbanisation, noting that 'By the middle of the nineteenth century the urban population of England exceeded the rural population: the first time in human history that this had ever been so, anywhere. [...] By the end of the nineteenth century, the urban population was three-quarters of the whole.'[43] White notes that the nineteenth century saw a growing wave of 'texts that sought to glamorize London and all it had to offer a youngster in search of adventure'; unsurprisingly, it is Dickens who is the primary source of inspiration, 'who most of all fired the imagination of provincials and who spiced their appetite for the fascinating metropolis'.[44] Evans in his self-portrait confessed to his admiration of Dickens, and his widow notes that he kept a framed image of Dickens above his desk wherever he worked throughout his entire career. There is ample opportunity to compare the two men: both were born outside London (or, as Jerry White would have it, both are 'provincials'), and yet made their way there as young men in the eventual hope (and realisation) of being able to earn a living by their pens. As

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[41] White, *London in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Vintage, 2008), p. 102.

[42] White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 103.

[43] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 217.

[44] Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 103

becomes clear from Evans's early published pieces, there is an element of the 'sketch'

present in his oeuvre suggesting an indebtedness to and influence by Dickens's *Sketches by*

Boz.

Stephen Knight describes Caradoc Evans's progression to London via the

> classical site of Welsh respectability, work as a draper's assistant, first in
> Carmarthen and – tracing mercantile colonialism back to its source – then Cardiff
> and then London. Before he could recreate in fiction these two hostile
> environments of home and work, he educated himself in night-classes, another
> classic Welsh lower-class manoeuvre but this time displaced to north London, and
> in 1906 with his new skills he obtained work as a junior journalist in the London
> popular press – a move which matches, almost parodies, the farm to Oxford
> fantasy (and sometime reality) of the gwerin ideal.[45]

The short, concentrated form of the stories renders on a generic level the myopic,

introverted, self-serving nature of the inhabitants of Manteg and the claustrophobia of

the village itself. Combined with this, Evans's appropriation of the soaring rhetorical

cadences of the Bible with an idiosyncratic rendering of the Welsh language focuses the

satire of these stories unwaveringly on to the Nonconformist chapels: the 'vividly

peculiar English idiolect' spoken by his characters depicts 'the inhabitants of west Wales

as morally retarded and viciously cretinous.'[46] Despite the suddenness of the impact of

My People exploding, without warning, in the face of the Welsh Liberal-Nonconformist

establishment, that impact could not have been achieved without Evans's literary

apprenticeship, as Knight and others to have written on Evans have noted. Despite the

intense gaze on Manteg, the London context still intrudes.

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[45] Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. 32. Italics in original.

[46] M. Wynn Thomas, *Corresponding Cultures: The Two Literatures of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), p. 46. The second chapter of Thomas's study, 'Hidden Attachments' – pp. 45-74 – identifies affinities and overlooked shared origins between Welsh- and English-language Welsh literature (often thought to have parted ways after *My People*) in terms of a common assault on Nonconformity. The '*Kulturkampf*' begun with *My People* (p. 46) 'affords only a brilliantly extreme example of that animus against Nonconformity which animated both the best Welsh-language and the best English-language literature of that period' (p. 51). Thomas offers T. Gwynn Jones as a Welsh-language representative of the same movement against Nonconformity.

London Chat

Evans's stories published prior to *My People* demonstrate a coming to terms with exile, containing many of the structural elements which found fuller expression later on. As Evans's own self-portrait and the work of his biographers and critics have noted, he was not a Welsh writer (in the sense that his work did not from the outset deal explicitly with Welsh themes) from the beginning of his career. The autodidact's route through composition classes saw his first offerings focus on the London working-class life which constituted Evans's own immediate circle. The status of *My People* as a text which inherits as well as departs becomes clearer by looking at these earlier stories: the pre-*My People* work bears witness to the influence of Caradoc Evans's London-Welsh context on his work insofar as the geographical distance and the influence of other London-Welsh writers (particularly W. H. Davies) inflect his writing.

These stories were published between 1904 and 1908, mainly in *Chat* magazine, although Evans's first published story, 'A Sovereign Remedy', appeared in *Reynold's Newspaper*. *Chat* was a weekly journal aimed at a male, working-class readership: it actively encouraged its readers to supplement their incomes by contributing articles and stories to the editor, C.A. Farmer. Describing itself as 'The Really New Weekly for Home and Train',[47] *Chat* began publication on 13 October 1906, changing its name to *London Chat* in the first year of its life. The opening number of the paper proclaims that '*Chat* is the Real Self-Help Journal, and I hope you like it';[48] the paper contains advice columns on financial matters of relevance to its readers: the first edition contains an article entitled 'How to Start a Small Shop', accompanied by the claim the '*Chat* is the paper that will teach you money-making every week'.[49] Yet while the paper instructs its readers in how to make money, it

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[47] *Chat*, 13 October 1906, p. 1.
[48] *Chat*, 13 October 1906, p. 1.
[49] *Chat*, 13 October 1906, p. 13.

also offers the opportunity for those readers to earn money by contributing content to future editions. Caradoc Evans was the first to take advantage of this opportunity: publishing under the name 'D. Evans Emmott' he was the 'first winner' of the prize for 'The Five-Guinea Story' and his story, 'King's Evidence', earned him the sum of £5 5s; it was published in the first number of *Chat* on 13 October 1906.[50]

'King's Evidence' is a story of a working-class London family. A wife and daughter welcome the return of Joe Gray, father and husband, to their poor home following his stint at Wormwood Scrubs prison. For Joe, the domestic space to which he returns is indistinguishable from his experience of incarceration at the prison from which he has recently been released: 'He even drew an unfavourable comparison between the chair on which he sat and a similar article in one of His Majesty's prisons'.[51] Joe's speech and manner are coarse and uncouth to the point of violence against his own family: he punches his young son's face. Telling his daughter Ada 'let's 'ave a peep at yer physog', and that she will 'do something better than service', there is a suggestion that he has his mind set on prostituting her.[52] Discovering a two-shilling piece donated to his family in his absence to help buy food for the young son, Alf, Joe takes it in his pocket to the pub. There, he meets the father of a fellow-criminal 'sent down Devonshire for a lifer' on account of Joe's having 'turned King's evidence'.[53] Having given the evidence that sent the accused to jail, Joe is attacked and mortally wounded, presumably by the father of the prisoner, the man he met in the White Horse pub. Passing in the street and witnessing her father's death, Ada 'covered his face in with her apron. She then put her fingers in his

[50] Caradoc Evans (as 'D. Evans Emmott'), 'King's Evidence', *Chat*, 13 October 1906, p. 15. Evans's was the first winning entry for the competition, suggesting that the competition was advertised and publicised before the publication of the first number.

[51] Evans, 'King's Evidence', p. 15.

[52] Evans, 'King's Evidence', p. 15.

[53] Evans, 'King's Evidence', p. 15.

waistcoat pocket and brought out the two shilling piece. She spat on it, placed it in her mouth, and walked slowly home.'[54]

The dark twist at the end of the story is a structural element which was certainly to develop in Evans's later stories, in *My People* and beyond. Another feature which is developed over the course of Evans's career is that of the resistant and long-suffering woman, though less recurrent is the victory of the resourceful and cool-headed Ada over the violent patriarch. The domestic space, in the London stories and the Manteg stories, is violent and oppressive; Joe's protestation, comparing his home with Wormwood Scrubs and concluding that 'one place was as good as another'[55] is an ironic inversion of the order of things which serves to intensify the satire of the male-centred tyrannical family structure. The oppression of the family by the megalomaniac father would reach its high-water mark in the Manteg stories, as pious, hypocritical patriarchs wield Nonconformist religion as a means to exert influence over others more vulnerable than themselves and to follow their own self-seeking greed. Sadrach Danyrefail, the 'Father in Sion' is the most callous patriarch in Evans's entire oeuvre, exercising total control over his young family by invoking the authority of God, the 'Big Man', to justify his brutality (his wife, Achsah, is driven mad from incarceration in the harness-loft).[56] Achsah is one of Evans's many female victims at the hands of a brutal patriarchy, making Ada's recovery of the coin from her dead father's waistcoat a rare triumph for a female character of Evans's, enduring mistreatment at the hands of a violent patriarchal superego.[57] Dickens is also an influence here, both in terms of engaging with lower-class

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[54] Evans, 'King's Evidence', p. 15.

[55] Evans, 'King's Evidence', p. 15.

[56] Caradoc Evans, 'A Father in Sion', in *My People* ([1915] Bridgend: Seren, 2003), pp. 49-56. References to God as the 'Big Man' occur throughout the story, and indeed the collection.

[57] John Harris cites 'The Devil in Eden' as another rare example of a victory for a female character in the Manteg stories. See also Katie Gramich, '"The Madwoman in the Harness-loft": Women and Madness in the Literature of Wales', in *Dangerous Diversity: The Changing Faces of Wales: Essays in Honour of Tudor Bevan*, ed. by Katie Gramich and Andrew Hiscock, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), pp. 20-33.

London and in terms of the narrative voice. The coarseness of Joe's language and behaviour is described at an ironic distance; there is a tension between the implied earthiness of working-class life and a more detached and articulate narrator – this is a manoeuvre drawn from Dickens – used for comic effect:

> In a picturesque, but homely phrase, effectively trimmed with appropriate adjectives, Joe Gray declared that he was feeling far from comfortable. He even drew an unfavourable comparison between the chair on which he sat and a similar article in one of His Majesty's prisons. Mr Gray was justified in employing the illustration, inasmuch as it was only that morning he had completed a nine calendar months' engagement at Wormwood Scrubbs [sic].[58]

Evans lists the works of Edwin Pugh and Arthur Morrison as direct examples which he imitated in the writing of his Cockney stories. Dickens is another acknowledged influence, but the work of George Gissing, George Moore and W. H. Davies might also be compared with Evans's representation of working-class London life and, particularly, in the use of a Cockney idiom. In 'King's Evidence' Joe addresses his daughter Ada as 'Hadar', inserting the aitch he elsewhere drops from words like 'hope', 'history' and 'have'. Jerry White lists 'the absent (sometimes wrongly placed) aspirate' among the many features of the Cockney accent which 'seem all to have been established by 1880, many in place for generations before that'.[59] This Cockney accent, suggests White, is a signifier of the London (and especially the London-born) working classes: 'This was the London dialect as learned in the street and as resolutely resistant to correction in the National, Ragged, Sunday and Board Schools of nineteenth-century London'.[60] While London slang transcended the class divisions within the city, dialect and pronunciation were indisputable signifiers of class: the Cockney accent 'was definitely not the language of the London-born bourgeoisie. [...] No one born into (or aspiring to) a class above the lower

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[58] Evans, 'King's Evidence', p. 15. Wormwood Scrubs, the London prison, is spelt 'Scrubbs' throughout the story.
[59] White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 111-2.
[60] White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 112.

middle could tolerate speech tainted by the common tongue of London.'[61] While

Dickens's influence thus inflects both the form and the content of 'King's Evidence',

Evans's first published story, 'A Sovereign Remedy' (another early story focusing on a

coin) pays specific homage:

> There is a curious, slimy mud in some parts of London that a few hours' rain
> works into a sinister paste that the feet flounder over as if it were the frozen slush
> of winter. Soho is one of these districts, and when rain fell one afternoon in
> November, and the thermometer swelled up to sixty, there were horses down,
> often three together, along Greek-street. Drivers were blasting the Vestry from
> their boxes, and those on foot planted each step in flat, cautious smacks over the
> mud.[62]

This is the first paragraph of Evans's first published story, which appeared anonymously

in *Reynold's Newspaper* on 23 October 1904. Evans's opening recalls the opening passage

of Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852-3), which with its blunt and uncompromisingly

stark first word locates the text firmly in the city:

> London. Michaelmas term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's
> Inn Hall. Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets as if the
> waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be
> wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an
> elephantine lizard up Holborn Hill. [...] Foot passengers, jostling one another's
> umbrellas, in a general infection of ill-temper, and losing their foot-hold at street-
> corners, where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and
> sliding since the day broke (if this day ever broke), adding new deposits to the
> crust upon crust of mud, sticking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and
> accumulating at compound interest.[63]

Dickens is the London novelist nonpareil, and *Bleak House* is among his greatest

renderings of the city, the sheer size of both the metropolis and the text indicating the

extent to which London in both the physical world and in popular consciousness

sprawled in such a way as to resist the ordering logic of author and pedestrian alike. That

Caradoc Evans's first published paragraph should imitate one of the most famous

opening paragraphs in the entire repertoire of London literature speaks not only of a

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[61] White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 112.

[62] Caradoc Evans, 'A Sovereign Remedy' in, *Fury Never Leaves Us*, pp. 49-52 (p. 49). Harris in an editorial note states that the title 'A Sovereign Remedy' was not used 'though as often with Caradoc it is a significant one, "remedy" being meant in its usual sense and as a term in coining'; note, p. 48.

[63] Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* ([1852-3] Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 49.

direct influence of Dickens's work on the mind and ambition of a devoted admirer; it also indicates that the newly-arrived exile, armed with newly-acquired writing skills yet still in search of an adequate voice, turns to the language and form of the new environment. Evans's initial manoeuvre is mimicry of the language and style of his new context.

Evans's *My People* stories constitute a kind of anti-pastoral aesthetic which, however grotesquely imagined, is nevertheless in the tradition of the pastoral: they are a ghastly inversion of the bucolic image of the rural idyll. Nevertheless, as the London-based *Chat* stories show, Evans's initial focus was on working-class life in the city. In a related sense the alternation between country and city can be detected in the work of Evans's friend, and fellow London-Welsh writer, W. H. Davies. Davies's first published work, *The Soul's Destroyer*, takes London as its principal focus; indeed, many of the poems from Davies's early career (as well as *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, of course) focus on the simultaneously dangerous and beguiling city. As Davies's career progressed, his work turned to nature. Broadly speaking – and despite a few notable exceptions – Davies's work rhapsodises about the countryside; it is arguably a turn to the pastoral. Both men move from city to country, albeit with wildly different effects.

Joe Gray's pleasant surprise on finding the two-shilling piece is expressed by means of a comparison which establishes another link between Evans and Davies, particularly at the early stages of their respective careers: 'Bli'me', he cried, 'this is a bit of orlright. A reg'lar Klondyke.'[64] The gold rush at the American Klondyke was a popular attraction in the consciousness of working-class men in the late-nineteenth century: in *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, Davies's super-tramp describes how 'One afternoon, when passing

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[64] Evans, 'King's Evidence', p. 15.

through Trafalgar Square, I bought an early edition of an evening paper, and the first paragraph that met my eye had this very attractive heading – 'A Land of Gold'. It was a description of the Klondyke, and a glowing account of the many good fortunes that daily fell to the lot of hardy adventurers.'[65] From the very centre of London, the mines of the Klondyke in Indiana hold promise and signify an easy fortune to both of these working-class Londoners. Ultimately, Davies's super-tramp was to gain little and lose a leg. Joe Gray, albeit more villainous than Davies's super-tramp, is a similar character: both are tempted by drink, are in and out of prison, and are both in search of a gold rush from which they can reap fabulous benefits without the inconvenience of exerting too much labour. The works of both Davies and Evans look to America and the New World of opportunity as a means of both material and social gain.

'A Sovereign Remedy' opens with the London streets covered with layer upon layer of new-caked mud. The slippery thoroughfares and pavements are both physically and morally hazardous to their pedestrians. As we have seen, this opening paragraph is an echo of the opening passage of Dickens's *Bleak House*, which itself recycles a literary trope detectable in works such as John Gay's *Trivia; or, The Art of Walking the Streets of London*, in which the city's streets pose a dangerous threat to easy access,[66] or, put another way, the hazards and dangers of the metropolis make staying on the straight road a particularly challenging enterprise. Just as in Evans and Dickens, layer upon layer of dirt and mud is deposited on the London streets, and each of these texts can be said to be

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[65] W. H. Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* ([1908] London: Jonathan Cape, 1942), pp. 159-60.
[66] See, for example, Book Three, 'Of Walking the Streets By Night', lines 121-6:
Let not thy vent'rous steps approach too nigh,
Where gaping wide, low steepy cellars lie;
Should thy shoe wrench aside, down, down you fall,
And overturn the scolding huckster's stall,
The scolding huckster shall not o'er thee moan,
But pence exact for nuts and pears o'erthrown.
John Gay, *Trivia: or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London*, 3rd edn (London: Printed for Bernard Lintot, 1730), pp. 52-3.

adding new layers to the literature of the city: as the streets become dirtier so does the literary palimpsest become richer. Financial riches are also a consideration to these stories, and their thematic treatment of money is not divorceable from the material means of their production. As a working-class Londoner, Evans himself was acutely aware of the value of money, and his biographers have noted how his upbringing – and that of the many West Walians who made their way from rural Ceredigion to London – was one of dire poverty.[67] Indeed, the poverty which struck the agricultural community of South West Wales at the end of the nineteenth century,[68] and which coloured Evans's upbringing is, arguably, manifested later on in the greed and corruption of the Manteg populace. Newly arrived in London, Evans's writing is both a thematic treatment of greed and avaricious hypocrisy and a material means of earning money. Little wonder that *My People* was regarded as 'an act of cultural terrorism',[69] and Evans subsequently gained a reputation as 'the betrayer of Wales, a homeland he had traduced in exchange for English gold.'[70] The content of Evans's *London Chat* stories is not divorceable from the material means of production. Evans's writing about the streets of London is in the hope that, rather than being caked in layered mud, they are paved with gold.

'A Sovereign Remedy' trades on this idea. 'Elizabeth Hunt, a physical wreck of fifty', waits in line in a 'damp and dirty' passage for payment from her boss, a German tailor.[71] The middle-aged woman who struggles and sacrifices in the face of adversity is a figure

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[67] Emrys Jones notes, for example, that the Welsh association with the London dairy trade, is one of 'A poor migrant group [that] has taken over a sector of the retail trade which the host population is reluctant to fill; they are satisfied with small returns for very hard work.' See Emrys Jones, 'The Early Nineteenth Century', in *The Welsh in London 1500-2000*, ed. by Emrys Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press on behalf of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 2001), pp. 88-109 (p. 106). John Davies notes that 'the London-Welsh community included 4,000 natives of Cardiganshire who were prominent in the dairying business', and Jones notes again that 'watering [of the milk] was common' (p. 107), often cited as a trend inherited from the poverty of life back in Wales. See John Davies, *A History of Wales* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), p. 443.

[68] See David Jenkins, *The Agricultural Community in South-West Wales at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1971).

[69] John Harris, 'Introduction' to Caradoc Evans, *Capel Sion* (Bridgend: Seren, 2002), p. vii-xx (p. ix).

[70] John Harris, 'Afterword' to *My Neighbours*, pp. 183-200 (p. 183).

[71] Caradoc Evans, 'A Sovereign Remedy' in *Fury Never Leaves Us*, pp. 49-52 (p. 49).

who, as Katie Gramich has shown, recurs throughout Evans's oeuvre, often with radical and revolutionary potential.[72] Having collected her week's payment Elizabeth proceeds to the hospital in order to buy first medicine, 'for the "old man"', then meat 'for all of them'.[73] On her way home from the hospital in Soho Square to 'the cellar in Michael-place, where the children and her sister Sarah and a bed-ridden husband awaited her return',[74] Lizzie slips in the street and drops her sovereign piece; unable to find it, a mysterious stranger walks past, pockets full of gold, and feigns to have recovered Lizzie's lost coin. Shortly afterwards, upon paying for the meat, it is discovered that Lizzie's coin is a counterfeit. Happily, the mysterious benefactor and dispenser of phoney sovereigns returns to Lizzie's rescue from the alerted police, and surrenders, to be led away. 'A Sovereign Remedy' can be read as a prototype of the *My People* material in the sense that there is a concern with the difficulty of telling true from false, genuine from counterfeit. The remedy of the title refers to the restoration of Lizzie Hunt's dilemma: she is ultimately absolved from the guilt of knowingly circulating counterfeit currency: her situation is remedied. As Harris suggests, however, 'remedy' is also a term derived from coining and minting, being as it is the tolerated variation in the standard weight of coins. The story is concerned with how genuine currency is - both in terms of Lizzie's coins and also in terms of the mysterious benefactor who proves to be false in his dealings with her. This is an effect compounded by the mysterious forger's confession:

> His face was ashen and his legs trembling.
> 'It's a mistake,' he said, quietly. 'She dropped a sovereign and I meant to give her this'. He pushed his coin into the woman's hand.
> 'I gave her the wrong one by mistake – that's all.'
> Even while he spoke the constable was watching him narrowly. With the last words he sprang forward, twisted an iron wrist around the man's collar, and threw him backwards across the counter.

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[72] Gramich has read Evans's Manteg stories from a feminist perspective, arguing that the cruelty suffered by women at the hands of the patriarchal Nonconformist hegemony serves to heighten the work's critique; in this way, Evans is recuperated as a proto-feminist writer. See Katie Gramich, "'The Madwoman in the Harness Loft'".

[73] Evans, 'A Sovereign Remedy', p. 49.

[74] Evans, 'A Sovereign Remedy', p. 49.

> 'I think I know you,' he said, grimly.
> 'You haven't done anything clever,' choked the other, half strangled. 'I couldn't let 'er be copped for nothink at all. I'll go quietly,' he added.[75]

The story concludes shortly after this passage, as the guilty man is led away by police and Lizzie accuses him of trying to rob her, to which the forger replies, 'half in amazement and half in disgust', '"Well that's all right"' as he 'passed on into the night'.[76] The denouement of the story brings to a head the narrative's preoccupation with what is genuine and fake. In his reappearance the forger endeavours to remedy Lizzie's situation by claiming to have made a mistake in giving her a counterfeit coin. His speech itself is disingenuous, fake: to pursue the theme deriving from the title of the story, there is a weight to his words not equal to the reality of the situation. In a strange and perhaps unexpected turn for the chivalrous, the forger assumes the role of the good thief, confessing his guilt lest the woman be arrested 'for nothink'. The confluence of the language of finance and coinage with the language of the law is continued when

> The shopman slowly grasped the situation.
> 'I won't charge the woman,' he said to the constable.[77]

This general concern with feigning, forging and counterfeit ethics re-emerges in the Manteg stories, though, of course, without any of the roguish magnanimity of the forger in 'A Sovereign Remedy'. The villain of 'A Sovereign Remedy' is arguably redeemed by his confession and surrender in a way which is completely absent from the *My People* stories. While the forger's guilt is absolved by his confession, the patriarchs of the *My People* stories invoke the language of religion and Nonconformity in order to justify an institutionalised form of greed and avarice.

'King's Evidence', similarly, sets out *in utero* the themes which would preoccupy Evans's work throughout his literary career. This and the other early Cockney stories are in a

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[75] Evans, 'A Sovereign Remedy', p. 52.
[76] Evans, 'A Sovereign Remedy', p. 52.
[77] Evans, 'A Sovereign Remedy', p. 52.

generic and structural sense versions of *My People avant la lettre*; but their status as precursors can only be granted after the event. The bitter conclusion of the story and the unadorned, bluntness of its narration is also arguably a common trope. Stephen Knight describes Evans's stories as 'generically tales, often just sketches, of a folk':[78] this assessment holds for Evans's London stories, like 'King's Evidence' and 'A Sovereign Remedy' as well as for collections like *My People*, *Capel Sion* and *My Neighbours*. On a generic level there is a linked sense of a moral which is offered by the stories: Joe Gray's unlamented demise invites a moral reading – it is a kind of fable, of sorts, and this is certainly a feature in common with the grotesque morals explored in *My People*. The heavily applied Cockney idiolect of the Grays is a feature of the London material which can be contrasted with the queer speech of the inhabitants of Manteg.

The contrast between London and West Wales shows both sides of the same coin: Wales, and specifically Welsh Nonconformity, can be pinpointed as the two elements present in *My People* and *Capel Sion* which are absent in the *Chat* material. Evans's voice emerges, and his satire is strongest, when directed towards a Welsh Nonconformist context. Evans's notorious voice emerges when the satire of violence and patriarchy is transposed from the poverty-struck homes of the London working class to the mud-walled cottages of the West-Wales countryside. It is the Welsh context which, in the structure of the stories, represents the shift from pre-emergent structure of feeling into the new emergent literary tradition. The theme of ethics, forgery and falsity present in embryonic form in 'A Sovereign Remedy', and the critique of patriarchal violence and greed witnessed in 'King's Evidence' are developed in a more powerful sense in *My People* when focused on the peasantry of West Wales using a (reappropriated) form of religious

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[78] Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. 31.

and biblical language – as evinced by Evans's self-confessed indebtedness to the Book of

Genesis.

Caradoc Evans: Super-Tramp

For the time being, in the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century, and with

My People still around ten years away, Evans continued his literary apprenticeship in the

pages of *Chat* magazine. Another early story which continues Evans's experimentation

with the moralistic short story is 'The Prodigal's Return'.[79] The story's title suggests a

move towards the parabolic or mock-parabolic style writ large in *My People*. The prodigal

of the story's title is Ted Young, who tramps his way from Devonshire to London. The

tramp figure is one of many recurring tropes in Evans's early work, and is one of the

more readily identifiable elements his work shares with that of W. H. Davies. Ted

eventually arrives in London, penniless, drunk and destitute, searching the streets for old

friends and acquaintances. Unable to find any fellow tramps or friends previously known

to him, Ted returns to his parents' home, a general store on Pitman Street, and addresses

himself to his father, Jos:

> 'I'm – I'm yer long lost son.'
> The elder man fixed on his spectacles.
> 'I 'ave found the water of life,' Ted resumed. 'I 'ave come back ter be a comfort
> to my father and mother in their old age.'[80]

Despite his parents' delight, Ted's return proves to be ill-fated and short-lived. Ted is

later arrested – he was '[d]runk, wanted to fight, and broke a window'[81] – and his father is

left to pay his bail of ten pounds. Raiding the life savings, Ted's mother laments: '"e is

our own son. It's very 'ard if we can't stand by 'im in a bit of trouble"', she wails,

reminding her husband '"Me and you is only common folk."'[82] During the night after his

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[79] Caradoc Evans (as 'D. Evans Emmott'), 'The Prodigal's Return', *Chat*, 8 December 1906, p. 197.
[80] Evans, 'The Prodigal's Return', p. 197.
[81] Evans, 'The Prodigal's Return', p. 197.
[82] Evans, 'The Prodigal's Return', p. 197.

return home Ted takes all his parents' remaining savings and disappears, leaving them, pathetically, calling on the 'Lord Gawd' to 'be good to our little Ted. He's weak in body. Soften his 'art and bring 'im back to us.'[83] It is on this mawkish and sentimental note that the story concludes, leaving the impression of an inverted biblical parable. The title of the story draws attention to the plot's darkly reworked narration of the prodigal's return. The Parable of the Prodigal Son appears in Luke 15. 11-32, and tells of the return of the spendthrift son to his father's house, where his return is celebrated with the killing of the fatted calf and the dressing of the prodigal in fine robes. Ted is the Prodigal of Evans's story who is introduced as a tramp figure who 'had tramped from Devonshire to London, and financially was no better off than the day he started.'[84] According to Luke the prodigal son is also seen as a super-tramp figure: having claimed his share of his inheritance, he 'took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living';[85] his brother (having stayed and worked at home all the while) complains that the prodigal had squandered the father's wealth by 'living with harlots'.[86] The biblical prodigal son, his fortune spent, eventually finds work in his exile from farmers who send him into the fields to tend to pigs;[87] Ted, too, finds agricultural work on his travels as 'Farmers sympathetically regarding his miserable appearance, offered him jobs, which on account of a "weak heart, of a longing to see his wife and children", and also of an inborn aversion to any form of physical exertion, he had been compelled to refuse.'[88] Both Ted and the prodigal son are brought home by the problem of acute poverty and hardship they face in exile – the former on account of the impecunious existence of the tramp, the latter as a result of frivolous living and famine. Ted's return elicits a response

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[83] Evans, 'The Prodigal's Return', p. 197.
[84] Evans, 'The Prodigal's Return', p. 197.
[85] Luke 15. 13, taken from the King James Version. All future biblical quotations derive from this translation unless stated otherwise.
[86] Luke 15. 30.
[87] Luke 15. 15.
[88] Evans, 'The Prodigal's Return', p. 197.

of sincere joy from his parents in much the same way as that of the father of the Prodigal

Son, and, indeed, Ted's own words are couched in a similarly biblical tone:

> 'I 'ave found the water of life', Ted resumed. 'I 'ave come back ter the comfort to my father and mother in their old age.
> [...]
> 'Down't arsk me where I've been — the past is blotted out. I'm washed with the water of right'us'ness.'[89]

Ted's penitence on his return makes him the avatar of his biblical counterpart, who

exclaims to his father, upon his return, '"Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy

sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."'[90]

Ultimately, however, Ted's words of penitence ring hollow. As the chapter (they are

called chapters, but in a story this short they are more like demarcated sections) titles of

Evans's story indicates, Ted Young is a prodigal son who, after his 'Conversion', suffers a

'Relapse', making off with his parents' money-box of savings. This, of course, is the dark

twist of the biblical narrative attempted by Evans's story. The biblical story's structure of

errancy, repentance and return is extended in 'The Prodigal's Return' by repeated errancy

which casts a shadow over Ted's entire story: the repentance rings hollow because

ultimately the prodigality of the son is shown to be as acute at the end of the story as it

was at the start. What emerges from this story's structure in terms of its relation to *My*

People is its exploration and use of the language of the Bible. There is a contrast between

the simple and humble use of religious language by Jos and his wife and the cynical,

manipulative use of Biblical language by their scoundrel son, Ted. Indeed, the

exploitative and self-serving son renders the naïve faith of his parents (at best) misguided

and (at worst) deluded. Ted's mother's thankful exclamation to her husband that '"'E

[Ted] 'as answered our prayers'" on his return, and the parents' abiding yet unfounded

faith in their son's good nature suggests that their idealism is an out-dated philosophy in

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[89] Evans, 'The Prodigal's Return', p. 197.
[90] Luke 15. 21.

a cynical world. The story's representation of Ted is an important precedent for *My People* insofar as his use of religious language serves to justify his actions (in his repentance and conversion in front of his father) while simultaneously furthering his own ends (his return to the family is only brought about so that he can deceive his parents out of their hard-earned savings). Ted's claim "'I 'ave come back to be a comfort to my mother and father in their old age'" recalls the fifth commandment's instruction to 'Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.'[91] This brings about the conclusion of the second chapter of the story, with Ted's mother giving thanks that the Lord has softened her son's heart and brought him home to Jos, Ted's father, affirming that "'"E 'as answered our prayers.'" Of course the fact that the final chapter of the story is entitled 'The Relapse' suggests that the prodigal's return is soon to be followed by his departure again. The conclusion of the story sees Jos, on his knees, echoing his words at the end of the previous chapter, except that, now, his son has made off again with the family savings:

> 'O Lord Gawd', he cried, 'be good to our little Ted. He's weak in body. Soften his 'art and bring him back to us.'[92]

Both of Jos's expostulations at the end of the penultimate and final chapters echo the father's words to the faithful son who stayed at home at the end of the Parable of the Prodigal Son: 'It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.'[93] While the parable and the penultimate chapter of 'The Prodigal's Return' end with the return of the lost son, an ironic shadow is cast backward from the conclusion to the story's final chapter because the same language – indeed the same phrases of softening the heart and bringing the son

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[91] Exodus 20. 12. See also the words of the Parable of the Prodigal Son: 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee' (Luke 15. 18).

[92] Evans, 'The Prodigal's Return', p. 197.

[93] Luke 15. 32.

home – are present in both texts. The language of the Bible is shown to be a tool which can be wielded to exploit the poor and their naïve faith.

Looking back at 'The Prodigal's Return' with the benefit of the hindsight afforded by *My People*, some important links – generic, structural and plot-based – emerge. Generically, the short story is a form which is conducive to the development of Evans's satire: the abbreviated form means that the focus on the single family can be more closely concentrated. John Harris has noted Evans's use of the short story genre for his first three books, noting that Andrew Melrose, the publisher, was taking a financial risk in publishing the short-story collections – notoriously commercially unsuccessful.[94] The structure of the stories fits in this sense – time and again, Evans's stories focus on a small cast of characters and end with an abrupt, dark and unexpected twist: the short-story form is therefore generically well suited to such darkly satirical turns.

What is absent from the London-based *Chat* stories, but is present in *My People*, is the Welsh context as manifested specifically in the guise of the West-Wales peasantry and the religion of the Welsh Nonconformist Chapels. While 'The Prodigal's Return' makes use of Biblical language and rhetoric to achieve its satirical effects, the ultimate impact of the story is to cast Ted Young as a free radical whose villainy is individual and idiosyncratic. As several commentators on Caradoc Evans's work have noted, the satire of *My People* and *Capel Sion* comes about because of the focus on the people of the West Wales peasantry and the extrapolated concern with what John Harris calls their 'moral darkness' and 'religious tyranny'.[95] The figure of the Nonconformist minister and the setting of the chapel elevate the satire (which, in 'The Prodigal's Return' is focused mainly on Ted

[94] Harris notes that 'publishing wisdom held that short stories had no marked appeal'. See 'The Banned, Burned Book of War', p. 35.
[95] Harris, 'Introduction' to *Capel Sion*, p. vii.

Young) to the level of a critique of the entire hegemonic structure. At this embryonic

stage in Evans's career, the Welsh peasantry is not present: intriguingly, reference is made

to Ted Young drinking a can of milk stolen from outside his parents' shop, and, as

Emrys Jones and John Davies have noted, the London dairy trade during the nineteenth

century was an identifiably Welsh industry in the city. While the Nonconformist chapel is

also absent from 'The Prodigal's Return', there is a critique of the hypocritical and

manipulative use of the rhetoric of Christian morality and those who wield it for their

own ends. 'The Prodigal's Return' trains its gaze in this regard toward the Salvation

Army, and this is a feature which can helpfully be linked to other Welsh writing in

London during the period:

> One night he stood dejectedly outside the Golden Harp in Bolsover Street
> listening to the Salvation Army officer. [...]
> Mr Young removed his stubby clay pipe, at which he had been sucking in vain,
> and hurled it at the officer with a derisive remark.
> 'Oh, you miserable sinner,' cried the Salvationist. 'Why don't you give your heart
> to God? He'll wash it for you.'
> 'It's as clean as yours, Gasbags,' said Ted, indignantly.[96]

The detail, as well as allowing Ted his truculent retort for the reader's amusement, forges

links with W. H. Davies's *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*. The similarities between Ted

Young and W. H. Davies's super-tramp bring the two men's work into contact with each

other and a nascent Welsh writing in English. Despite Belinda Humfrey's claims to the

contrary, there are similarities between Evans's work and that of his contemporaries. As

previously mentioned, Davies's *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* similarly takes

exception to the Salvation Army:

> The officers in charge were, according to my first opinion, hypocrites; which
> seemed to be verified some time after from Head Quarters, for both the Captain
> and his Lieutenant were dismissed from the Army. [...]
> As for the Lieutenant, he was very gentle and fervent in prayer, more so than any
> man I have ever heard, but in conversation he had not a civil word for anyone,
> except, of course, his superior officer.[97]

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[96] Evans, 'The Prodigal's Return', p. 197.
[97] Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, p. 197. Davies's super-tramp recounts his experiences with
the Salvation Army in Chapter 22 of *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, pp. 196-207.

Ted Young and Davies's super-tramp are clearly analogous figures in terms of their vocation as tramps and their attitudes towards the perceived hypocrisy of religious language as espoused by the Salvation Army and, to some degree, Nonconformity.[98] The story is an early example of the combination of Nonconformity, the London context and the return to the family of an absent son or daughter. In this regard it is a similar structure to a later story of Evans's from his 1919 collection, *My Neighbours*: indeed, 'Unanswered Prayers', the title of the later story, echoes Jos's thanks for Ted's return in 'The Prodigal's Return'. The story concerns two god-fearing individuals, Tim and Martha, and their absent daughter, Winnie, a maid who is in prison, having been framed for theft by her employer. Winnie's absence is thus foisted upon her by a woman of higher social class, rather than – as in the case of Ted Young – owing to her own greed. Her parents are the caretakers of the Welsh Chapel in King's End, London, and it is their prayers which remain unanswered, as the dramatic first paragraph of the story indicate:

> When Winnie Davies was let out of prison, shame pressed heavily on her feelings; and though her mother Martha and her father Tim prayed almost without ceasing, she did not come home. It was so that one night Martha watched for her at a window and Tim prayed for her at the door of the Tabernacle, and a bomb fell upon the ground that was between them, and they were both destroyed.[99]

This opening frames the narrative: the story which follows leads up to this destructive denouement. Tim and Martha have been keen to conceal their daughter's imprisonment from the chapel elders; when the secret is finally uncovered they are cast out: they remain outside the chapel in the vain hope that Winnie will return (Tim has mis-counted the length of his daughter's imprisonment). The story concludes with Tim praying at the chapel door: unlike the reader he is unaware of his impending demise. In this regard

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[98] Davies's super-tramp recalls his grandmother's 'very strong opinions about the stage' – a career pursued by a cousin who, had they not been related, 'would have been considered a sinner too far advanced for prayer' (Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, p. 21). Elsewhere, as we have seen, the super-tramp recounts how 'Life was very irksome to me in this period [childhood and adolescence], being led to chapel morning and evening on Sundays, and led back; having the mortification of seeing other boys of the same age enjoying their liberty' (Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, p. 30).

[99] Caradoc Evans, 'Unanswered Prayers', in *My Neighbours*, pp. 125-35 (p. 127).

there is a structural similarity to 'The Prodigal's Return', which concludes with Jos praying for Ted's return. Both sets of parents' prayers remain unanswered: Tim's return is soon followed by his subsequent departure; Tim and Martha's prayers do not reach their addressee before the falling bomb reaches them.

Evans's early stories explore the ethics of family relations in the context of working-class London. In a specific sense, Evans's tramp stories are also explorations of ethical codes and rules, and the title of a story published in July 1907 might stand as indicative of that theme. 'Wot's the Good of Washing?' was published in *Chat* magazine on 6 July 1907 and features a conversation between an interviewer and a tramp (both unnamed) as recounted by a third-person narrator. The main character 'was an excellent species of dissolute tramp',[100] and the sketch proceeds to outline in a humorous and ironic tone the codes by which tramp life is conducted. Complaining of the flies that accost his face, the tramp laments that he 'Don't know why they allays make fer me faice', and, when asked about 'the water cure', replies to his interlocutor

> '[...N]othin' ain't no good. As fer water, young feller, I'm sick of it. That I am.
> Wot's the good of washing yer faice in the morning?' He fixed his beady eyes on
> the listener in the manner of one that has scored a point. 'Y'are dirty afore yer
> knows where y'are. Ain't yer?'[101]

At the head of the page on which this story appears is the slogan 'Laughs on Every Line'; Evans's story occupies half of the page, and the bottom half of the page is taken up by short, pithy, epigrammatic or ironic sketches or vignettes, as well as a poem entitled 'The Good of Laughter'.[102] At the foot of the page is an offer for the reader to 'Insure your

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[100] Caradoc Evans (writing as 'D.E. Emmott'), 'Wot's the Good of Washing? A Humorous Sketch', in *London Chat*, 6 July 1907, p. 52.

[101] Evans, 'Wot's the Good of Washing?', p. 52.

[102] Among these epigrams are 'A physician is a man who pours drugs of which he knows little into the body of a man of which he knows less', and 'Time heals all things, except a pair of boots; he leaves the bootmaker to heel those.' *London Chat*, 6 July 1907, p. 52.

wages by signing the Coupon on page 69'.[103] Placed in this context, 'Wot's the Good of

Washing?' emerges as a contribution to and a reflection on the struggles of working-class

Londoners; juxtaposed on this page is a concern with earning – and insuring – an

income, with a distinctly working-class humour and voice: many of the anonymously

authored epigrams and sketches lampoon businessmen, managers and clerks as well as

provincials like a 'Scotch farmer' or, in a later story, the swindling and deceitful

proprietor of a sea-side guesthouse.[104]

It is eventually revealed that there is little good in washing one's face on account of an

unfortunate experience endured by Alf, a fellow-tramp, whose clean and newly-washed

face identified him as the thief of a bar of soap (and a watch belonging to a parson):

> 'But what has all this to do with water?', asked the interviewer.
> 'Y' silly, fat-'eaded puddin' faiced son of a cuckoo', he said, 'carn't yer see further
> than yer pug ole nose? W'y, if pore Alf 'adn't a-washed 'is dial, the bloom'n' old
> passon wouldn't 'ave tacked onter 'im likes. And Alf wouldn't ave borrerred 'is
> bloom'n' ole watch.'[105]

This remarkable speech is another example in Evans's early work of a peculiar,

idiosyncratic idiom spoken by lower-class characters; rural West Wales is not present in

this story, but there are correspondences between the peculiar dialect spoken by the

tramp characters and the Manteg peasantry: in fact, 'cuckoo' is an insult used in the

Manteg-based stories, such as the *My Neighbours* story 'Treasure and Trouble', in which

Dan admonishes his brother, Aben: "Crow you do like a cuckoo".[106] Alf's misfortunes,

and the desirability of having a dirty rather than clean face recall the unorthodox ethical

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[103] *London Chat*, 6 July 1907, p. 52.

[104] For the latter story see Caradoc Evans (writing as 'D.E. Emmott'), 'Hopkins on Holiday: His Expectations and Realisations' in the summer number of *London Chat*, 3 August 1907. Incidentally, Davies's *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* concludes with a description of an irascible landlady who on a whim orders the eponymous super-tramp to quit his rented lodgings, to the extent that 'the worldly wisdom contained in the simple words – "Never live in a house next door to your landlady or landlord" [...] deserves to become a proverb.' See *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, p. 306 and, generally, the final chapter, 'A House to Let', pp. 301-7.

[105] Evans, 'Wot's the Good of Washing?', p. 52.

[106] Evans, 'Treasure and Trouble', in *My Neighbours*, pp. 71-9 (p. 76).

codes by which Davies's super-tramp conducts himself. For example, Davies's super-tramp discusses how on his American journeys it would be preferable to be arrested upon arrival in a new town because, during winter, some weeks' incarceration in the local gaol is preferable to life on the streets; in a symbiotic relationship, the local police's crime-detection rates are favourably improved. In a similar vein, Davies's super-tramp remembers how he and a fellow tramp would sing – badly and loudly – for the pennies of passers by and nearby inhabitants; bad singing was likelier to elicit remuneration (and an instruction to move on) than any more tuneful turning. Indeed, in his *Western Mail* article, Caradoc Evans himself shows his awareness of this element in Davies's life and work, noting that 'As a tramp and a beggar he failed only at gridling – which is to sing hymns in suburban streets, in a voice which sounds as if the singer suffers from a stitch in his side.'[107]

Evans's Manteg stories are notable for their unremitting, almost unblinking gaze at the peasantry of a single rural West Wales village. By focusing unflinchingly on the single village, with inhabitants whose world view extends only as far as College Carmarthen or a draper's shop in Llanelli, Evans intensifies his satire of the introvertedness of the Welsh peasantry.[108] Nevertheless, one story in *My People*, 'The Devil in Eden', introduces an outsider figure in the form of Michael, a tramp who arrives in Manteg yet who is ultimately identified as 'a fallen angel' who is outwitted by Dinah and the people of Manteg.[109] On arrival in Manteg, Michael is greeted by Ianto who claims that 'This is the

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[107] Caradoc Evans, 'Tramp and Poet: How Fame Came to a Newport Man: Adventurous Career', *Western Mail*, 15 January 1916, p. 7.

[108] Eben, in 'The Talent Thou Gavest' is sent to the theology college at Carmarthen and Dan, in the story 'As it is Written', 'is in a shop draper in Llanelly', whence he returns to Manteg with Alice, 'the owner of the nice shop draper'. See Caradoc Evans, 'The Talent Thou Gavest', in *My People*, pp. 73-80 and 'As it is Written', in *My People*, pp. 120-6 (pp. 125, 126).

[109] Evans, 'The Devil in Eden', in *My People*, pp. 88-93. John Harris describes how 'Manteg outwits a fallen angel' in 'The Banned, Burned Book of War', pp. 30-1. In the same essay Harris identifies Dinah as 'Caradoc's New Woman – intelligent, watchful, sexually active, and firm in the faith – the kind who in the later fiction increasingly gain victory' (p. 31).

Garden of Eden. This is the beginning of the world. Goodness me, here was put breath

into clay; here God gave Adam the tongue that I am speaking now.'[110] Earlier in the

conversation Ianto exclaims

> 'Not religious are your words, man. What for you don't know that you utter these
> vain things in the Garden of Eden? Open your eyes, and look you. Does not this
> river break out into four little heads? Saw you Shop Rhys as you came by? There
> the Creator placed Adam, and was not Adam the first sinner? Behind you is the
> evil tree, boy bach. See you how crooked the old trunk is! And here just is the
> spring that gave Eva fresh water to brew tea.'[111]

This introverted world view, where the Tree of Knowledge is no further away than the

adjacent field, is thrown into sharper relief by the arrival of one from outside Manteg

society.

> On the afternoon of the second Sunday after his coming he fondled Dinah and
> made mischief with her, and when they had committed their sin, the woman was
> revengeful, and she said to him:
> 'Go your way! Take to your dunghill! You lout! For sure I will shout your
> wickedness.' She seized his head and clawed his scalp, until the tramp's hair was
> dyed red.[112]

Following this dramatic and violent episode Dinah lies with Michael, whereafter he does

not leave. One evening, as Michael sleeps at the fireside

> Dinah turned around, and she beheld that Michael's feet were cloven hoofs, and
> that from his head there came forth two horns. In the twinkling of an eye she
> knew whom she had been entertaining. Hastening into the lower parlour, she
> placed the palms of her hands on the cover of her Bible and prayed:
> 'In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, get thee behind me, Satan.
> Jesus bach, be with your ruler in Capel Sion. Amen.'[113]

When, with a mischievous tone of voice, Gwyn Jones lists and then dismisses the

credentials of the pretenders to Caradoc Evans's crown as inaugurator of twentieth-

century Anglo-Welsh literature, he argues about W. H. Davies: 'if Davies was not always

well-bred and gentlemanly, he'd written a lot of nice poems about cows and flowers and

hiraeth for the sweet days that have been, with a lot of Welsh place-names in them – and

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[110] Evans, 'The Devil in Eden', p. 89.
[111] Evans, 'The Devil in Eden', p. 89.
[112] Evans, 'The Devil in Eden', p. 91.
[113] Evans, 'The Devil in Eden', p. 92.

on the occasions when he wasn't nice, well, he was half-English, wasn't he? and had a

wooden leg – or was it a cloven hoof? – into the bargain.'[114] Curiously, according to

Jones's account, W. H. Davies himself is a devil in Eden: Edenic in his construction of

rural Wales and devilish in his subversion of it. Evans's story introduces an actual cloven-

hoofed devil into Edenic west Wales; it is a literal rendering of the collection's subversion

of the pastoral mode at large. The character of Michael, a tramp, chimes with Jones's

assessment of W. H. Davies and shows Evans's inheritance of pre-existing literary

structures of feeling. The judgment made by Dinah 'in the twinkling of an eye' recalls the

Last Judgment and Christ's victory over Death as recorded by Paul the Apostle:

> [50]Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.
> [51]Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,
> [52]In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.
> [53]For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.
> [54]So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.
> [55]O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?[115]

And so, Michael is left in Manteg, fetching water from the well with a porous vessel in

perpetuity: like Achilles' pursuit of the tortoise, it is a task he is incapable of ever

achieving, binding him to seeming eternity under the watch of Dinah and Manteg as

punishment for his lascivious ways. Dinah keeps Michael under her authority, endlessly

fetching water from a well in a cinder sifter: 'On dark nights she goes to the well and

mocks Michael, who until he performs the task that is set him, will remain upon the earth

in the flesh of a tramp.'[116] Michael, the devil-tramp in Eden, is mockingly described as the

Archangel Michael, the biblical commander of God's Army.

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[114] Jones, *The First Forty Years*, pp. 7-8.
[115] 1 Corinthians 15. 50-5.
[116] Evans, 'The Devil in Eden', p. 93.

Just as, in Evans's oeuvre, the treatment of the figure of the tramp descends from

humorous rogue to one employed for pointed satirical effect, so too does the generic

impetus shift from the humorous sketch to the dramatic. This shift in emphasis is

indicated in the title of a later story, 'At the Feet of the Virgin'.[117] The story opens with a

figure who becomes increasingly familiar to readers of Evans's work – namely a feeble

old woman, a match-seller in this case – clutching the railings of a church. She is moved

on from her position by a policeman, who accuses her of drunkenness. '[W]retched,

filthy, verminous',[118] the old woman tries the policeman's patience; as she is moved on

she falls into the gutter, where she is subjected to the jibes and amusement of the

'mirthful policeman' and the 'witty clerks, who were prepared to miss their homeward

trains rather than lose the fun the ridiculous match-seller was sure of creating.'[119] To the

disappointment of the assembled onlookers, the old woman dies in the ditch (another

trope which was to recur in Evans's later work); in a sentimental final detail, a boy, who

is later identified as the woman's grandson, having witnessed his grandmother's sad

demise, lights a candle for her at the nearby Catholic church, whereafter he drifts out of

consciousness (whether he is dead or asleep is uncertain). 'At the Feet of the Virgin' is, as

proclaimed by its subtitle, a sketch; it is a short piece, approaching a short story.[120]

Evans's later work contains other old and oppressed women: the self-sacrificing figure of

Nanni in 'Be this her Memorial' is an obvious example. The old match-seller's death in

the ditch sets a precedent for the deaths of other Evans characters: Rachel in 'A Father in

Sion' 'developed fits; while hoeing turnips in the twilight of an afternoon she shivered

and fell, her head resting in the water ditch that is alongside the hedge.'[121] Her father,

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[117] Caradoc Evans (as 'D. E. Emmott'), 'At the Feet of the Virgin: A Dramatic Sketch', in *London Chat*, 9 November 1907, p. 495.
[118] Evans, 'At the Feet of the Virgin', p. 495.
[119] Evans, 'At the Feet of the Virgin', p. 495.
[120] See J.A. Cuddon's definition in *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, rev. edn, rev. by C.E. Preston (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 833.
[121] Evans, 'A Father in Sion', in *My People*, pp. 49-56 (p. 53).

Sadrach, the Father in Sion, taking a cart-load of manure along the route, calls to his still and prostrate daughter to wake up, oblivious to or (more likely) uncaring that Rachel has drowned in the ditchwater. On his return, having emptied his cart, Sadrach realises that his daughter has died and 'cast Rachel's body into the cart'.[122]

There are clear structural similarities between the fate of Rachel in 'A Father in Sion' and the old woman in 'At the Feet of the Virgin'. Both are women who work hard for their living: the London woman is a match-seller (a vocation not dissimilar to some of those pursued by W. H. Davies's super-tramp) while Rachel works on Danyrefail farm, the family holding. Both struggle under the weight of the hardship of their lives and develop fits and nervous disorders: both consequently meet pitiful ends in the ditch, cast off from life's main thoroughfares, from where they are mocked or treated with a heartless contempt by men who enjoy higher social standing. Similarly, Nanni in 'Be this her Memorial' is Caradoc Evans's best-known female character and meets the most famous end of any character in Welsh writing in English: in sacrificing all she has in order to buy the departing minister a gift of a Bible, Nanni is reduced to eating roasted rats. In a grotesque denouement, the minister pays Nanni a visit, there to discover rats beginning to consume her body. As noted in the previous chapter, this horrific detail is uncannily similar to W. H. Davies's poem 'The Rat', in which the rat, seeing an old woman near death is keen to 'pick at one of her cheek-bones'.[123] 'At the Feet of the Virgin' discusses the fate of the urban lower-class woman, while Davies's 'The Rat' does not give an explicit confirmation of its location (though references to the pothouse where the old woman's husband drinks and the soldier at whom the daughter winks may suggest an urban setting); 'Be this her Memorial' is ensconced firmly in a Welsh setting in order that

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[122] Evans, 'A Father in Sion', p. 54.
[123] W. H. Davies, 'The Rat', in *Collected Poems of W. H. Davies* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1943), p. 273.

the satire of the tyrannical hold of Nonconformist patriarchal hegemony be more acutely

directed.

The mirth and amusement of the city clerks and police at the sight of the old woman

match-seller's death in the ditch sets a precedent for the critique of gender relations in

Evans's work. The attitudes of the assembled menfolk towards the old woman also

introduces a precedent – most famously developed later in the figure of Achsah in 'Be

this Her Memorial' – of the incarceration by officially sanctioned male authority of

women deemed deviant, undesirable or, often, mad. The policeman who attempts to

move the old woman on shares several jokes with the assembled male spectators: that

'she's 'ad too much drink', that 'She's blindo [...] absolutely blind to the world' and that

she has 'got a blessed cheek' to claim 'she ain't boozed'.[124] The free indirect discourse

used in the story also helps – literally – to keep the woman in the ditch: 'There was

something inexpressibly comic in the expression on her face: her toothless gums were

apart, her wrinkled, pointed chin rested ludicrously on her tattered bodice, and her eyes

looked like those of a frightened dog.'[125] The old woman is bestialised by the description:

later, a clerk pushes her supporting hand away from her as she attempts to get up with

the end of his umbrella, precipitating the fall – on her face – which proves to be the

lethal blow (though this, again, is applauded as a humorous jape).[126]

As the old woman is raised, once more, from the ground by the policeman, she falls

again, and dies. In raising her, the constable dismisses her affliction as the actions of a

drunk unsteady on her feet, and endeavours to take the woman to the police station.

Importantly, the woman's presence on the street is deemed undesirable or deviant and

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[124] Evans, 'At the Feet of the Virgin', p. 495.

[125] Evans, 'At the Feet of the Virgin', p. 495.

[126] The detail anticipates the Respected Josiah Bryn-Bevan prising apart 'with the ferrule of his walking-stick' the clasped dead hands of Nanni in 'Be this her Memorial'. See Evans, 'Be this her Memorial', p. 112.

this, in the eyes of the patriarchy, is deemed to be sufficient cause for her incarceration: it is a thematic structure which is developed, in a rural context, in 'A Father in Sion'. In that story, Achsah, wife of Sadrach, is locked in the harness loft because her husband designates her as mad. As Katie Gramich has discussed, Achsah's motherhood (she has eight children) is identified by Sadrach as the cause of her (supposed) madness.[127] Achsah is thus locked in the harness loft, 'Wherefore to her husband she became as a cross, to her children as one forgotten, to everyone living in Manteg and in the several houses scattered on the banks of Avon Bern as Achsah the madwoman.'[128] Achsah is allowed out only once a week 'for an airing', by Sadrach, who drives her out into the fields with a cow's halter over her shoulders.'[129] Achsah is eventually driven to actual madness by this treatment.[130] Though not mad, the old woman in 'At the Feet of the Virgin' is nevertheless accused of drunkenness and intoxication of which the men in the story are the only judges: her drunkenness is foisted upon her externally. Like Achsah, who wears the cow's halter and sleeps on straw and sackcloth, the old match-seller is also made bestial by the male gaze upon her and must, as a consequence, be dominated and ultimately nullified.

The theme of madness in Evans's work is explored in another direction in the article entitled 'Royalty "In Retirement"', published on 25 May 1907 in the *London Chat*. It is a short journalistic sketch about what happens to nobility, aristocrats, and members of royal families who are said to have retired:

> When a Royal personage incurs the displeasure of the reigning sovereign by some
> act of disobedience, such as contracting a mesalliance, he may be immediately

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[127] Gramich, '"The Madwoman in the Harness-loft"', p. 21.

[128] Evans, 'A Father in Sion', p. 51.

[129] Evans, 'A Father in Sion', p. 52.

[130] Gramich notes the similarities between Achsah and Bertha Rochester, wife of Edward Rochester, in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. In both texts, the original insanity of the madwoman is questionable: certainly both are mad by the end of the story but their madness has been created by their ill-treatment and brutalization at the hands of the patriarchy and its female accomplices.' See Katie Gramich, '"The Madwoman in the Harness-loft"', p. 22.

consigned to some distant fortress or a private asylum until he becomes wiser. So when you read in your morning paper that So-and-so has been 'ordered into retirement', you know what sort of retirement he is in.[131]

It is a short piece, little longer than 400 words, written with pithy, ironic curiosity about the affairs of those at the top echelons of society across Europe: Evans cites the recent revelation that, like Bertha Rochester and (later) Achsah, 'the Queen of Romania, known to English readers as Carmen Sylva, was, though perfectly sane, incarcerated in a madhouse for two years for offending her husband.'[132] Princess Louise of Belgium is also cited as a woman sent to the madhouse as punishment for eloping with a cavalry captain: 'The leading specialists of the mind declare that she is not only sane now, but that she has never been insane.'[133] The piece also cites examples of four young aristocrats: Archduke Louis Victor, brother of the Emperor of Austria; the Consort to the King of Saxony; the son of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg; and, in England, the Marquis of Townshend. Each of them was incarcerated and designated mad, despite their sanity, so that their unwanted presence in public life could be prevented. In each case mentioned in the piece, as well as that of Achsah in 'A Father in Sion' and the old match-seller in 'At the Feet of the Virgin', the individual concerned has been deemed *non compos mentis* by others: royalty keen to avoid scandal; officers of the law; disaffected husbands invoking the language of religion as justification for their actions. In some of these examples, the trauma of this experience has brought about the demise of the unfortunate individuals: Achsah famously becomes mad, the woman in 'At the Feet of the Virgin' dies and, Evans notes in 'Royalty "In Retirement"', the Duke of Saxe-Coburg 'was placed under restraint in a sanatorium in Austria, where he promptly blew out his brains.'[134]

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[131] Caradoc Evans (as 'D. Evans Emmott'), 'Royalty "In Retirement"', *London Chat*, 25 May 1907, p. 779.

[132] Evans, 'Royalty "In Retirement"', p. 779.

[133] Evans, 'Royalty "In Retirement"', p. 779.

[134] Evans, 'Royalty "In Retirement"', p. 779.

The madness and insanity projected on to those individuals by hegemonic patriarchal authorities becomes in many cases a self-fulfilling prophecy; this is a central concern to much of Evans's later writing. The sinister conclusion of the *My People* story 'The Woman Who Sowed Iniquity', in which Joshua covets the property of his sister Betti (who has been left penniless and destitute by the departure of her husband, Gwilym), is a development of the same theme, in which male characters plot over the life and property of a vulnerable woman. Joshua instructs Hugh the Stonemason:

> 'The Big Man has not forsaken the righteous, so whatever happens will be his doing, not ours Hugh bach. The Lord's will be done. Go you down to Lancoch now, and take an old ladder with you and climb to the roof, and remove the tiles one by one. Be careful lest any untoward happening befall my sister Betti, for has not the white little Jesus bidden us to love our enemies? Do you see, Hugh bach, that not one slate falls on the head of our sister Betti. But if one does, well-well, then, has not the Great Male promised to be on the side of His religious children?'[135]

Betti's haughtiness during her courtship of, and the early stages of her marriage to, Gwilym (who turns out to be a penniless drunken lout) reaps this violent death at the hands of both men, working in concert with the Big Male, God. Betti's mésalliance with Gwilym, like those of the European aristocrats mentioned in 'Royalty "In Retirement"', serves ultimately as licence for the patriarchal elders to mete out justice in cruel and violent ways. It is a means to destabilize the demarcation between sanity and insanity, where the lengths to which the patriarchy is willing to go in order to prove and contain the professed madness of errant womanfolk itself borders on the insane. 'Royalty "In Retirement"', in its focus on royals, nobles, and aristocrats, suggests that the same hypocrisy and corruption, not to mention oppression (of women, especially) permeates all levels of society across all nations and cultures. The focus on the intimate family secrets of the landed gentry must also, presumably, have made good copy for the editors of a magazine catering for a readership of poor, working-class Londoners. Indeed, this

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[135] Caradoc Evans, 'The Woman Who Sowed Iniquity', in *My People*, pp. 94-101 (p. 101).

curiosity about the scandals at the higher echelons of society, projected or otherwise, can be seen in turn-of-the-century writing. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's great hero-detective Sherlock Holmes is frequently engaged in cases in which he must maintain the good name and reputation of respected members of society: 'A Scandal in Bohemia', for example, sees Holmes clear up the threat of blackmail posed to the King of Bohemia by compromising photographs of himself and Irene Adler, the American-born adventurer with whom he had become entangled in his youth.[136] Holmes is able to prevent news of the scandal from entering into the public domain. The same anxiety is given a gothicized twist by Arthur Machen, in whose *The Great God Pan* (published in 1894, two years after Conan Doyle's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* – both authors knew each other and each other's work) the femme fatale Helen Vaughan is responsible for the grisly murders of London aristocrats known as the West End Murders.

Among Evans's early Cockney stories there are a few which make use of Welsh scenes and characters. Another 'Tale of Slum Life', entitled 'Her Royal Highness', is, in the same vein as 'King's Evidence', about the trials and travails of a mother and her child, a young woman, by the hand of the drunk and violent husband and father. On the street, the girl is ironically greeted as the 'Princess of Wales' by a fruitseller. Finding her father in a pub, the daughter thinks to herself that "'I'd do for 'im, that I would, if I'd have ter swing for it.'"[137] Again, the oppressive father mistreats the women in his family; the story concludes with the mother, with her dying breath, telling her daughter "'Be a good girl, Daisy. Try and get out of 'ere. [...] If yer can't, ye'll come to no good.'"[138] The theme of female solidarity in working-class London, particularly in the face of oppressive, drunken and violent husbands and fathers, is a feature which can be detected in the work of other

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[136] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, 'A Scandal in Bohemia', in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* ([1892] London: Penguin, 1981), pp. 9-32.

[137] Caradoc Evans (as 'D.E. Emmott'), 'Her Royal Highness', in *London Chat*, 28 December 1907, p. 9.

[138] Evans, 'Her Royal Highness', p. 9.

writers, like W. H. Davies and George Moore. Moore's *Esther Waters* (1894), for example,

is a story of the sacrifices made by its eponymous heroine on behalf of her illegitimate

son.[139] The London slum context is developed in the story, though, of course, the

oppressive family context is a feature of later Welsh-set stories. What is for Daisy only an

ironic nickname making reference to Wales develops into a more sustained engagement:

the pre-emergent structure of feeling continues to develop as *My People* approaches.

Indeed, there are other Welsh examples of literary representations of family struggle.

Moelona's *Teulu Bach Nantoer* (*The Little Family of Nantoer*), published in 1912, for example,

is a story of Gwen Owen, the widow of a drunken husband whose death left her and her

three young children penniless can in its rhapsodising and romanticising of the Welsh

peasantry be read as the literary obverse of Evans's *My People*[140] (the eventual return of

Eiry, the kidnapped daughter can, as Katie Gramich has argued, be read for 'its biblical

echoes of the Prodigal son, [and] may be seen as an allegory for the "awakened" Wales,

whose sons and daughters are returning to her, having been "kidnapped" by the foreign

interloper'.[141] It was this romanticised myth of the Welsh peasantry which *My People*,

when it arrived, was set to explode.

Chatting about Wales

Some of Evans's *Chat* stories deal more directly with Wales in more clearly traceable draft

versions of the patterns of the *My People* material.

> Twmi brought out his spectacles, breathed on them, rubbed them with waistcoat
> lining, and finally adjusted them over a short, stubby nose.
> 'Dango,' he remarked, 'it's in English.'[142]

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[139] George Moore, *Esther Waters* ([1894] Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

[140] 'Moelona' (Elizabeth Mary Jones), *Teulu Bach Nantoer, Ffug-Chwedl i Blant* (Wrecsam: Hughes a'i Fab, 1913), now available at www.llyfrau.org/gsdl/cgi-bin/library.exe

[141] Katie Gramich, *Twentieth-Century Writing in Wales: Land, Gender, Belonging* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 53.

[142] Caradoc Evans, 'The Pretender' [1908], in *Fury Never Leaves Us*, pp. 52-8 (p. 53).

Twm Shones is called to the house from the cowshed by his wife to read a letter sent by their daughter, Maria, from London. Unable to understand the letter because it is written in English, Twm asks the postman to translate the message; Sal, Twm's wife, however, assumes 'that Maria was coming all the way from London in one of those new-fangled horseless carriages.'[143] Maria has been at a London drapery shop; she descends from the train anglicised: "'Do you know," declared the girl, in a burst of confidence. "I've clean forgotten my Welsh. Awfully silly of me, isn't it?"'[144] Her father looks on, uncomprehending yet proud; when the news gets out, Maria is regarded by the villagers and her mother with contempt and sadness: 'Maria forgetting her language! She might as well forget her religion, because to forget one is to forget the other. A tear coursed down Sal's cheek.'[145] The terrible prospect of Maria's going to church, not to chapel, and that her Anglicization be discovered by the chapel minister, strikes great fear in the heart of Sal. In a darkly humorous conclusion Twmi looses the bull on Maria (who is wearing a red dress); the charging bull is shot by Twmi, but the shock of the incident is enough to precipitate Maria's recovery of her Welsh:

> ''Nhad (father),' stammered the girl in Welsh, pure Welsh, 'I – I was only shamming.'
> 'Now,' said Twmi, kissing her, and carrying her into the house, 'now you're talking. Sit down and tell us about yourself.'[146]

The tone of the story is one of gentle irony, but this is very much more like the *My People* material. Here is a critique of what Gwyn Jones describes as 'philistinism' and 'Welsh provincialism', although rendered in a much more gentle and amusing manner than the savage satires so admired by him.[147] The story of the village girl, of peasant stock, who goes to London and promptly forgets her 'pure' Welsh is drawn from typical oral

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[143] Evans, 'The Pretender', p. 53.
[144] Evans, 'The Pretender', p. 55.
[145] Evans, 'The Pretender', p. 55.
[146] Evans, 'The Pretender', p. 55.
[147] Jones, *The First Forty Years*, p. 9.

histories, or gossip, repeated in rural communities: it has the air of folklore or rural (not

urban) myth about it. More specifically, Maria is a female reworking of the figure of Dic

Siôn Dafydd, the eponymous figure of a satirical poem by Jac Glan-y-Gors (John Jones,

1766-1821). In the poem the illiterate Dic, like Maria, makes his way from rural Wales to

forge a career as a draper in London. In London Dic takes after the city's fashions and

rejects the Welsh language, refusing to speak it even with his mother. Eventually, his

pride and arrogance precipitate a fall from grace, the result of which is Dic's return, in

disgrace, to Wales. The poem, and the figure of Dic, became a notorious and frequently-

cited touchstone throughout the nineteenth century,[148] and, indeed, into the twentieth:

Dafydd Iwan's nationalist anthem 'Yma o Hyd' ('Still Here') claims that the Welsh

language has remained despite every Dic-Siôn-Dafydd.[149] The specific links to Jac Glan-

y-Gors's poem suggest that Caradoc Evans too was familiar if not with the poem itself

then certainly with the mythos of its eponymous main character: the peasant upbringing;

the progress to London; the career as a draper; the procurement of London fashions and

manners; the rejection of the Welsh language to the point of refusal to converse in it with

mother and father; the eventual return in penitence; and, of course, the widespread

scandal and ignominy of public disapproval. Much of Evans's work rails against the

various manifestations of Dic Siôn Dafydd-ism on the one hand (as *My Neighbours*

demonstrates), and the small mindedness and limited world view of the West Wales

peasantry on the other. The story was originally published in the *London Chat* number of

11 January 1908 and, as John Harris notes, 'Caradoc had begun to find his own matter

and form. [...H]e was proving a nerve of Welsh rural society. The approach is the

satirist's, precise and personal [...] For the moment the tone is gentle, but material and

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[148] 'Dic Siôn Dafydd', in *Cydymaith i Lenyddiaeth Cymru*, ed. by Meic Stephens (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1997), p. 193.
[149] Dafydd Iwan ac Ar Log. 'Yma o Hyd'. SAIN SCD 2063.

technique are at hand for a deeper attack.[150] The restoration of the peasant girl's Welsh

by her father's extreme means (the loosing and shooting of a bull) is rendered humorous,

if somewhat ridiculous, and this characterises the narrative voice of the stories of Wales

derived from Evans's early stories. 'The Pretender' embodies – in a pre-emergent form –

the schism identified by Gwyn Jones as the 'revolt against Nonconformity' that

characterises Anglo-Welsh literature.[151] In the week since her return,

> Not a syllable of Welsh had passed her [Maria's] lips. She even said her prayers,
> according to Sal, who had listened at the keyhole, in English. Of what use are
> supplications uttered in any language but Welsh?[152]

The hold of Nonconformity over the villagers of West Wales is here amusingly rendered

as a nascent form of the satires of *My People*. God must be a Welsh speaker, and prayers

addressed to him in English run the double risk of falling on His deaf ears and of causing

a local scandal.

'The Man Who Wouldn't Die' provides an important example of this shift from an

affectionate and teasing tone to an altogether darker and more violent treatment of the

same material. Published originally in *London Chat* on 8 February 1908, the story was

reworked and reappeared as 'The Glory that Was Sion's' in *My People* in 1915. 'The Man

Who Wouldn't Die' is Anthony Penffos, the old sinner who, though 'he had never been a

shining ornament in chapel',[153] is nevertheless the subject of a fierce tug of war between

the local chapel and the local church: the prize is Anthony Penffos's body, which, *post

mortem*, will require burial. The premise of the story is that, knowing the chapel cemetery

is full, 'He said he would get his own back on the "chapelers", and die',[154] knowing that

in this eventuality his body would be interred in the burial ground of the church. After

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[150] Harris, 'Note', in *Fury Never Leaves Us*, p. 48.
[151] Jones, *The First Forty Years*, p. 12.
[152] Evans, 'The Pretender', p. 57.
[153] Caradoc Evans, 'The Man Who Wouldn't Die', in *Fury Never Leaves Us*, pp. 58-62 (p. 58).
[154] Evans, 'The Man Who Wouldn't Die', p. 58.

much frantic organisation of a new plot and sincere supplication for a postponement of Anthony's death, the deacons and chapel elders go to Anthony's farm, Penffos, only to discover that he has left for the collieries, as his wife Anne explains: 'He was sure new ground wouldn't agree with him, because it wasn't healthy.'[155] The story suggests in its knockabout manner a critique of Nonconformity and its hypocrisy: despite the extensive wrangling over the destination of Anthony's soul (and body) after death, Shacki, one of the chapel deacons, having discovered that Anthony has risen and recovered, exclaims with relief 'good job we didn't pray for his sins'.[156] Here also is a critique of the peasantry of West Wales and all its self-importance, myopia and inter-denominational rivalry: 'Tom Davies suggested putting a notice on the gates leading to the chapel to the effect that Anthony's remains were only deposited as a matter of convenience in the Dissenter's churchyard.'[157]

This is itself a story with resurrectional potential: it reappears, in a reworked form, in *My People*, as 'The Glory that was Sion's'. In this version of the story it is Twm Tybach who 'was abhorred in Capel Sion'; 'He was as irreligious as an irreligious Welshman can be'.[158] The story is the fifth of the fifteen *My People* stories; its context in this collection of satires rather than as a single story in a light-hearted London publication immediately intensifies the impact of 'The Glory that was Sion's'. The tone of the narrative voice is also darker and more violent: while Anthony Penffos 'never had been a shining ornament in chapel', Twm Tybach is 'abhorred in Capel Sion'. What is latent in the ironic narrative voice of 'The Man Who Wouldn't Die' is writ large in 'The Glory that was Sion's'. Twm's status as being 'as irreligious as an irreligious Welshman can be' extends the target of the critique beyond the figure of Twm and on to Wales itself. The anxious wrangling over

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[155] Evans, 'The Man Who Wouldn't Die', p. 62.
[156] Evans, 'The Man Who Wouldn't Die', p. 62.
[157] Evans, 'The Man Who Wouldn't Die', p. 59.
[158] Caradoc Evans, 'The Glory that was Sion's', in *My People*, pp. 81-7 (p. 81).

the body of Twm Tybach and Anthony Penffos is imbued with a mock-solemnity (the deacons discuss seriously, the chapel minister is consulted for his wise opinion) which renders ridiculous the entire episode as a series of darkly humorous capers. The recasting of 'The Man Who Wouldn't Die' into 'The Glory that was Sion's' suggests a gestation period during which there is a struggle for form, and a transformation of a pre-emergent structure of feeling, into an emergent writing about Wales and the Welsh peasantry.

One further Welsh-based story from Evans's early period sharpens the contrast between this pre-emergent structure of feeling and the newly emergent one spawned by it. 'Taffy at Home: the Humour and Pathos of Welsh Life' was published in the *London Chat* on 21 September 1907, and it is an early description of the Manteg which was to become the focus of the aggressive, truculent stories of *My People* and *Capel Sion*. It is a remarkably rich example of the progression of Evans's writing from the gentle, mocking early stories to the unremitting aggression of his later satires – the crystallisation of a structure of feeling to an emergent literature. 'Taffy at Home', 'The Pretender' and 'The Man Who Wouldn't Die' are further along the trajectory of Evans's writing than were the Cockney stories, but remain for the time being essentially humorous pieces which ridicule their target rather than aggressively attacking it. Generically, 'Taffy at Home' is a sketch, stopping short of being a short story: there is no plot, but, rather, a series of vignettes and descriptive anecdotes which, with the humour and pathos announced in the title, signpost for the *London Chat* readers the foibles and provincial idiosyncrasies of the Welsh peasantry. 'Taffy' is not an eponymous character in the piece; indeed the name is used to signify a generic Welsh identity or Welsh way of life. In this respect, 'Taffy at Home' can be incorporated into the fashion at its contemporary moment of lampooning Wales and the Celtic countries. As Stephen Knight notes, it was 'a time when mockery of

the Celtic parts of Britain was a profitable publishing practice'.[159] 'Taffy at Home'

predates T. W. H. Crosland's *Taffy was a Welshman*, which was to be published in 1912,

but does follow the same author's *The Unspeakable Scot*, published in 1902. Both of

Crosland's texts lampoon and ridicule the Welsh and the Scots in a similar way to

Evans's 'Taffy at Home' – Knight claims they knew each other as London journalists –

though they are 'lightweight' by comparison to Evans's *My People*: this is an example of

how *My People* wipes away Evans's own early work, as well as the work described by

Gwyn Jones as the sandcastle dynasty.

'Taffy at Home' lacks the focus and drive - and impact – of Evans's short stories. Manteg

is the focus, though it is described by means of an implied contrast with London: this is a

feature, as we have observed, discernible in much of the London-based writing of the

turn of the twentieth century.

> We in Manteg contend that the importance of London is greatly exaggerated, and
> that the importance of Manteg is under-estimated. London is represented on the
> map by a black mark, which is, to quote Jack teilwr, as big as your head, while
> Manteg does not even figure on the home-made map which hangs on the
> schoolroom wall. But Manteg is of great consequence, nevertheless, and we are all
> agreed that were London not London, then Manteg would be the Metropolis.[160]

Significantly, this is a text about the Welsh peasantry written from the inside: the narrator

adopts the first person plural. Yet, of course, the piece was first published in the *London*

Chat, aimed at a London audience. 'Taffy at Home' might be considered as a piece which

is riven by exile, and might in this regard stand as emblematic of much Welsh writing of

the period: in order to adopt the insider's voice – to speak on behalf of the Manteg

community which he describes – Evans's narrative voice must be displaced, relocated, to

London. From its opening sentence, and means of publication, a dynamic between Wales

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[159] Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. 38.

[160] Caradoc Evans (writing as 'D. Evans-Emmott'), 'Taffy at Home: The Humour and Pathos of Welsh Village Life', reprinted in T. L. Williams, *Caradoc Evans* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press on behalf of the Welsh Arts Council, 1970), pp. 31-7 (p. 31).

and London is established which sees each inflected by the other. The ironic distance

between the way of life in Manteg and the language used to describe it is retained from

the early Cockney stories – the descriptions of Joe Gray in 'King's Evidence', for

example. Yet, in 'Taffy at Home', that ironic distance between description and the

described is sunk down into the texts, rather than raised up from above: the narrative

voice is 'at home' in this environment. The satire of the piece is created by the distance

between the assumptions of the narrator and those of the implied reader:

> The word Manteg implies a calm place. The name is a distinct libel, for there is life
> in the village, and, on occasions, life of the most tumultuous order, too. We still
> remember how Ianto railed in a bit of land along the riverside with spiked wire,
> and how the neighbours swooped down in the dead of night armed with pickaxes
> and shovels, and broke down the citadel; Ianto and his supporters retreating to
> Sally's hen-house. We have vivid recollections of the consternation caused when
> Mr Adams denounced Howell Powell from the pulpit for blacking his face on a
> New Year's Eve.[161]

The weight attached, through oral storytelling, by the villagers of small, rural, peasant

communities, to these anecdotes is clearly rendered all the more ridiculous by the implied

contrast with London.

'Taffy at Home' reads like a check-list for the elements which were to be reworked into

the satire of *My People* and Evans's other Manteg stories. The pride and haughtiness of

'Josiah Watkins, General Dealer' is akin to that of Evans's drapers and drapery shop

owners in the London-focused *My Neighbours*: he 'makes periodical visits to London and

Bristol, and brings to Manteg the very latest things in fashion';[162] he is rumoured –

although 'nothing was proved' – to have visited a theatre,[163] an insinuation which

prompts a cursory sermon in the following Sunday's service at the Methodist chapel. Mr

Watkins is the kind of character who in Evans's later work would be represented as a

thoroughly malevolent figure: he cites providence as the influence behind the death of

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[161] Evans, 'Taffy at Home', p. 31.
[162] Evans, 'Taffy at Home', p. 32.
[163] Evans, 'Taffy at Home', p. 32.

Will Ty'r Afon (who had borrowed his cart not in order to buy a suckling at the market, but, rather, to bring home a wife) before promptly ensuring the order for Will's widow's mourning.[164] Old Shemmi is another villager and Crimean war veteran hostile to any change – and thus the encroachment of modernity – on the village; he is crestfallen and downcast that his son has died 'far away among the heathen English':[165] it is not the loss of his son, but rather that his son should be interred in England, that is the true cause of his grief. Another feature present in this early story, but in humorous rather than satirical form, is the figure of the Nonconformist minister. The story's narrator remembers how, 'During the Revival there was much competition as to which of the sects should display the more fervour.'[166] The narrator, a Dissenter, concedes that it was 'the other side, the Methodists', who are both the better singers and the more successful in showing the more fervour, preferring their sermons to last up to an hour and a half. The Dissenters,[167] conversely, prefer shorter sermons of up to thirty-five minutes, and – though not as passionate as the Methodists – did achieve a great success in converting Robert, the pig-dealer, a 'rank atheist and blasphemer'.[168]

The humorous discussion of Nonconformity seems lightly done, yet it is based on many actual accounts: during the time of the Welsh Revival – 1904-05, only two years prior to the publication of Evans's story – newspapers would publish statistics of conversions of people according to their chapels and denominations. This is rendered humorously in 'Taffy at Home' – the Methodists initially 'said that Robert was only shamming'[169] – but this sense of inter-denominational rivalry reappears in darker form (though perhaps

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Evans, 'Taffy at Home', p. 33.
[165] Evans, 'Taffy at Home', p. 34.
[166] Evans, 'Taffy at Home', p. 34.
[167] Evans explains to his London readers in parentheses how 'Congregationalists are known as Dissenters in the rural districts of Wales'. See Evans, 'Taffy at Home', p. 34.
[168] Evans, 'Taffy at Home', p. 34.
[169] Evans, 'Taffy at Home', p. 34.

darkly humorous), in the *Capel Sion* story 'Three Men from Horeb'. This story tells of the

tug-of-war between Capel Sion and Capel Horeb over the body of the recently deceased

Ella. Ella's father, Enoch, the Teller of Things in Capel Sion, is instructed to retrieve his

son's body 'before he stinks' because, as the Respected Bern-Davydd exclaims, 'In Capel

Sion must Ella be buried. Horeb, ach y fi.'[170] Having borrowed a 'gambo' (cart) to

retrieve his son, Enoch is involved in a violent altercation with Shon Daviss, of Capel

Horeb, and knocked into the grave.[171] During the commotion a crowd of the Horeb

faithful make off with Ella's body once more; the conclusion of the story tells of how

'the men of Sion came upon the men of Horeb and stopped them; and the battle went

hard against Horeb': Enoch is finally raised from the grave intended for his son.[172] 'Taffy

at Home' notes that 'Undoubtedly the greatest honour that can befal [sic] anyone in

Manteg is to possess a corpse':[173] the farcical battle over possession of Ella's corpse in

'Three Men from Horeb' pushes to blackly humorous lengths the denominational politics

underpinning this axiom. 'Godly folk', it is noted, 'have a death in their houses at least

once every two or three years'.[174] This last detail leads to the conclusion of 'Taffy at

Home' which is another version of the structure of 'The Man Who Wouldn't Die' and

'The Glory that was Sion's': 'Shacki Rees was ill, and expected to die', and is revived by

the sound of his wife Marged preparing to shave his face after death. The verb 'expected'

is ironically employed here, as it does not specify exclusively whether expectation of

death refers to Shacki's particular condition or to the communal will, the Manteg

superego, and its expectation of regular deaths every few years. In the latter sense there is

an implication that Shacki's death is assumed to be imminent and is also expected to be a

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[170] Caradoc Evans, 'Three Men from Horeb', in *Capel Sion*, pp. 39-42 (p. 39).
[171] Evans, 'Three Men from Horeb', p. 41.
[172] Evans, 'Three Men from Horeb', p. 42.
[173] Evans, 'Taffy at Home', p. 36.
[174] Evans, 'Taffy at Home', p. 36.

proper outcome: Shacki must live (or rather die) according to Manteg's expectations. This he obstinately refuses to do for a further three years and three months.

As T. L. Williams notes, 'all the themes and character-types would reappear in *My People*. Josiah Watkins [...] will be reincarnated as the unspeakable Rhys Shop';[175] the taboos and superstitions of Nonconformist West Wales were to be reworked and recast. While Williams argues that 'it would be difficult to deduce from style and language [of 'Taffy at Home'] that this account of Welsh life had come from the author of *My People*',[176] there is still a structural link between 'Taffy at Home' and the *My People* material. This is a sketch: the narrative focus pans through the village and its inhabitants with vignettes and anecdotes rather than a plot structure. Stephen Knight, in noting the vogue for mockery of the Celtic fringe, suggests that 'Evans also acts, or was read as, a foreign correspondent for imperial London';[177] according to this account Evans's satire is complicit with that which it critiques. At the earlier period of 'Taffy at Home' the description of Manteg is not as aggressive as in *My People*; the people of Manteg are subject to jest and a somewhat patronising tone in 'Taffy at Home' while in *My People* the West-Wales peasantry are characterised by avaricious greed and bovine stupidity. It is worth remembering that 'Taffy at Home' appeared first in the *London Chat*: the target audience is London-based and metropolitan in contrast to the provincial subject matter. Knight's analogy between Evans and the figure of the foreign correspondent is borne out by the full title of the piece: 'Taffy at Home: The Humour and Pathos of Welsh Life'. The subtitle strongly indicates the function of the story as a work of explanation or description by a correspondent. 'Taffy at Home' combines with the journalistic sentiment of the subtitle a popular stereotype: the effect is to embed a stereotype within its context

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[175] Williams, *Caradoc Evans*, p. 38.
[176] Williams, *Caradoc Evans*, p. 37.
[177] Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. 38.

by signifying verisimilitude in the description. This ambiguity surrounding how to read

Evans's work would become ever more pressing with the publication of *My People*, with

great anxiety (especially among Welsh reviewers) about how the stories would be read

outside Wales as literally true – this latter fear was behind the vilification of Evans as a

traitor of Wales.

The City, the Village

Perhaps in order to preserve the shock-value of the publication of *My People* in 1915, or

perhaps because the work itself is inaccessible and has not – with a few exceptions –

been reprinted, critics have been reluctant to give Caradoc Evans's stories published in

the London press much critical attention. Yet, by looking at these various publications it

becomes clearer that *My People* itself is a stepping-stone on a journey: it is a crystallisation

of a pre-emergent Welsh (or London-Welsh) structure of feeling into an identifiable and

more self-conscious emergent form of Welsh writing. As the work of Benedict Anderson

and Eric Hobsbawn has shown, traditions, be they national, social or cultural, despite

their claims to antiquity, are in fact relatively modern inventions which incorporate a

number of pre-existing residual or even archaic[178] terms, and recast them as emergent

ideologies. As the Introduction argues, however, in the example of London-based writing

about Wales, and as Raymond Williams's own argument allows, the distance from archaic

to emergent is not as great as might initially be supposed. In the writing about Wales –

and Celticity – the focus on the past becomes reinvested with a turn to the future; past

defeats offer the possibility of and inspiration for a glorious future; golden ages are

always tantalisingly close to recapture. The work of Ernest Rhys, W. H. Davies and

Arthur Machen focuses on elements which might be termed residual and recaptures, or

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[178] See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992). The 'archaic' is an important though less well considered element of Raymond Williams's thinking on the interplay of residual, dominant, and emergent.

reawakens, them to suggest newly emergent possibilities. Rhys, writing about the gwerin, romanticises the connection with the past while also investing that folk with the potential for a utopian future. W. H. Davies's contrast of country and city – especially as manifested by the contrast between the Welsh (border) country and London – provides the impetus behind his poetic voice. Arthur Machen's treatment of ancient Roman and Celtic history gives his work the opportunity to conjure up the ghosts of the past and indicate that they continue to haunt the present.[179] Caradoc Evans's work brings these residual elements together in *My People*, dragging the West-Wales peasantry into modernity by means of a new, emergent mode of writing. It is through his experimentation with these older forms that Evans strikes upon a new idiosyncratic, iconoclastic modernist aesthetic. Nevertheless, despite the suddenness of this attack on the residual group that is the Welsh peasantry, there are precedents and patterns – structures of feeling – which are discernible in *My People*; these stretch back not only to the work of Machen, Rhys and Davies, but also to Evans's own early work.

Despite, or perhaps because of, its almost unrelenting focus on Manteg, there is nevertheless a negotiation between Wales and London which is present in both *My People* and *Capel Sion*. Both collections were written in London and published by a London publishing house, that of Andrew Melrose. Stephen Knight has pointed out that Melrose, a London Scot, had published in 1901 *The House with Green Shutters* by George Douglas Brown, a text which bears similarities to *My People* in its attack on the idealised, romanticised image of the peasantry (embodied in the Scottish tradition by the 'Kailyard' fictions).[180] Knight is also keen to demonstrate that as well as deriving from the same stable as these anti-Kailyard fictions, *My People* appeared at a time when mockery of

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[179] As Jacques Derrida has it, 'a specter is always a revenant. It always begins by coming back'. See Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf ([1994] New York and London: Routledge, 2006), p. 11.

[180] Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. 38.

Wales, Scotland and Ireland 'was a profitable publishing practice'.[181] So, while Evans's

stories seem inescapably bound to Manteg and the West Wales peasantry, it is this

claustrophobia, this very fact that the stories limit their horizons to 'Eisteddfod

Castellybryn', 'College Carmarthen' or the April Fair that lays bare their London origins.

Evans was to delineate the nature of this wild oscillation between London and West

Wales in later works, especially *My Neighbours*, his third collection which focuses on the

London Welsh, and *Nothing to Pay*, the semi-autobiographical novel which tells of Amos

Morgan's path to a London drapery from provincial Welsh origins.

Theoretical accounts of the nature of exile can help shed light on this split emphasis in

Evans's work. Edward Said, in a famous essay, argues that

> No matter how well they may do, exiles are always eccentrics who feel their difference (even as they frequently exploit it) as a kind of orphanhood. [...] Clutching difference like a weapon to be used with stiffened will, the exile jealously insists on his or her right to refuse to belong.[182]

The exiled writer is always conscious of difference from his or her present (exiled) state,

from the host. Said's thinking can shed some light on Evans's *My People* as a text of exile.

While links between Said's notion of the exile's 'orphanhood' and T. L. Williams's stress

on the formative influence of the death and subsequent absence of Evans's father can be

left for psychoanalytical or biographical critics to ponder, there is nevertheless a strong

sense in which Evans's attack on the Welsh-speaking, chapel-going communities in

which he himself was raised speaks of an act of filial rebellion. Welsh writing in English

might be read as a tradition which from *My People* onwards has at root a prevailing

rejection of the ways of the father; Caradoc Evans is its principal *enfant terrible*. Said

identifies the potentially violent nature of the exile's condition, something which certainly

correlates with the previously quoted accounts of Evans and his 'war of liberation'. Said's

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[181] Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. 38.
[182] Edward W. Said, 'Reflections on Exile', in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 173-86 (p. 182).

argument suggests that there are creative possibilities as well as dangers attendant on the

fact that the exile can either be at home or completely estranged anywhere in the world:

the exile can exercise the right to belong or refuse to belong to either native place or new

environment. This complex notion of belonging and not belonging is certainly an

important element of Evans's ironic title, *My People*. Knight notes that 'The title *My People*,

while obviously an ironic disavowal, still permitted the collection to be read in England

as first-contact narrative', and that the satire of the collection is in the tradition of the

chap-books which included risible representations of 'Taffy' as 'ill-spoken stage

buffoons'.[183] The London-based production and publication of Evans's book opens up a

distance between London and Wales, a distance writ large in the irony of the title which

attests to the exiled voice's struggle between belonging and not belonging, between

acceptance and disavowal. Said continues by arguing that the exile's jealously-guarded

difference

> usually translates into an intransigence that is not easily ignored. Wilfulness,
> exaggeration, overstatement: these are characteristic styles of being in exile,
> methods of compelling the world to accept your vision – which you make more
> unacceptable because you are in fact unwilling to have it accepted. It is yours, after
> all. Composure and serenity are the last thing associated with the work of exiles.[184]

Following the publication of *My People*, Caradoc Evans was accused of many things, and

though it is unlikely that serenity was among the charges, it is certain that intransigence,

wilfulness, exaggeration and overstatement (or outright fabrication) were. The grotesque

nature of Evans's stories in *My People* clearly chimes with Said's notion of the exiled

voice's wilful exaggeration of a world-view. Caradoc Evans's letters to newspapers

defending his work – particularly to his harshest critic within Wales, the *Western Mail* –

are, despite Said's claims, composed and consistent; Said's analysis otherwise fits Evans's

work like a well-cut suit straight from the draper's: exaggeration and overstatement,

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[183] Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. 38. For more on the representation of Wales in the early chap-books see Moira Dearnley, *Distant Fields: Eighteenth-Century Fictions of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 1-11.

[184] Edward W. Said, 'Reflections on Exile', p. 182.

achieved through a terse, unembellished prose, are defining characteristics of Evans's work, all made possible, following Said, by Evans's exile and the perspective it affords his work's imagining of the West-Wales peasantry.

Both 'Taffy at Home', and indeed the *My People* material, is about a folk culture, a peasant population of West Wales, even as depicted from London. Benedict Anderson and Anthony D. Smith note how emergent national consciousness often focuses on, and valorises, the figure of the peasant: the peasantry somehow embodies an authentic form of identity by means of a closeness to the land, to language, to tradition (even invented traditions). In this way the peasant is the figure onto whom the present-day idea of a Golden Age is projected: emergent national identity relies on, and combined with, the residual nature of the non-metropolitan old-world peasant. Katie Gramich has discussed representations of the peasantry in Irish and Welsh literature, noting that 'The notion of a rural peasantry which embodies an essential national identity has been a key element in the anti-colonial self-fashioning that has taken place in Ireland and Wales in the modern period.'[185] In her essay, Gramich notes that this valorised and ennobled peasant is a figure constructed in much of the Welsh and Irish writing of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Gramich argues, however, that 'the Welsh rural gwerin, which had become a sacrosanct ideal within Wales, was soon to be destroyed by the modernist grotesquerie of the prose of Caradoc Evans':[186] indeed, 'Caradoc Evans's male peasant is unredeemed: calculating, self-centred, lustful, greedy, and savage, he is completely lacking in any virtue, while his female counterpart is browbeaten, gullible, uneducated, brutalised and, often, mad.'[187] Nevertheless, Evans's writing is as concerned with the peasant as that of any other writer of his day. Caradoc Evans is often read alongside Allen Raine as the

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[185] Katie Gramich, 'Creating and Destroying "The Man Who Does Not Exist": The Peasantry and Modernity in Welsh and Irish writing', *Irish Studies Review*, 17.1 (February 2009), 19-30 (p. 19).

[186] Gramich, 'Creating and Destroying "The Man Who Does Not Exist"', p. 23.

[187] Gramich, 'Creating and Destroying "The Man Who Does Not Exist"', p. 23.

obverse of a similar impulse: Raine's mode is romance while, as Knight ventures, Evans's

mode is anti-romance.

As Chapter One argues, Ernest Rhys is another author who romanticises the Welsh

peasantry and indeed, in a column in the *Manchester Guardian* in June 1906, Rhys praises

Raine's work – and particularly *Queen of the Rushes*, Raine's ninth novel – for its 'idyllic

simplicity and charm'.[188] Rhys is particularly full of praise for Raine's description of the

rural peasantry: Gildas 'is the Welsh "Gabriel Oak" [from Thomas Hardy's *Far From the*

Madding Crowd (1874)]', while

> Gwenifer, the silent girl, who is Queen of the Rushes and whose fate is in step with
> his, is a figure that wears a charm and has a mystery in its maidenliness, and, in
> short, realises something of an effect which many would-be Celtic writers self-
> consciously attempt and fail to get.[189]

As Gramich has pointed out, contemporary reviewers of Raine's work praised the

authenticity of its rendering of the peasantry and a rural Welsh way of life.[190] Ernest Rhys

is very much in this tradition, as the above quotation shows, though by the time of his

review, June 1906, English reviewers had begun to tire of what they perceived to be

Raine's incessantly romantic provincial stories.[191] An anonymous obituary to Allen Raine

in the *Manchester Guardian* in 1908 (and so probably authored by Rhys), argues that 'what

she really had at heart and what she could and did write about with a most heartfelt

author's emotion was the idyll of a few Cardiganshire folk living on that lonely coeast

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[188] Ernest Rhys, 'A Welsh Novel', *Manchester Guardian*, 6 June 1906, p. 3. The article is signed 'E. R.', and so is likely to be authored by Rhys, who contributed a regular column to the paper.

[189] Rhys, 'A Welsh Novel', p. 3.

[190] Katie Gramich, 'Selling Wales: Allen Raine and the Popular Novel', unpublished lecture delivered at the Wales-Ireland Network's 'Ireland, Wales and Popular Culture' symposium at Cardiff University, 24 September 2010.

[191] Lucian Taylor, in Arthur Machen's *The Hill of Dreams*, makes reference to the kinds of romances for which Raine gained her reputation: he reads a review of a book called *Millicent's Marriage*, by Sarah Pocklington Sanders, which praises the 'pictures of innocent and healthy English girlhood' and 'the topics which will always find a welcome in our homes, which remain bolted and barred against the abandoned artists and the scrofulous stylist'; Lucian's work, on the contrary, rejects this mode and prefers a modernist or proto-modernist mode of writing in 'an attempt to translate into English prose the form and mystery of the domed hills'. See Arthur Machen, *The Hill of Dreams* (Aberteifi: Parthian/Library of Wales: 2010), p. 37.

who had won their way to her affections when she was a child and a young girl.'[192] As

Gramich points out, Raine was seen initially as the novelist Wales had been waiting for.[193]

However, after her death it would be seven further years before the publication of *My*

People. 'Taffy at Home' in some sense bridges the gap between the ferocious aggressive

satire of *My People* and the idyllic scenes of Raine: there is a shift from romance to satire,

with several structural elements to be repeated in Evans's later work, as well as a shift

from narration from the outside of Manteg society to the inside. Yet, two years later, 'E.

G. R.' (probably Rhys again)[194] writing in the *Manchester Guardian* opined that 'Wales is

still waiting for her predestined tale-teller in English who shall find the colloquial

equation and add some narrative power to a real and intimate knowledge of the people.

As for the publishers, they are looking hard for a successor to "Allen Raine" who can use

the so-called idyllic note with the same sentimental sincerity'.[195] 'E. G. R.''s candidate

under consideration in that particular discussion is the American-born Jeanette Marks's

Through Welsh Doorways (1910), though she is deemed an (honourable) failure owing to her

status as visitor to Wales.

In a later column, Rhys notes that 'Wales has the fullest and friendliest village literature in

the whole record.'[196] 'Celtic Folk', claims Rhys, 'ought to make good villagers because of

their fireside resources and cordial instincts'.[197] Rhys is reminded of these facts by what

he sees as the surprising omission of a single Welsh example in Dr Julia Patton's *The*

English Village: A Literary Study 1750-1850 (1918). Yet if Rhys is surprised by the absence

of a Welsh example in Patton's study, it is also surprising to note that, in 1919, four years

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[192] 'Allen Raine', in *Manchester Guardian*, 23 June 1908, p. 7.

[193] Katie Gramich, 'Selling Wales'. Gramich notes elsewhere that 'Allen Raine's critical acclaim and phenomenal popularity ensured that she had many imitators and followers. See Gramich, *Twentieth-Century Women's Writing in Wales*, p. 43.

[194] Ernest Rhys's middle name was Percival, but his wife's name was Grace: 'E.G.R' might suggest a collaboration between the two.

[195] 'E. G. R.', 'New Novels', *Manchester Guardian*, 2 November 1910, p. 5.

[196] Ernest Rhys ('E. R.'), 'Celtic Notes', *Manchester Guardian*, 19 August 1919, p. 14.

[197] 'E. R.', 'Celtic Notes', *Manchester Guardian*, 19 August 1919, p. 14.

after the publication of *My People*, Rhys fails to mention Caradoc Evans in his roll-call of writers of the Welsh village: there is little cordiality or friendliness in Manteg, certainly. As Gwyn Jones was to remark forty years later, that world was done away with by the publication of *My People*.

'E. G. R.''s article of 1910, wishing for the emergence of a new, genuine Welsh novelist, suggests that Ernest Rhys was aware that such a thing as a Welsh structure of feeling was under development. *My People*, of course, was to push that structure of feeling further, into a new, emergent tradition. It is clear from Rhys's reading of Welsh writing prior to *My People* that he was aware that a Welsh structure of feeling awaited definition; furthermore, as the sentiments of his reviews and the tenor of his creative work suggest, that Welsh structure of feeling was expected to crystalise into a pastoral, romantic mode, putting particular emphasis on the representation of the peasantry as a heroic and authentic influence. However, little did Rhys – or anyone – expect it to take the shape of *My People*, even though, to all intents and purposes, many of those criteria were met. *My People* and *Capel Sion* are texts of the peasantry and are – however critically and satirically – written from the inside. The writing is, in that regard, 'authentic', though not in the sense in which Rhys may have expected: Evans used that language, combined famously with the Book of Genesis, to create a writing savagely critical of the community from which it originated. Ultimately, Evans is indeed one of his own predecessors: the early stories – the Cockney stories and the Welsh-focused material – represent the solidification of a Welsh structure of feeling into a newly emergent literature.

Conclusion

The four writers considered in this thesis are taken to represent a particular impression of London-Welsh literary culture in the late decades of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth. Nevertheless, this thesis does not argue that London-Welsh literary culture is reducible to these four figures. On the contrary, a self-conscious sense of Welsh identity is often not the most prominent feature of each writer's work, and the various ways in which Rhys, Machen, Davies, and Evans respectively construct their own imagined communities explodes the idea of a unified, monolithic, internally consistent London-Welsh voice. Rhys, Machen, Davies, and Rhys are part of a complex network of Welsh writers and writings in London, and their writing attests to a sometimes romantic, sometimes patriotic, sometimes turbulent but always influential relationship with Wales – especially given the London context of their life and work.

This thesis focuses in the main on literary writing, although there is discussion of journalism by Ernest Rhys Arthur Machen, and Caradoc Evans. Yet the work of these four writers does not constitute the total of London-Welsh poetry and fiction during this period. Allen Raine, for example, moved to London after her marriage in 1872, and published her first four novels – *A Welsh Singer* (1896), *Torn Sails* (1897), *By Berwen Banks* and *Garthowen* (both 1899) – while living there (she returned to her native Ceredigion in 1900). Similarly, the *London Kelt* newspaper published a considerable amount of fiction and poetry, by both readers and more established authors. The *Kelt* published stories weekly, including works by Lillian Bowen Rowlands and Alfred Thomas, whose *In the Land of the Harp and Feathers: A Series of Welsh Village Idylls*, first published in book form in 1896, was initially serialised in the *London Kelt*. The entries to the literary competitions of the 1887 and 1909 National Eisteddfodau – both held in London – represent an

unexplored archive suggestive of a rich, concentrated cultural engagement with Wales from London.

Nor is literature the only kind of London-Welsh writing to be produced at the turn of the twentieth century. 1873 is the year of the re-establishment of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodoion, in its third manifestation. There had been a thirty-year intermission between the dissolution of the society in its second incarnation, an intermission during which, according to R. T. Jenkins and Helen Ramage, 'the need for a national Society to promote literature was keenly felt'.[198] Jenkins and Ramage note that the Cymmrodorion Society took the initiative in the debates surrounding Welsh education at both intermediate and higher level.[199] Ernest Rhys was a member, and presented two papers to the society, the first of which, 'Welsh Bards and English Reviewers', called for 'a new and contemporary approach to the whole subject of Celtic literature, and of the discovery, surely not impossible, of a modus vivendi, so to speak, between Welsh poetry and English criticism.'[200] In his criticism, as well as in his creative work, Rhys makes the case for laying before an English readership an authentic and distinctive Welsh literature, an impulse also underlying his republication of Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of *The Mabinogion* in 1902.[201] Rhys's influence and contribution to the work of the Cymmrodorion is emblematic of the Society's broader engagements with Welsh writing. But it is clear that the Society's interests were wider, encompassing writings on history

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[198] R. T. Jenkins and Helen M. Ramage, *A History of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion and of the Gwyneddigion and Cymreigyddion Societies 1751-1951* (London: The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1951), p. 174.

[199] Jenkins and Ramage, *A History of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, pp. 174-5.

[200] Ernest Rhys, 'Welsh Bards and English Reviewers', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1892-3), 29-45 (p. 244). See also, Ernest Rhys, 'Welsh Wit: Mediæval and Modern', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1919-20), 82-94.

[201] *The Mabinogion*, trans. by Lady Charlotte Guest ([1848-49] London: Dent, 1902). Along with the publication of Arnold's *On the Study of Celtic Literature* in 1910, Rhys's inclusion of Welsh/Celtic material among the early titles of the Everyman Library seems incongruous, and bears the ideological stamp of the series editor: publication of such material in a series of classic texts of English literature suggest how, for Rhys (and to borrow from the title of the second volume of his autobiography) Wales and England wed.

and folklore as well as mounting serious campaigns for the establishment of Welsh civic institutions including the University of Wales (founded in 1893), the National Library of Wales and the National Museum of Wales (both established in 1907). Just as this thesis argues for the significance of London to the development of an increasingly self-conscious Welsh writing in English, a similar argument could be advanced for the role of the Welsh communities in London in the establishment of the national institutions of Wales.

The London-Welsh chapels of the late-nineteenth century produced a significant body of writing which also awaits further exploration. Rhidian Griffiths notes that 'From the late nineteenth century until 1939 London chapels enjoyed a period of conspicuous growth, and ministers served constantly growing congregations.'[202] The *London Kelt* published, on a weekly basis, the listings for the London-Welsh places of worship, including 23 chapels and five churches.[203] Furthermore, the *Kelt* also published reports of the activities of these chapels and their various societies, including eisteddfodau, *cymanfaoedd canu* (hymn singing festivals) and public lectures. A series of features in the *London Kelt* consisted of profiles, with illustrations, of the major Nonconformist preachers of the day. The *cofiant*, or biography, of the Welsh Nonconformist minister remains an important genre in Welsh writing during this period, and preaching in London recurs as a frequent detail in many of them as a marker of a preacher's status. Peter Hughes Griffiths (1871-1937), the

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[202] Rhidian Griffiths, 'The Lord's Song in a Strange Land', in *The Welsh in London 1500-2000*, pp. 161-83 (p. 172). Griffiths's chapter includes statistics and figures for the congregations of London-Welsh chapels and of their history and wider significance to London-Welsh communities.

[203] The *Kelt* lists the chapels according to their denomination. The Baptist chapels were at Castle Street, Oxford Street, Eldon Street and Moorfields. The Calvinistic Methodist chapels were at Charing Cross Road, Falmouth Road, Holloway (Sussex Road), Hammersmith (Southerton Road), Jewin (Fann Street), Shirland Road, Stepney (White Horse Street), Stratford, Wilton Square and Walham Green. The Congregationalists met at Barrett's Grove, the Boro' Chapel, Battersea Sunday School (Latchmere Road), Radnor Street in Chelsea, the Tabernacle (King's Cross) and the United Congregational (Parson's Hill). The Wesleyans met at the Burlington Hall on Regent Street, the City Road and Poplar. London Welsh Anglicans met at All Saints' (Margaret Street), the East End Welsh Church Mission on Bridge Street and Burdett Road, St Bennett's (Queen Victoria Street), St Bennett's Mission (230 Hornsey Road) and St David's (Paddington Green).

Calvinist Methodist author, became minister of the Charing Cross chapel in 1902, where

he remained until his death; he married Annie Jane, the widow of the Liberal M. P. and

Cymru Fydd figurehead Tom Ellis (1859-1899). Griffiths contributed a number of articles

on topics ranging from the relationship between church and state to Turner's paintings; a

selection of these writings were collected as *Llais o Lundain* ('*Voice from London*', published

in 1912). Griffiths's focus is in the religious sphere of London-Welsh life, yet his

contribution as man of letters is structurally similar to those other figures considered in

this thesis.

The *London Kelt* newspaper itself is perhaps the single most comprehensive archive of the

life and activity of the London Welsh during this period. While this thesis has drawn

from it at various points, no complete study or index of its contents yet exists.[204] The

diversity of the writing contained in it attests to the multi-faceted nature of London-

Welsh life: the *Kelt* is both a reflection of and a contribution to that sense of vibrancy and

dynamism. Such a study would unquestionably enrich understanding of the various

London-Welsh milieux and their discourses – literary, journalistic, religious, political - at

the turn of the twentieth century, as well as drawing attention to the interconnectedness

of those discourses.

While this thesis thus makes no claims to comprehensiveness, and is aware of both the

arbitrariness of its chosen subject matter and of the wealth of material not considered, it

nevertheless argues that the work of Rhys, Machen, Davies, and Evans not only

anticipates but also makes possible the development of the tradition of twentieth-century

Welsh writing in English. Evans's *My People*, so often the starting point for chronologies

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[204] For a first, brief, foray into the potential riches of this archive, see Tomos Owen, 'The *London Kelt* (1895-1914): Performing Welshness, Imagining Wales', *Almanac: Yearbook of Welsh Writing in English*, 13 (2009), 109-25.

of Welsh writing, is recast as a text which inherits – albeit with some significant departures – the work of London-Welsh writers of earlier decades. These writers' works – including Evans's own work prior to *My People* – are emblematic of a split, or plural, sense of identity stemming from the late-nineteenth-century London context. Ultimately, in its diverse and varied ways, the host of writings produced in these years articulates a new sense of Welsh identity often struggling with being cut off from its roots in an imagined community but also embracing the emergent creative possibilities afforded by that peculiar sense of exile.

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