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**Independent Wales?:
The Impact of Devolution on Welsh Fiction in
English**

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Abstract

This thesis traces the relation between Anglophone Welsh fiction and politics, in light of the campaign for, and introduction, of devolution. Focusing primarily on the period 1970 – 2011, the thesis analyses a range of novels, short stories and journal articles produced in this period. The Introduction begins with an analysis of the history of devolution in Wales and considers theories of nationalism proposed by theorists including Benedict Anderson and Raymond Williams, both of whom suggest that heightened awareness of a wider national community is integral to the development of a cohesive nationalist impulse. Chapter I commences with an analysis of the relation between literature and politics in the years prior to the 1979 referendum on Welsh devolution. Taking as its starting point Fredric Jameson's theory of political allegory in literature, this chapter considers the way in which the presentation of politics in Anglophone Welsh fiction becomes gradually more overt by the close of the 1970s. Chapter II examines the way in which Anglophone Welsh fiction writers responded to the outcome of the 1979 referendum, alongside other political events of the 1980s such as the Falklands War and widespread industrial decline. Chapter III charts the development of the relation between fiction and politics in 1990s Wales, suggesting that the years preceding the 1997 referendum on devolution witnessed a more overt engagement between Anglophone Welsh fiction and politics than had been evident in the 1970s. The final chapter argues that in the wake of devolution fiction from Wales has responded by presenting an increasingly diverse and multi-faceted image of Wales, characterised by a more overt engagement with politics and nationalism. The Conclusion considers how the changes outlined in this thesis relate to wider cultural developments in Wales and suggests how this research may be expanded to incorporate broader areas of the arts in Wales.

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Introduction

Literature and Politics in National Identity

In September 1997 the Welsh electorate voted in favour of devolution by the narrowest of margins. A majority of less than one per cent secured victory for the ‘Yes’ campaign, meaning that Wales would finally receive some limited powers of self-government. The process had been a lengthy and often controversial one, dividing campaigners, the media and writers in Wales for a number of years. Yet, to date, no sustained study of the relation between literature and politics in Wales, in light of the struggle for devolution, has been carried out. This thesis forms the first extended study of the interaction between prose fiction and devolution in Wales, establishing a foundation for future research.¹ In contrast, a number of studies have been carried out on the impact of devolution on Scottish literature, most notably the *Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, edited by Berthold Schoene, which offers a wide range of essays considering the position of Scottish literature and culture in the wake of devolution.² As in Scotland, the process of securing devolution for Wales was a lengthy one, involving a failed referendum on devolution in 1979, the impact of which is explored in more detail later in this thesis. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, this research focuses primarily on the period between 1970 and 2011.

The purpose of this thesis is threefold. Firstly, it seeks to determine the nature of the relationship between Anglophone literature and politics in Wales prior to the 1979

¹ Writing in 2006, William Housley noted that ‘despite the plethora of sociological work on national identity in post-devolution Wales little focus has been directed towards the cultural sphere and its relationship with different forms of identity construction and representation’. William Housley, ‘Artists, Wales, Narrative and Devolution’, *Devolution and Identity*, ed. John Wilson and Karyn Stapleton (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 77-94 (p. 78).

²*The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. Berthold Schoene (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007). Some of the essays in this collection are discussed briefly in the ‘Comparative Studies’ section, later in this chapter.

referendum on devolution. Through this analysis it demonstrates that the prevailing sense of division in Welsh politics was reflected by a similar sense of division in Anglophone Welsh writing in the 1970s. Secondly, the thesis considers what effect the failure of the 1979 referendum on devolution had on Anglophone Welsh writing. Moreover, it gives attention to how the major political events of the 1980s and 1990s, including the miners' strikes and the Falklands war, may have contributed to apparent disharmony between political opinion in England and Wales and how such events were presented in writing from Wales. It goes on to explore what differences exist between the role of Anglophone Welsh writing in the build-up to the 1997 referendum on devolution, when compared to that of 1979. Finally, it seeks to demonstrate the way in which literature in Wales has responded to and, in turn, been affected by the introduction of devolution.

The complex relation between literature and politics lies at the heart of this thesis and is one which has previously been the subject of much discussion. Clearly, literature has been closely aligned with politics from the earliest times, not least in the oratorical use of literary style and techniques to further political aims. The origins of rhetoric in literature can be traced back to classical writing, when the skill was used in the process of writing political speeches.³ Though the relationship between literature and politics may have become less direct in the intervening centuries, it has not lost its significance.⁴ Writers of literary works often have political agendas, whether overt or covert, and may use rhetorical devices and skills to make such agendas more acceptable to their audiences. In the twentieth century, works such as George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) or, in the Welsh context, Lewis Jones's *Cwmardy* (1937) indicate that modern writers, no less than their Classical forerunners, are

³ George A Kennedy has argued that the skill was first consciously acknowledged as such in the fifth century, when 'for the first time in Europe, attempts were made to describe the features of an effective speech and to teach someone how to plan and deliver one'. George A Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 3.

⁴ For example, Benedict Anderson explores the connection between literature and the development of national identity in his *Imagined Communities*, an analysis of which is included later in this chapter.

interested in persuading their readers of the validity of their political views and the wrong-headedness of their opponents'. These examples moreover show that writers can be strongly influenced by the political climate and events of their time to produce works which are a direct intervention in contemporary ideological debates. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that political events may affect literature written in a given period in a range of different ways.

The relationship between political events and Anglophone Welsh fiction published during the final three decades of the twentieth century and the start of the twenty-first century will form the basis of this thesis. Raymond Williams has suggested that the word 'culture' offers an important starting point for a study of national identity, being commonly used to refer to 'a whole way of life'.⁵ True to his socialist roots, Williams regards the economic base as underpinning cultural production, suggesting that the way of life to which he refers is characterised by the fact that 'the arts are part of a social organization which economic change clearly radically affects' (p. 11). For Williams, culture and its artefacts can be regarded as products of the political and economic climate from which they have emerged. Moreover, Williams also emphasises the connection between cultural activity and the construction and development of society, outlining his theory that:

Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning. The making of a society is the finding of common meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment under the pressures of experience, contact and discovery, writing themselves into the land. The growing society is there, yet it is also made and remade in every individual mind. (p. 11)

The arts, of which literature is a significant part, can therefore be regarded as a feature of politics in the widest sense, being both a 'national inheritance' (p. 15) and an inescapable part

⁵ Raymond Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary', *Raymond Williams Reader*, ed. John Higgins (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 10-24 (p. 11).

of everyday life.⁶ As if to further confirm the centrality of literature in cultural development, Williams concludes that ‘a writer’s job is with individual meanings, and with making these meanings common’ (p. 24) indicating that literature has the potential to play an important part in the formation of a shared sense of national identity. While this thesis will argue that the relationship between literature and politics is more subtle and multifarious than is suggested by Williams, his argument nevertheless emphasises the complexity of the relation between socio-political change and cultural development.

If political factors such as the economy can have a direct impact on culture and, in turn, literature, it is important to consider how economic factors may have shaped the meaning of Welsh identity during the latter half of the twentieth century. Martin Johnes explores the way in which various political events have influenced contemporary Wales in his 2012 study *Wales Since 1939*, pointing to the way in which these events informed perceptions of national identity. Discussing the effect of industrial decline on political opinion in Wales, Johnes notes that the concept of Welsh identity ‘had become more political under the Conservatives as the traditional industrial base was dismantled’ throughout the 1980s.⁷ Moreover, in his analysis of the results of the 1997 referendum on devolution, Johnes draws attention to what he regards as the politicising of Welsh identity in the inter-referenda years. Comparing the results of the 1979 and 1997 referenda, Johnes argues that while there may not be any evidence ‘to suggest that the “yes” result was due to any significant rise in

⁶ Williams’ theory draws on the ideas explored by Karl Marx in his theory of base and superstructure, in which Marx argues that ‘in the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness’. The belief that literature arises as one of the products of the ‘superstructure’ built on this economically formed ‘base’ supports the assertion that literature can be regarded as a cultural by-product of political and economic developments. Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1981) [1970], p. 20.

⁷ Martin Johnes, *Wales Since 1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 417.

Welsh national identity' (p. 416), there were increased 'political consequences of making that identification' (p. 416). Johnes' argument suggests that a heightened political awareness was in effect in Wales by the time of the 1997 referendum and that this awareness may have influenced perceptions of national identity and, consequently, voting patterns in the referendum. In analysing literature from the inter-referenda years, this thesis will therefore seek to establish whether Anglophone Welsh writers contributed to an increased awareness of what Johnes terms 'the political consequences' of Welsh national identity in existence in Wales by the eve of the 1997 referendum. Such developments provide a prime example of the changing meanings of society, embodying Williams' description of society being 'made and remade' ('Culture is Ordinary', p. 11) as a result of social and political change.

Much of the shift in the meaning of Welsh identity which occurred in the latter part of the twentieth century seems to have taken place in response to events during the 1970s and 1980s, indicating significant change in a relatively short period of time. Such change is not entirely unusual in the development of a nation; Eric Hobsbawm points out that 'national identification and what it is believed to imply, can change and shift in time, even in the course of quite short periods', leaving it open to the changing influence of features such as language and literature.⁸ If this literature is itself subject to political and economic change, writers, poets and commentators within a nation can be regarded as playing a potentially important role in shaping national identity and perceptions of place at times of increased political and social change. Interestingly, Hobsbawm goes on to note that the nationalist movements of the late twentieth century were characterised by 'essentially negative, or rather divisive' (p. 164) arguments, pointing to their focus on differentiating the home nation from those around it. This thesis will investigate whether depictions of nationalism in Anglophone

⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 11.

Welsh writing relied on encouraging perceptions of division between Wales and England as a means of generating support for the prospect of devolution.

While political factors may have contributed to a period of increased change in the meaning of Welsh identity throughout the latter decades of the twentieth century, Welsh political identity had long been a complex and divisive topic. The often turbulent political relationship between England and Wales has characterised the history of both nations over the preceding centuries. Wales has been bound politically to England since the Act of Union was passed in 1536, followed by its subsequent amendment in 1543, effectively annexing Wales to England. A defining moment in this relationship came in 1830 when ‘the Great Sessions and chanceries of Wales were abolished, thus causing Wales to be wholly absorbed into England in legal and administrative matters’.⁹ The combined effect of such Acts was to leave Wales greatly dependent on England for economic, legal and political support. Interestingly, historians suggest that there was a distinct lack of opposition from Wales to these Acts, permitting such significant political processes to be carried out.¹⁰ Brian Singer has noted that contemporary nations are frequently formed through ‘loose, incoherent complicity’, suggesting that national identity may be based more on a lack of desire, or ability, to oppose an enforced identity.¹¹ While a sense of complicity may well have led to Wales being annexed to England, it is possible to see the twentieth century as a gradual

⁹ John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), p. 364.

¹⁰ Chris Williams argues that ‘the Welsh largely welcomed the change in their status’ which accompanied the Acts of Union, regarding the union as a step forward. Chris Williams, ‘Problematizing Wales: An Exploration in Historiography and Postcoloniality’, in *Postcolonial Wales*, ed. Jane Aaron and Chris Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), pp. 3–22, (p. 5). Similarly, John Davies has noted that, unlike the equivalent process in Scotland and Ireland, ‘there was acquiescence’ in the Welsh response to the 1536 Act of Union, a feature Davies attributes to the fact that the Welsh Act of Union was passed ‘solely by the Parliament of England, a body lacking members from Wales’. His argument suggests that the lack of vocal opposition may then be taken to reflect the level of political powerlessness of the Welsh people. John Davies, *A History of Wales*, p. 232.

¹¹ Brian Singer, ‘Cultural Versus Contractual Nations: Rethinking their Opposition’, *History and Theory* 35:3 (1996), pp. 309–37 (p. 317).

coming to consciousness of the Welsh nation. In particular, this thesis argues that in the wake of the failed referendum on devolution in 1979, Anglophone Welsh writers were far from politically complicit, instead asserting their own sense of regional and national identity through their fiction. In so doing, Anglophone Welsh writing posed a challenge not only to cultural perceptions of national identity in Wales, but also to the political system through which Wales was governed.

However one-sided the political relationship between England and Wales may appear to have been prior to the twentieth century, it would be incorrect to assume that literature from Wales offered no challenge to English political authority. Indeed, a number of works of Anglophone Welsh writing turned their attention to topics of political or social concern, such as Amy Dillwyn's 1880 novel, *The Rebecca Rioter*, which explores the social and economic impact of the introduction of tolls on some rural Welsh roads. Katie Gramich has described the novel as 'a fascinating example of the productive interaction between history and literature', made all the more significant because of Dillwyn's decision to adopt the voice of a male protagonist.¹² Furthermore, Dillwyn's work offers an insight into the deficiencies of class and gender based hierarchies of the late nineteenth century, advocating reconciliation as a way to overcome these problems. Dillwyn was by no means alone in her attempt to address historical and political issues in her fiction. Even writers such as Allen Raine, renowned for her romance novels, later managed to use that genre to make what Stephen Knight regards as 'an attempt to give an account of Wales in her own day'.¹³ In contrast to Dillwyn, Raine's work lacked an overt political agenda, but instead drew attention to Wales as a place by giving voice to unmistakably Welsh characters. Thus, while her work may not have directly

¹² Katie Gramich, 'Introduction' to Amy Dillwyn's *The Rebecca Rioter* (Dinas Powys: Honno, 2004), pp. v-xxi, (p. x).

¹³ Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 21. Knight draws particular attention to Raine's 1900 novel *Garthowen: A Story of a Welsh Homestead* in which a crime motif is used by Raine to explore aspects of social life in a coastal town in Cardiganshire.

addressed political events, Raine's decision to write about places familiar to her is nonetheless significant, posing a challenge to the Anglocentric bias of the publishing world on which she depended as an author. Both examples suggest that a level of engagement between literature and politics was in existence in Welsh fiction in English long before devolution became a viable proposition for Wales.

In addition to heightened political awareness in Wales in the twentieth century, another debate began to emerge which further broadened the discussion of Wales' complex political identity. The question of whether Wales can legitimately be regarded as a postcolonial nation has proved to be both a significant and divisive topic in the latter half of the twentieth century. Considering the matter in his essay 'Problematizing Wales: An Exploration in Historiography and Postcoloniality', Chris Williams outlines his argument that while it may not be possible to regard contemporary Wales as postcolonial, it may be useful to employ the term 'post-colonial' in order to emphasise a particular period in the development of Wales as a nation.¹⁴ His belief is founded on the basis that while Wales has undoubtedly displayed some features of a colonised nation, it cannot be regarded as a postcolonial nation in the generally accepted sense. Williams' reasons for this conclusion stem from the fact that Welsh people have been entitled to the same voting rights as their English counterparts and have been 'the active agents as well as the passive subjects of [British] imperial expansion' (p. 7). Kirsti Bohata adopts a not dissimilar perspective in her 2004 study *Postcolonialism Revisited*, in which she employs the term 'postcolonialism' to denote 'a broad field of academic research, literary theory and creative writing, [...] to distance it from any temporal or political implication that colonialism is ended'.¹⁵ Wales is

¹⁴ Chris Williams, 'Problematizing Wales: An Exploration in Historiography and Postcoloniality', p. 3.

¹⁵ Kirsti Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 3.

perhaps best regarded as occupying a complex, and ambivalent, place between colonialism and postcolonialism, arguably having never been fully defined by one or the other.

This thesis therefore proposes to explore the politics of Anglophone Welsh writing in relation to devolution, based on the premise that in the past Wales has been largely dependent on England for political and financial support. As Chris Williams has suggested, Wales has certainly been heavily reliant on England since the Acts of Union, even though it cannot be regarded as having been a wholly colonised nation. This relationship was undoubtedly changed by the introduction of devolution in Wales and Jane Aaron and Chris Williams have noted that the opening of the Welsh Assembly in May 1999 ‘was popularly celebrated as if it marked the coming into being of a liberated nation,’ such was the scale of the celebration, particularly in Cardiff.¹⁶ Yet in reality, the new Assembly offered relatively limited powers to Welsh politicians; the Government of Wales Act 1998 listed twenty areas of responsibility which would be transferred to the Welsh Assembly.¹⁷ The introduction of the Welsh Assembly can therefore be regarded as a *lessening* of Wales’ reliance on England and a significant step towards gaining greater political autonomy, rather than as a moment of liberation from colonial rule. In this light, this thesis will explore the development of nationalist and political awareness in Anglophone Welsh writing, in view of the apparently increasing desire for greater political and cultural independence towards the close of the twentieth century.

¹⁶ Jane Aaron and Chris Williams, ‘Preface’ to *Postcolonial Wales*, pp. xv-xix, (p. xvi).

¹⁷ *The Government of Wales Act 1998*, available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/38/pdfs/ukpga_19980038_en.pdf [Accessed 25/11/13].

Imagined Communities

In his 1983 book, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson defines nationality as a ‘cultural artefact’, an argument which is of particular relevance to this thesis and its analysis of the relation between literature and politics in Wales.¹⁸ Anderson goes on to describe the concept of the nation as ‘imagined’ (p. 49) owing to the fact that ‘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’ (p. 49). Anderson’s argument raises a number of points of significance to the study of literary representations of national identity in Wales. Firstly, the existence of Wales as an independent nation remains a moot point in debates about the political status of Wales.¹⁹ As already established, the position of Wales in relation to the rest of the United Kingdom has often proved complex and has been the subject of much contention. This thesis seeks to demonstrate that the period from 1970 – 2011 marks a time of gradually increasing awareness of the existence of Wales as a nation in its own right, evident in a cultural sense in the literature produced by Anglophone Welsh writers. In this study I strive to establish how this sense of cultural independence engages with and is informed by political developments in Wales.

Anderson goes on to accord literature a central role in the creation of a sense of national identity, arguing that ‘fiction seeps quietly and continuously into reality, creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations’ (p. 36). For Anderson the term ‘fiction’ can be applied primarily to the form of personal narrative which formulates identity, yet the same concept can be applied to our reading of literature. This thesis tests Anderson’s concept by examining whether Anglophone

¹⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006 [1983]), p. 48.

¹⁹ See for example, Adam Price’s argument that Wales ‘can in many ways still be characterised as a tentative, emerging nation’. Adam Price, ‘Reinventing Radical Wales’ in *Politics in 21st Century Wales*, Rhodri Morgan, Nick Bourne, Kirsty Williams and Adam Price (Cardiff: Institute of Welsh Affairs, 2008), pp. 66-84 (p. 66).

Welsh writing appears to contribute to the creation of confidence in national identity in the years following the 1979 referendum on devolution. Furthermore, the thesis seeks to determine whether the contribution made by Anglophone Welsh writing is in fact carried out ‘quietly and continuously’ (p. 36), or whether expressions of identity are made more openly and explicitly, particularly in the years preceding the 1997 referendum. If a more direct connection between literature and politics can be seen to exist in Anglophone Welsh writing, it may well indicate a heightened desire for political change in Wales. Moreover, this thesis argues that the contribution made by Anglophone Welsh writing may be continuous, but fluctuates significantly in the volume and nature of its output. Here, the argument pays particular attention to the way in which different genres of writing are used in the period from 1970–1997 and how the volume and breadth of writing from Wales has developed in the wake of devolution.²⁰ As part of a consideration of the presentation of regional and national identity in Anglophone Welsh writing, this thesis also draws on an idea outlined by Raymond Williams in an essay entitled ‘Freedom and a Lack of Confidence’ (1981). Here, Williams explores the potential difficulty of balancing regional and national identities in literature. It can be assumed that regional demands may, at times, conflict with those of other regions and even with an overall sense of national identity, posing a potential problem for writers who choose to explore presentations of place in their work. For Williams, the solution to this problem is to ‘write in the full consciousness that other places and their pressures exist’ and to acknowledge these differences as a positive feature.²¹

The term ‘regional’ is used in this thesis to refer to writing from different areas of Wales, and not to Wales as a region of the United Kingdom. This thesis will analyse the

²⁰ See, for example, Chapter III which examines the resurgence of the short story form in Anglophone Welsh writing.

²¹ Raymond Williams, ‘Freedom and a Lack of Confidence’ (1981) in *Who Speaks for Wales?*, pp. 143-146 (p. 145).

processes through which such regional literatures develop within Wales and consider whether such writing in turn contributes to the creation of an overarching national literature, mirroring the gradual movement towards greater political autonomy for Wales. Furthermore, this thesis questions whether the desire to depict a specific place hinders the development of an overall sense of national identity. It explores in more depth the rise of what Raymond Williams terms the 'regional novel' (p. 144) in Anglophone Welsh writing from the early 1990s onwards.²² In so doing, this thesis demonstrates that literature from Wales offers an increasingly diverse image of national identity in the build-up to the 1997 referendum, contributing to the redefinition of Welsh identity, both within Wales and on an international platform.

In order to explore the relationship between literature and politics at both regional and national levels in Wales, the texts in this thesis are examined through the lens of Anderson's concept of an imagined sense of nationhood. The thesis seeks to determine whether an awareness of such a sense of community exists within Welsh writing in English in the pre-devolution era. My argument suggests that, particularly in fiction from Wales in the years prior to the 1979 referendum on devolution, there is an absence of awareness of a wider community, or indeed national identity, within Wales. In contrast, my analysis of literature from the inter-referenda period in Wales, demonstrates that Anglophone Welsh writing is characterised by a growing awareness of this sense of community, which broadens both the scope and the political reach of the fiction. I argue that in post-devolution Anglophone Welsh writing the act of devolution, often symbolised by the physical image of the Welsh Assembly, allows authors to engage with this 'imagined community', resulting in the construction of a renewed sense of national identity in Wales.

²² Williams' use of the term 'regional' relies on his perception of a region as 'a district, often an administered district' (p. 144), with the development of the 'regional novel' (p. 144) arising out of this concept as a form of literature where authors depict certain settings or places in their writing.

A gradual increase in the awareness of the 'imagined community' can also be seen as a means of increasing the potential for political development in Wales. As previously mentioned, Raymond Williams suggests that in order to assert a sense of regional identity, writers must first write with the awareness that other places and cultures exist. To write with an awareness of these other places and cultures is to acknowledge their presence and, to a certain extent, their significance, even when they cannot physically be seen by the writer. It is this sense of awareness of other places and a wider community that is increased in post-devolution Anglophone Welsh writing as writers are able to gain a greater confidence in the presence of the 'imagined community'. With this confidence in mind, Anglophone Welsh writing is able to contribute to what can be seen as the redefinition of Welsh identity in the post-devolution era. Here, the boundaries of nationalism are able to expand somewhat, broadening Welsh cultural horizons. Anderson argues that 'the nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations' (p. 50). The definition, and extension, of these boundaries is significant to my study of the connection between literature and devolution in Wales as it indicates the way in which perceptions of Welsh identity have changed throughout the period 1970-2011.

While the process of devolution naturally required some adjustment to perceptions of Welsh identity, the introduction of a National Assembly raised the profile of Wales on an international stage.²³ Such significant political change necessitated some adjustment to the perception of the cultural and national identity of Wales, requiring further extension of the 'elastic' boundaries to which Anderson refers. Nikolas Coupland and Hywel Bishop have

²³ For example, the topic inspired an international colloquium entitled *Pays de Galles: Quelle(s) Image(s)?/What Visibility for Wales?* at the Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique in Brest in 2007 and a subsequent collection of papers arising from the event was published in 2009. Both the event and the publication sought to consider the way in which the Welsh Assembly had increased the visibility of the Welsh nation on an international platform.

noted the significance of this process for Wales as a smaller nation within Europe, pointing out that ‘the national project that political devolution has handed to Wales in many ways comes at an odd moment – a time when national boundaries are being redrawn, when the securities that nationalisms once brought are being undermined by global realignments, and where nations, especially “small ones”, have to find new niches and market values to remain viable’.²⁴ This thesis demonstrates that the outcome of these changes is the creation of a new ‘imagined community’ for Wales, through which authors are able to depict the places and concerns relevant to their perceptions of contemporary Wales. Considering the problems associated with an analysis of nationalism and the concept of the imagined community in their essay on post-devolution Scotland and England, Susan Condor and Jackie Abell argue that ‘the ambiguities of the referent of the term “identity” afford slippage between “the nation” as an object of literary and political rhetoric and assumptions concerning the subjective self-consciousness of individual citizens’ (p. 52).²⁵ The aim of this thesis is not to conflate these terms, but to consider the ways in which literature and politics interact in Wales in the period from 1970 – 2011. Having done so it will be possible to explore the way in which this interaction may have influenced a sense of national consciousness and contributed to the redefinition of the imagined community in Wales. Thus, this thesis argues that throughout this period the concept of the imagined community gradually becomes both a political and cultural reality in Wales.

²⁴ Nikolas Coupland and Hywel Bishop, ‘Ideologies of Language and Community in Post-Devolution Wales’ in *Devolution and Identity*, ed. John Wilson and Karyn Stapleton (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 33-51 (p. 48). Coupland and Bishop go on to assert the idea that ‘cultural identity issues are highlighted and are being worked out in a context of political and cultural change’ (p. 48) in Wales.

²⁵ Susan Condor and Jackie Abell, ‘Vernacular Constructions of “National Identity” in Post-Devolution Scotland or England’ in *Devolution and Identity*, ed. Wilson and Stapleton, pp. 51-76 (p. 52).

A History of Devolution in Wales

Vernon Bogdanor has defined devolution as ‘the transfer to a subordinate elected body, on a geographical basis, of functions at present exercised by Ministers and Parliament’.²⁶ In order to trace the origins of the process in Wales, we must first seek to establish when the concept of devolution first entered the consciousness of the Welsh people. The idea of a measure of self-government for Wales can be traced back to the nineteenth century, when in 1886 Cymru Fydd, or ‘Young Wales’, was established to campaign in favour of what was described as ‘home rule’ for Wales.²⁷ The group saw only limited success and Geraint H. Jenkins has argued that ‘at critical moments, the Young Wales movement failed to mobilize support among the commercial and urban communities of South Wales between 1886 and 1896’.²⁸ His argument therefore points to a lack of political coordination between different regions of Wales as one of the key failings of the movement, something which would need to be redressed if future campaigns were to prove more successful. Nevertheless, the group did contribute to a number of significant political developments which took place in Wales over the course of the next decade.²⁹ Yet while the period itself proved to be positive for Wales, Cymru Fydd entered a downward spiral in the succeeding years when ‘Welsh sectional, regional, linguistic, and class antagonisms lessened the appeal of a national political autonomy for Wales’.³⁰

It is worth noting at this point the work of O. M. Edwards, whom Hazel Walford Davies has described as ‘the catalyst who opened up a new period of creative writing’

²⁶ Vernon Bogdanor, *Devolution in the United Kingdom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 2.

²⁷ The group was inspired by its Irish counterpart, Young Ireland.

²⁸ Geraint H. Jenkins, *A Concise History of Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 224.

²⁹ For example, in 1892 Wales secured a Royal Land Commission, shortly followed by the establishment of the University of Wales, founded with a Royal Charter in 1893.

³⁰ J. Graham Jones, writing about Cymru Fydd in *The Celts: History, Life and Culture* Volume 1 ed. John T. Koch and Antone Minard (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2012), p. 244.

through his work, which provided Welsh readers with ‘attractive, affordable reading material and acquainted them with the history and traditions of Wales’.³¹ Writing at the close of the nineteenth century, Edwards was able to offer a depiction of Wales that incorporated its rich historical and cultural past. In particular, the publication of his book *Hanes Cymru* in 1895 provided an important point of reflection on Welsh history. It could be argued that in order to progress towards the future, Wales first needed to gain a greater awareness of its past. This work was furthered by Edwards’s efforts to establish a number of Welsh periodical publications, including *Cymru*, *Cymru’r Plant*, *Wales* and *Heddyw* all of which offered commentary and reflection on Welsh history and culture, from both the past and the present time. Acting as founder, editor and a main contributor for these periodicals Edwards achieved mixed success, but nevertheless wielded some considerable influence, on the topics of Welsh culture and politics. Writing in the *Writers of Wales* series’ biography of Edwards, Hazel Davies argues that even short-lived publications, such as *Heddyw*, are indicative of Edwards’s desire to encourage Wales ‘to advance towards a new future armed with forward-looking thoughts’.³² Davies goes on to suggest that ‘*Heddyw* pointed an accusing finger at Welsh hypocrisy and mendacity’ (p. 51), adding that many of the accusations levelled by Edwards could still be considered ‘curiously contemporary in the 1980s’ (p. 52). While often provocative in nature, Edwards’s desire to use periodical publications to assert and explore a clearly defined sense of Welsh identity was undoubtedly an important step in the development of Welsh identity. As previously explored, Benedict Anderson credits print culture and the work of newspapers as playing a vital role in offering the imagined community ‘an idea of steady, solid simultaneity through time’ (*Imagined Communities*, p.

³¹ Hazel Walford Davies, ‘Sir Owen M. Edwards’ in *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopaedia*, ed. John T. Koch (California: ABC-CLIO, 2006), p. 656.

³² Hazel Davies, *O. M. Edwards* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988), p. 51.

63).³³ In this respect Edwards's contribution can be regarded as highly important. Katie Gramich has described Edwards as 'a driven man, passionately committed to reminding the Welsh of who they were or at least of convincing them that they were the idealized, noble mountain people conjured up in his historical narratives'.³⁴ Consequently, while Edwards's passionate publications were not always entirely successful commercially, his commitment to the writing of Welsh history, and the development of national identity in Wales, is impossible to overlook.

The concept of Home Rule for Wales was raised again in a number of movements at the start of the twentieth century in response to similar discussions about the political status of Ireland and Scotland. R. Merfyn Jones has noted that such debates had a cross-party nature as they were 'not only a Liberal issue', but were also 'widely debated within the labour movement in Wales in the years 1910 – 1912', noting in particular Scottish politician Keir Hardie's suggestion in 1910 that Wales should be granted a Secretary of State for Wales in line with the Scottish political model.³⁵ As with earlier movements regarding the topic of Welsh political status, such attempts ultimately proved unsuccessful. The inter-war years proved to be somewhat more successful for nationalists, with a number of significant political and cultural changes taking place in Wales.³⁶ 1925 saw the formation of political party Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru, established with the aim of providing a Welsh voice in British politics. Interestingly, however, Kenneth O. Morgan has noted that the aims of Plaid Cymru were

³³ This work was further supported by Edwards' efforts to campaign for education to be delivered through the Welsh language and for changes to the syllabus which would enable a greater study of the history and culture of Wales.

³⁴ Katie Gramich, 'Narrating the Nation: Telling Stories of Wales', *North American Journal of Welsh Studies*, Volume 6.1 (Winter 2011), 2-19 (p. 3).

³⁵ R. Merfyn Jones, 'Wales and British Politics, 1900 – 1939', in *A Companion to Early Twentieth Century Britain*, ed. Chris Wigley (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 87-101, (p. 100). It is worth noting that Hardie had previously been elected as an MP for Merthyr Tydfil in 1900, becoming one of only two Labour MPs in Parliament at the time.

³⁶ In 1922 the Urdd Gobaith Cymru was founded, with the purpose of encouraging children and young people to speak the Welsh language.

originally ‘not formally committed to self-government for Wales’.³⁷ Instead, Morgan points out that:

its three main objectives all concerned the protection of the Welsh language, including the making of Welsh the only official language, recognizing it as an obligatory medium in official business and government administration, and using it as a medium of instruction in education from every level from primary schools to the university (p. 207).

A change in direction came in 1926 when Welsh poet Saunders Lewis took over as president of the Party, leading to their 1932 announcement of their intention to fight for home rule.³⁸ It is worth noting that a large proportion of the developments made in Wales during these inter-war years focused on similar aims of preserving the status of the Welsh language and inspiring renewed engagement with Welsh culture, rather than offering any significant step towards a measure of political independence. To this end, BBC Radio offered its first broadcast in Welsh in 1935, a significant step towards recognising the cultural significance of the Welsh language.³⁹

Tensions between Welsh and English political interests increased in 1936 when the UK government announced plans to create an RAF bombing school in the grounds of farm buildings at Penyberth in Llŷn, proposals which met with fierce opposition in Wales. A petition, signed by over half a million Welsh objectors, was presented to British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin and was swiftly dismissed without debate. In September of the same year Saunders Lewis, along with two other members of Plaid Cymru, Lewis Valentine and D. J. Williams, carried out an arson attack on the farm buildings in protest at their acquisition by the government. The subsequent trial proved to be both dramatic and

³⁷ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880 – 1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 207.

³⁸ Nigel Forman cites 1932 as a significant year in the development of Plaid Cymru as it had ‘begun to elaborate a more recognisable political programme’ and ‘committed itself to the goal of self-government for Wales on a dominion-basis within the British Empire’. Nigel Forman, *Constitutional Change in the UK* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 101.

³⁹ It is nonetheless worth noting that, in spite of such broadcasts, the BBC did not offer a dedicated Welsh language radio station until the establishment of Radio Cymru in 1977.

controversial; the defendants were originally placed on trial in Caernarfon, but the case was later moved to the Old Bailey after the Welsh-speaking North Wales jury failed to reach a verdict. Saunders Lewis made the most of the opportunity to deliver a speech of defence during the original trial in which he praised Welsh writing as ‘one of the great literatures of Europe’.⁴⁰ Lewis went on to argue that their action had been based on ‘moral’ (p. 1) values and reasserting his belief that ‘the Welsh nation must gain its political freedom without resort to violence or to physical force’ (p. 4). Although the three men were eventually found guilty by the London jury and sentenced to nine months’ imprisonment, it is interesting to note the response of some fifteen thousand people who gathered in Caernarfon to show their support for the three men on their release from prison. John Davies regards the incident as ‘proof that at least some of the people of Wales were raising their heads after the trauma of the early 1930s’, suggesting that the event harnessed further support for Welsh nationalism and Plaid Cymru.⁴¹ By the close of the Second World War petitions were being presented to the Westminster government requesting the appointment of a Secretary of State for Wales to represent the country’s interests in parliament. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the idea did not prove popular with the UK government and was rejected by the Labour administration who attempted to soften this heavy blow by creating a council for Wales in 1948 and a junior minister for Welsh affairs in 1951.⁴²

Running parallel to the on-going political battle for a measure of Welsh independence, another struggle was also taking place across Wales. In the first three decades of the twentieth century Wales had witnessed a steady decline in its employment figures, with

⁴⁰ Saunders Lewis, speaking in his own defence during the trial at Caernarfon in 1936. Available via the National Library of Wales, at: <http://centenary.llgc.org.uk/en/XCM1927/page-flip/2/4.html> [Accessed 09/01/14], p. 2.

⁴¹ John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 593.

⁴² Christopher G. A. Bryant has described these steps as being ‘minor compared with the separate provisions made for and in Scotland’. Christopher G. A. Bryant, *The Nations of Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 122.

major threats to its industrial, and consequently economic, status. Gareth Elwyn Jones has claimed that:

the dominant issues in Welsh politics in the 1920s had far more to do with Labour issues than those traditionally associated with Liberalism... Unemployment, depression and industrial relations were the foci of attention. Neither home rule, nor more limited devolution had such appeal for the parties, and did not provoke much feeling in Wales.⁴³

Jones perhaps underestimates the strength of political feeling in Wales which, while undeniably preoccupied by industrial and economic concerns, still paid a certain amount of attention to the potential for a degree of autonomy. Nonetheless, by 1935 overall unemployment in Wales had reached over thirty-eight per cent of the population, although this figure was much higher in areas which had previously been at the heart of the coal and iron mining industry, such as Merthyr Tydfil where the figure rocketed to over sixty per cent.⁴⁴ These problems certainly influenced a number of literary representations of Wales from the period, with writers such as Lewis Jones, Kate Roberts and Rhys Davies exploring issues of unemployment and financial hardship in their fiction.⁴⁵

In such a period of economic upheaval, concerns arose that national identity in Wales had become somewhat lost. Saunders Lewis used a lecture on Anglo-Welsh writing in 1938 to describe the way the field had turned to ‘reflection of the undirected drifting of Welsh national life’.⁴⁶ It is entirely possible, however, that reflections on national identity in

⁴³ Gareth Elwyn Jones, *Modern Wales: A Concise History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 259.

⁴⁴ Julius W. Friend, *Stateless Nations: Western European Regional Nationalism and the Old Nations* (London: Palgrave, 2012), p. 62.

⁴⁵ See for example Kate Roberts’ 1932 novel *Feet in Chains* in which the lives of the family are dominated by their constant struggle to maintain employment and a source of income. For example, when Jane and Ifan Gruffydd become parents to two sons their thoughts turn immediately to the future when as they gain a ‘glimpse of the day when the two would be a help to them, after they started work in the quarry’ (p. 31). Kate Roberts, *Feet in Chains*, trans. Katie Gramich (Cardigan: Parthian, 2012 [1936]).

⁴⁶ Saunders Lewis, ‘Is there an Anglo-Welsh literature?’ An Annual Lecture delivered to the Branch, 10th December 1938, (Cardiff: Urdd Graddedigion Prifysgol Cymru, 1939), p. 14.

Anglophone Welsh writing were not those of ‘undirected drifting’, but a representation of cultural and political uncertainty. A sense of uncertainty remained one of the defining features of Welsh identity in the succeeding decades. Novels such as Emyr Humphreys’ *A Toy Epic* (1958) and Glyn Jones’ *The Valley, The City, The Village* (1956) presented protagonists struggling to understand their own sense of identity, a problem often inextricably linked to their perceptions of Wales.⁴⁷ Following on from this uncertainty, the late 1950s and 1960s were particularly significant in defining the relationship between Wales and England. Tensions were heightened considerably in 1957 when the UK parliament voted in favour of flooding the village of Capel Celyn in order to create a new reservoir which would provide water for the Liverpool Cooperation. During Parliamentary discussion of the matter, Welsh MPs voiced their concerns, with not one supporting the creation of the reservoir in the subsequent vote.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, English MPs voted in favour of the proposals and the development went ahead, sparking outrage in Wales and emphasising the extent of Wales’ lack of political control. The episode undoubtedly contributed to a growing sense of turmoil in Wales, drawing further attention to the political imbalance in the relationship between England and Wales. Geraint H. Jenkins has argued, however, that despite the loss of Capel Celyn the event ‘served to galvanize weary and dormant nationalists alike’, initiating a renewed sense of nationalism in Wales.⁴⁹ It was in the wake of this heightening political tension and renewed sense of nationalism that James Griffiths was appointed as the first

⁴⁷ See for example *A Toy Epic* where Michael’s sense of Welsh identity leaves him feeling strangely isolated from his friends and family. Emyr Humphreys, *A Toy Epic* (Bridgend: Seren, 2003 [1958]), p. 121. Aspiring artist Trystan undergoes a similar struggle for identification in Jones’ *The Valley, The City, the Village*. Glyn Jones, *The Valley, The City, The Village* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2009 [1956]).

⁴⁸ It should be noted that this response was to the second reading of the Bill in early July 1957 and not during the final reading of the Bill on 31 July 1957. Martin Johnes observes that although concerns were raised by Welsh politicians, including the Plaid Cymru leader Gwynfor Evans, English MPs and Lords readily dismissed such concerns by focusing on what they believed to be ‘the greater good’ achieved by the proposals. Martin Johnes, *Wales Since 1939*, pp. 213-4. Johnes goes on to note that ‘twenty-seven Welsh MPs voted against its second reading, with the rest abstaining’, a number which dropped to just twenty votes against the proposals by the time of the Bill’s third reading, (p. 215).

⁴⁹ Geraint H. Jenkins, *A Concise History of Wales*, p. 294.

Secretary of State for Wales in 1964, marking a decisive political development for Wales and a starting point for the debate over Welsh devolution which arose over the course of the following decade.

Why Now?

The question of 'why now' is an appropriate time to explore the relationship between literature and devolution in Wales is very apt. In order to establish the answer, we must turn both to the past and to the present for clarification. Wales has, historically, experienced a somewhat turbulent political relationship with England, as outlined above. Furthermore, as Raymond Williams has pointed out, there has frequently been a sense of fear regarding what anti-devolution campaigners would term the 'break-up' of Britain and its subsequent impact on the strength and identity of the United Kingdom as a whole. Williams argues that in order for progress towards greater political autonomy to be achieved, perceptions would need to be altered so that devolution was regarded not as a divisive act, but as one which provided both political and cultural benefits.⁵⁰ From the post-devolution era it is important to question whether this fear of dividing Britain has dissipated, or whether a Welsh vote in favour of devolution is a demonstration of an altogether different emotion. Over a decade after the introduction of devolution, it is pertinent to ask the question: what difference has devolution made to perceptions of national identity in Wales? For the purposes of this study, this question will be linked to that of whether the literature of Wales has contributed to the changes which have taken place since the 1979 referendum and whether such changes continue to be reflected by contemporary Anglophone Welsh writing.

⁵⁰ Raymond Williams, 'Are we becoming more divided?' in *Who Speaks for Wales?*, pp. 186-190 (p. 186).

In recent years, the subject of devolution and potential political independence for Wales has risen again to the forefront of debate. With Scotland approaching a referendum on independence in 2014, debate about the future of Wales has been reignited. Yet the role of literature in the process of political change in Wales since 1970 has been all too frequently overlooked, leaving a sizeable gap in cultural studies of devolution which is gradually being acknowledged. In 2012 a project entitled *Devolved Voices*, an initiative launched at Aberystwyth University, was established with funding from the Leverhulme Trust to explore poetic emergence in post-devolution Wales.⁵¹ Meanwhile the recent Silk Commission, tasked with reviewing the economic and constitutional situation in Wales since devolution, has recommended that further political powers should be devolved to the National Assembly. What has yet to be offered is a sustained analysis of the changing relation between literature *and* politics in Wales over the four decades directly affected by devolution.

As previously mentioned, studies of the relation between literature and devolution in Wales have, to date, been relatively limited. Until now, the primary examples of such a study have consisted of a small number of essays which have offered relatively brief analysis of representations of devolution in selected literary works from Wales. Prominent among these is an essay entitled 'Pulling you through changes: before, between and after two referenda', by Jane Aaron and M. Wynn Thomas in 2003 as part of the University of Wales Press *A Guide to Welsh Literature* series. In the essay, Aaron and Thomas trace the political changes under way in Wales alongside a selection of literary texts produced between 1979 and 2002. In so doing, they argue that 'Welsh writing in English is contributing to the bringing together of the Welsh tribes, not to form some kind of bland conformity, [...] but to encounter, record

⁵¹ A more comprehensive outline of the aims of this project and a selection of resources, including interviews with a number of post-devolution poets, can be found on the *Devolved Voices* website, 'About the Project' at: <http://wordpress.aber.ac.uk/devolvedvoices/about-the-project/> [Accessed 22/10/13].

and negotiate that diversity which is modern Wales'.⁵² If this is so, it is possible to regard this process as a vital stage in the renegotiation of the boundaries of Welsh national identity and the development of a new sense of political community in Wales. As it has been over a decade after the introduction of a National Assembly for Wales, this thesis is able to go beyond the analysis carried out by Aaron and Thomas to consider in more detail literary responses to devolution in Wales. It is also able to take into consideration a further referendum in 2011 which sought approval to extend the powers of the National Assembly.

Jane Aaron has also written about the impact of devolution on Welsh writing in her 2004 essay 'Towards devolution: new Welsh writing', published in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature*. Here, Aaron pays particular attention to the presentation and development of gender identities in the wake of the 1979 referendum on devolution in Wales. Aaron argues that towards the close of the twentieth century 'Welsh politics has changed in a manner which would suggest a renewed determination among Welsh people to survive as a distinct entity'.⁵³ This sense of determination to survive was also noted much earlier by Welsh historian Gwyn Alf Williams who, like Aaron, perceives this attitude to be a response to political, social and economic upheaval experienced by Wales in the latter decades of the century.⁵⁴ For Aaron, this determination to exist as a distinct entity manifests itself in the emergence of a number of distinctive features in Welsh writing, including that of 'a feminist Welsh voice' (p. 689) and a heightened connection between political and cultural debate in Wales. Aaron's essay points towards an increasing sense of diversity in Welsh writing. This thesis will build on these studies by offering a sustained

⁵² Jane Aaron and M. Wynn Thomas, 'Pulling you through changes: Welsh writing in English before, between and after two referenda' in *Welsh Writing in English*, ed. M. Wynn Thomas (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 279-309 (p. 308).

⁵³ Jane Aaron, 'Towards devolution: new Welsh writing' in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* ed. Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 685-699, (p. 686).

⁵⁴ Gwyn Alf Williams, *When was Wales?* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 304.

analysis of the way in which literature and devolution contribute to the construction of a renewed sense of political and cultural community in Wales.

While Wales had been undergoing its own struggle to secure devolution, a parallel campaign had been in existence in Scotland. Unlike Wales, Scotland came much closer to securing devolution in 1979 and eventually secured a Scottish Parliament with a much more confident majority of over seventy four per cent of those who voted in the 1997 referendum.⁵⁵ Over the course of this study, I will draw comparisons between the progress of Welsh and Scottish quests for devolution. It is undeniable that Scotland appears to have responded more enthusiastically to devolution, a fact that can be attributed in part to the sense of confidence which exudes from Scottish writing in the inter-referenda years.⁵⁶ As Scotland approaches a vote on full independence in 2014, it is increasingly important to consider what the consequences of such a decision would be for the rest of Britain, and specifically for Wales, both politically and culturally. Questions of this nature serve to emphasise the need for further reflection on the nature of politics and culture in Wales.

An Outline of the Structure of the Thesis and Chosen Texts

The first Chapter of this thesis seeks to demonstrate that the build-up to the 1979 referendum on devolution in Wales revealed much about popular perceptions of the boundaries of Welsh identity. To a large extent these boundaries were shown to be complex and deeply problematic, often being centred on features such as language and perceptions of community.

⁵⁵ Statistics available in the *House of Commons report: Results of Devolution Referendums (1979 & 1997)*, paper Research Paper No. 97/113 published in November 1997 and available at: http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CDgQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.parliament.uk%2Fbriefing-papers%2FRP97-113.pdf&ei=c1FmUpSHBoyX0QXd1oDoAg&usg=AFQjCNGXZUbfssHgFkge_m78ZwIoOm9Apw&bvm=bv_55123115,d.d2k [Accessed 22/10/13].

⁵⁶ Berthold Schoene has argued that this tone of confidence was unparalleled in many other European countries at the time. See 'Introduction' to *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, pp. 1-6, (p. 1).

Moya Jones has argued that within Wales ‘communication difficulties have led to comparatively isolated communities being self-sufficient and even inward looking’.⁵⁷ Yet while a lack of change may have proved problematic in some areas of Welsh life, others experienced rapid change as the twentieth century drew to its close. Particularly notable among these changes was the rise of women’s writing in Wales, the development of which is traced in this thesis. Deirdre Beddoe has argued that the ‘last thirty years of the twentieth century witnessed more radical and sweeping changes in the lives of women in Wales than did the previous seventy years put together’, due to far reaching social and political change.⁵⁸ Commentators have argued that these changes are reflected in a remarkable period of growth for Welsh women’s writing.⁵⁹ For Beddoe, women can be regarded as playing an active role in these developments, becoming ‘the agents of change’ (p. 159) in developments taking place from the 1970s onwards. This thesis traces the development of women’s political identity in Anglophone Welsh writing, arguing that the increased visibility of women writers reflects women’s heightened engagement with politics in Wales. Chapter I reflects the emergence of this trend by exploring works such as Bernice Rubens’ *I Sent a Letter to My Love* (1975) alongside literature by male authors including Alun Richards’ *Home to an Empty House* (1973) and Raymond Williams’ *The Volunteers* (1985).

Chapter II examines the impact of the 1979 referendum on Anglophone Welsh writing. Here, I draw comparisons to the reaction of Scottish writers to Scotland’s failure to secure devolution in the referendum held in the same year. I argue that in spite of initial disappointment, Anglophone Welsh writers gradually responded to the outcome of the

⁵⁷ Moya Jones, ‘Framing Welsh Identity’ in *Textes et Contextes*, No. 1 (2008), pp. 15-22, p. 16. Available at: <http://en.youscribe.com/catalogue/reports-and-theses/knowledge/humanities-and-social-sciences/framing-welsh-identity-1612105> [Accessed 12/09/13].

⁵⁸ Deirdre Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows: A History of Women in Twentieth Century Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 159.

⁵⁹ Katie Gramich has described the 1970s and 80s in particular as a time of ‘awakening’ for women writers in Wales. See: *Twentieth-Century Women’s Writing in Wales: Land, Gender, Belonging*, p. 106.

referendum, turning their attention to relevant political and social events which affected Wales during the 1980s. Among these events were the Falklands War, Miners' Strikes and industrial decline, all of which are depicted in numerous works of fiction set during the period, such as Christopher Meredith's novel *Shifts* (1997) and Carl Tighe's short story 'Rejoice!' (1985). In drawing together fiction and non-fiction articles from the period, this chapter offers an exploration of the connection between literature and political commentary in Wales, considering how these two modes may have contributed to the process of redefining national identity, which began in the wake of the 1979 referendum on devolution.

The third chapter of this thesis charts the development of Anglophone Welsh writing in the years leading up to the second referendum on devolution in Wales in 1997. The analysis commences with a discussion of the growth of Anglophone Welsh writing at the start of the 1990s, including the reasons behind the revival of the short story form. Here, the thesis argues that the growth of independent publishing houses in Wales permitted Anglophone Welsh writers a much greater level of freedom since they were able to submit work for publication without the need to satisfy the demands of a publisher based outside Wales. This new-found sense of independence led to a marked increase in fiction which focused on specific geographical areas, incorporating a range of features which identify a specific region, including dialect, references to place and the inclusion of matters of local concern. The fact that writers were able to employ such features strengthened the relationship between literature and politics in Wales and contributed to the creation of a broader 'imagined' community. In forming this analysis Chapter III refers to a range of texts including short stories by Glenda Beagan and Sian James, Christopher Meredith's *Sidereal Time* (1997) and Mike Jenkins' collection of short stories, *Wanting to Belong* (1997).

Chapter IV considers the way in which Anglophone Welsh writing develops in the wake of devolution in Wales. Wales voted in favour of devolution in the September of 1997,

but it was not until the May of 1999 that the first Assembly elections were held and the new Welsh Assembly was officially opened. The opening section of this chapter therefore considers literature from these years, in what can be considered a period of transition for Wales. Here the chapter returns to Benedict Anderson's argument that once nations have been imagined they can be 'modelled, adapted and transformed' in response to political or social change.⁶⁰ Chapter IV suggests that it is precisely this process of adaptation and transformation which is under way in post-devolution Wales and is reflected by Anglophone Welsh writers. In order to demonstrate the extent of this process of transition and transformation Chapter IV engages with texts such as Rachel Trezise's *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl* (2000) and Richard John Evans' *Entertainment* (2000) which trace the transition from pre- to post-devolution Wales.

The texts chosen for inclusion in this thesis have been selected to reflect these changes, encompassing a diverse range of geographical, social and political features. Anglophone Welsh writing offers a wide variety of literature, especially in the post-devolution years, the full scale of which could not possibly be included within the limitations of this study. Nonetheless, the texts which have been selected for analysis have, I contend, contributed significantly to the creation and shaping of a renewed sense of Welsh identity in the period addressed by my research. Perhaps inevitably, a number of the texts included in this thesis focus on South Wales, or more specifically, Cardiff. Writing in 2006 Alistair Cole noted that 'the role of Cardiff [in devolution] has been deeply controversial'.⁶¹ Cole goes on to suggest that this controversy arises from the fact that Cardiff was only recognised as capital of Wales in 1951 and although 'concentrating most national institutions within its midst, the capital city voted against devolution in 1979 and 1997' (p. 48). Consequently, it is

⁶⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 141.

⁶¹ Alistair Cole, *Devolution Series: Beyond Devolution and Decentralisation: Building Regional Capacity in Wales and Brittany* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 48.

important that thesis considers the way in which Cardiff and the surrounding South Wales area are presented in Anglophone Welsh fiction from 1970 – 2011. Nevertheless, texts such as Glenda Beagan's short story collection *The Medlar Tree* and Charlotte Williams's *Sugar and Slate*, which both adopt a focus on North Wales, have been incorporated into the analysis and allow the thesis to approach the presentation of these different areas of Wales from a comparative angle.

The scope of the thesis, spanning a total of more than forty years, necessitates a wide range of material, much of which offers a vital glimpse of the period in which it was written. Furthermore, a number of the texts included in this analysis have yet to receive significant critical attention and I hope to bring such texts to the forefront of debates on Welsh writing. Although the focus of this research centres on Anglophone Welsh writing, I have included authors who have achieved publication in both the English and Welsh languages. The reason for this decision was to better represent an emerging trend within contemporary Anglophone Welsh writing of utilising both linguistic cultures in poetry and fiction produced in Wales. A number of contemporary Welsh language authors have seen their work translated into English in recent years and a growing minority of bilingual writers are publishing work in both languages. Thus, this thesis takes some account of this emerging pattern in post-devolution literature from Wales. Moreover, the decision to include a works of fiction by a broad range of authors as taken to ensure that the thesis provides a synoptic view of the fiction being produced by Anglophone Welsh writers in the years addressed by this study. In so doing, the thesis is able to explore how different areas of Wales are presented by a variety of authors from differing social, political and economic backgrounds. This choice is particularly prevalent in Chapter III which explores and compares the presentation of Wales in fiction with a North Wales setting, such as Beagan's *The Medlar Tree*, to those with a South Wales setting, such as Sian James's short story collection *Not Singing Exactly*. Here

again the focus of thesis is on providing a foundation for future studies in this area, not on emphasising the centrality of these texts above others which could not be included within the limitations of the study.

It is with such concerns about the presentation of Wales in Anglophone Welsh fiction, and against a backdrop of division and political uncertainty in Wales, that this thesis begins. Commencing shortly after the post of Secretary of State for Wales was created in 1964, the chapter explores how Anglophone Welsh writing was engaged with division over language, culture and politics in 1970s' Wales. Charting the literary and political developments which took place in the decade, Chapter I considers the way in which writing from Wales contributed to such debates as the 1979 referendum on devolution approached

Chapter I – ‘St David’s Day Defeat’: The rise of the individual and the impact of the 1979 referendum on Welsh fiction in English¹

‘Cymru or Wales?’ read the question posed by *Planet* magazine on the cover of their first edition in 1970, cutting immediately into a debate which had been raging for several decades. The cover epitomized existing division between what M. Wynn Thomas terms the two ‘discourse communities’ of Wales, comprising Welsh and English language literary cultures.² This chapter seeks to explore the way in which Anglophone Welsh writers address such division in Welsh identity, contributing to the complex relation which developed between literature and politics in 1970s Wales. If the image presented through Wales’ literary culture was one of division, it would be logical to assume that this sense of division may have had a direct impact on the country’s overall sense of national identity. Benedict Anderson’s argument that the ‘imagined community’ is imagined precisely because ‘the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them’ suggests that an awareness of other members of the nation may have a direct influence on individual perceptions of identity.³ While they may have been aware of their fellow-members, inhabitants of Wales would also have been aware of the tension which existed between the two linguistic cultures of Wales. Rather than uniting Welsh inhabitants during the 1970s, linguistic and geographical differences can, therefore, be regarded as having been a barrier to the development of an overarching sense of national identity.

This problem of linguistic division was not exclusive to Wales; Anderson cites language as one of the most problematic identifiers of national identity. Reflecting on the challenges posed by the fact that different languages may exist within a nation, Anderson rightly points out that there ‘is no possibility of humankind’s general linguistic unification’

¹ Gillian Clarke, ‘Editorial’, *The Anglo-Welsh Review* 64 (1979), 1-5 (p. 1).

² M. Wynn Thomas, *Corresponding Cultures: The Two Literatures of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), p. 1.

³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006 [1983]), p. 49.

(p. 43) and, as a result, varying linguistic cultures within a single nation must be considered to be part of the formation of national identity. Furthermore, Anderson goes on to suggest that, regardless of the language in which they are written, cultural artefacts such as literature are able to have a direct impact on perceptions of the 'imagined community'. This belief that the rise of print-capitalism 'made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways' (p. 36) places literature, in all its forms, at the heart of the formation of national identity. Consequently, if literature is able to contribute to the formation of nationalism, a divided sense of identity in culture could, in turn, exacerbate existing confusion over national identity in Wales.

As noted in the Introduction, a strong sense of division in Welsh culture was in evidence a long time before devolution was raised as a possibility for Wales. Despite some notable success stories, Anglophone Welsh writers had struggled to secure recognition both within and outside of Wales during the first half of the twentieth century.⁴ In 1938 Saunders Lewis had argued that the problem with what was then termed 'Anglo-Welsh' writing was its lack of distinctiveness as a literary field in its own right. In a University of Wales lecture entitled 'Is there an Anglo-Welsh Literature?' Lewis had claimed that 'there is not a separate literature that is Anglo-Welsh, and that it is improbable that there ever can be', indicating an early point of division between Anglophone Welsh writing and its Welsh language counterpart.⁵ Indeed, Lewis went so far as to describe the tension created between Welsh writers and their Anglophone Welsh counterparts as being a 'fissure in Welsh literary activities' (p. 13) of the time. While Welsh fiction was clearly distinguishable, not least by its use of the Welsh language, it is possible to argue that Anglophone Welsh fiction at the time

⁴ Obvious exceptions include Dylan Thomas and Allen Raine, both of whom achieved publication and readership both in Wales and beyond during this period.

⁵ Saunders Lewis, 'Is there an Anglo-Welsh Literature?' (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1938), p. 13.

lacked quite such a clear sense of identity.⁶ According to Lewis, if Welsh writing in the English language were to prosper as the twentieth century unfolded, a clearer sense of identity would need to be established and rendered in a distinctive literary idiom in order to enable the field to become instantly distinguishable from Anglophone writing produced elsewhere within the United Kingdom.⁷

Yet as the 1970s dawned, just over thirty years after Saunders Lewis' apparent rejection of Anglophone Welsh writing, the field was still in existence and had experienced some significant developments in the intervening years. Works such as Richard Llewellyn's infamous 1939 novel *How Green Was My Valley*, which was adapted for film in 1941, had certainly succeeded in drawing attention to the field of Anglophone Welsh writing, but had also managed to generate an equal amount of controversy. Commentators were quick to point out that the novel bore little resemblance to the reality of life for much of contemporary Wales. The film version has since been described as 'a sentimental Hollywood melodrama, drawing upon a fanciful Celtic imagery akin to Scottish tartanry and kailyard', but it nevertheless gained significant attention outside Wales.⁸ Anglophone Welsh poets seemed to have fared somewhat better than their fiction counterparts during the decades which followed Saunders Lewis' damning account of Anglo-Welsh writing. The work of Dylan Thomas, for example, was in no small way responsible for drawing significant attention to the field. His turbulent personal life and frequent broadcasts undoubtedly further raised the profile of both Thomas and Wales on an international platform.

⁶ Welsh language literature continued to flourish in the post-war years and, as John Davies observes, had experienced a 'substantial increase' in publication from the late 1950s onwards, with authors such as Caradog Prichard and Waldo Williams among the most notable authors. See John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 653.

⁷ In contrast, Lewis also used his lecture to argue that Irish writers such as Synge, Yeats and Joyce had succeeded in creating a distinctively Anglophone Irish literature. 'Is there an Anglo-Welsh Literature?', pp. 5-8.

⁸ Steve Blandford, *Wales on Screen* (Penybont-ar-Ogwr: Seren, 2000), p. 152.

As previously explored, Wales had experienced a turbulent political era in the post-war years, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s. The establishment of the Welsh Office in 1965 had gone some way towards ensuring that Welsh concerns were represented within British politics. Yet in his study of modern Wales, Gareth Elwyn Jones suggests that although the ‘Welsh Office had some power and some successes’ it was not sufficient to ‘disguise the continuing Welsh dependence on Whitehall’.⁹ Linguistic division in Wales also proved problematic, with Welsh speakers increasingly demanding equal status for the language within Wales. A successful campaign was led by readers of *Barn* magazine in 1969 for bilingual road tax discs, while there was a long-running and ultimately successful direct action campaign for bilingual road signs. Martin Johnes points out that, in the case of the latter, ‘although the Welsh Office was happy to allow local authorities to make their information signs bilingual, it did not want two languages on directional signs because it feared the presence of Welsh might distract drivers and endanger safety’.¹⁰ Johnes also notes that the Welsh Office was nervous of increasing the size of road signs to accommodate both languages as they were concerned that to do so would ‘annoy householders who had already complained about their size’ (p. 232). Both examples indicate the additional pressures faced by the Welsh Office who were tasked with trying to satisfy the demands of both Welsh language campaigners and non-Welsh speakers in Wales.

In examining how Anglophone literature responded to, and reflected upon, such political developments, the ideas of the Marxist critic and theorist, Fredric Jameson, can be illuminating. Exploring nationalism in third-world literature in 1986, Jameson noted what he described as ‘an obsessive return of the national situation’ among third-world nations,

⁹ Gareth Elwyn Jones, *Modern Wales: A Concise History*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 269.

¹⁰ Martin Johnes, *Wales Since 1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 232.

revealing a deeper desire to understand the true meaning of national identity.¹¹ Jameson goes on to argue that ‘all third-world texts are necessarily [...] allegorical’ (p. 69) and can, in a very specific sense, be regarded as ‘national allegories’ (p. 69). Jameson’s reasoning for this conclusion is his assertion that:

third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic – necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society’ (p. 69).

Wales, obviously, cannot be considered as politically, socially or economically comparable to the third-world countries discussed by Jameson. Yet, as outlined above, a number of recent critics have remarked on Wales’s ‘postcolonial’ status, which is analogous to that of many third-world nations, and it is also notable that the political and national allegory which Jameson suggests is an important feature of third-world literature of the late twentieth century, is also perceptible in a number of works of Anglophone Welsh fiction from the 1970s.¹² This chapter considers the way in which such political allegory is presented in Anglophone Welsh writing prior to the 1979 referendum on devolution and how this allegory relates to the political changes being demanded and debated in Wales at the time. Moreover, it examines whether such political allegory may have had the potential to contribute to the development of a wider awareness of the ‘imagined community’ in Wales in the 1970s.

If the form of political allegory suggested by Jameson can be noted in Anglophone Welsh fiction of the 1970s, it is also important to consider the way in which this political allegory may contribute to the formation of the ‘imagined community’ in Wales. Benedict

¹¹ Fredric Jameson, ‘Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism’, *Social Text*, 15 (Autumn, 1986), 65-88 (p. 65).

¹² While this chapter focuses specifically on an analysis of the presentation of political allegory in Alun Richards’s *Home to an Empty House* and Bernice Rubens’s *I Sent a Letter to My Love*, a similar approach can be noted in other works of fiction from the surrounding period, such as Moira Dearnley’s 1973 novel *That Watery Glass* and Emyr Humphreys’ 1965 novel *Outside the House of Baal*.

Anderson's argument that a sense of nationhood develops 'quietly and continuously' would appear to be supported by Jameson's assertion that political and national allegory may be present in fiction, even when it does not appear to offer an overt analysis of politics.¹³ The use of such an approach would suggest that Anglophone Welsh fiction which incorporates such features may have been able to contribute to the creation of an unconscious national allegory. Consequently, questions of nationalism would be positioned as semi-peripheral to the fiction being produced by such writers. While this chapter concentrates on the way in which such allegory is presented in examples of Anglophone Welsh fiction from the 1970s, it is possible to see questions of nationalism moving from the periphery to the centre of such fiction as the twentieth century draws to a close. In so doing, the 'imagined community' of Wales becomes increasingly prevalent in the fiction produced by Anglophone Welsh writers in the approach to the second referendum on devolution in 1997.¹⁴

It is not only the nature of the 'imagined community' being presented in Wales which is of significance, but the image of the individuals being depicted as part of that community. Here, the role of women in Anglophone Welsh writing is of particular importance. In her study of Welsh women writers of the twentieth century, Katie Gramich describes the 1970s as a time of 'awakening' for women writers in Wales.¹⁵ This chapter goes further, to suggest that the decade marked a period of gradual political awakening for both male and female fiction writers in Wales. Using examples from the writing of authors such as Alun Richards, Bernice Rubens, and Raymond Williams, it argues that this process of awakening was manifested in two main features, both of which contributed to the developing role of Anglophone Welsh writing in the politics and culture of Wales. Firstly, women appeared to

¹³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006 [1983]), p. 36.

¹⁴ For a further exploration of this development, see Chapter IV of this thesis.

¹⁵ Katie Gramich, *Twentieth-Century Women's Writing in Wales: Land, Gender, Belonging* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 106.

become increasingly active within politics and culture in Wales in the 1970s, gradually becoming more visible within Welsh literary and cultural spheres. Secondly, the 1970s were marked by a growing awareness of the complexity of contemporary Welsh identity. The development of these two features, along with the deployment of different forms of national allegory, forms the basis of the first two sections of this chapter, followed by an assessment of the way in which Anglophone Welsh writing responded to these changes in the build up to, and immediate aftermath of, the 1979 referendum.

Writing in 1986, Deirdre Beddoe argued that Welsh women were ‘culturally invisible’ and existed primarily as ‘a bit of trimming on the male image of Wales’.¹⁶ While it would be inaccurate to suggest that women had been entirely invisible in Wales prior to the 1970s, their presence and number had all too often been overshadowed by their male counterparts in the field of Anglophone Welsh writing. Beddoe’s reasoning for this assertion appears to be based on her argument that women in Welsh culture could be divided into five main stereotypes: the ‘Welsh Mam; the Welsh lady in National costume; the pious Welshwoman; the sexy Welshwoman and the funny Welshwoman’ (p. 229). Although very different, Beddoe suggests that these stereotypes shared some similar characteristics, such as their dependence on male figures for economic support (p. 230) and their location within the domestic sphere. This chapter responds to that analysis by exploring the way in which women are presented in Anglophone Welsh writing of the 1970s, challenging the idea that all women in Welsh culture are depicted according to the stereotypes mentioned by Beddoe. In so doing, it considers both the way in which the role of women writers developed in response to political and social change in the decade and the way women were presented in Anglophone Welsh fiction by male writers.

¹⁶ Deirdre Beddoe, ‘Images of Welsh Women’ in *Wales: The Imagined Nation* ed. Tony Curtis (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1986) pp. 227-238 (p. 227).

This chapter will interrogate Beddoe's assertion that women were 'excluded from the formation of the national image of Wales' (p. 229) by seeking to demonstrate the way in which women formed an integral part of Anglophone Welsh writing in the 1970s. In so doing it considers the way in which women contributed to the formation of Welsh identity both through the act of writing and as female characters in fiction published during the decade. Beddoe's argument that Welsh women are excluded from the national image of Wales relies on the idea that women are frequently depicted in roles that they no longer occupy. To illustrate this point, Beddoe selects the image of the 'Welsh Mam', a woman who primarily inhabited the domestic sphere and was largely a 'housebound' figure and the image of the 'pious Welshwoman' who 'gives a false impression of Welsh womanhood' (p. 236). By contrast, this chapter suggests that female characters in 1970s Anglophone Welsh writing were often presented very differently from the stereotypes outlined by Beddoe, being depicted in roles outside of the domestic sphere and away from the limitations noted in Beddoe's essay. Further to this exploration, it also considers whether the presentation of female characters in a broader range of circumstances to those listed by Beddoe contributes to heightening awareness of the imagined community in Wales during the decade. Beddoe has also suggested that the post-war years were among the most challenging for Welsh women who, having gained a measure of independence and improved access to the workplace during the Second World War, were frequently expected to return to the domestic sphere in the following years. As Katie Gramich notes, a number of Welsh women writers had been directly involved in war, an experience which undoubtedly informed their later work.¹⁷ By the early 1970s the situation had still not been fully resolved, with women writers still lacking the attention often drawn by their male counterparts.

¹⁷ Gramich cites the example of Hilda Vaughan who served at a Red Cross hospital and in the Women's Land Army during the First World War and Judith Maro who served in the ATS in World War II. *Twentieth Century Women's Writing in Wales: Land, Gender, Belonging*, p. 106.

The problem of Welsh women writers lacking attention was epitomised in 1970 in a collection of short stories by Welsh authors entitled *The Shining Pyramid*. The anthology, published by Gomer Press, drew together twelve short stories by Welsh authors from the twentieth century. Writing in the introduction, editors Sam Adams and Roland Mathias commented on the fact that ‘it has often been said that those Welsh writers who have made the greatest impact both in Wales and upon the world outside have been lyric poets and short story writers’, yet ‘only four previous collections of stories by Welsh authors’ had been published to date.¹⁸ Moreover, the editors are quick to point out that *The Shining Pyramid* is unique, being the first anthology of short stories by Welsh writers to be published in Wales and the first collection to include only stories originally written in English. Nevertheless, the collection noticeably contained only work by male authors, the majority of which had previously been published elsewhere. The editors offer no explanation for the absence of any female authors in the collection, a decision which overlooks successful women writers of the early twentieth century such as Hilda Vaughan and Dorothy Edwards, who had excelled in their use of the short story form. Whatever the reasons for this decision may have been, the absence of any female writers in the collection is indicative of the difficulties faced by Welsh women writers hoping to secure publication.

As mentioned above, it was not only the role of women which was being interrogated and renegotiated during the 1970s. Debate about the future of Wales led to a growing acknowledgement of the complexity of contemporary Welsh identity in general, with this sense of complexity notably reflected in literature from the period. A significant part of this developing awareness seems to have been connected to a growing sense of distinction between Welsh identity and that of other parts of the United Kingdom. Political events of the

¹⁸ Sam Adams and Roland Mathias, ‘Introduction’ to *The Shining Pyramid and Other Stories by Welsh Authors*, ed. Sam Adams and Roland Mathias (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1970), pp. xi-xvi (p. xi).

preceding decades had served to emphasise the political differences between Wales and England in particular. As previously mentioned, events such as the flooding of Capel Celyn to provide water for the Liverpool Corporation in the late 1960s had exacerbated tensions which had existed between Wales and England for some time. The 'imagined community' of Wales may not have been entirely certain of its own identity, but throughout the 1970s it became increasingly aware of the boundaries which separated Wales from other nations.

With the decline of industry in Wales already becoming evident in the 1970s, a new pattern can be seen to emerge in Anglophone Welsh writing from the period. A focus on the individual gradually comes to the fore in such writing, emphasising a concentration on the self above family members or members of the surrounding community. This focus on the self can be observed in the breakdown of the family unit in Anglophone Welsh writing and the increased emphasis on personal narratives as the decade progressed. The first section of this chapter considers the way in which this pattern can be noted in the work of authors including Alun Richards and Bernice Rubens, as well as in literature published in journals and literary magazines in Wales. Moreover, it considers the way in which this growing focus on the individual affects perceptions of the Welsh identity as an imagined community, suggesting that Welsh nationality was faced with something of a crisis of confidence as the 1979 referendum on devolution approached.

A Time of Awakening: Social, Sexual and Political Awakening in *Home to an Empty House* (1973) and *I Sent a Letter to My Love* (1975)

The gradual sense of 'awakening' which Gramich argues can be noted in the work of Welsh women writers from the 1970s, can also be observed in the development of sexual and social

identities in Wales in the period.¹⁹ In turn, these changes can be related to an increasing focus on the needs of the individual in fiction from the same period. In the past, writing from Wales had frequently maintained a strong focus on the community and, in particular, the centrality of the family structure. Novels such as Kate Roberts' *Feet in Chains* (1936) and Gwyn Jones' *Times Like These* (1936) had depicted strong family units at the heart of close-knit, often industrial, communities in Wales. In 1979 Raymond Williams analysed these texts as examples of what he termed 'the Welsh industrial novel', pointing out that the image of the family could be used to act as a microcosm for wider society in such fiction.²⁰ Williams argued that the family presented 'the most accessible immediate form' (p. 105) of access to industrial society, allowing Welsh writers to explore industrial communities through the relationships and hardships faced by a family unit. Such a technique was made possible by the fact that industrial communities in both the North and South of Wales shared significant amounts of their daily lives. Men often worked in the same quarry or mine as their neighbours, leaving their children to attend the same local school and their wives to shop in the village stores. Yet the decline of industry in Wales and the gradual disintegration of industrial communities rendered the example of the family insufficient as a means of exploring the daily lives of characters in areas where people no longer shared substantial similarities in portions of their work and home lives.

In addition to illustrating the complex social changes underway in Wales, Alun Richards' novel *Home to an Empty House* (1973) captures a moment of intense personal and political development in early 1970s Wales. The novel centres on husband and wife, Walter and Connie, and their struggle to understand their own sense of identity, both as individuals

¹⁹ Katie Gramich, *Twentieth-Century Women's Writing in Wales: Land, Gender, Belonging* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 106.

²⁰ Raymond Williams, 'The Welsh Industrial Novel' in *Who Speaks for Wales? Nation, Culture, Identity*, ed. Daniel Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), pp. 95-111 (p. 95).

and within their marriage. The couple's marriage has become a mundane relationship which reveals their lack of connection. Connie calmly describes their circumstances as 'just two people for whom things haven't gone very well', demonstrating a lack of engagement and emotional investment in their relationship.²¹ Interestingly, in spite of their indifference towards their relationship, both Walter and Connie struggle to establish a sense of identity outside of their marriage. When Walter is hospitalised with tuberculosis, Connie finds herself surprised by the strength of her emotions as she cries 'salt tears' (p. 84) when leaving him in the hospital for the first time. Yet her sudden outburst of emotion seems to stem from feelings of self-pity rather than from any major concern for her husband's well-being. Consequently, Connie's thoughts soon return to her own predicament, leading to the admission that 'it was what I felt that counted. Me-me-me! I didn't think of him' (p. 75). These feelings do not appear particularly troubling to Connie and are justified to herself as she leaves the hospital with the thought that 'he [Walter] was their problem now' (p. 80), a thought which seems to confirm the degree of separation between husband and wife in the novel. It is significant that throughout *Home to an Empty House* the only time the pair appear genuinely united is through their sexual desires, which appear to have replaced any real sense of affection for each other. Both Walter and Connie seem to regard their sex life as the primary means of contact in their marriage and yet sexual relations between them appear to be little more than momentary gratification. Early in the novel Connie remarks that sex is the only thing they have in common, followed swiftly by the revelation that they 'had exhausted the instinct and had nothing to say in the silence that followed' (p. 77).

It is within Connie and Walter's troubled marriage that a form of the political allegory to which Fredric Jameson referred in his analysis of third-world literature, can be seen. Connie's concern with her own circumstances is indicative of a focus on the individual as

²¹ Alun Richards, *Home to an Empty House* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2006 [1973]), p. 31.

distinct from the family unit which had dominated earlier Anglophone Welsh writing. Here, the breakdown of Connie's relationship with Walter can be regarded as a form of the political allegory to which Jameson referred in that the couple's marriage acts as an allegorical representation of the historical relationship between England and Wales, with the gradual demise of their marriage suggestive of a decline in the political relationship between the two nations. The results of a General Election in 1970 had revealed the difference in political opinion between England and Wales, with 51.6% of Welsh voters in favour of a Labour government, as opposed to a majority share of 48.3% of English votes for the Conservative party.²² A similar pattern had emerged in the preceding General Election in 1966 and was repeated in the next one in 1974. Significantly, in the case of the 1970 election, the response from English voters was enough to ensure that the Conservative party secured control of Government, indicating that Welsh political feeling could be overpowered by that of England.²³ What can be seen in *Home to an Empty House* is then the start of a process of disengagement, with Connie uncertain whether to extract herself from a relationship which seems largely perfunctory. It could be argued that, at this stage, Wales was yet to embark on a similar process of disengagement from the dependency of its political relationship with the rest of the United Kingdom.

It is worth noting that, however unfulfilling Connie finds her relationship with Walter, she never fully escapes her fear that the end of their marriage would leave her 'unimportant[t]' (p. 324) and isolated. Such concerns are suggestive of the way in which a fear of change may hinder the ability to move towards the future. Having embarked on a half-hearted affair with senior colleague, Ifor, Connie treats the relationship as an opportunity for self-discovery,

²² UK Election Statistics: 1945 – 2003, House of Commons Library, Research Paper 03/59, 1st July 2009, pp. 11 – 12. Available at: <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons/lib/research/rp2003/rp03-059.pdf> [Accessed 17/09/13].

²³ UK Election Statistics: 1945 – 2003, House of Commons Library, Research Paper 03/59, 1st July 2009, p. 9.

taking advantage of the opportunity to escape from her daily life and test the boundaries of the affair. When searching for somewhere to stay in London with Ifor, Connie hopes to find a place that she will 'never be able to go to again' (p. 179), suggesting that her desire to experience a new place is uppermost in her concerns. Her relationship with Ifor is, therefore, a temporary state, offering an opportunity for Connie to forget her own difficulties for a time, rather than a permanent means of furthering her career or progressing from her current job. In fact, Connie's lack of ambition is striking for, when offered a position on a UK teaching panel, she is keen to take it because of the opportunity for 'a nice trip to London every month' (p. 101) and an escape from the mundane routine of her life, rather than the enhanced career prospects it offers her. It is similarly significant that in order to secure change, and attend a meeting regarding education in Wales, Connie is required to travel away from her local area and visit London.²⁴

Connie is a particularly interesting figure in the novel as she does not appear to adhere to the image of women in twentieth-century Welsh culture which Deirdre Beddoe suggests is stereotypical. As previously mentioned, Beddoe draws attention to middle-class perceptions of the Welsh family unit which featured 'a male breadwinner, a dependent home-based wife and dependent children' as an integral part of its image.²⁵ Although married, Connie is not a mother, and her irritation with Walter early in the novel distances her from the more traditional role of a supportive wife. Moreover, far from being financially dependent on Walter, Connie has a job as a teacher in a local school. This job further separates her from the image of the 'housebound' (p. 236) Welsh Mam. Moreover, Connie is not the only strong

²⁴ Responsibilities for primary and secondary education were only transferred to the Welsh Office in 1970. It is also worth noting that a certain amount of male domination still seems to exist within the education system presented in the novel, with the senior roles of headteacher and schools inspectors predominantly occupied by male characters. Likewise, when Ifor is replaced by a new inspector at the close of the novel it soon transpires that he thinks little of Connie, suggesting that 'he didn't feel it at all desirable that adolescent boys were principally in the charge of a woman' (p. 318) and dismissing her from her role on the panel.

²⁵ Deirdre Beddoe, 'Images of Welsh Women', p. 231.

female character to appear in *Home to an Empty House*; the young couple live with Connie's Aunt Rachel, a figure Walter describes as 'our landlord, protector, and old mother earth' (p. 11). Walter's words seem to confirm Rachel's position in a matriarchal role within the novel, one who wields real power over the family, being both financially secure as the owner of the house and unyielding in her beliefs as the couple's self-appointed moral guardian.²⁶ As such, both characters pose a challenge to gender stereotypes, a trait which is made all the more striking by the fact that it is acknowledged by the novel's male protagonist.

It is not only the presentation of women in *Home to an Empty House* which challenges stereotypical images of gender in Welsh culture. Walter differs considerably from images of men frequently depicted in Welsh writing who, as Deirdre Beddoe also notes, have traditionally been portrayed as 'coalminers and rugby players' evoking images of 'strong male bodies' (p. 227). The presentation of Walter in the novel could not be further removed from these images. Immediately depicted as a somewhat hopeless character, it soon transpires that Walter gained his present job of selling dog food through the influence of Rachel and Connie's relatives. Having failed to earn a sustainable income through second-hand car sales, Walter is forced to allow Rachel to arrange a job for him working with Connie's uncle, Iestyn. The fact that Rachel openly states that Walter 'doesn't make enough to live on' (p. 12) selling cars and then arranges a new job for him, further detaches Walter from the image of the male breadwinner and provider for his family. Similarly, Walter encounters few physical demands in his job, a point which becomes apparent when he responds with a resounding 'certainly not' (p. 7) when asked by a doctor whether he has carried out any heavy manual work in recent times. These features of his life, coupled with the fact that he

²⁶ This role as moral guardian can be noted later in the novel when Rachel threatens to throw Connie out of the house if she fails to end her affair with Ifor (p. 239). Nevertheless, her failure to carry out this threat suggests a more complex relationship with her niece and perhaps a fear of isolating herself from her closest relative.

develops tuberculosis and a related ophthalmic condition, present Walter as being both financially and physically weak.

Although unpleasant, Walter's illness does present him with an opportunity to escape from the routine of his daily life. In particular, through his illness Walter is able to engage with a new range of people. This experience seems to prove beneficial to the process of recovery as by the time he is discharged he has struck up a friendship with a fellow sufferer, the two men developing a bond 'like old soldiers together' (p. 315) in the wake of their illness. The fact that Walter finds a sense of community with another tuberculosis sufferer is indicative of his need to engage with people who share his experiences and understand his difficulties. This need for a sense of community is suggestive of a need for 'horizontal comradeship', similar to that necessitated in the formation of the imagined community in Benedict Anderson's theory of nationalism.²⁷ It is such a sense of community which Connie seems to lack at the close of the novel when she is left alone to reflect on her feelings of isolation. Ifor observes at one stage that Connie possesses 'a total indifference to things Welsh' (p. 195), lacking understanding of his own connection to Wales and his belief that he is 'the pip squeezed from the orange, the product of both, victim and assassin' (p. 195). In contrast, Connie's indifference is perhaps embodied by her gleeful response to the prospect of trips to London. Yet for Ifor, the brief affair with Connie marks 'the beginning of a new awareness of myself' (p. 195), reigniting a sense of connection to Wales which he had previously suppressed.

Interestingly, Ifor's renewed sense of political and national awareness seems to be based on a reconnection with a sense of place which he had lost in his efforts to be successful in his career and shed the 'trait of ingratiating' (p. 195) which he regards as a hindrance to the development of the Welsh population. Dai Smith perceives this renewed connection with

²⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 7.

Wales to be a direct result of Ifor's historical associations with the Wales of his childhood, contrasting him with Connie for whom 'the past is something other people had, strictly now, a mere history'.²⁸ Coming from a different generation to Ifor, Connie's ideas about Welsh identity are largely based on her experiences of other people's nationalism. For Connie, Welshness is associated with 'quarrelling committees' (p. 243), 'things going wrong, little political men with vested interests [...] And the Language that nobody spoke much in towns, unless it was to get on in the BBC or Education' (p. 243). Finding these features 'meaningless in terms of my present' (p. 243), Connie presents Wales as a concept firmly rooted in a past with which she feels little affinity. Thus, from Connie's perspective, the boundaries of Welsh identity are associated with an old Wales which bears only limited relevance to her present. While the novel does not offer any attempt to redefine these boundaries, Connie's awareness of their lack of relevance to contemporary Wales indicates a growing understanding of the need for change.

The focus on the development of the individual and a lack of engagement with a wider community is reflected in the structure of *Home to an Empty House*, with chapters being recounted by different characters. Significantly, three women, Connie, Rachel and Ifor's wife, Hilda, are provided with an opportunity to speak in the novel, increasing the dominance of the female voice in the narrative. Yet Hilda's brief appearance as a narrative voice arguably raises more questions than it answers. Like Connie, Hilda cannot be included in any of the categories mentioned by Deirdre Beddoe in her assessment of the presentation of women in Welsh culture. Reviewing the novel, Jon Gower described the decision to include a chapter from Hilda's perspective as a 'very obvious design fault', claiming her role

²⁸ Dai Smith, 'A Novel History' in *Wales: The Imagined Nation*, pp. 131-158 (p. 155).

is little more than a 'plot device, a deus ex machina'.²⁹ Yet the inclusion of a chapter from Hilda's perspective offers more than a contrived resolution to Ifor and Connie's affair. Hilda's story offers a strong contrast to Connie's, revealing a sense of boredom in her admission that 'the days seem to pass without me getting out' (p. 256). Her words contrast sharply with Connie's desire to escape from the confines of her home and workplace, as does Hilda's later confession that 'I have never had an orgasm' (p. 259), her lack of sexual satisfaction a further degree of separation between the two women. Hilda's dependency on alcohol and her tragic suicide attempt therefore serve as a poignant reminder that the experiences of Connie and Rachel are not necessarily representative of all women and that further change is needed to extend social opportunity to all sectors of the community. Summarising the novel, Dai Smith has argued that *Home to an Empty House* 'confronts directly the emptiness from which the new beginning must be made'.³⁰ Smith points out that 'no easy filling up of the vacuum of contemporary South Wales is on offer' (p. 155) in the novel, which instead urges readers to embrace 'the ambiguous, the ambivalent and the uncertain' (p. 155) in contemporary Wales.

Acting again as a form of national allegory, the ending of *Home to an Empty House* offers its readers a glimpse of the potential problems of gaining a greater political autonomy. Having finally accepted that her marriage to Walter is over, Connie faces the prospect of life on her own and a time of 'just being me' (p. 324). As previously explored, the couple's union is one of convenience which no longer fulfils the needs of either participant and, as a result, neither individual is able to move towards the future. It is only when the cycle of daily life is shattered by Walter's hospitalisation and Connie's subsequent affair, that the couple fully

²⁹ Jon Gower, 'Review of *Home to an Empty House*' for *Wales Arts Review*, available online at: <http://www.walesartsreview.org/library-of-wales-home-to-an-empty-house-by-alun-richards/> [Accessed 19/09/13]

³⁰ Dai Smith, 'A Novel History' in *Wales: The Imagined Nation*, pp. 131-158 (p. 155).

realise their need for separation. Rachel Trezise argues that *Home to an Empty House* is about the couple ‘never getting what they want, but finally realizing what it is they need’.³¹ In this sense the novel can be regarded as a process of awakening, with the characters gradually developing a stronger awareness not only of their own needs, but of the lives of others beyond the confines of their marriage. Walter’s experience of illness and Connie’s experiences with Ifor do little to improve their individual circumstances, but they do serve to heighten their sense of awareness about themselves.

Connie’s apparent fear of independence at the end of the novel can be connected to her lack of engagement with a wider community. With her marriage to Walter over and her affair with Ifor terminated, Connie is left with very little support or engagement with any wider community. Having spent much of the novel avoiding this fact, Connie finally concedes that ‘sooner or later you realise it, when you’re really on your own’ (p. 295), belatedly recognising the need for engagement with others. Nevertheless, Connie retains her belief in her ability to survive. When leaving Walter in the hospital at the start of his illness, Rachel advises Connie ‘to go on living your normal life’ (p. 85), a mantra which she reaffirms through her conviction that ‘everybody’s life was bits and pieces. Some people had to pick themselves up off the floor more than most, that was all’ (p. 317). Interestingly, this resilience which Connie displays throughout the novel shares some characteristics with the female survival narrative which emerged more clearly in Welsh women’s writing in the wake of the vote in favour of Welsh devolution in 1997.³²

The complexity of gender roles in twentieth-century Wales and an increasing awareness of the need for change are also explored in Bernice Rubens’ 1975 novel, *I Sent a Letter to My Love*. The novel, which is set in Porthcawl, follows a woman in her fifties as she

³¹ Rachel Trezise, ‘Introduction’ to *Home to an Empty House*, pp. ix-xiii, (p. xiii).

³² Chapter IV of this thesis explores the impact of the survival story in Welsh women’s writing in more detail.

unexpectedly finds herself exploring her sexuality properly for the first time and embodies a very different form of national allegory from that seen in *Home to an Empty House*. Feeling increasingly depressed by the mundane nature of her life and her role as carer for her disabled younger brother, Stan, and frustrated by her consequent sense of loneliness, protagonist Amy decides to send her profile to the dating section of a local newspaper, using a pseudonym to conceal her identity. The initial anticipation she experiences as she awaits the 'expected letters' from prospective admirers soon diminishes as she eventually receives only one reply which comes in the form of a letter from Stan.³³ The fact that Stan unwittingly responds to Amy's letter, suggests that the siblings are more similar than they may have realised, with Stan's letter revealing his own frustrations and feelings of isolation in his admission that he has 'very few friends' (p. 90). Nevertheless, this depressing turn of events is highly ironic as Amy's attempt to escape from the insular nature of her life in fact drives her further into the very relationship from which she had originally wished to escape.

It is interesting to note that Amy's decision to submit her profile relies on a belief in the existence of others with similar interests and desires outside of her hometown. When writing her profile Amy takes the decision to adopt a pseudonym, having been filled with 'a great sense of self-importance that the eye of the world turned on the comings and goings of Amy Evans of Porthcawl' (p. 63). Her concerns not only reveal her belief in a wider imagined community, but also her perception of herself as an integral part of that community. This belief in the imagined community beyond Porthcawl is momentarily shattered when only Stan replies to her advert, leaving Amy bereft of the connection with the wider world which she so desired. Nonetheless, the correspondence still enables Amy to move beyond Porthcawl as she travels by bus to a neighbouring town to post and collect the letters in a complex operation designed to avoid arousing the suspicions of her brother and her best

³³ Bernice Rubens, *I Sent a Letter to My Love* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2008 [1975]), p. 74.

friend, Gwyneth. Despite maintaining the assertion that her decision to write the letters allows her to ‘give to him [Stan] what he pleaded’ (p. 92), it soon becomes apparent that Amy finds personal comfort in their correspondence. Her growing dependency on the exchange of letters increases as she becomes ‘excited at the thought of the arrival of her letter to Stan’ (p. 109) each week, as well as experiencing ‘trembling anticipation’ (p. 121) before opening his replies. Her reliance on the letters, in spite of acknowledging them as ‘a fantasy’ (p. 120) suggests that the process is as much one of personal gratification for Amy as it is a lifeline to Stan, offering her an outlet through which to escape from the limitations of her daily life.

It is not only through the exchange of letters that Amy experiences a sense of liberation in *I Sent a Letter to My Love*. Along with her friend Gwyneth, Amy invests in her first ever pair of trousers. Interestingly, Amy’s attraction to the trousers is based on her belief that they ‘would make her slim, daring even’ (p. 65), again revealing her desire for change. Merely visiting the shop to look at the trousers becomes a significant moment for Amy, for whom ‘even to stop at Pugh’s window required an act of courage’ (p. 65), a feeling intensified by her conviction that such window shopping was ‘for well-dressed ladies who had the taste and the money to seriously consider using both’ (p. 65). Reflecting on the presentation of place in the novel, Katie Gramich has noted that *I Sent a Letter to My Love* offers a portrayal of ‘what it feels like to be an ugly, unloved girl trapped in an unfulfilling role’, with Porthcawl providing an ‘appropriate background for Amy Evans’s anguish’.³⁴ Amy’s desire for greater happiness and experience of life beyond the confines of her present home is evident as she contemplates wearing the trousers only in the event of a trip to Paris. Her sudden decision to wear the trousers for a picnic in Porthcawl later in the novel implies,

³⁴ Katie Gramich, ‘Both in and Out of the Game: Welsh Writers and the British Dimension’ in *Welsh Writing in English*, ed. M Wynn Thomas (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 255-77 (p. 266).

momentarily, that Amy may have overcome this anguish about her life and surroundings. Yet this temporary release fails to last, as Amy's secret correspondence with Stan gradually unravels and her surroundings become more restrictive once again, with Amy eventually residing permanently within one room of her house.

However poignant Amy's decision to purchase a pair of trousers may initially appear, the outcome of the purchase is decidedly less assured. The trousers remain in a drawer for some time and when Amy does eventually gather the courage to wear them she becomes 'nervous of putting them on' (p. 131), concerned that Stan will not approve. This desire to secure her brother's approval indicates that Amy lacks confidence in her new appearance. Indeed, her need for reassurance from a male figure ultimately suggests that she has not yet aligned her wearing of trousers with her position as a woman, a concept reinforced by Amy's efforts to 'acquire a trouser talent that man simply owned by nature' (pp. 131-2). While perhaps more covert than the form of national allegory explored by Jameson in his essay, the scene can be read as a further metaphor in the novel's depiction of national allegory, with the event mirroring Welsh politics by indicating a desire for change which is not yet matched by an accompanying sense of confidence in a new identity. This lack of confidence can again be noted in Amy's decision to pair the trousers with 'an old cardigan' (p. 131), as if the security of the old item will counter the radical change represented by the trousers.

While Amy may have been the driving force in initiating the correspondence, the balance of power within the exchange of letters undergoes a dramatic shift as the novel develops, revealing the extent to which brother and sister are most concerned with their individual happiness. Like Connie in *Home to an Empty House*, Amy struggles to maintain power within the relationship, especially when faced with Stan's beseeching requests for a meeting. Similarly, it is Stan who brings the correspondence to a sudden end with the news of his impending marriage to Gwyneth delivered to Amy through one of the letters to her alias,

Blodwen Pugh.³⁵ The abrupt end to the epistolary relationship leaves Amy struggling to face the reality of a future without their exchange. The end of the correspondence also marks the end of Amy's alias, Blodwen, an event which Amy mourns as 'the passing of what was, after all, her own person' (p. 190), her distress revealing the full extent of her reliance on the exchange. Amy's apparently emotionally-triggered physical paralysis following the announcement of Stan and Gwyneth's engagement further confirms the idea that Amy's primary motive in the correspondence was to fulfil her own need for communication and expression. The loss of this connection and the sense of closeness it offered to her brother leaves Amy's character helpless and dependent at the novel's close.

What is interesting to note about the presentation of Amy in *I Sent a Letter to My Love* and Connie in *Home to an Empty House*, is the way in which neither character conforms to the stereotypes suggested by Deirdre Beddoe in her assessment of the role of women in Welsh culture. Neither woman appears to be satisfied by occupying a merely domestic role in life, with both seeking to satisfy their needs by moving outside of the domestic sphere. Moreover, while characteristic of the wider second-wave feminism movement of the 1970s, this reluctance to remain in the domestic sphere again mirrors an important political development underway in Wales at the time. Charlotte Aull Davies has noted the way in which women were all too frequently marginalised in Welsh politics of the twentieth century. In particular, Davies cites the example of Mai Roberts, whose instrumental role in arranging the encounters which led to the formation of the Welsh Nationalist Party in 1925 has been often overlooked.³⁶ Davies goes on to assert that for the most part women did not gain a stronger role within Plaid Cymru until the 1970s, when 'there were clear indications that

³⁵ It is worth noting that Amy chooses the emphatically Welsh name 'Blodwen' for her alias, perhaps suggesting a yearning for a more definite sense of national identity.

³⁶ Charlotte Aull Davies, 'Women, Nationalism and Feminism' in *Our Sisters' Land: The Changing Identities of Women in Wales*, ed. Jane Aaron, Teresa Rees, Sandra Betts and Moira Vincentelli (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1994), pp. 242-255 (p. 243).

some women in the party were beginning to reject the helpmate role that had hitherto characterized the activities of the Women's Section and of most individual women within the party' (p. 247).³⁷ In light of this important development, the desires of Amy and Connie to escape the confines of their domestic environments can be seen in the context of a wider female desire to become more active within a social and political context.

In contrast to Connie, in spite of her desire to escape her circumstances, Amy seems to feel at least some sense of obligation towards her role as 'home-maker' (p. 62) and carer to Stan. Significantly, however, neither woman appears to discover a sense of identity with which she feels entirely comfortable. Having spent a considerable portion of the novel attempting to escape her present circumstances, Amy is depicted as being left bereft by her brother's relationship with Gwyneth. Confined to her bed by her emotional paralysis, Amy relinquishes her role as carer for Stan, instead being cared for by Gwyneth. Her release from her domestic duties does afford Amy a moment of satisfaction as 'she tasted the colonising power' (p. 203) of her own inability to move, but this sense of power is short-lived. As Stan and Gwyneth's marriage draws closer and 'the sickly fear' (p. 213) returns to Amy, her sense of powerlessness comes to dominate her final moments, suggesting that she has yet to find a position in life with which she is comfortable. Similarly, in *Home to an Empty House*, Connie gains little emotional or sexual satisfaction through her affair with schools inspector Ifor, finding his desire for her 'tragic' (p. 291) and describing their attempt at sex as being like 'something on the commercials, no good when you got behind the gloss on the package' (p. 291). Nevertheless, however unsatisfying her affair with Ifor is, Connie still remains unable to repair her marriage to Walter and is left to contemplate a sense of 'loneliness' (p. 324) which she is powerless to prevent.

³⁷ Davies notes that in spite of this movement 'the first straightforwardly feminist motion to reach the [Plaid Cymru] conference came in 1978 when the party adopted a stance in favour of women's rights' (ibid. p. 247).

The sense of personal dissatisfaction and powerlessness experienced by Amy in *I Sent a Letter to My Love* and Connie in *Home to an Empty House* can also be read as an allegorical depiction of the political and industrial changes induced by the onset of industrial decline in Wales and growing uncertainty about the country's political and economic future. Stephen Knight has described *Home to an Empty House* as 'an allegory of the condition of Wales in the late twentieth century: baffled, disappointed, lacking outlets for its talents and emotive powers, but still on its feet – and still writing'.³⁸ Similarly, in *I Sent a Letter to My Love*, Amy's desire to maintain the correspondence with her brother is indicative of her desperation to change her own circumstances, but her inability to do so through any other means. Jane Aaron and M. Wynn Thomas have noted that many of Rubens' Welsh characters are 'sexually frustrated or maimed, narrow-minded, [and] obsessive', traits which can be read as symptomatic of political frustration within 1970s Wales.³⁹ For Amy and Connie alike, their lives are marked by a sense of frustration which they are unable to fully understand and a need for change which they are unable to fulfil. Moreover, in *I Sent a Letter to My Love* Amy's ultimate paralysis can be seen as an allegorical representation of the Welsh nation's stunted ability to act politically, serving as a further indication of the underlying political frustration within the novel.

Heightened Tensions: Approaching the 1979 Referendum

While a sense of political and national allegory can be noted within Anglophone Welsh fiction from the early 1970s, a more direct relation between politics and culture can be noted in a number of Welsh journals from the same period. The political and cultural influence of

³⁸ Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 180.

³⁹ Jane Aaron and M. Wynn Thomas, 'Pulling you through changes: Welsh writing in English before, between and after two referenda' in *Welsh Writing in English*, ed. M. Wynn Thomas (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp.279-309 (p. 266).

journals and literary magazines in both English and Welsh is in evidence in Wales from as early as the later nineteenth century. Outlining his theory on national identity, David Adamson suggests that ‘intellectuals pursuing artistic, literary, academic, philosophical and political careers contribute significantly to the forging of national culture and the creation of national identity’.⁴⁰ Apparently confirming Adamson’s theory regarding the centrality of periodical publications in the forging of national culture, journals in both the English and Welsh languages certainly formed a key component of Welsh literary culture during the twentieth century. To this end, M. Wynn Thomas notes that in ‘the immediate pre-war period, the simultaneous appearance of several lively new journals such as *Wales*, *The Welsh Review*, *Tir Newydd* and *Heddiw*, was [...] symptomatic of the feeling amongst young Welsh authors on both sides of the [linguistic] divide, that the activity of writing needed to be radically re-examined in light of the conclusive social economic and political changes of the 1930s’.⁴¹ Similarly, in the post-war period, journals can be regarded as playing a significant role in the renegotiation of Welsh literary identity. It is within this re-examination of the activity of writing that both Welsh and English language publications share an element of unity, their common goal of seeking change and development for Wales somewhat bridging the divide between the two languages. Thomas suggests that this response may have been in part due to an awareness that ‘alert young English writers were already regrouping around such innovative journals as *New Verse*’ (p. 89), leaving their Welsh counterparts to seek alternative outlets for their work.

Amidst ongoing political debate over issues of importance to Wales, the launch of *Planet* magazine in 1970 offered a forum for literary, political and cultural debate through the

⁴⁰ David Adamson ‘The Intellectual and the National Movement in Wales’ in *Nation, Identity and Social Theory: Perspectives from Wales*, ed. Ralph Fevre and Andrew Thompson (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), pp. 48-68 (p. 48).

⁴¹ M. Wynn Thomas, *Corresponding Cultures* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), p. 89.

English language. Featuring articles and commentary on topics ranging from the influence of small presses in Wales to an examination of the political situation in Ireland, *Planet* immediately defined itself as a politically-based publication. Interestingly, a defining feature of early editions of *Planet* was the attempt to bridge the gap between Welsh and English language culture in Wales. Issue two of the magazine featured an extract from Kate Roberts' 1936 Welsh-language novel, *Traed Mewn Cyffion*, translated into English by Ned Thomas. The choice of extract is of some considerable significance as it focuses on a scene in which Jane Gruffydd is told of her son's death in the fighting of World War I.⁴² It is significant that this extract was chosen, not least because of its political implications, but also due to its depiction of a Welsh-speaking woman who cannot understand the language of the telegram in which she is told that her son is dead. The extract serves to illustrate the difficulties posed by an inability to offer bilingual services to Wales. The publication of the extract also demonstrates the way in which *Planet* crosses the divide between the Welsh and English languages, bringing a highly praised Welsh-language text to the attention of English readers.

1973 witnessed a further development in discussion about the political future of Wales, with the release of a report by the Kilbrandon Commission which had been established in 1969 to consider the options for devolution in Wales and Scotland. The report generated a significant amount of interest among the media and some political commentators, but in reality, appeared to change very little in regard to Wales' prospects of securing devolution. Gareth Elwyn Jones even suggests that 'it is difficult to know how seriously the Labour Government took the Crowther/Kilbrandon Commission' when it was established in 1969.⁴³ Jones goes on to point out that 'in any case Labour were replaced in government by

⁴² Kate Roberts, *The Chains Around My Feet*, trans. Ned Thomas, *Planet*, 2 (October/November 1970), 50-54.

⁴³ Gareth Elwyn Jones, *Modern Wales: A Concise History*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 269.

the Conservatives after the 1970 election, an election in which Plaid Cymru's performance was disappointing' (p. 269). This sequence of events seems to indicate that the Commission may not have been particularly successful in raising awareness about devolution among the general public. Nevertheless, writing for *The Times* in 1973, Trevor Fishlock argued that the Commission's report had excited nationalists in Wales and Scotland, reporting that 'nationalist blood is manifestly racing at the prospect of parliaments for Wales and Scotland'.⁴⁴ Interestingly, Fishlock predicted that 'for all the excitement or anticipation [...] delegates were well aware that in the major parties there will be a strong movement to have ideas about Welsh and Scottish parliaments shelved' (p. 3), anticipating further tension and division as debate about the potential for devolution continued.

While some Welsh nationalists may have responded enthusiastically to the outcome of the Commission, for the proposals to be successful in a referendum the general public would need to be convinced of the potential benefits of Welsh devolution. It is here that the role of Anglophone Welsh fiction became particularly significant. In his illustrated history of Anglophone Welsh writing, Roland Mathias argued that 'post-war Anglo-Welsh writers spring from a *majority* of the population, not a restricted class or two, and have come, with rare exceptions, through a uniform educational system'.⁴⁵ Consequently, it would be possible for Anglophone Welsh fiction writers to speak to and represent the views of a wider section of Welsh society than they may previously have done. Mathias emphasises the positive features which can be noted in the development of the field of Anglophone Welsh writing in the post-war era, in particular, the lessening of class restriction on such writing. Nonetheless, the fact that such writers have experienced a 'uniform educational system' (p. 114) indicates a heavy external input on the formative development of young writers in Wales. In addition,

⁴⁴ Trevor Fishlock, 'Kilbrandon Excites the Welsh Nationalists', 29th October 1973, *The Times*, p. 3.

⁴⁵ Roland Mathias, *Anglo-Welsh Literature: An Illustrated History* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1986), p. 114.

Mathias' argument that post-war Anglophone Welsh writers originate from a 'majority' (p. 114) of the population would suggest that there may be a minority whose existence was not fully represented by the main body of Anglophone Welsh writers in post-war Wales.

With a vote on devolution apparently becoming a genuine prospect, attention turned to Wales' political identity towards the latter years of the 1970s. The campaign which ensued proved to be something of a tug-of-war between a desire for a measure of independence for Wales and concerns about the country's ability to function under such a system. Reflecting in 1997, John Osmond argued that such indecision and confusion within literary and media circles in Wales during the 1970s may have contributed significantly to the outcome of the 1979 referendum. Writing in *Planet* magazine, Osmond suggested that 'in the 1970s *The Western Mail* found itself beset with contradictions throughout the course of the devolution debate', arguing that this situation was because its 'editorial commitment to devolution was intellectual rather than emotional'.⁴⁶ His argument suggests that the media in Wales may have contributed to existing doubt over the concept of devolution for Wales. Furthermore, for Osmond, doubts about devolution were compounded by the focus of the British media on Scotland's impending referendum, rather than on the one taking place in Wales. A similar idea was expressed by an Institute of Welsh Affairs report published in 1996 which cited the fact that Scottish and Welsh devolution campaigns were run in parallel as a major hindrance to the progression of the Welsh campaign for devolution in the 1970s. The report argues that 'UK media attention was focused on Scotland as it had been throughout the Parliamentary passage of the Scotland and Wales Bills. In consequence the distinctive Welsh case for devolution was never fully understood by the Welsh public'.⁴⁷ The report therefore suggests

⁴⁶ John Osmond, 'A National Newspaper?' in *Planet* 123 (June/July 1997), 23-34.

⁴⁷ *The Road to the Referendum: Requirements for an Informed and Fair Debate*, an Institute of Welsh Affairs Report (Cardiff: Institute of Welsh Affairs, 1996), p. 10.

that the majority of the Welsh public may not have been aware of the full implications of their vote in the 1979 referendum.

Regardless of how much attention the campaign for Scottish devolution may have gathered in wider Britain, the matter continued to draw political and cultural attention in Wales with an increasing intensity as the decade drew to a close. Varying opinions about the political future of Wales and the absence of a wider sense of community served to heighten feelings of tension about Welsh identity. Martin Johnes has noted that ‘political and cultural nationalists were uncertain [of] what to do’ when faced with the option to vote either for or against devolution for Wales.⁴⁸ In particular Johnes notes the fact that Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg opted not to campaign for a ‘yes’ vote, in spite of support for the idea of a Welsh Assembly from the Welsh-language press.⁴⁹ Far from being surrounded by ‘elastic’ boundaries, in the build-up to the 1979 referendum Welsh national identity therefore apparently struggled to expand beyond the restraints of the past. Instead of moving towards the future, Welsh politics was being held back by inability to progress beyond the boundaries within which it had previously been governed. In order for Wales to achieve a degree of political autonomy in the future, it would need to overcome such obstacles in order to expand and challenge perceptions of national identity.⁵⁰

Apparently determined to encourage its readers to confront arguments about Welsh politics, *Planet* magazine adopted an increasingly political tone as the prospect of a referendum on devolution slowly became a reality. Published in the magazine in 1977, the

⁴⁸ Martin Johnes, *Wales Since 1939*, p. 296.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

⁵⁰ While Johnes focuses primarily on the Welsh division over the prospect of devolution, it is important to note that similar tensions were in existence across the United Kingdom. Geraint H. Jenkins has described the absurd situation in which anti-devolutionaries within the Labour party ‘were given free rein to sabotage their own government’s proposals’ during campaigning for the 1979 referendum. Geraint H. Jenkins, *A Concise History of Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 296.

short story 'Max Thomas' by Ron Berry seemed to warn against the dangers of investing too much trust in a hierarchy dominated by those in positions of power or leadership. In the story an inept 'foreman carpenter, who couldn't handsaw down a chalk-line in hardboard' wields an unnerving amount of power over his fellow builders by using his position as foreman to exert control over his colleagues.⁵¹ With a 'mastery of building trade jargon' (p. 46) and a 'swagger of immunity' (p. 46), Max Thomas apparently manages to maintain his position as foreman in spite of his ineptitude as a builder. Indeed, it is soon revealed that while 'useless on the tools, Max loved authority' (p. 46), his desire for control fuelling his attitude towards the other builders. The depiction of this desperate desire to retain power is made further significant by the fact that it is relayed through a story about workers in the building trade. The setting and the building terminology used to invoke these scenes places a struggle for power and political authority among working-class labourers in a setting similar to that encountered by many on a daily basis. Consequently, the nationalist allegory within the story is able to present the implications of a political power struggle as a story with visible consequences for its characters.

The full extent of these consequences and of Max's lack of concern about the other builders is only revealed later in the story when he deliberately engineers an unsafe working situation, resulting in horrific injuries for an innocent labourer, Joey. While Joey is left 'drunk from shock and bruises' (p. 48) Max stands and laughs before taking control of the situation. His solution is to feign ignorance in relation to the incident, blaming instead the site's agent and General Foreman. Here, the abdication of responsibility reveals the inequality in the building site's political hierarchy. There are muttered words of warning among the other builders who assert that 'Max takes care of Max Thomas' (p. 49) and remind each other that 'you and me, we look after ourselves' (p. 49). Thus, the story not only appears

⁵¹ Ron Berry, 'Max Thomas' in *Planet* 36 (Feb/March 1977), 46-49 (p. 46).

to urge caution against a system of management in which so much authority is held by a single figure, but also reveals how little the interests of the labourers are represented by that system. In this sense the story furthers the political and national allegory noted earlier in *Home to an Empty House* and *I Sent a Letter to My Love*. Ultimately, ‘Max Thomas’ presents a scenario in which those furthest removed from the source of power and authority are made vulnerable by their lack of representation.

The relation between culture and politics is addressed even more directly in Raymond Williams’ 1978 novel, *The Volunteers*. Although published only shortly prior to the 1979 referendum, Williams’ novel is a powerful example of the changes underway in Anglophone Welsh fiction towards the end of the 1970s. Set in Williams’ imagined version of the 1980s, the novel explores the aftermath of the shooting of the secretary of state for Wales, Edmund Buxton. With a referendum on devolution looming, it is significant to note that Williams chose to depict a Wales in which devolution had not taken place. The shooting occurs during Buxton’s visit to St Fagans to open a new wing and, as the complex story unfolds, it emerges that he has previously been linked to the death of a coalminer, killed during a miners’ strike a few months earlier. The setting of St Fagans is suggestive of the political state of Wales during this period, caught in a struggle between the traditions of the past and the inescapable problems of the present. It is noticeable that when Buxton arrives at the Welsh Folk museum he is immediately greeted by crowds in which there are ‘scuffles and arrests’ and angry scenes among the waiting protestors.⁵² Such images are juxtaposed against those of ‘the houses so quiet, the fine high trees, [and] the singing birds’ (p. 14) which Buxton encounters while inside St. Fagans. Yet the relative calm inside the museum offers only a temporary shelter for Buxton from the crowds outside, who represent a contemporary Wales which is full of unrest and the threat of violence.

⁵² Raymond Williams, *The Volunteers* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2011 [1978]), p. 12.

Unsurprisingly, given the centrality of industry in early twentieth-century Welsh writing, depictions of industrial protest were not an uncommon feature in Anglophone Welsh writing prior to the 1970s. Indeed, some of the best-known twentieth-century fiction from Wales featured depictions of political protest. Lewis Jones' 1937 novel *Cwmardy* and Richard Llewellyn's *How Green Was My Valley?* (1939) are two such examples of fiction from this period to present violent protest against deteriorating working conditions for Welsh industrial workers. Continuing in this tradition, *The Volunteers* invokes a scene of similar violence and tension as a small, but close-knit, mining community is rocked by the death of a striking miner, Gareth Powell, who is fatally shot by the army. Although the novel traces events surrounding the death of Gareth Powell, it is at this point that the novel differs dramatically from depictions of coalfield strikes portrayed in earlier works of Welsh fiction in English. There are no last minute negotiations in a bid to resolve the situation and the striking miners do not seem to be offered any concessions. Rather, they are ordered firmly to move from the yard or become 'subject to arrest' (p. 39). Their refusal to move becomes an act of defiance in the face of an army and a government minister who appear to have no empathy with their cause. Indeed, following the death of Gareth Powell, an attitude of mild contempt can be seen in the reaction of a nearby army officer who insists that Powell 'provoked this trouble' (p. 47), laying blame for the incident on the individual and refusing to accept any responsibility for the army's role in Powell's death.

The nature of politics in the Britain represented in *The Volunteers* is further explored as the investigation into the attempted shooting of Buxton unfolds. The Wales depicted in the novel is a place which appears to have very limited independence and is apparently considered relatively insignificant on a national scale. Indeed, the opportunity to cover the story of Buxton's first visit to Wales since the death of Gareth Powell during the miners' strikes at Pontyrhiw is dismissed by the media conglomerate, Insatel, in favour of sending a

crew to report on a factory occupation in Bromwich. The latter is deemed by a Senior Analyst at Insatel to be ‘much more significant’ (p. 7), in spite of the presence of numerous leaflets advertising ‘the huge demonstration that had been called for St Fagans when Buxton was due to arrive’ (p. 7). Arguing with the protagonist, journalist Lewis Redfern, about the decision the Analyst demands to know the difference ‘between these heaving images you’d get and any Welsh rugby crowd, singing for dear heart before some match or other’ (p. 7). The return to stereotypes of Welsh identity suggests a failure to recognise the strength of political feeling in Wales and a determination to reduce the country’s national identity to meaningless clichés.

It is important at this point to return to Raymond Williams’ theory that the image of the industrial community, in particular the presentation of families within this environment, can be used as a microcosm of wider society.⁵³ This technique can be noted in *The Volunteers* where the community of Pontyrhiw find that their protest against industrial decline develops into a revelation of much wider political division between Wales and England.⁵⁴ Likewise, Fredric Jameson’s assertion that in third-world literature the ‘story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society’ (p. 69) can similarly be applied to *The Volunteers*.⁵⁵ Particularly significant in this respect is the fate of Gareth Powell, whose death not only generates wide media interest, but also becomes representative of the battle between Welsh industrial workers and the London-based political system which they feel no longer represents their needs. The result is a protest from the Pontyrhiw community which offers ‘the response of a whole community, a whole country, to the shooting of one of its young men’ (p. 26). Strength of feeling about the

⁵³ Raymond Williams, ‘The Welsh Industrial Novel’, p. 95.

⁵⁴ Writing in a foreword to the novel, Kim Howells has also argued that the depiction of Pontyrhiw ‘resembles Saltley Gate, the scene of a celebrated NUM success in the 1972 miners’ strike’. Kim Howells, ‘Foreword’ to *The Volunteers* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2011), pp. vii-xiv, (p. ix).

⁵⁵ Fredric Jameson, ‘Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism’, p. 69.

incident is such that Powell's death escalates the protest of one community to the point where it is transformed into the outcry of a nation who have become conscious of the extent of their lack of power against the ruling English government.

In addition to emphasising the threat faced by small Welsh communities, *The Volunteers* furthers the idea that the concerns of Welsh people have become disassociated from those of London-based politicians. Consequently, there appears to be a clear discrepancy between ordinary citizens and the politician appointed to represent them. Significantly, the Minister is geographically distanced from Wales, paying only brief visits to the country when necessary in a bid to avoid encounters with protesters. Similarly, political processes in the novel are often covert, with events taking place in what is described as 'the political underground' (p. 5). This process means that the true nature of political events is often obscured from the general public, with journalists such as Redfern akin to private detectives in their quest to uncover the real story behind incidents such as the attempted assassination of Buxton. Redfern even describes himself as an 'investigator' (p. 105) later in the novel, reinforcing the idea that in Williams' imagined Wales political transparency has been lost. Yet Redfern's investigations into the shooting of Buxton and the secret organisations he uncovers as part of his enquiries serve to further isolate him, even placing him in a position of danger. Little clarity is ever offered, for even the official inquiry into the death of Powell held in the final stages of the novel is limited, characterised by 'persistent uncertainty' (p. 239) and Redfern's desperate attempts to protect himself and others by not revealing the true sources of the information he had uncovered as part of his own enquiries.

As with much of the fiction explored in this chapter, the novel challenges not only the political status quo, but the way in which male and female roles are presented in response to political events. In a scenario which mirrors the inversion of gender roles noted in fiction from earlier in the decade such as *Home to an Empty House* and the rejection of gender-based

stereotypes as suggested by Deirdre Beddoe, traditional male and female roles seem to become inverted following the death of Gareth Powell. As a male friend of Powell's attempts to console his friend's widow, he finds himself suddenly faced with an outburst of anger from the wives of the miners. Having been confronted with news of Powell's death, John Davies 'expected to comfort, [and] to soothe' (p. 53); instead he is confronted by the 'naked anger' (p. 53) of the women he had expected to placate. Powell's death appears to ignite a furious emotion in the women, uniting them across the generations, with even the eldest among them branding the army 'killers' (p. 53). It is the scale of this anger and loss felt by the small village of Pontyrhiw that leads to the heated nature of the protest at St Fagans where Buxton is later shot, triggering a complex investigation. Moreover, the incident again places emphasis on the significance of an individual, whose death is able to have such a profound impact on the surrounding community.⁵⁶

An important facet of the cultural and media world presented within *The Volunteers* is its immediacy. The novel's opening line reveals that Redfern 'was in the air fifty minutes after Buxton was shot' (p. 3), while what are termed the 'literati' (p. 3) of news organisation Insatel had already prepared an initial statement for release reporting on the shooting by the time of his departure. Interestingly, the immediate nature of this report appears to be driven by the belief that the shooting constituted a 'political sensation' (p. 3) likely to capture the interest of the general public. This interest in sensationalised news, rather than in the actual ramifications of political events, seems to be confirmed when Redfern reflects that 'in News Division the political underground runs second only to sport. International terrorist movements, bombs, hijackings, kidnaps: there is no better news in the business' (p. 5). His

⁵⁶ The scene also contrasts with the response of Jane Gruffydd in *Feet in Chains* when she receives the news that her son Twm has been killed during the First World War. Although initially angered by the news, Jane's feelings soon subside into her overriding feelings of helplessness as she attacks a Pensions Officer with a clothes brush before breaking down in tears. See Kate Roberts, *Feet in Chains*, trans. Katie Gramich (Cardigan: Parthian, 2012 [1936]), pp. 197-8.

assertion suggests that in the Britain presented in *The Volunteers*, politics has become akin to a spectator sport in which events can be sensationalised and dramatized in order to generate wider interest and revenue. True political meaning has been lost in a struggle to generate headlines and capture rapidly changing public interest.

In many ways *The Volunteers* offers the antithesis to the more covert political allegory in evidence in fiction from earlier in the decade, such as *Home to an Empty House* and *I Sent a Letter to My Love*. The explicit political nature of Williams' novel may be indicative of a desire to engage more overtly with politics and generate further debate as a consequence. To this end, the novel offers a warning about not engaging openly with politics. Events in *The Volunteers* are exacerbated by the existence of a shadowy political organisation entitled The Volunteers whose existence is uncovered by Redfern during his investigations into the attempted assassination of Buxton. Since the organisation is a secretive one, its members are required to disguise their involvement in the group, leading to what Redfern describes as 'a commitment to nothing' (p. 151). His words assert the idea that unless accompanied by an outwardly identifiable set of beliefs and aims, political opinion has little to contribute to the wider development of the nation. Juxtaposed against the accusations of a lack of public understanding about the prospect of devolution for Wales, *The Volunteers* asserts the idea that a greater level of public engagement with, and understanding of, politics is needed in order for real progress to be made.

Facing the Referendum

When a referendum on devolution for Wales was officially announced, reaction from Welsh commentators and authors was strongly mixed. For many, the referendum raised a number of deeply problematic questions about the existence of Wales as a part of the United Kingdom. Ned Thomas addressed these problems in an editorial for *Planet* magazine following the

announcement that a referendum would take place. Having described the extent of devolution being offered to Wales as ‘a very weak measure of self-government (less than a Swiss canton enjoys)’, Thomas moves on to question whether devolution is a wise option for contemporary Wales.⁵⁷ Uppermost in Thomas’ concerns seems to be a lack of cohesion in regard to national identity, in particular the argument that ‘a Welsh Assembly without a raising of Welsh people’s consciousness might prove catastrophic for everything we think of as Welshness’ (p. 2). It is interesting to note that Thomas openly acknowledges a lack of consciousness in regard to Welsh identity, citing it as a potential hindrance to the political development of Wales. Thomas’s other main concern centres on what he perceives to be ‘the idea of Britain, that has hypnotised and co-opted generations of Welsh people’ (p. 2), which in itself lacks clear definition. In spite of such reservations, Thomas concludes that a vote in favour of devolution would be ‘a vote for the lesser evil’ (p. 3) expressing a hope that the concept of Wales as a distinct political and cultural entity ‘is slowly gaining ground’ (p. 3). While ultimately advocating devolution for Wales, Thomas’s words do little to project a sense of certainty about the prospect of a National Assembly for Wales, suggesting that the division regarding contemporary Welsh identity, which M. Wynn Thomas identified as being problematic to the development of Wales earlier in the decade, had not been resolved.⁵⁸

These problems relating to the development of Welsh identity continued to become increasingly prevalent as the 1979 referendum on devolution approached. Consequently, it is here that Raymond Williams’ stark warning about the effect of fear at the prospect of a change in the political structure of the United Kingdom become particularly significant. With a referendum on devolution approaching, Wales remained subject to what Alwyn D. Rees

⁵⁷ Ned Thomas, ‘Two cheers for devolution?’ in *Planet* 47 (February 1979), 2-3 (p. 2).

⁵⁸ M. Wynn Thomas, *Corresponding Cultures*, p. 1.

termed the ‘illusion’ of Britishness.⁵⁹ Rees argued that this illusion was seemingly based on the perception that if Wales, and indeed Scotland, were to receive a measure of devolution, the demise of British identity would be imminent. Regardless of Rees’ argument, the outcome of the 1979 referendum in Wales revealed a deep lack of support for the concept of Welsh devolution, with 79.4% of voters opposed to the proposals.⁶⁰ Numerous suggestions have been raised as to why this was the case, many of which blame a lack of substance behind the proposals for a Welsh Assembly. Laura McAllister has suggested that the motive behind the 1979 referendum lay largely with a sense of ‘rather desperate self-preservation’ from the Labour government, rather than from a genuine belief that devolution would offer the best option for Wales.⁶¹ Yet whatever the driving force behind the political parties’ motivation for campaigning for or against devolution, McAllister does point out that devolution has ‘seldom been interpreted as a party political issue’ (p. 151) in Wales, again indicating that responses to devolution were diverse and may have lacked a cohesive direction.

While Welsh politics had manifestly failed to embrace the possibility of devolution, Scotland had faced a very different set of circumstances in the build-up to the referendum. Pre-conditions established by the British government required that forty percent of the Scottish electorate must vote in favour of devolution in order for The Scotland Act 1978 to be enforced. Consequently, although Scotland returned a narrow majority vote in favour of devolution, an overall turnout of just over sixty percent of the Scottish electorate meant that

⁵⁹ Alwyn D. Rees, ‘A nation with a split personality’, *Planet* 42 (April 1978), 11-13, (p. 11). Article originally published in *Barn* in 1965.

⁶⁰ Results of Devolution Referendums (1979 and 1997), Research Paper No. 97/113, House of Commons Library, available at: www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/RP97113.pdf [Accessed 18/02/13].

⁶¹ Laura McAllister, ‘The Welsh Referendum: Definitely, Maybe?’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, Volume 51, Issue 2, pp. 149-156, (p. 150). McAllister goes on to assert that the premise of the Labour Party’s support for Welsh devolution was a desire to ‘revive a flagging, under-pressure administration’ (p. 151) by orchestrating a show of support for Prime Minister James Callaghan.

the preconditions were not met.⁶² While neither Scotland nor Wales managed to secure devolution in 1979, then, their respective referendums did reveal more about their perceptions of national identity at the time. As suggested at the start of this chapter, a sense of division was prevalent not only in Welsh attitudes to devolution, but also in the eyes of Scottish voters. The question of whether either nation would receive devolved power in the immediate future may have been temporarily settled, but it can be argued that the process generated wider debate about the nature of national identity in both countries. Indeed, the boundaries of British identity had been sufficiently challenged by the referendum process to ensure that the matter could not merely be forgotten. For Scotland, where the pro-devolution vote was considerably higher than in Wales, the situation was arguably more complex. Willy Maley has maintained that while ‘cultural devolution was arguably a prerequisite of political devolution’, the 1970s had not witnessed sufficient coherence between cultural and political developments, with ‘the rising tide of cultural nationalism’ unable to match ‘the ebb and flow of political nationalism’.⁶³ Although Wales had delivered a much more decisive result against devolution, the results similarly suggested that there may have been a lack of unity between cultural and political nationalist movements.

Demonstrating a perhaps less covert form of national allegory than that noted in some works of Anglophone Welsh writing from the early 1970s, a poignant short story written by Phillip Perry appeared in the last edition of *Planet* to be published in 1980. ‘Closing Sequence’ traces the exchange between a man and his ex-girlfriend, who is leaving him in order to pursue a relationship with another woman. Although devastated by her decision, the

⁶² Results of Devolution Referendums (1979 and 1997), Research Paper No. 97/113, House of Commons Library, available at: www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/RP97-113.pdf [Accessed 18/02/13].

⁶³ Willy Maley, ‘Cultural Devolution? Representing Scotland in the 1970s’, *The Arts in the 1970s: Cultural Closure?* ed. Bart Moore-Gilbert (London: Routledge, 1994), 78-98 (p. 85).

protagonist refuses to accept his ex-partner's suggestion that he co-exist with her and her new lover. The irony of the exchange is conveyed through the female character's desire to 'tie up the loose ends and leave everything tidy'.⁶⁴ Her desire for closure and a clearly defined end to their discussion about the relationship is in stark contrast to the outcome of the referendum on devolution in Wales, which appeared to have revealed the full extent of political division and uncertainty in Wales, without offering a viable solution.

Whatever difficult questions the discussion in 'Closing Sequence' may have raised, its ending offers a modicum of hope for the future. The close of the story sees its protagonist walking out into the night repeating the mantra 'I'm a survivor' (p. 113). The words seem to mirror the sentiment expressed by Ned Thomas in his closing editorial; reflecting on the failure of the referendum on devolution, Thomas recalls *Planet's* earlier assumption that 'the British State could be reformed, both constitutionally and in respect of Welsh language rights, by a little pleading and prodding and reasoning'.⁶⁵ Like the main character in 'Closing Sequence', *Planet's* editorial team had been faced with the realisation that pleading for change in the current situation was somewhat ineffective. Instead, what was needed was a stronger representation of Welsh identity which encompassed the diversity and concerns of contemporary Wales. Gillian Clarke's description of the referendum result as 'the St. David's Day defeat' suggests that the outcome dealt a fatal blow to traditional perceptions of Welsh national identity, consequently requiring adjustments to be made to the way in which Welsh identity was defined in the coming years.⁶⁶ Thus, in order to contribute to the process of securing change for the political system in Wales, Welsh cultural identity would need to gain the definition and confidence it so critically lacked as the 1970s drew to a close.

⁶⁴ Phillip Perry, 'Closing Sequence' in *Planet* 49/50 (January, 1980), 111-113 (p. 111).

⁶⁵ Ned Thomas, 'Come In Planet Your Time Is Up' in *Planet* 49/50 (January, 1980), 3-4 (p. 3).

⁶⁶ Gillian Clarke, 'Editorial', *The Anglo-Welsh Review* 64 (1979), 1-5 (p. 1).

Chapter II ‘A permanently changing reality’: the process of redefinition in Anglophone Welsh writing 1980-1989

Six years after the 1979 referendum failed to secure devolution for Wales, Harri Webb used an interview with the *Western Mail* in 1985 to make the startling announcement that ‘Anglo-Welsh literature is, more or less, a load of rubbish’.¹ Discussing the state of Welsh fiction in English in post-referendum Wales, Webb expressed his belief that Anglophone Welsh writing no longer mattered because ‘it has only marginal relevance to Wales now’.² It is, perhaps, possible to understand Webb’s sense of anger; as a strong campaigner for devolution, the outcome of the referendum was certainly a bitter blow for him.³ While Webb’s words may appear to be somewhat melodramatic, they nonetheless reveal the extent of his frustration with the role of contemporary Anglophone Welsh literature. Moreover, although Webb’s denial of the relevance of Welsh fiction in English may have been based on personal despair rather than on an actual analysis of contemporary literature, as suggested by Jane Aaron and M. Wynn Thomas, it nonetheless offers a bleak outlook on the future of Anglophone Welsh writing.⁴ This chapter considers the validity of Webb’s verdict, exploring the reaction of Anglophone Welsh writers to the effects of political change and industrial decline throughout the 1980s. In so doing, it seeks to demonstrate that Anglophone Welsh writing was not only of relevance to Wales, but was also able to engage with a wider discourse on national identity in the wake of the 1979 referendum.

¹ Harri Webb, in an interview in the *Western Mail*, April 2nd 1985, pp. 37-38.

² *Ibid*, p. 37.

³ Webb had held steadfastly to his conviction that Wales would eventually vote in favour of devolution in 1979, declaring in characteristically dramatic fashion in 1976 that Wales was ‘marching backwards to independence, everybody desperately pretending that we are going somewhere else’. Harri Webb, ‘Webb’s Progress’, *Planet 30* (January 1976), 23–278 (p. 28).

⁴ Jane Aaron and M. Wynn Thomas, ‘Pulling you through changes: Welsh writing in English before, between and after two referenda’ in *Welsh Writing in English*, ed. M. Wynn Thomas (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp.279-309 (p. 285).

In his 1958 essay 'Culture is Ordinary' Raymond Williams suggested that culture and the act of writing were vital features of the process of defining national identity. Williams' reasons for this assertion were that 'every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning.'⁵ Moreover, the importance Williams places on the 'finding of common means and directions' (p. 11) resonates with Benedict Anderson's suggestion that the 'imagined community' relies on the belief in a connection with other likeminded individuals. A failure to connect with others and to share ideas may result in a situation in which there is no cohesive understanding of political or cultural developments. As Williams had demonstrated in his 1978 novel, *The Volunteers*, to keep the beliefs and meanings hidden from public view may result in a dangerously isolated society, in which political beliefs effectively count for nothing as they are not articulated to, or shared with, others.⁶

In his aptly entitled essay 'Are We Becoming More Divided?', probably written in the late 1970s, Raymond Williams identifies what he perceives as the two central aims of the nationalist movements in Wales and Scotland. The first of these is an attempt 'to declare an identity, to discover in fact what we really have in common, in a world which is full of false identities or, to put it another way, in which important kinds of meaning – the meaning of community, for example – are much harder to find, in real terms, than they have seemed to be in the past'.⁷ A task of this magnitude would naturally be a lengthy process, the work of which Harri Webb may have overlooked in his dismissal of Anglophone Welsh writing. Yet the establishment of such an identity would allow Welsh writers to engage in a form of

⁵ Raymond Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary', *Raymond Williams Reader* ed. John Higgins (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001 [1958]), pp. 10-24 (p. 11).

⁶ See Chapter I, p. 68-69.

⁷ Raymond Williams, 'Are We Becoming More Divided?' in *Who Speaks For Wales? Nation, Culture and Identity* ed. Daniel Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003 [c. 1975-78]), pp. 186-190 (p. 188).

nationalism which reached across both literary and geographical boundaries in Wales. Secondly, Williams argued that in attempting to discover a true national identity, Wales was also ‘trying to discover political processes by which people really can govern themselves – that is, to determine the use of their own energies and resources – as distinct from being governed by an increasingly centralised, increasingly remote and also penetrating system’ (p. 188). Williams predicted that the future of Welsh identity might become reliant on the achievement of these two aims. This chapter strives to ascertain what role Anglophone Welsh writing played in the execution of this redefinition of identity and its subsequent relation to political processes. In light of Williams’ theory about the development of national identity, this chapter therefore suggests that Anglophone Welsh writing participated in the construction of a renewed sense of national identity in the wake of the failure to secure devolution for Wales in 1979.

In making this analysis it is particularly important to consider the political and industrial changes which occurred in Wales throughout the 1980s. As Mike Parker and Paul Whitfield have noted, in Wales ‘the early 1980s were dominated by swiftly rising unemployment and a collapse in the manufacturing base’.⁸ Such major changes to social and economic conditions in Wales unsurprisingly had a far-reaching impact, the effects of which on Anglophone Welsh writing will be explored in this chapter. The 1980s also marked a turbulent stage in the relationship between Welsh politics and British national identity. As previously mentioned, the results of General elections held in 1979, 1983 and 1987 revealed a major division between voters in England and Wales. While the Welsh electorate voted strongly against a Conservative-led government, their votes were overshadowed by those cast in England where a clear majority were in favour of a Conservative government at each

⁸ Mike Parker and Paul Whitfield, *The Rough Guide to Wales* (London: Rough Guides, 2003), p. 522.

election.⁹ Securing a majority vote in England ensured that the Conservatives, led by Margaret Thatcher, remained in control of UK politics throughout the decade, against the wishes of the majority of the Welsh electorate. This situation may have contributed to heightening tension between Welsh and English political and national identity, acting as a poignant reminder of the consequences of rejecting devolution in 1979.

It is during this decade that the start of the process outlined by Martin Johnes in his study *Wales Since 1939* can be noted. Johnes draws attention to what he terms ‘the political consequences’ of national identity, arguing that a greater awareness of these political consequences did not develop fully in Wales until the 1990s, yet it is possible to see the beginnings of this process in fiction from 1980s Wales.¹⁰ There can be little doubt that the outcome of the 1979 referendum had brought serious political consequences for Wales, the effects of which were keenly felt during moments of heightened political tension during the 1980s. Events such as the Falklands War and the 1984 miners’ strikes, coupled with the effects of industrial decline, led to increased discussion about the political identity of Wales following its rejection of devolution. Furthermore, it is possible to connect this increased awareness of the political consequences of voting against devolution in the 1979 referendum as an important part of the process of political self-discovery suggested by Raymond Williams.¹¹ This chapter therefore commences with an exploration of Welsh national identity in literature at the start of the 1980s, focusing on the processes by which Welsh writers were able to explore political circumstances in Wales and their impact on the development of nationality.

⁹ *UK Election Statistics 1918 – 2004*, House of Commons Library, Research Paper 04/61, published 28th July 2004. Available at: <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons/lib/research/rp2004/rp04-061.pdf> [Accessed 22/03/2012], pp. 11-12.

¹⁰ Martin Johnes, *Wales Since 1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 416.

¹¹ Raymond Williams, ‘Are we becoming more divided?’, p. 188.

In the aforementioned essay 'Are We Becoming More Divided' Raymond Williams goes on to outline the potential obstacles faced by those who wish to redefine national identity and seek alternative political processes for their nation. Firstly, Williams suggests that the desire to seek unity between English, Scottish and Welsh nations is not entirely healthy. Indeed, Williams argues that the desire to instil a sense of unity which encompasses all nations is a potentially negative force, requiring nations to conform to a caricature of their actual identity, based on 'the kind of unity they've got used to' (p. 186). Any objection to this sense of unity would carry the potential to cause 'an emotional crisis' (p. 186) among those who were unable to conceive of Welsh, Scottish, and indeed English, identity as a continually evolving state. Thus, according to Williams, in order for Wales to redefine its national identity, its people, not least of all its writers, would need to avoid well established, but perhaps unrealistic, representations of what it meant to be Welsh in contemporary Britain. Secondly, if Welsh writers were to be instrumental in the development of a new sense of national identity it would be necessary for them to refrain from depicting their history and culture in an overly romanticised manner. Williams notes that where writers and historians offer a 'pseudo-historical' (p. 189) or romanticised account of Wales, perceptions of Welsh identity tend to be largely detrimental.¹² His argument suggests that solutions to current identity crises cannot be derived from a fictional re-writing of the past. Instead, writers who offer an honest exploration of the needs and values of Wales at the present time may be better able to reflect the identity of their country accurately.

Williams' theory does not, however, imply that national identity must be wholly reliant on highlighting differences or division between nations and regions. Indeed, Williams suggests that when attempting to define national identity, different nations must be able to

¹² Williams also explores this tendency to romanticise Welsh history in his 1960 Novel *Border Country* where Will is told an amusingly exaggerated and fanciful version of Welsh history through the reading of old textbooks. Raymond Williams, *Border Country* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2006 [1960]).

accept their differences as well as their common features in order to progress (p. 188). If national identity is allowed to develop in this way, Williams predicts that nations will eventually be able to determine and govern their own political needs, existing within a new community framework which offers division not as a negative force but as a necessary factor of independence. While internal division may be problematic to the development of national identity, Williams advocates a measure of external division, concluding his essay with the assertion that 'division...is someone else's name for independence' (p. 190). Williams' suggestion that division between Wales and other nations may not be an entirely negative feature of national identity supports the argument made by Benedict Anderson that 'no nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind'.¹³ Indeed, Anderson points out that the nation is imagined as limited because it must have 'finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations' (p. 7), the process of establishing these boundaries being an important stage in the process of defining a national identity. It is therefore possible to regard division between Wales and other areas of the United Kingdom not as the sign of a deep-rooted separatist movement, but as a way of identifying and exploring the boundaries which define Wales' uniqueness.

In order to understand the challenge faced by Welsh writers who wished to redefine notions of Welsh national identity, it is first necessary to consider in more detail the political and economic circumstances which affected Wales at the start of the 1980s. With a seemingly unstoppable wave of Thatcherism poised to sweep Britain and the 1979 referendum still casting a dark shadow over Welsh writers, the outlook for Welsh autonomy may indeed have appeared bleak. Speaking in an interview over eight years after the referendum, the poet John Tripp revealed the extent to which Welsh writers had been affected by the result. 'It's a tragedy what happened on March 1st [...] and you can't expect your poets to be the same

¹³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006 [1983]), p. 7.

again', stated Tripp, suggesting that Harri Webb was not alone in his sense of despair about the future of Welsh writing.¹⁴ Nevertheless, Tripp's words contained a seed of hope for those aiming to rewrite Wales' national and cultural identity; his words imply that the failure to secure devolution for Wales had the potential to act as a catalyst for change. In dealing with the repercussions of a vote against devolution, Welsh writers were able to formulate their own perceptions of Welsh political and cultural identity.

While the 1979 referendum may initially have appeared to have a negative effect on writers from Wales, the opposite reaction can be noted in Scottish writing from the period. Writing on the effects of the 'no' vote in the Scottish referendum in 1979, Berthold Schoene comments on the strength of the reaction of Scottish writers to the decision not to provide Scotland with its own assembly. Schoene argues that 'rather than stunting cultural activity in Scotland', the referendum result in 1979 inspired Scottish writers to a new level of creative and nationalist output.¹⁵ Similarly, Duncan Petrie states that, in the wake of the referendum, Scottish writing witnessed an 'unprecedented explosion of creativity [...] often seen as a direct response to the disastrous "double whammy" inflicted upon the Scottish people in 1979'.¹⁶ Here, Petrie refers to Scotland's failure to secure devolution, in spite of a 51% 'Yes' vote, an event shortly followed by Conservative victory in the UK general election and the rise of Thatcherism.¹⁷ It is in this respect that Anglophone Welsh writers can be seen to differ

¹⁴ John Tripp in an interview with Nigel Jenkins in *Planet 60* (1987), 32-42 (p. 42).

¹⁵ Berthold Schoene, 'Going Cosmopolitan: Reconstituting "Scottishness" in Post-Devolution Criticism' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. Berthold Schoene, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007) pp. 7-16 (p. 7).

¹⁶ Duncan Petrie, *Contemporary Scottish Fictions: Film, Television and the Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 2.

¹⁷ Preconditions of the Scottish referendum had required a majority 'Yes' vote representative of 40% of Scotland's entire electorate in order to secure devolution. The 51% majority of those who voted did not achieve this margin. Peter Lynch has argued that this precondition amounted to a 'wrecking amendment' which 'led directly to the 1979 referendum and the defeat of the government's devolution plans' in Scotland. Peter Lynch, *Scottish Government and Politics: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), p. 10.

most from their Scottish contemporaries. While in Scotland the failure to secure devolution inspired an impassioned outpouring of literature exploring and asserting Scottish national identity, Wales' reaction to the result of the referendum was momentarily that of a stunned silence. Although quick to brand the incident a 'trauma', key figures in Welsh writing initially appeared at a loss as to how to remedy their despair.¹⁸

Significantly, the aftermath of the failure to secure devolution for Wales coincided with one of the darkest periods of modern Welsh history. At the time of the 1979 referendum, the British Steel Corporation had employed around 63,000 Welsh workers, a figure which by 1983 had plummeted to just 19,000.¹⁹ Welsh coal mining offered a similarly grim picture. A House of Commons report published in 2009 stated that 'structural changes to coal mining, steel and other heavy industries in Wales in the 1980s and 1990s have had a particular impact on male employment in areas where communities were largely dependent on one industry'.²⁰ A primary challenge faced by Anglophone Welsh writing in the period was then whether it could reflect the enormity of these changes in Wales, at both an economic and social level. The ability to engage with and represent the concerns of these communities would ensure that Anglophone Welsh writing would remain relevant to debate on what many undoubtedly regarded as a bleak future for the country. As Gwyn A. Williams noted in 1985: 'some, looking ahead, see nothing but a nightmare vision of a depersonalised Wales', suggesting that a lack of hope for the future may have blighted the Welsh population in the 1980s.²¹ The instillation of a renewed sense of hope was thus an important feature of redefining Welsh national identity and developing a stronger sense of cultural and political identity for the

¹⁸ John Osmond, 'Preface' to *The National Question Again* (Llandysul: Gomer, 1986), pp. x-xi, (p. x).

¹⁹ John Osmond, 'Coping with a dual identity', *The National Question Again*, pp. xix-xlvi, (p. xxvi).

²⁰ *Globalisation and Its Impact on Wales: A Report Together with Formal Minutes* (London: Stationery Office, 2009), p. 27.

²¹ Gwyn A. Williams, *When Was Wales? A History of the Welsh* (London: Penguin, 1991 [1985]), p. 304.

future. Yet those in favour of devolution would need to convince the wider Welsh population that to gain a measure of independence from England would not be a sign of disloyalty precipitating ‘emotional crisis’, but a necessary step forwards in defining, assessing and, ultimately, governing its own political needs.²²

In considering the connection between literature and politics during the 1980s, this chapter draws together longer works of fiction published during the decade and short stories produced in Welsh journals from the period. In so doing, it charts a growing awareness of the political consequences of the 1979 referendum and analyses of Wales’ position in relation to the rest of Britain. Building on the apparent rise of a focus on the individual, which can be noted in Anglophone Welsh writing from the preceding decade, fiction from the 1980s indicates a heightening awareness of the how the actions of the individual may affect those around them. In this respect, the chapter continues to build on the discussion of political allegory outlined in Chapter I, suggesting that the examples of fiction included here also indicate an increasingly overt engagement with politics. This chapter therefore explores whether this awareness leads to a greater engagement with the wider ‘imagined community’ of Wales and an enhanced understanding of the boundaries by which Welsh identity was defined by the close of the decade.

‘The Welsh experience’: fiction and journals from early 1980s Wales²³

There can be no doubt that the demise of *Planet* magazine in 1980 had left a gaping hole in the promotion and analysis of writing from Wales at a time when it was most needed. A magazine which for almost ten years had offered sustained critical debate about Welsh culture, politics and literature, *Planet* had become a figure-head for the development of

²² Raymond Williams, ‘Are we becoming more divided?’, p. 186.

²³ Ned Thomas, ‘Editorial’, *Arcade*, volume 1 (1980),10.

cultural debate in Wales. Writing his final editorial for the magazine, Ned Thomas' had been keen to offer reassurance that the closure was not a direct result of the outcome of the 1979 referendum on devolution.²⁴ Yet the decision to cease publication of *Planet* had come as yet another blow to those in the literary community struggling to recover from the failure to secure devolution in Wales. In his closing editorial, Thomas suggested that a new sense of direction was needed in order to fully promote Welsh culture in the post-referendum period. Closing the door on nine years as the editor of *Planet*, Thomas' final thought was of the changing needs of Wales, suggesting that 'what is now needed is an English-language publication belonging to a much more popular level of Welsh life than *Planet*, which will help to build a solidarity and understanding at that more popular level' (p. 4). Thomas's awareness of the need for a publication which reached out to a greater portion of the Welsh population was indicative of the need for a greater sense of community among the Anglophone Welsh literary community over the coming decade.

In answer to this need for a publication which reached out in solidarity to a new Welsh audience, 1980 saw the launch of *Arcade* magazine and the first steps towards an attempt to explore Welsh identity in the wake of the 1979 referendum. Under the editorial guidance of Ned Thomas and John Osmond and published in the English language, the magazine managed to combine lively debate on Welsh culture with a more serious political commentary. In this regard, *Arcade* can be seen as the fruition of Ned Thomas' suggestions in the final edition of *Planet*. Yet, in spite of its confident entry into the Welsh publishing scene, *Arcade* initially struggled to define itself amid an on-going debate over the status of English-language publications produced in Wales. The belief that a true sense of Welsh identity was reliant on the ability to speak the Welsh language still clung to any debate on national identity. A comment made in 1977 by the folk singer and politician Dafydd Iwan is

²⁴ Ned Thomas, 'Come in Planet Your Time is Up', *Planet* 49/50, (January, 1980), 3-4 (p. 3).

particularly indicative of this perspective; Iwan argued that ‘the Welsh language, in the final analysis is that which gives the Welsh nation substance. Even the non-Welsh-speaking Welshmen owe their Welshness to the Welsh language’.²⁵ It is such attitudes that *Arcade* sought to dispel with a self-justification in the first edition, claiming that ‘we start with the premise that there is a Welsh experience – by now the dominant experience – which can only be felt and experienced through the medium of English’.²⁶ If Wales was to learn to appreciate its differences not as a divisive force but as an essential part of the definition of national identity, as Raymond Williams had suggested, magazines such as *Arcade* were necessary in order to protect the interests, and express the concerns, of those in Wales whose first language was English.²⁷

Nevertheless, opposition to *Arcade*’s attempts to define its identity was strong. In an exchange which can be read as indicative of the dispute at the heart of notions of Welsh identity in the early 1980s, *Arcade* found that it had to defend itself against heated criticism from Welsh-language supporters. Even those in favour of the publication expressed doubts about its right to define itself as Welsh. In a letter printed in *Arcade* Raymond Garlick writes that ‘I am all for *Arcade*, but when the London media begin to refer to it as “the Welsh magazine” I shall flinch for *Y Faner* and *Barn*’, demonstrating the strength of the division which was still in existence between English- and Welsh-language culture in Wales.²⁸ The challenge for *Arcade* was to define itself as a new kind of Welsh magazine, one not reliant on the Welsh language to identify it as Welsh. In this respect, *Arcade* built on the ambitions of *Planet* which had earlier sought to bridge the divide between English-language and Welsh-language communities. Disagreement over *Arcade*’s identity also aptly demonstrates the

²⁵ Dafydd Iwan, ‘Dafydd Iwan’, in *Artists in Wales 3*, ed. Meic Stephens (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1977), pp. 38-44 (p. 40).

²⁶ Ned Thomas ‘Editorial’, *Arcade*, Volume I, 1980, 10.

²⁷ Raymond Williams, ‘Are We Becoming More Divided?’, p. 186.

²⁸ Raymond Garlick, in a letter published in *Arcade*, Volume III, 1980, 11.

problem of internal division which was still in existence in Welsh culture at the start of the 1980s.

Over the course of its two-year run, *Arcade* continued with its intention to ‘present Wales to Wales every fortnight as clearly as we can’ with a range of articles offering Welsh news, politics and analysis of literature from Wales.²⁹ Topics addressed ranged from the role of women in Welsh culture to the analysis of Welsh history.³⁰ At the heart of this work, the on-going debate about national identity continued apace, rearing its head in almost every feature. Writing in a column in an early edition of *Arcade*, Emyr Humphreys argues that ‘if we wish to continue considering ourselves Welsh it becomes necessary, at regular intervals, for us to define our attitude to some of the more widely disseminated cultural aspects of the English’.³¹ Here, definition of national identity is regarded as being a reaction akin to defence. Once again the desire to define and defend a sense of identity which separates Wales from other nations is recognised as a factor in the growth of nationalism and, consequently, Humphreys’ words encourage Welsh readers to distinguish between their own cultural values and those seemingly inflicted on them.³² It is worth noting that at this time Humphreys was still working on his monumental ‘Land of the Living’ sequence of novels, a series which traced the political and cultural history of Wales throughout the twentieth century. The complex series of novels trace the life of Amy Parry, an aspiring teacher, as she encounters various social and political obstacles throughout her personal life and career. While Amy’s life is the central focus of the novels, the series also has a much wider political scope. Stephen Knight has described the character of Amy as ‘a representation of how people in

²⁹ Ned Thomas, Editorial, *Arcade*, Volume II, 1980, 10.

³⁰ See for example Deirdre Beddoe’s article ‘The Lost Sex: the Case of the Missing Welsh Women’ in *Arcade* III, 19 and Jan Morris’ assessment of modern Welsh history, language and identity, ‘The Seven Torments’ in *Arcade* VIII, 9.

³¹ Emyr Humphreys, ‘Chasing Shadows’ in *Arcade*, VII, 21.

³² See Lynn Williams, ‘National Identity and the Nation State: Construction, Reconstruction and Contradiction’ in *National Identity* ed. Keith Cameron (Exeter: Intellect, 1999), pp. 7-17 (p. 8).

Wales have responded timidly, even shamefully, to their situation', with a particular focus on the political and industrial identity of South Wales.³³ Humphreys' work on the sequence, along with his comments in *Arcade* magazine, can be regarded as an on-going effort to assert the cultural and historical significance of Welsh national identity at a time of political unrest and uncertainty.

As part of this effort Humphreys published the next instalment of his 'Land of the Living' sequence shortly afterwards, in 1985, under the title *Salt of the Earth*. Despite its being set in 1930s Wales, Jane Aaron has noted that the mentality of the characters in the novel

reflect[s] the Referendum trauma, and parallel[s] the sentiments of Welsh-language novelists and poets, like Angharad Tomos or Gerallt Lloyd Owen, who also felt that the results of the 1979 referendum had given them good reason to fear that contemporary Wales was more afraid of freedom than of death itself.³⁴

Aaron's statement acknowledges the sense of fear generated by the prospect of a measure of independence to which Raymond Williams referred in his article 'Are we becoming more divided?' As the first novel in the sequence to be published in the wake of the 1979 referendum, the attitudes raised in *Salt of the Earth* provide an interesting insight into Humphreys' response to the outcome of the referendum. At the start of the novel, central character Amy Parry is introduced to Professor Gwilym, who immediately expresses concern at Wales' future prospects at a time when it is faced with an industrial base 'crumbling to decay' and 'young people, our hope for the future, leaving their homeland in droves'.³⁵ Moreover, Gwilym is keen to argue that 'a people who have lost their sense of independence have also lost the capacity to stand on their own feet' (p. 8), implying that the loss of a sense of nationality has the potential directly to affect that nation's ability to function. Although set

³³ Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 146.

³⁴ Jane Aaron, 'Towards Devolution: New Welsh Writing', p. 688.

³⁵ Emyr Humphreys, *Salt of the Earth* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999 [1985]), p. 8.

in the 1930s, the novel therefore manages to capture the problems faced by inhabitants of Wales in the 1980s. It is not only the loss of a sense of independence which Professor Gwilym highlights as problematic to the development of Wales as a nation in *Salt of the Earth*. Echoing the argument made by Raymond Williams that fear and ‘emotional crisis’ are frequently precipitated by the mention of the division of the United Kingdom, Gwilym complains of a ‘serf mentality’ (p. 8) within Wales.³⁶ According to Gwilym, this mentality ‘fears freedom’ (p. 8), making it a major obstacle to any movement which seeks to secure a measure of political independence.

The subject of greater political independence was still prevalent in *Arcade* magazine and by the time the final issue was published in 1982 it had played host to a range of articles debating the future of Welsh culture, literature and politics. In this sense it can be regarded as contributing to debate about the nature of contemporary Wales and the political systems through which it was governed, steps which Raymond Williams highlighted as particularly important to the process of redefining national identity.³⁷ With a determination which seemed to grow in strength with every issue, the magazine retained its drive to contribute to the definition of Welsh identity, arguing in favour of the promotion of literature from Wales and the campaign for a Welsh-language television channel. The support of this campaign indicated *Arcade*’s willingness to work alongside Welsh-language campaigners, promoting the development of both Welsh- and English-language culture in Wales. Even its demise became the subject of a political row. The cover of the final *Arcade*, which depicted an entirely black background bearing the words ‘The Government declares Wales an *Arcade* free zone’ emblazoned in white, insinuated that the magazine’s closure was the result of a

³⁶ Raymond Williams, ‘Are we becoming more divided?’, p. 186.

³⁷ Raymond Williams, ‘Are we becoming more divided?’, p. 188.

lack of independence in Wales.³⁸ Writing in an article expressing his disappointment at the Arts Council's decision to cease funding *Arcade*, Ned Thomas argues that the decision is 'a good illustration of the need for some examination of the Arts Council's accountability'.³⁹ His comments emphasise the political consequences of such decisions, suggesting that a lack of political autonomy in Wales was able to have a significant effect on the development of Welsh culture.

The closure of *Arcade* magazine in 1982 heralded the start of a year which proved both controversial and of vital importance to the development of Anglophone Welsh fiction . An opportunity to further define differences between Welsh and English identity arose in April 1982 when, with Thatcherism in full swing, the British government led Wales and the rest of the United Kingdom into war in the Falklands. The topic of the Falklands War was still one of heated debate and frustration when *Planet* magazine returned to the Welsh literary circuit in 1985. Under the heading 'As I Was Saying...' and back at the helm as editor, Ned Thomas introduced the new series of *Planet* as an essential forum for debate at a moment when 'tensions produced in Wales by the Falkands war or youth unemployment' were drawing significant attention.⁴⁰ Thomas points to the divided nature of Welsh identity at this time as being particularly problematic in understanding the effects of such events, urging readers to 'to speak to each other from a wider variety of situations' (p. 4) in order to

³⁸ Cover of *Arcade* Issue 34, 1982.

³⁹ Ned Thomas, 'The History of Our Demise', *Arcade* 34, 4-5 (p. 5). The decision of the Welsh Arts Council to withdraw financial support for *Arcade* appears to be have been based on their concern regarding the amount of funding the magazine required. In its first year of publication the magazine was awarded £17,000 of funding from the Council, an amount which was listed in the Council's financial report, along with the statement that 'the Committee was pleased to support the launching, in October 1980, of the new English-language fortnightly *Arcade* magazine'. *Welsh Arts Council: Annual Report for Year Ending 31st March 1981* (Cardiff: Welsh Arts Council, 1981), p. 26. Having awarded £43,500 of funding to the magazine in the following year, the Council noted their decision to halt further financial support in their presentation of accounts in 1983, attributing the decision not to renew their support for *Arcade* to the fact that 'this magazine's circulation had fallen steadily during the year'. *Welsh Arts Council: Annual Report for Year Ending 31st March 1983* (Cardiff: Welsh Arts Council, 1983), p. 15.

⁴⁰ Ned Thomas, 'As I Was Saying', *Planet* 51, 1985, 3-5, (p. 4).

exchange individual ideas about Welsh identity. Interestingly, Thomas also appeals specifically to women writers and researchers who ‘have been under-represented in the literary world’ (p. 4) to offer contributions. His words can be seen as a direct appeal to the ‘imagined community’ of Wales, reaching out to a varied Welsh readership which Thomas knew existed, but with which he desired further engagement. Nurturing an exchange of ideas about Wales from this readership illustrates an eagerness to mobilise different sections of the ‘imagined community’ of Wales and unite them in a magazine which aimed to encompass ‘the whole of Wales, geographically and linguistically as its subject and to project its various communities to each other’ (p. 4).

In keeping with this focus on political events of importance to Wales, the first edition of *Planet* since its five-year hiatus returned immediately to the political fray by publishing the short story ‘Rejoice!’ by Carl Tighe, which examined Welsh reaction to the Falklands War. The story is a tense depiction of a Welsh school preparing for a visit from a Falklands veteran. While the majority of staff in the school are in favour of the visit, trouble arises when the message ‘THE THATCH IS IN THE FALKLANDS COUNTING DEAD AND MONEY’ is found emblazoned across the school assembly hall in royal blue paint.⁴¹ Like the message scrawled on the school walls, the words printed in capital letters within the story emphasise the political undertone of the narrative in ‘Rejoice’. Indeed, the story’s title echoes Margaret Thatcher’s provocative declaration following the recapture of South Georgia, in which she exhorted the British public to ‘Rejoice’ at the news.⁴² Here, Thatcher’s words, which have formed the basis of countless debates in subsequent years, are used to construct a title which presents Wales as having little to rejoice over as a result of the war.

⁴¹ Carl Tighe, ‘Rejoice!’ in *Planet* 51, (June/July 1985), 72-95, (p. 73).

⁴² John Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: The Iron Lady* (London: Vintage, 2008 [2003]), p. 138.

At the heart of Tighe's story lies the discrepancy between English and Welsh politics. The announcement that there will be a visit from a decorated Falklands veteran comes as part of a school assembly, with the event being described as 'part of our St David's Day celebrations' (p. 72). What remains somewhat unclear throughout 'Rejoice' is why the Falklands war is linked by the headmaster to the celebration of St David's Day. The plot centres on a young teacher named Dorcas, who finds herself isolated from her colleagues as a result of voicing her political opinions. Speaking out in the staffroom later in the story, Dorcas challenges the connection between the Falklands War and St. David's Day celebrations, suggesting that there is ample reason for Wales to avoid involvement in such wars.⁴³ An awkward moment arises when a PE teacher reads an article from a local newspaper stating that Welsh men from Patagonia have been serving in the Argentine Air Force. Stumbling through the article to a hostile staff room, Miss Williams reads that 'all those Welsh Guards at Bluff Cove, it says they were all probably killed by Welsh pilots from Patagonia' (p. 89). This revelation, which is dismissed simply as 'rubbish' (p. 89) by the other teachers, is challenged only by the young Dorcas who, in a wave of anger and frustration, finally poses the unanswerable question 'why should the Welsh fight a war for England?' (p. 89). Posing the question 'what bloody use is the Falklands to you?' (p. 89) Dorcas goes on to identify some of the most significant problems faced by Wales in the 1980s, 'the coal and steel are in ruins, the valleys are full of ghost towns, and all you can do is bask in the reflected glory of some stupid little imperialist dream' (p. 89). The fact that 'Rejoice' offers no answer to these questions suggests that these are arguments which may need to be addressed outside of fiction.

⁴³ The argument that Wales had ample reason to avoid involvement in wars fought under the badge of the British Empire had previously been similarly addressed by other Welsh writers and poets. See for example R. S. Thomas' 'Welsh History' (1952) in *Poetry 1900 – 2000*, ed. Meic Stephens (Cardigan: Parthian, 2007), pp. 139-40.

The frustration felt by Dorcas at her Welsh co-workers' apparent obsession with the visit of the Falklands veteran lends support to the argument that Wales was in the process of redefining its political identity in the 1980s. In allowing a sense of hysteria to mingle with an apparently confused sense of British identity, the characters in 'Rejoice!' deprive themselves of the opportunity for debate on issues of importance to Wales. So great is their preoccupation with holding a successful celebration to honour the war veteran that the wellbeing of children within the school is overlooked. The plight of Damon Fahy, a pupil expelled from the school for his suspected role in the graffiti, unfolds over the course of the story and illustrates the extent to which the school's frantic preparations and determination to appear supportive of the war risks the future of young people in Wales. While apparently innocent of this crime, Fahy is expelled from the school amid concerns that any form of protest would threaten the success of the visit. Somewhat ironically, Fahy ends up joining the parachute regiment without even completing his education at school. Defending his decision to sign up with abrupt honesty, Fahy suggests that a lack of opportunity within Wales is the reason behind his choice to abandon education claiming that 'my brilliant brother done that already. Slogged his guts out getting exams. A first class degree and what? Three years on the dole is all.' (p. 85). His comments reveal a disturbing lack of hope, all too strongly reflected by the increasing numbers of unemployed young people in Wales by the mid-1980s. Figures suggest that by 1982 Welsh employment levels had fallen dramatically to just 62%, a number which perhaps explains Fahy's lack of hope for the future.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Figures published in *Wales: Towards Full Employment*, (Department for Work and Pensions / Welsh Assembly Government, 2007), p. 5. Philip Jenkins has argued that this figure was the result of a dramatic decline that had taken place as a result of industrial decline in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Jenkins notes that 'between 1979 and 1982, Wales lost 130, 000 jobs. By the end of 1981, Wales had 170, 000 known unemployed, with a further 44, 000 in rather tenuous job creation programmes'. Philip Jenkins, *A History of Modern Wales 1536 – 1990* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 376.

The fact that Fahy's plight is representative of a number of Welsh people during the 1980s, gives an uncomfortable realist edge to the story portrayed in 'Rejoice'.⁴⁵ Similarly uncomfortable is the way in which the teachers at the school turn suddenly and cruelly against Dorcas for refusing to back down in her political beliefs and efforts to support Fahy. A smear campaign spreads rumours that the young teacher is pregnant by Fahy, while other members of staff hurl hostile accusations that she is 'stirring up trouble' (p. 84). The majority of Welsh characters in 'Rejoice!' are simply not prepared to stand up in political protest. It is easier for individuals to protect their own positions and adhere to popular viewpoints than intervene in the case against Fahy. In this way Dorcas falls victim to a war in which she herself played no part. Her plight, which is carefully and often powerfully evoked in the story, is perhaps representative of the division still in existence among Welsh people in the early 1980s. While political opinion within nations is frequently, and often healthily, varied, here the divide is one of more than disagreement over the need for war. Writing in *Arcade* earlier in the decade Jan Morris had noted that one of the torments of Welsh identity was that of 'uncertain loyalty'.⁴⁶ Tighe's story can then be seen to offer an insight into the confusion faced by what Morris described as the 'thousands of Welsh families today whose loyalties are every-which-way' (p. 9).

While focusing primarily on the need for distinction between Welsh nationality and those of other nations, Raymond Williams touched on the problems of internal division in his essay 'Are We Becoming More Divided?'. Williams highlights a sense of awareness, albeit at a subconscious level, of the geographical and social differences within Wales, writing that: 'we have always been aware of the deep differences between industrial South Wales, rural

⁴⁵ Martin Johnes has explored the effects of this lack of job prospects for the younger generations in Wales, concluding that in the 1970s and 1980s 'youth unemployment was becoming so pervasive that some teenagers were now growing up with few aspirations'. Martin Johnes, *Wales Since 1939*, p. 353.

⁴⁶ Jan Morris, 'The Seven Torments' in *Arcade* VIII, 9.

North and West Wales, and the very specific border country' (p. 189). Yet he is keen to point out that 'looking and working for unity' (p. 189) is the only way to address this problem of internal division and avoid distraction from the larger question of Wales' political and cultural identity. With the defeat of the 'Yes' campaign in the 1979 referendum still fresh in the minds of independence activists and the continuation of the raging debate over the Welsh language, many writers and Welsh politicians alike may have found Williams' hopes for unity in the development of Wales unrealistic.⁴⁷ By the mid-1980s the urgency of the need for change could no longer be ignored. Circumstances were unquestionably exacerbated by the results of the 1983 general election in which Welsh voters cast a 37.5% plurality vote in favour of the Labour party, only to have their results effectively quashed by a 40% Conservative vote in England.⁴⁸ Welsh input into British politics appeared to be at an all-time low and in order for progress to be made, division within Wales would need to be overcome.

Losses as a result of the Falklands' War affected all areas of Wales, as Tony Conran's poem 'Elegy for the Welsh Dead in the Falkland Islands, 1982' indicates, with its litany of names of dead soldiers from across Wales.⁴⁹ Likewise, while the effects of industrial decline were most keenly felt by South Wales, North Wales also suffered heavily as a result of mine and quarry closures and economic hardship. It is perhaps through their awareness of shared suffering that the inhabitants of Wales became more keenly aware of their wider communities. Through protests against mine closures and the industrial decline imposed by the Westminster government, Wales again appeared to move a step closer to the desire to 'discover political processes by which people [could] really govern themselves'.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ For example Cymdeithas yr Iaith (The Welsh Language Society) maintained pressure on the government throughout the 1970s and 80s, particularly in relation to the campaign for a Welsh language television channel.

⁴⁸ *UK Election Statistics 1918 – 2004*, House of Commons Library, Research Paper 04/61, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁹ See Tony Conran, 'Elegy for the Welsh Dead in the Falkland Islands, 1982' in Meic Stephens, ed. *Poetry 1900-2000* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2000), pp. 383-385.

⁵⁰ Raymond Williams, 'Are We Becoming More Divided?', p. 188.

Protest and Politics: Anglophone Welsh Writing and the 1984 Miners' Strike

If the Falklands war had left Wales partially disillusioned in regard to its political identity, the 1984 Miners' Strike was to shatter any remaining illusion of unity between Welsh politics and the policies and priorities of the British government. Previous strikes and industrial action had been well documented in Anglophone Welsh writing, becoming almost the defining feature of much early twentieth-century fiction from Wales.⁵¹ Thus, 1984 marked not only 'one last great strike' for the miners, as Stephen Knight suggests, but also a pivotal moment in the development of Anglophone Welsh writing.⁵² As Welsh industry faced rapid decline, so too the industrial novel, previously a central feature of twentieth-century writing from Wales, witnessed the demise of the industry on which it had centred.⁵³

The subject of the 1984 miners' strike is addressed in Roger Granelli's novel, *Dark Edge*. Although published in 1997, the novel offers an insight into the division created in Wales as a result of the strike. Set in a Welsh valley in the midst of the strikes, *Dark Edge* depicts the impact of the miners' strikes on one family and the valley in which they live.⁵⁴ The action centres on brothers Edwin and Elliot who come into conflict when their respective jobs as a miner and a policeman lead them into a direct, and increasingly violent, struggle against each other. In contrast with his handsome appearance, Elliot's character is complex and unpleasant, completely at odds with that of his brother, and nemesis, Edwin. While Elliot relishes the opportunity to 'meet aggression with aggression' in his work, Edwin is a

⁵¹ See for example Lewis Jones' 1937 and 1939 novels *Cwmardy* and *We Live* which explored the lives and hardships of mining communities in the South Wales valleys, including the impact of the 1926 General Strike.

⁵² Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. 176.

⁵³ See Chapter I, p. 36 for a more detailed discussion of this decline in industry and its impact on Anglophone Welsh writing.

⁵⁴ In making use of the family unit as the central focus for the novel, Granelli employs one of the techniques most closely associated with Welsh industrial fiction from the first half of the twentieth century.

quiet man who tries to rally his fellow miners with a combination of common sense and cautious words.⁵⁵ Drafted in to assist the police force at protest sites in England, Elliot reveals an ever-increasing tendency towards aggression and excessive violence. The novel opens with Elliot preparing for one such trip, with his taste for violence revealed almost immediately as he handles his police baton, reflecting that ‘the weapon was hopelessly inadequate for modern policing’, instead ‘yearn[ing] for the guns police carried all over the world’ (p. 5). His desire for a weapon with the power to kill offers a disturbing indication of the dark turn that the plot will take as the novel progresses. As the fight between miners and police at the protest intensifies, Elliot finds himself becoming increasingly involved in what rapidly becomes a personal battle to exert his power. In an early moment of aggression Elliot attacks a protesting miner, a scene which is described in brief but vivid detail as Elliot ‘d[i]g[s]’ (p. 11) at the man with a baton, turning ‘his blond hair red’ (p. 11). The extreme violence of Elliot’s actions foreshadows later events in the novel when Elliot again loses control, with dire consequences.

An inability to exercise self-control is not the only unpleasant attribute which Elliot displays in *Dark Edge*. In addition to employing an unnecessary level of violence in his work, Elliot is also unfaithful to his wife, Susan, conducting an affair with Lisa, a woman he meets while working in Yorkshire. It later transpires that such affairs had started ‘in the first year’ of his marriage (p. 25), indicating a lack of loyalty to his wife and family. In an alarming further twist, Elliot’s inclination towards violence becomes entangled with his sexual desires, sex offering what he perceives to be ‘the perfect distillation of the night’s fever’ (p. 13) after a night of conflict with the miners. Subsequently, Elliot’s personality throughout the novel is frequently presented in moments of extreme emotions, usually resulting in a sudden outburst of uncontrolled anger or violence. It is not only Elliot’s attitude towards Susan which

⁵⁵ Roger Granelli, *Dark Edge*, (Bridgend: Seren, 1997), pp. 6-7.

highlights the difficulties faced by Welsh women seeking to become politically active in the early 1980s. *Dark Edge* reveals the vital role played by women in supporting the miners' strike, as well as the problems women faced in raising such support. In the novel, food parcels are collected and distributed by a women's support group (p. 52), while a fundraising trip to Cardiff raises over three hundred pounds for the cause (p. 131).

As with the smear campaign established as a result of Dorcas' political views in Carl Tighe's story 'Rejoice', in *Dark Edge* Susan finds herself suffering as a result of her involvement in women's action to support the miners' strike. The fact that Susan is capable of harbouring and acting on a political opinion at odds with that of her husband leaves Elliot incensed. When Susan and the rest of the women's group find themselves in police custody as a result of a dispute on the streets of Cardiff, Elliot's reaction is both violent and cruel. Beating his wife with deliberate menace, he brands Susan's action as 'messing about with those fucking loonies' (p. 128), demonstrating a refusal to acknowledge the women as a genuine part of the industrial action. In a scene which reinforces the violent nature of Elliot's character, he locks both daughters into their playroom while he carries out a brutal and pre-mediated attack on Susan. Throughout the beating, which results in Susan suffering a fractured rib, Elliot coldly ignores the cries of his daughters, revealing an attitude of disdain towards women. His rage later leads him to an act which Susan describes as 'rape, though she did not fight' (p. 161), during which Elliot revels in her obvious 'revulsion' (p. 161) at him. For Elliot, the act is a sign that he has 'regained total control' (p. 161) over his wife, suggesting that for him sex is not only a mark of power but a means through which he is able to exert his sense of superiority over women.

Elliot's violence towards his wife serves as a reminder that Welsh women still faced problems of oppression and archaic attitudes to gender roles in the 1980s. While the period may have been one of 'radical and sweeping changes in the lives of women in Wales', these

changes were not instantaneous or without opposition.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, as Jane Aaron and Teresa Rees point out in the 'Introduction' to their edited collection of essays, *Our Sisters' Land*, 'it is the example and inspiration of other women which activates many a political campaigner, whether within the Welsh language movement or within sexual politics, at Greenham or on a picket-line'.⁵⁷ Susan's determination to participate in the protest in spite of the opposition she receives from her husband and the police in *Dark Edge* is a brave act which signals her intention to make a difference and inspire other women to do likewise. The actions of Susan and the other women involved in the protest in *Dark Edge* can then be regarded as a move to connect with a wider community of women involved in protests against political or social injustices.

Elliot's extreme character and his obvious disdain for anyone who opposes him, leaves *Dark Edge* finely balanced between fiction and political propaganda. Significantly, as the novel draws to a close, its tone becomes increasingly, and overtly, politicised. The fight between Edwin and Elliot is reduced to a battle between good and evil, with Elliot 'slashing and kicking' (p. 175) at his younger brother, whose main thought had been that 'violence must be avoided' (p. 174).⁵⁸ The fight echoes the ongoing struggles between police and miners. As the two men tumble through a broken fence onto the railway line, it rapidly becomes clear that neither will emerge truly victorious from the fight. While Elliot pays a high price for his actions, his fall onto the railway line and subsequent paralysis bring further problems for Edwin. Like the miners who found themselves forced to bring their strike to a

⁵⁶ Deirdre Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows: A History of Women in Twentieth Century Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 159.

⁵⁷ Jane Aaron and Teresa Rees, 'Introduction' to *Our Sisters' Land: The Changing Identities of Women in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1994), pp. 1-14 (p. 13).

⁵⁸ Edwin's determination to avoid violence echoes calls by Labour leader Neil Kinnock who had emphatically condemned the use of violence during the strikes and advised miners to oppose any such behaviour. Neil Kinnock, speaking to the Labour conference in Blackpool in 1984. Available at: <http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=190> [Accessed 13/06/2013].

close in early 1985, Edwin finds himself the subject of a police investigation and tabloid sensation (pp. 180-1). His fate is perhaps the strongest image to emerge from *Dark Edge*, reminding readers of the price Wales, and indeed miners across the United Kingdom, paid during the strikes.⁵⁹ In this respect the timing of the novel is of great significance, with its publication in 1997 coinciding with both a general election and a second referendum on devolution in Wales.

Perhaps as a result of the fate of the characters in *Dark Edge*, there is a sense of anti-climax in the close of Granelli's novel. The final scene of *Dark Edge* is reminiscent of moments of revelation concerning national identity in Anglophone Welsh fiction from earlier in the twentieth century. Edwin's sudden epiphany about Welsh identity recalls Michael's feelings about nationality as he surveys his local valley from a mountaintop towards the close of Emyr Humphreys' 1958 novel, *A Toy Epic*.⁶⁰ Likewise, in Glyn Jones's 1956 novel, *The Valley the City the Village*, Trystan experiences similar emotions when surveying his home village from a nearby mountain.⁶¹ The fact that the final scene of *Dark Edge* recalls these novels suggests that the quest to define Welsh identity is still on-going. Staring down at the valley from his favourite spot on the mountain, Edwin reflects on his attachment, not only to his own valley, but also to Wales. The emotions Edwin experiences lead him to an almost spiritual moment of reflection as 'he wanted to take the solitude of the hillside into his hands, crumple it into a ball and eat it. Such was his addiction and sense of oneness with the spirit of this place' (p. 185). His feelings of impassioned loyalty and closeness to Wales echo those of

⁵⁹ In total over 11,000 arrests were made across the UK during the course of the 1984-5 strikes, with over 5000 men tried for alleged crimes. See Jonathan Winterton and Ruth Winterton, *Coal, Crisis and Conflict: The 1984-85 Miners' Strike in Yorkshire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 163.

⁶⁰ See Emyr Humphreys, *A Toy Epic*, (Bridgend: Seren Classics, 2008).

⁶¹ See Glyn Jones, *The Valley, The City, The Village* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2009), p. 29. There is also a similar scene in Raymond Williams's 1960 novel, *Border Country*, in which the character Will surveys his home valley from the mountain, having returned there from his new home in London, pp. 361-362.

Michael and Trystan, but have not progressed to develop any substantial idea of how to gain independence for Wales and further national identity. As Jane Aaron and M. Wynn Thomas have noted, '*Dark Edge* suggests that Welsh working-class males, as well as their female counterparts, were similarly made more aware of their nationalist allegiances through their involvement in the strike'.⁶² For Edwin, a means of addressing this fresh awareness of national allegiance remains in the future, but a gradual coming to consciousness of the political consequences of national identity is in evidence by the end of the novel. Thus, *Dark Edge* suggests that little has changed, closing what initially reads as a radical and powerful depiction of the impact of the 1984 miners' strikes with an ending which offers little in the way of solutions to existing problems in Wales. Like Carl Tighe's 'Rejoice', a lack of answers within the fiction seems to suggest that there are political questions which still need to be resolved in Wales, echoing the idea that Welsh national identity is in the process of redefinition.⁶³

Set against the backdrop of the 1984 miners' strikes, *Dark Edge* is also an example of how heavily politics had influenced literature in Wales during the period since 1979. The lack of resolution at the end of the novel is equally significant. Rather than reaching any real conclusion in the struggle between miner and policeman, Elliot's fall, and subsequent paralysis, leads to an emotionally and psychologically paralysing situation for his family. Most disappointing of all is the fate of Susan, who, having seemed poised to finally escape the clutches of her violent and unfaithful husband, finds herself back in the family home she hates and unable to divorce Elliot. Depressingly, having been described as a 'victim' (p. 178) of Elliot's accident and tied indefinitely to her husband, Susan's only hope of release is the

⁶² Jane Aaron and M. Wynn Thomas 'Pulling You Through Changes', p. 295.

⁶³ See Gwyn Alf Williams, *When was Wales?*, p. 304.

possibility of his early death. Similarly, the end of the miners' strike features only briefly in the novel, overshadowed by the fight which takes place between Elliot and Edwin.

As *Dark Edge* draws to a close, with Edwin resolving to consider a move to England to study at university, there is one final ironic twist in the plot. Edwin's decision comes as the result of an invitation by Kathryn, an English academic and journalist sent to Wales to capture the story of the miners' strike from a local perspective. Interestingly Edwin notes that 'it had taken an English woman to revitalise his feelings for Wales' (p. 185), a relationship which to a certain extent reflects Welsh political reliance on England during the 1980s and suggests that action taken in England can have an impact on political feeling in Wales. A small ember of hope does, however, burn within Edwin's final thoughts which indicate a change in the direction of Welsh identity. Rather than seeking confirmation of his identity simply by looking inwards, Edwin determines to 'broaden his horizons without denying his roots' (p. 186). This sentiment chimes with the theory outlined by Raymond Williams that in order to establish a stronger sense of national identity, Wales must first compare itself to other nations.⁶⁴ As Edwin looks beyond Wales, the novel suggests that its inhabitants will be able to further develop their awareness of Welsh identity through broadening their understanding of other places and cultures. Particularly significant here is the idea that identifying differences may have a positive effect on the process of redefining national identity.

Attempts to compare Welsh identity to that of other nations are one of the most prominent themes to emerge in Anglophone Welsh fiction in the wake of the 1984 miners' strike. In his essay 'Are we becoming more divided?' Raymond Williams refers to the hysteria that often afflicts people at the mention of the break-up of Britain.⁶⁵ Nonetheless,

⁶⁴ Raymond Williams, 'Are We Becoming More Divided', p. 188.

⁶⁵ Raymond Williams, 'Are We Becoming More Divided?', p. 186.

post-1979 Anglophone Welsh writing offered renewed debate about the position of Wales in relation to the rest of the United Kingdom. As previously discussed, Carl Tighe's 'Rejoice' challenges its readers with difficult questions about Welsh involvement in English politics and war. Similarly, *Dark Edge* focuses on a scenario where a Welsh policeman is sent to England in a bid to control striking miners there. The practice of transporting Welsh police to scenes of protest and disruption in England was a relatively common device employed by the police force during the 1984 miners' strike as a means of ensuring that a high volume of police were in position at sites where protests were at their most virulent. The tactic also served the double purpose of limiting the potential for local sympathies to prevent police action.⁶⁶ In *Dark Edge*, Elliot regards his voluntary deployment to England as an honour and a task likely to increase his chances of promotion. Yet for the Welsh reader there may be something distinctly uncomfortable about the prospect of Welsh men being sent to fight against miners in England when their own country was so heavily involved in industrial action. The idea may not be as grim as that of Welsh men fighting and even killing soldiers of Welsh origin in the Falklands, as in 'Rejoice', but it is nevertheless a disturbing picture of the way in which early 1980s Wales was subject to the political dominance of England.⁶⁷

It is worth noting that *Dark Edge* was published shortly prior to the 1997 general election and, in revisiting the strikes, suffering and financial difficulties of the early 1980s in Wales, may have sought to act as a reminder to Welsh voters of the hardship faced during the 1980s under the leadership of Thatcher's Conservative government. In this light, the novel's

⁶⁶ This was not the first time such a method had been used in Wales. In 1936 Saunders Lewis, Lewis Valentine and J. D. Williams were tried for their role in a fire ignited at a farmhouse in Penyberth in protest at the British Government's acquisition of the site as a RAF training camp. A jury in Caernarfon refused to find the trio guilty and the trial was subsequently moved to the Old Bailey in London, where a guilty verdict was recorded. John Davies explores the impact of this event in more detail in *A History of Wales* (London: Penguin, 2007), pp. 575-6.

⁶⁷ Raymond Williams notes that this oppression inflicted by the British Government has also been suffered by working-class English citizens and is not exclusively experienced by those living in Wales. Raymond Williams, 'Wales and England' [1986] in *Who Speaks for Wales? Nation, Culture, Identity*, pp. 16-26 (p. 16).

complex ending and the somewhat uncertain future faced by many of the characters can be explained as an attempt to raise awareness of the need for change. As Edwin reflects that the valley has survived previous difficulties, he also predicts that it will continue to exist even if the mines are eventually shut down (p. 186). His hope for survival echoes the sentiments expressed by Emyr Humphreys when writing about the survival of Welsh identity in *Arcade*, that ‘survival has always been part of the Welsh condition’.⁶⁸ *Dark Edge* therefore seeks to encourage the continuation of Welsh identity, beyond the difficulties of industrial decline and its subsequent effects; the novel’s publication in 1997 served as a reminder of this turbulent period in recent Welsh history. It is arguably in response to the desire to examine the processes by which Wales was governed and the subsequent problems it experienced, that Anglophone Welsh writing developed its direction throughout the remainder of the decade. Explaining his decision to revive *Planet* magazine in 1985, Ned Thomas comments that ‘the tensions produced in Wales by the Falklands war or youth unemployment – these are our culture, they are what the writers write out’.⁶⁹ His words suggest that the development of English writing in Wales during the 1980s is primarily a response to the need for an accurate and effective analysis of Welsh politics and identity.

Replacing Romance with Reality: The Growth of Independent Publishing in Wales

While Anglophone Welsh writing of the 1980s had clearly contributed to fresh debate about the political status of Wales, no unified image of identity had yet emerged. As previously touched upon, in ‘Are we becoming more divided?’ Raymond Williams acknowledged this problem by noting that ‘we have always been aware of the deep differences between industrial South Wales, rural North and West Wales, and the very specific border country’.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ See Emyr Humphreys, ‘The Chosen People’ *Arcade* IX,19.

⁶⁹ Ned Thomas, ‘As I was saying...’ *Planet* 51, June/July 1985, 3-5 (p 4).

⁷⁰ Raymond Williams, ‘Are we becoming more divided?’, p. 189.

Yet Williams is keen to point out that ‘we don’t get past that by inventing a pseudo-historical or romantic Welshness’ (p. 189). Instead, Williams suggests that to move beyond such differences is to seek ‘the definition and the development of a modern Wales’ (p. 189). A literary tendency to romanticise images of Wales in fiction can be attributed in part to the historical dominance of English publishing houses over their few Welsh counterparts. Previous studies have noted that all too often during the twentieth century, Anglophone Welsh fiction was selected for publication according to its adherence to English perceptions of Wales. Stephen Knight has argued that ‘in 1900, Welsh fiction in English was basically a way for English readers to tour Wales without ever leaving the armchair’ which consequently enabled English publishers to ‘shape[e] the views given of Wales and the Welsh people in terms of English attitudes and varying forms of condescending curiosity’.⁷¹ Knight’s suggestion implies that such control over which fiction which was selected for publication may have been an attempt to regulate readers’ perceptions of Wales.

Instrumental in creating unrealistic images of Wales were a number of literary romances published in the later nineteenth century. Jane Aaron has noted in particular the fiction of Ann Beale, whose early work frequently conformed to negative stereotypes of Welsh identity. Aaron observes that Beale’s early works, for example *The Vale of the Towy* or *Sketches in South Wales* depicted Welsh characters as being lazy, slovenly and almost primitive in their nature, features which Aaron describes as being a ‘serious racial flaw’.⁷² Summarising the situation, Aaron argues that ‘many of [Beale’s] fictions through their romance plots lay heavy emphasis on the appropriateness of the union between Wales and England’ (p. 124).⁷³ The presentation of Wales in Beale’s fiction offers a clear contrast to that

⁷¹ Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. xi.

⁷² Jane Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women’s Writing in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 124.

⁷³ Aaron has also argued that these features echo comments made in the notorious *Blue Books*, apparently supporting the depiction of the Welsh in the documents, p. 125.

which can be seen in the fiction of authors such as Allen Raine, who provided a much more favourable view of Wales in novels such as her Newport-based family saga, *Garthowen* (1900). Raine's popularity, both within Wales and internationally, along with the acclaim she received as a result of her Welsh romances, were also instrumental in inspiring other female writers, as Katie Gramich notes in her analysis of twentieth-century women's writing.⁷⁴ The ability to make such an impact on aspiring writers is further indicative of the influential nature of fiction which addresses politics in a less overt manner.

Presenting a similar problem to stereotypes created by Ann Beale's early fiction, the work of Caradoc Evans deviated considerably from the romances offered by Allen Raine and contemporaries such as Edith Nepean, reinforcing the difficulties caused by English publishers asserting control over perceptions of Welsh identity. While the images of Wales in Evans' work were not remotely romanticised, his presentation of the country frequently depicted scenes far removed from reality. His 1915 collection of short stories, *My People*, caused outrage among Welsh commentators from across the country, gathering criticism for the 'squalid, repellent picture' the stories presented of rural West Wales.⁷⁵ The powerful effect of such images of Wales was not lost on Evans' London-based publisher, Andrew Melrose, who provocatively described the stories as 'realistic pictures of peasant life' on the collection's original cover. Another often noted example of this problem is Richard Llewellyn's 1939 novel *How Green Was My Valley*, which achieved success in the bestseller lists with its nostalgic and sentimental images of rolling Welsh landscapes and a hearty mining community steeped in stereotypes. Writing in *Planet* in 1989, Ian Bell described the

⁷⁴ Katie Gramich, *Twentieth-Century Women's Writing in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007). Gramich cites in particular the example of Edith Nepean, whose early fiction reveals Raine's influence on her work, p. 43.

⁷⁵ Review of *My People*, Anonymous reviewer writing in *The Western Mail*, 13th November 1915, p. 7.

novel as ‘the most pervasive and influential fabrication of Wales and the Welsh ever invented’.⁷⁶ The film adaptation which followed the novel was no better, being described by Darryl Perrins as ‘a sentimental Hollywood melodrama’ which bore little resemblance to the reality of Wales.⁷⁷ In order for Anglophone Welsh writers to establish an independent voice through literature they needed to engage with their contemporary audience by portraying Wales realistically and without bowing to popular stereotypes. If Anglophone Welsh writers were able to avoid pandering to the desires of English publishers by projecting overly romanticised depictions of Welsh life, more attention could be drawn to the political and social needs of Wales.

It is in light of this need to escape from such presentations of Wales that the development of independent publishing houses in Wales can be regarded as important, in both political and literary terms for Wales. Benedict Anderson’s description of the way in which ‘fiction seeps quietly and continuously into reality’ implies that fiction has the power to affect perceptions of national identity.⁷⁸ As a result, fiction which presented negative, romanticised, or even false, images of Wales would have the potential to mould its readers’ opinion of Wales. Likewise, Anderson suggests that fiction which engages with readers, presenting them with an ‘imagined world visibly rooted in everyday life’ (pp. 35-6), can contribute to the creation of the ‘confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations’ (p. 36). The establishment of Seren Books in 1981 can therefore be regarded as an important step towards providing literature for Wales which was rooted in and representative of contemporary Wales. Founded with the Welsh name ‘Seren’ (star), the company set out to publish English-language texts by Welsh authors. The offspring of the

⁷⁶ Ian Bell, ‘How Green Was My Valley?’ *Planet 73* (1989), 3-9, (p 3).

⁷⁷ Darryl Perrins, ‘This town ain’t big enough for the both of us’ in *Wales on Screen* ed. Steven Blandford (Penybont-ar-Ogwr: Seren, 2000), pp. 152-167 (p. 152).

⁷⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 36.

highly successful poetry journal *Poetry Wales*, Seren was founded with the original intention to publish only poetry and initially operated under the title 'Poetry Wales Press'. The company later extended its remit to include selected English language fiction by Welsh authors. Recalling the event some thirty years later, Seren's founder, Cary Archard, reflected that 'opportunities for publishing in Wales were far fewer then... There were a couple of publishers but they didn't publish a great deal of English language work and a lot of writers were neglected'.⁷⁹ Although not on the scale of expansion seen in Scottish literature during the 1980s, the creation of a new publishing house solely dedicated to the work of the Anglophone Welsh was a vital step towards the redefinition of Welsh literary identity.⁸⁰

One of Seren Books' most notable publications in the 1980s was Christopher Meredith's 1988 novel, *Shifts*. The title itself is indicative of an air of change, hinting at both an industrial landscape and a nation in the process of redefinition. Set against the backdrop of industrial decline during the late 1970s and a time of great uncertainty in Wales, the novel charts the lives of a small group of characters affected by the imminent closure of their town's steel factory. Trapped within a cyclic structure which opens and closes with the clocking on and off of the steel plant's workers, the characters spend much of the novel trying, and failing, to escape from their individual circumstances. The novel centres on Keith, a local steelworker with a keen interest in local history, a topic which is somewhat scathingly dismissed by the other characters. This interest in history can be seen as representative of a desire to engage with the reality of the past, a reality which Keith is keen to share with others through presenting his findings in a talk on local history. Furthermore, Keith's quest to learn

⁷⁹ Cary Archard in an interview with Abbie Whightwick 'Welsh Publishing House Seren is Thirty' in *The Western Mail*, October 15th 2011, 14.

⁸⁰ Gerard Carruthers has described the latter decades of the twentieth century as a 'second renaissance' for literature in Scotland. Gerard Carruthers 'Scottish literature: Second Renaissance' in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth Century English Literature*, pp. 668-684 (p. 668).

more about the history of his surrounding area embodies Benedict Anderson's assertion that in the creation of the 'imagined community' the history of the nation 'looms out of an immemorial past'.⁸¹ Anderson goes on to argue that nations which are aware of this past will see themselves as 'glid[ing] towards a limitless future' (p. 12), suggesting that an awareness of the past is inextricably linked to an ability to develop and survive in the future. The local history which Keith endeavours to uncover in *Shifts* may only form a small, and perhaps more accessible, part of Wales' own 'immemorial past', but it is nonetheless an important sign of an increasing consciousness of the history and complexity of his nation.

Significantly, not all of the characters share Keith's interest in understanding the past; his wife Judith regards the project as a slightly dull hobby which occupies her husband, while his friend Jack remains indifferent to the subject. Listening to Keith attempt to explain the main details of his research, Jack looks 'politely' (p. 98) at the pictures in the work Keith has so carefully compiled and seems at a loss as to how to respond to such enthusiasm about the past. His eventual conclusion, 'you've. You've got a lot of interesting stuff' (p. 98), demonstrates that, for Jack, the past is difficult to engage with and lacks relevance to his present circumstances. Jack's lack of interest in the past may be exacerbated by the fact that he has lived away from the town for a number of years, only moving back at the start of the novel when he is in need of a job. Returning to the town as an adult, Jack seems to lack Keith's sense of affiliation with the place, suggesting that he has lost the connection he once had to his home town. In this way, Jack represents a portion of society which has yet to fully comprehend the significance of its past as a foundation for moving towards the future.

Jack's difficulty in understanding Keith's interest in the past is also connected to his own desire to live only in the present in an attempt to avoid his feelings of guilt about the past. For Jack, the past contains memories of his abandoned pregnant girlfriend and his

⁸¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 11.

underlying guilt at betraying his father by leaving the town; being forced to consider the past would require Jack to take responsibility for his actions, something he is reluctant to do.

Nevertheless, Jack cannot fully escape his sense of guilt which surfaces occasionally within the novel when he remembers how he 'broke' (p. 46) his father's heart by 'bugger[ing] off to Reading' (p. 46) and leaving him behind. Similarly, when embarking on an affair with Judith, Jack struggles to commit to the prospect of a long-term relationship with her.

Contemplating the possibility of running away together, Judith looks into Jack's eyes and realises that his expression reminds her of 'animal's eyes, suggesting some presence but offering no contact' (p. 200). Interestingly, this lack of emotion is shared to a certain extent by Judith, who struggles to find meaning in any of her relationships. She seems to exist in a perpetual state of disappointment, first in Keith, whom she finds mildly inadequate both as a husband and a lover, and secondly in her futile affair with Jack. The difference between her relationships with the two men is reflected in the lyrics of the Beatles' song which Judith hums sporadically in the novel. She yearns for the 'Eggman' (p. 34) who, Richard Poole suggests, 'would not only be a more satisfying lover than her husband, [but] would give her a baby'.⁸² Her affair with Jack only partially fulfils this role as he satisfies her sexual desires, but does not give her a baby. Judith's lack of satisfaction echoes the unfulfilled hopes of the female characters in *I Sent a Letter to My Love* and *Home to an Empty House*, with her yearning for the imagined 'Eggman' (p. 34) also indicating a desire for something which is beyond her grasp. It is possible to read Judith's predicament in *Shifts* as a sign that the political frustration which characterised a number of works of Anglophone Welsh writing in the 1970s remained unresolved.

⁸² Richard Poole 'Eggmen and Zeros: Christopher Meredith's *Shifts*' in *Shifts*, Christopher Meredith (Bridgend: Seren, 1988), pp. 215-31 (p. 225).

To suggest that Judith's problems could be entirely solved by becoming a mother would, however, underestimate the complexity of her character. Rather, her position is reflective of the state of limbo which the whole community has been placed in as a result of the impending plant closure. Moreover, the idea that motherhood could offer resolution to Judith's problems is somewhat depressing, indicating the possibility of a return to female stereotypes of earlier in the century.⁸³ As it is, by the end of the novel Judith remains without a child, suggesting that she must seek some other form of identity. Judith can then be regarded as a further contradiction of the stereotypes of Welsh women outlined by Deirdre Beddoe and explored in the previous chapter. Like Connie in *Home to an Empty House*, Judith's identity in the novel intersects with some aspects of the stereotypes listed by Beddoe as she occupies roles as Keith's wife and Jack's lover, while still retaining desultory control over the domestic sphere. It is her lack of commitment to each of these categories which means that Judith cannot be confined to a single stereotype. Far from being entirely committed to her marriage to Keith, Judith embarks on an affair which she seems to enjoy in part because it removes her from the domestic sphere and offers an alternative to the mundane nature of her life with Keith. The fact that this pattern echoes Connie's reasons for embarking on her affair with Ifor in *Home to an Empty House* is indicative of a lack of progression in the intervening years. Judith's search for happiness in *Shifts* is therefore connected to a need to focus primarily on the present and contrasts with Keith's quest for resolution by engaging with the past.

While Judith searches for meaning in her life by satisfying her immediate physical needs, Keith's attempts to understand the present through studying the past also provide him with little comfort. It is at this point that it becomes evident that language is still a point of

⁸³ For example, the image of the archetypal 'Welsh Mam' suggested by Deirdre Beddoe in her essay 'Images of Welsh Women', *Wales the Imagined Nation*, pp. 227-238 (p. 231).

division in Welsh culture, with Keith facing a language barrier which threatens his ability to understand key historical texts. His discovery of an old election handbill looks briefly as if it might prove to be significant, yet his inability to read the Welsh writing scribbled on the back of the card is immediately problematic, for it is in a ‘language which was his own, but that he could not understand’ (p. 127). Keith’s subsequent realisation that his studies have been ‘making mysteries, not solving them’ (p. 127) furthers the atmosphere of frustration which runs throughout the novel. Kirsti Bohata has noted that the Welsh words used in *Shifts* are never translated for the reader, suggesting that the absence of a translation may have been intentional in order to encourage the reader to follow in Keith’s footsteps and attempt to learn the language.⁸⁴ Bohata goes further by regarding this technique as a form of ‘political code-switching’ (p. 126); certainly this untranslated use of the Welsh language emphasises the division caused by debate over the use and importance of the Welsh language that had raged throughout the 1970s and 1980s. As discussed in Chapter I, division caused by debate about the status of the Welsh language and its significance in defining Welsh national identity has been identified as a crucial factor in the failed campaign for devolution in 1979. John Osmond has argued that different parties employed ‘the language card’ as part of their campaigns, although he acknowledges that the full impact of this tactic is difficult to measure.⁸⁵

By the time *Shifts* was published in 1988, tension between the English and Welsh languages of Wales may not have been as strong as it had been in the previous decade, but it still remained problematic. In their study of the development of the Welsh language, Harold Carter and John Aitchison describe the 1980s as a time of ‘mixed blessings’ for the Welsh language, arguing that it marked the continuation of ‘positive and negative forces’ which had

⁸⁴ Kirsti Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 125.

⁸⁵ John Osmond, ‘Preface’ to *The National Question Again*, pp. x-xi (p. x).

been visible in Welsh language debates throughout the previous decade.⁸⁶ Similarly, writing in *Arcade* in 1981, Emyr Humphreys suggested that ‘in the depth of our psychology we are well aware that the language is still the badge of all our tribe. That is why the etiology of violent objection to so innocent a target as the Welsh language is identical with that of colour prejudice and anti-Semitism’.⁸⁷ Humphreys’ assertion that the Welsh language acts as a mark of identification explains, to a certain extent, Keith’s predicament in *Shifts*. Without the ability to understand the Welsh language, Keith is not only unable to access the past and fully understand its significance, but also lacks the ability to connect with an important facet of his cultural history.

Keith’s struggle to understand his research reveals the continuing complexities of language division within Wales. Likewise, the narrative structure of *Shifts* is similarly poignant as it presents the problems faced by multiple characters in the wake of industrial decline. In *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson emphasises the importance of the concept of ‘simultaneity’ (p. 24) in fiction as a means of providing a sense of continuity and an image of the present which connects with both the past and the future. Anderson argues that:

the idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which is also conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history (p. 26).

A sense of simultaneity, whereby different events are depicted as happening at the same time, can therefore be used to project this movement through time and create a sense of organic unity. For Anderson, this sense of simultaneity is vital to the construction of the imagined

⁸⁶ John Aitchison and Harold Carter, *A Geography of the Welsh Language 1961 – 1991* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1994), p. 68. In their study Aitchison and Carter describe the period from 1961-1980 as being ‘critical’ (p. 42) to the development of the Welsh language, with a period of increased numbers of Welsh-speakers between 1961 and 1971 preceding a decline in the latter half of the 1970s (p. 66).

⁸⁷ Emyr Humphreys, ‘The Chosen People’, *Arcade*, IX, 19.

community, instilling confidence in the ‘steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity’ (p. 26) of other members of the imagined community. This technique is evident in the novel’s opening chapter when Jack finds himself standing in a ‘crammed’ (p. 9) personnel office trying to get work at the steel plant, while Judith waits in the crowded butchers, surrounded by queuing people, some of whom are hoping to be given some ‘scraps’ (p. 14) from the floor. In so doing, *Shifts* depicts the way in which industrial decline is beginning to affect the entire area and not just the lives of the novel’s main characters. Such a depiction suggests that the progress of the Welsh nation may be similarly affected by industrial decline and its associated hardships.

The problems faced by the characters in *Shifts* may be regarded as disassociated from the debate on devolution in Wales, yet the novel’s historical and political context is carefully woven into the narrative. The characters in *Shifts* suffer from a sense of lethargy, being reluctant to improve their circumstances. Keith’s failure to react to the affair between Judith and Jack reflects his inability to comprehend the consequences of not taking action. At one point Judith tries to force Keith into action, confronting him with the question ‘why don’t you do something?’ (p. 198); instead of reacting to the situation, however, Keith feigns indifference to the affair. Similarly, Jack and Judith’s apparent inability to commit fully to their affair can be read as symbolic of the failure of the Welsh nation to commit to the idea of devolution in 1979.⁸⁸ More strikingly, the workers in the steel plant also demonstrate this desire to avoid facing the consequences of the plant’s closure. Knowing that they face redundancy with the imminent closure of the plant, they take no steps towards action, instead

⁸⁸ It is possible here to draw parallels between Jack and Judith’s affair and the end of the relationship in ‘Closing Sequence’ by Phillip Perry, published in *Planet* in 1979. In both cases an affair can be read as a metaphor for the way in which Wales flirted briefly with the idea of devolution but ultimately chose to remain within its present confines.

spending most of their free time playing cards or idly discussing women. Their reluctance to react to the problems they encounter leaves them facing an uncertain future.

Meredith's novel is not, however, an incitement to protest but one which questions the responses of its characters when faced with social and personal changes which are apparently beyond their control. The effects of industry on the community are clear in the lives, and indeed bodies, of most of the characters, who are defined by their connection to the steel plant. Such a connection is evident in bodily functions such as Keith and Judith's sex life, which appears to be dictated by Keith's shifts, resulting in what Judith brands an 'unnatural' (p. 34) pattern. Likewise, Jack refers to giving birth in industrial language, recalling how the men from the plant always referred to labour as 'tapping off' (p. 23). In particular, there is the pathetic character of 'O', a man whose nickname and indeed existence is based around the clocking on and off at work and whose emptiness seems to reflect the pointless cycle of life within which the characters are trapped. Yet this cycle must inevitably end with the closure of the plant, suggesting that in the aftermath of its closure the characters will need to redefine their identity. Failure to adapt to the loss of this part of their identity may leave the characters facing the 'nightmare vision of a depersonalised Wales' to which Gwyn Alf Williams referred in his reflections on Welsh national identity.⁸⁹ Williams' words imply that a lack of hope for the future may have blighted the Welsh population in the 1980s. Uncertain of how to move forward and find a new sense of direction in their lives, the characters in *Shifts* reflect this lack of hope. Their uncertainty about the future represents the concerns of many Welsh people in the 1980s, particularly in the South of the country, who found themselves facing an uncertain future and the loss of an industry which had defined them.

While *Shifts* may have ended with a distinct lack of hope for the future, the novel's publication by Seren Books was a sign of the changes taking place within the Welsh

⁸⁹ Gwyn A. Williams, *When Was Wales?*, p. 304.

publishing scene. Reflecting on the contribution made to Wales by Seren, Owen Sheers, the Anglophone Welsh poet and novelist, emphasises the importance of publishing houses within small nations, stating that they are ‘a sign of national and cultural strength’, adding that ‘to what degree a nation has its own publishing houses is important. It’s a way of allowing a country a voice’.⁹⁰ Sheers’ words reinforce the significance of *Shifts* as a novel which voices a country’s concerns through exploring the difficulties experienced by a range of characters facing the effects of industrial decline in Wales, with little prospect of support in rebuilding their lives. Thus, while the novel may have depicted an area, and a nation, facing an uncertain future, its publication was indicative of an ability to articulate the reality of this uncertainty and frustration through the medium of fiction published in Wales itself.

Seren Books was not the only Welsh imprint working to redress the balance of publishing between Wales and England. If Wales was to acquire a clear voice through which to articulate its national identity, those who had previously been overlooked in Anglophone Welsh writing needed to be brought to the fore, none more so than women writers. While the plight of the characters in fiction such as *Shifts* was one of frustration and inability to progress, the role of women in Welsh writing was undergoing something of a transformation. Although a number of Welsh women fiction writers had achieved publication prior to the 1980s, their efforts had often been overlooked, failing to secure the recognition they deserved.⁹¹ As a result, Anglophone literature in Wales in the mid-1980s was still largely dominated by male authors. The launch of Honno, the Welsh feminist press, in 1986 was therefore highly significant in broadening the field to include those previously unable to break into a publishing world in which men formed the majority. With the role of Welsh fiction in English finely balanced between the ties of the past and the need for development,

⁹⁰ Owen Sheers speaking to Abbie Whightwick about Seren in ‘Welsh Publishing House Seren is Thirty’ in *The Western Mail*, October 15th 2011, 14.

⁹¹ Chapter I explores the role and presentation of women in Welsh fiction prior to 1970 in more detail.

the launch of a publishing house solely aimed at publishing the work of women from Wales therefore marked a clear change in direction.

The recognition and publication of fiction by women had been slow to develop in Wales, particularly in comparison to developments made in this respect in other nations. Linden Peach, for example, considers the differing circumstances between Irish and Welsh women's writing in his comparative study of the two literary cultures, claiming that 'Ireland seems to have been ahead of Wales in the 1990s in publishing women writers from diverse social backgrounds'.⁹² Peach's argument is predominantly based on the absence of an anthology of short stories written solely by women from Wales, as the first anthology of this nature was not published until 1994 when Honno Press produced the collection *Luminous and Forlorn: Contemporary Short Stories by Women from Wales*. As Peach points out, Ireland's first collection of short stories by female authors was published some five years previously (p. 6). Nonetheless, such problems were in existence in Wales prior to the 1990s, with the difficulties faced by women writers in Wales being symptomatic not only of a gender divide, but of the actual difficulty for many writers in achieving publication in Wales. Thus, the establishment of Honno Press in 1986 can be regarded as a significant moment in the development of independent publishing in Wales, representing a proportion of the nation which had previously lacked sufficient opportunity to present their work.

As well as promoting the work of new and emerging writers, Honno Press were committed to raising awareness of the tradition of Welsh women writers in Wales, bringing previously forgotten or unsung Welsh women writers to literary attention. Honno Classics, a series of books by women writers which had long been out of print or overlooked by readers and publishers alike, swiftly became a key factor in Honno's success. The series has

⁹² Linden Peach, *Contemporary Irish and Welsh Women's Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 6.

continued to the present day and now includes republished works by authors such as Allen Raine, Amy Dillwyn, Dorothy Edwards and Hilda Vaughan. With each publication containing an introduction by a leading female scholar in the field of Welsh literary and cultural studies, the series added a sense of prestige to fiction produced by Welsh women writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The result of this effort was to reinforce the tradition of women's writing in Wales, demonstrating that the country has long produced successful female writers. The re-discovery of this tradition also placed writing by women on an equal level with men, illustrating that women's writing in Wales is as much a part of Welsh literary and cultural heritage as that produced by male writers. Moreover, the writers selected for publication by Honno were representative of places and regions from across Wales. As a result, their work can be seen as contributing to the creation of a sense of community which more accurately represented the reality of life in 1980s Wales.

One of the first books to be published by the newly-established Honno Press was *Betsy Cadwaladyr: A Balaclava Nurse – An Autobiography of Elizabeth Davis*, an autobiographical account of the life of a woman from Wales in the mid-nineteenth century. Published in 1987, the autobiography recounts a world of work, nursing, war and travel from the perspective of an idiosyncratic Welsh woman. Interestingly, Honno chose to republish the original edition of the text which had been edited by Jane Williams, a leading nineteenth-century scholar of Welsh social history and politics. Once again, Honno's attempt to demonstrate a tradition of academic and literary work by women in Wales is evident. Yet readers were not left to reflect solely on the past in Wales; the introduction by Deirdre Beddoe pointed out the significance of the text for modern Welsh readers. Beddoe observed that both Williams and Davis 'broke out of the confines imposed upon them by sex and class – the one through travel and adventure and the other through education and a serious literary

career'.⁹³ As a result, the example set by the autobiography suggests that contemporary women writers from Wales might be able to use their writing about Wales and their lives to free themselves from existing stereotypes or social and economic restrictions.

In contrast to publishers such as Seren Books, Honno Press also chose to publish literature in both English and Welsh. The company's decision to incorporate both languages is perhaps indicative of an attempt to broaden the sphere of publishing in Wales, presenting writing from both language communities and from across the whole of the country. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that, as Jane Aaron has observed, 'Honno seems to have difficulty in attracting Welsh-language manuscripts', a problem which was particularly evident during the cooperative's early years.⁹⁴ In this respect Welsh-language publishing house Gomer Press seems to have had more success, publishing a collection of feminist essays entitled *Asen Adda* (Adam's Rib) in 1975, followed by an anthology of women's poetry, *Hel Dail Gwyrdd* (Gathering Green Leaves) in 1985. The publication of such collections indicates that there was interest among Welsh women writers in publishing their work, but perhaps suggests that for these writers a press associated more firmly with the Welsh language offered a more appealing opportunity for publication.

Although some of the fiction produced by women writers from Wales during the early twentieth century had focused predominantly on depicting a relatively insular environment, a number of writers had moved beyond these boundaries. Writers such as Amy Dillwyn and Menna Gallie had set novels in London and Ireland, while Dillwyn's novel, *The Rebecca Rioter*, was even translated into Russian.⁹⁵ Similarly, Allen Raine had achieved success not

⁹³ Deirdre Beddoe, 'Introduction' to *Betsy Cadwaladr: A Balaclava Nurse – An Autobiography of Elizabeth Davis* (Dinas Powys: Honno Press, 1987) pp. i-xiii (p. i.)

⁹⁴ Aaron goes on to state that 'only one such manuscript was offered to them in the year 1991-2'. Jane Aaron 'Finding a voice in two tongues: gender and colonization' in *Our Sisters' Land*, pp. 183-198 (p. 194).

⁹⁵ Kirsti Bohata and Stephen Lovatt discuss the translation of Dillwyn's novel in their essay, 'The Russian Rioter': Amy Dillwyn's *The Rebecca Rioter* in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, *Almanac: A Yearbook of Welsh Writing in English* 16, 1-30 (p. 1).

only in Wales, but also through a diverse overseas readership. The decision by Honno Press to re-publish Elizabeth Davis' autobiography can therefore be seen in the context of wider attempts to broaden the scope of Welsh writing. Moreover, the consideration of other locations, languages and cultures naturally forms an important part of the process of defining identity and reaffirms the idea that in order to discover its own identity a nation must first compare itself to other cultures and discover both common and unique features.⁹⁶

In addition to its determination to promote a tradition of Welsh women's writing, by the close of the 1980s Honno Press had also turned its attention to promoting the work of contemporary women writers. The company's efforts were not restricted solely to fiction, as exemplified by the publication of a collection of poetry by Penny Anne Windsor in 1988, enticingly entitled *Dangerous Women*. The collection challenged attitudes to women and demonstrated a desire to publish works which focused more on the position of women in contemporary society.⁹⁷ To this end, Honno published *On My Life* in 1989, an anthology of autobiographical writing by women in Wales. The collection was the result of a competition held by the Welsh Arts Council which invited women from across Wales to submit an autobiographical essay written in either the English or Welsh language. As well as forging important links between the work of Honno Press and the Welsh Arts Council, the competition sought to provide a place for women to tell their story, where previously little opportunity had existed. The collection acts as a testimony to the lives of women in Wales, bringing to light a suppressed history through its memories of twentieth-century life from across Wales. The editor, Leigh Verrill-Rhys, observes in the introduction to the collection that the statement 'little girls should be seen and not heard' is used frequently throughout the

⁹⁶ See Raymond Williams, 'Are we becoming more divided?', p. 188.

⁹⁷ Penny Anne Windsor, *Dangerous Women* (Dinas Powys: Honno Press, 1988).

prizewinning and commended essays.⁹⁸ Verrill-Rhys goes on to declare that ‘two hundred and sixty three of those little girls, as women, chose to be heard publicly through the competition’ (p. v), with the sheer volume of entries to the competition indicative of a desire for the opportunity to speak out among women in Wales.

While the collection may not have appeared unduly radical in subject matter, it is still possible to identify the publication of *On My Life* as a pivotal moment in the development of publishing in Wales and its influence on politics. Both for the women whose stories were selected for publication and for the further two hundred and fifty whose stories did not make the collection, the invitation to speak signified the destruction of the sentiment that ‘girls should be seen and not heard’. Verrill-Rhys notes that, as if in response to this statement, ‘many of the entrants wrote about particular traumas they had experienced: two almost fatal accidents; a mastectomy; a fight against cancer; a child’s fight against cancer; a bone disease in the leg leading to amputation; a broken marriage; death of a partner; death; death; death...’ (p. v). Indeed, such a description would suggest that *On My Life* presented an extremely bleak picture of the lives of many Welsh women. Yet at the heart of the collection there exists a feeling of hope for the future and gentle humour in the tales of childish scrapes and family experiences, symbolic of the strength of character of women in Wales who had suffered much throughout the twentieth century.⁹⁹ Patricia Waugh has argued that in the seventies the motto “‘the personal is political’” became the resonant sound-bite encapsulation of a commitment to recover women’s voices from “‘between the acts’” of world history’.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Leigh Verrill-Rhys, ‘Introduction’ to *On My Life: Women’s Writing from Wales ed. Leigh Verrill-Rhys* (Dinas Powys: Honno Press, 1989), p. v.

⁹⁹ See for example Ann Moore’s essay ‘Reindeers in the Desert’ (pp. 73-86) which, in spite of depicting the hardship faced by a small family in the build up to Christmas, also contains humorous recollections of being ‘wrapped up like Eskimos’ (p. 77) and an irrepressible cockerel which wakes the entire house (p. 81).

¹⁰⁰ Patricia Waugh, ‘Feminism and writing: the politics of culture’ in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature*, pp. 600-17 (p. 603).

Thus, the personal reflections of women from Wales held the potential to contribute to political and national debate.

The implications of *On My Life* were significant; the collection signified release from the constraints that had previously limited the literary development of Welsh women. Even if the value of such writing was not noted immediately, its influence on politics was vital to broadening the scope of the campaign for devolution over the coming decade. Jane Aaron points out that the work of Welsh women writers throughout the 1980s ‘functioned so as to make room for women within a male-dominated Welsh culture which had previously seemed reluctant to include the feminine’.¹⁰¹ In the past, Welsh women had been depicted as playing a less overt role in politics, with any direct political intervention restricted to matters of immediate local or domestic concern. This attitude is evident in works such as Kate Roberts’ classic novel, *Feet in Chains* (1936) where the protagonist Jane Gruffydd’s rebellious final outpouring of anti-war and anti-imperial emotion comes as a result of the death of her son.¹⁰²

Here again it is interesting to note the importance of an element of simultaneity and continuity in the creation of a sense of community and nationhood.¹⁰³ The stories presented in *On My Life* depict the different experiences of women from across Wales in the twentieth century. As a result, the collection contributes to the presentation of an ‘imagined community’ which exists simultaneously across Wales, regardless of the fact that the featured female contributors may have had little, or no, connection with each other. Through its presentation of the stories of different childhood experiences of Welsh women, *On My Life* therefore contributed to increasing awareness of the lives of women in twentieth-century

¹⁰¹ Jane Aaron ‘Towards Devolution: New Welsh Writing’ in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 685-699 (p. 690).

¹⁰² It is worth noting that the incident takes place at a time before women had obtained the right to vote and, as such, Jane Gruffydd’s actions can be seen as those of a woman who has few opportunities for expressing her political views.

¹⁰³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 25.

Wales. Since these stories offered an insight into their authors' past, they also contributed to a process of recording and making accessible the history of women in Wales throughout the century.

The role of women in politics had featured little in campaigns for either side of the debate in the build-up to the 1979 referendum on devolution in Wales. Thus, the promotion of literature, either fictional or autobiographical, by women from Wales during the 1980s suggested a move towards debate on topics of concern to women. These changes were further signalled by the work of Welsh women poets such as Gillian Clarke and Sheenagh Pugh, whose poetry frequently focused on topics of concern to them, such as the environment and the identity of women within the contemporary world.¹⁰⁴ It is also worth noting that it is not only the literature published by Honno Press that is significant but the business model on which the publishing house was set up and run. Before its launch in 1986, Honno issued an invitation for female shareholders in the company, whose input and financial support would be used to run the business. The hundreds who took up this invitation were indicative of the strength of support for the development of Welsh women's writing.¹⁰⁵ Their enthusiasm to contribute to the collective also revealed a sense of belief that such work was important and the later contributors to *On My Life* showed a willingness to share their stories with others.

The importance of women's writing in the campaign for devolution would become apparent primarily in the 1990s and will be further addressed later in this study. It is, however, important to note the impact made on Anglophone Welsh writing by the establishment of Honno in 1986. Both the timing of the launch, in the middle of a decade of political turmoil and industrial decline and protest in Wales, and the nature of its early publications, are suggestive of a changing current within Welsh writing in English. Both

¹⁰⁴ For a more detailed analysis of the impact of Welsh women's poetry on encouraging topical debate during the 1980s see Jane Aaron, 'Towards Devolution: New Welsh Writing', p. 691.

¹⁰⁵ It is worth noting that Honno Press is still run on these co-operative principles in the present day.

Honno and Seren embodied a new sense of independence in Anglophone Welsh writing, marking a turning point in its direction since the 1979 referendum. Although the 1980s witnessed the decline of industry, the powerful effects of strikes and political strife in Wales, its literature had finally begun to expand beyond the limitations it had faced in the past. Crucially, both publishing houses offered authors the chance to address topics of importance to them, thus enabling them to consider the political and social needs of Wales, a vital step in defining an independent national identity.¹⁰⁶

The validity of Harri Webb's declaration that Anglophone Welsh writing was 'a load of rubbish' had certainly been disproved by Anglophone Welsh writers by the close of the 1980s. By then it had become apparent that it was merely the term 'Anglo-Welsh', rather than the field of Anglophone Welsh writing, that was in decline. With its new sense of independence and the rise of Welsh-based publishing houses, Anglophone Welsh writing appeared to be flourishing. Bolstered during the decade by important milestones, such as the establishment of the Association for Welsh Writing in English in 1984, writing from Wales had begun to move towards a less divided future.¹⁰⁷ As if to epitomise this change, 1988 marked the re-launch of one of Welsh writing's most widely-acknowledged and longest-running literary journals, *The Anglo-Welsh Review*. With a forty-year history, the magazine had stood the test of time, surviving significant political and cultural changes, before being rebranded as *The New Welsh Review* in 1988, the new title suggestive of an air of change in the field.

When *The New Welsh Review* first appeared in 1988 it replaced the long-lived journal *The Anglo-Welsh Review*, which had originally started in 1949 under the name *Dock*

¹⁰⁶ See Raymond Williams, 'Are we becoming more divided?', p. 189.

¹⁰⁷ The Association was established in 1984 as a joint initiative between five Welsh universities and Colleges to promote the study of Welsh writing in English. Association of Welsh Writing in English website, 'About'. Available at: <https://www.swan.ac.uk/crew/awwe/> [accessed 10/02/13].

Leaves.¹⁰⁸ The magazine was founded by Raymond Garlick and Roland Mathias, both of whom were major figures in the promotion of Anglophone Welsh writing and who later altered the title to *The Anglo-Welsh Review*.¹⁰⁹ The contribution made by the publication in each of its incarnations is clearly evident in the opening editorial of *The New Welsh Review*. The editor, Belinda Humfrey, writes that, unlike many of her predecessors, ‘the present editor need not argue the case for a Welsh literature in *English* in Wales’ (p. 1), a statement which illustrates the extent to which Welsh writing in English had progressed by 1988. Humfrey does, however, express the concern that Welsh writing in English has not yet achieved its full potential, adding that ‘there is still a need to increase the readership of good Welsh writing in English both in Wales and in the English-speaking world beyond Wales’ (p. 1). It is with this sentiment in mind that *The New Welsh Review* set itself the target of presenting writing from Wales to an international audience. The fact that such an ambitious target was established suggests that Welsh identity had developed to an extent where the focus was no longer solely on ‘presenting Wales to Wales’, as it was at the launch of *Arcade* in 1981, but of projecting images of Welsh identity to the wider world.¹¹⁰

Short fiction featured in the early editions of *The New Welsh Review* also featured scenes from outside Wales, connecting literature from Wales with that from other cultures. Issue two of the re-launched journal included a short story by crime fiction author H. R. F. Keating entitled ‘Light Coming’. The story features Keating’s famous detective, Inspector Ghote, who is depicted telling his young son the story of when his home village first had electricity installed. Ghote describes the sense of anticipation the village felt as they waited for the installation to take place, recalling how ‘the excitement had kept the village buzzing

¹⁰⁸ *Dock Leaves* was originally based in Pembroke Dock where it remained for a number of years.

¹⁰⁹ This history is explored in more detail in the entry on *The New Welsh Review* in *The New Companion to the Literature of Wales*, ed. Meic Stephens (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), p. 530.

¹¹⁰ Editorial comment in *Arcade*, Volume II, 1980,10.

for weeks'.¹¹¹ Interestingly, however, Ghote goes on to reveal that opinion about the forthcoming electricity had been mixed, telling his son that 'debate had raged. Some had prophesied dire effects from breathing air mixed with mysterious electricity. Others had seen a glorious new world' (p. 35). This division in opinion at the prospect of change mirrors the division outlined by Raymond Williams as the main response to the possibility of a measure of independence for Wales.¹¹²

In many respects the launch of *The New Welsh Review* marked the culmination of a long struggle to establish Anglophone Welsh writing as a field in its own right. That is not, however, to suggest that Welsh-language writing and publishing in Wales was in decline in the 1980s. Indeed, some Welsh-language journals such as *Barn* continued to thrive throughout the decade, as did Welsh-language publishing houses, although some, such as Y Lolfa and Gomer, adapted to publish works in both Welsh and English. The result was a Welsh literary culture which better reflected the diversity of contemporary Wales. Anglophone Welsh writers and publishers had gained a greater degree of control over fiction published in Wales, enabling it to become representative of a much wider proportion of the Welsh population than it had been at the start of the decade. Moreover, the structure, and even publication of, such fiction was indicative of an attempt to assert a renewed sense of Welsh identity, one which was no longer based on fear of division or oppression from beyond Wales. For this sense of nationality to develop into a deeper awareness of the politics of Wales, more writers would need to find their voice among those shouting to be heard in the creation of the 'imagined community' and the redefinition of Welsh identity.

¹¹¹ H. R. F. Keating, 'Light Coming', *New Welsh Review*, 2, 35-36 (p 35).

¹¹² Raymond Williams, 'Are we becoming more divided?', p. 186.

Chapter III – The Drive for Devolution: Anglophone Welsh writing 1990-1998

Keen to engage in debate on the nature of Welsh identity, in 1996 the self-styled ‘National Newspaper of Wales’, *The Western Mail*, embarked on a series of articles exploring contemporary views of Welsh national identity. The prominent journalist and broadcaster John Humphrys, born in Cardiff, was among the contributors and focused his comments on comparing attitudes to Welsh and Scottish identity. Humphrys argued that ‘the Scots are taken seriously. We by and large, are not. We are defined in the English mind by our national caricature.’ Addressing cultural contributions to Welsh identity, Humphrys adds that ‘to a large extent we connive in the creation of our cultural caricature. Why, if a play or short story comes from Wales, must the plot invariably be set in a Welsh village peopled entirely by women called Bloddie and men called Dai Coffin-Maker or Jones-the-Something-or-Other? And why must they all have IQs of 10 but be very, very cunning?’¹ Humphrys’ comments hit directly at long-standing arguments over the projection of Welsh identity in the contemporary world, and, as Diane Davies notes in her analysis of Humphrys’ comments, ‘we do not have to look far, especially in the case of TV programmes, for some illustration of stereotypical Welshness’.² Yet while such stereotypes may indeed have existed within television and film productions, by the start of the 1990s Anglophone Welsh writing had already moved considerably beyond the caricaturization and stereotyping referred to by Humphrys.

As explored in Chapters I and II, images of Welsh identity had, to a certain extent, previously suffered from characterisations which bowed to stereotypes and clichéd presentations in fiction. Like many observers, Diane Davies attributes this presentation in no small part to the precedent established by Caradoc Evans in his 1915 volume of short stories,

¹ John Humphrys, ‘Time to blow all the coal-dust clichés away’, *Western Mail*, (20th March, 1996), 13.

² Diane Davies, ‘Towards Devolution: Poetry and Anglo-Welsh Identity’ in *National Identity*, ed. Keith Cameron, (Exeter: Intellect, 1999) pp. 19-30 (p. 19).

My People.³ As mentioned in Chapter II, the volume depicted its rural Welsh characters as being simultaneously comic, repulsive and eccentric, engaging in exploits which veered from the immoral to the ridiculous and pathetic. In light of the notoriety of Evans' work, it is small wonder that Anglophone Welsh writers spent a considerable part of the remainder of the twentieth century struggling to break free of similar characterisations. Yet by the time Humphrys made his comments in 1996, the Welsh publishing scene had changed radically from the scenario he describes in his comments to the *Western Mail*. The reasons for this change, as outlined in the previous chapter, were partly due to the rise of independent publishing houses in Wales, which had enabled Welsh editors and publishers to gain greater control over the field of Anglophone Welsh writing. Anglophone Welsh writers were then increasingly able to use their writing to present Wales from their own perspective, rather than having to conform to stereotypes of the kind referred to by Humphrys.

What is nevertheless interesting about Humphrys' comment is its apparent lack of correlation to the state of Welsh writing and publishing in the mid-1990s. The fact that Humphrys refers to such caricatures suggests that not all stereotypes about Welsh identity had yet been entirely overcome. His statement may also be a reflection of his own circumstances; as a London-based journalist, he may have been rather out of touch with contemporary Wales. Yet it is nevertheless problematic, as it suggests that such caricatures may form the basis of common cultural perceptions about Wales. This chapter will seek to demonstrate how these perceptions of Wales were challenged by Anglophone Welsh writers in the years preceding the second referendum on devolution in 1997. It will further seek to demonstrate that the changes which took place were enough to override perceptions that Welsh identity, and indeed its literature, centred on a 'cultural caricature'. Moreover, this chapter suggests that Anglophone Welsh writing in fact offered the people of Wales an

³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

increasingly diverse representation of culture to support political development in the build-up to the 1997 referendum. In addition, the broadening of Welsh writing in English can be regarded as a reflection of the increasingly visible role of literature in everyday life in Wales.

These changes to the relation between Anglophone fiction and politics in Wales were developing concurrently with a growing awareness of the need for change in other aspects of Welsh culture. Peter Lord had offered a critique of the Welsh arts and visual culture in 1992 when he assessed the situation as part of his study, *The Aesthetics of Relevance*. Lord complained that a wider appreciation of the visual arts in Wales was being hampered by ‘the notion of an incomplete – and consequently inadequate – national culture as presented in Wales by Anglocentric art historians’.⁴ For Lord, this notion was ‘a powerful constraint on political evolution’ (p. 8), preventing the recognition of a continuing Welsh tradition of visual art and culture. Moreover, Lord alleged that certain aspects of the National Museum of Wales were, in fact, having a negative effect on the development of Welsh culture. He argued, for example, that the success of Saint Fagans National History Museum was problematic as it ‘lock[ed] Wales into a perpetual rural past’ (p. 40), with its success posing ‘a serious difficulty for the future of the culture it was established to sustain’ (p. 41).⁵ Lord’s words urged those involved in the creation and promotion of Welsh visual art to take a more active role in raising awareness of the work of contemporary Welsh artists. Yet, however bleak the current situation may have been for Welsh artists seeking an outlet for their work, the fact that a lack of opportunity was cited as a problem by Lord indicates a new sense of awareness of the need for increased cultural engagement in Wales. A desire to involve the

⁴ Peter Lord, *The Aesthetics of Relevance* (Llandysul: Gomer, 1992), p. 8.

⁵ A similar point was made in a demonstration by artist and singer Gruff Rhys in 1992, when he took the decision to roll toilet paper down the steps of the National Museum as a protest against the lack of contemporary Welsh art displayed by the Museum. Huw David Jones has described the act as ‘one of the more colourful interventions in a long-running dispute about the display of art at the National Museum’. Huw David Jones, ‘The National Museum of Art’, *Planet* 204 (November 2011), 18-32 (p. 18).

National Museum in such a process of cultural engagement also illustrates a desire to engage the public in art and instil a sense of pride in and knowledge of Welsh culture.

Like most nations, Wales had seen its national and cultural identity constantly change and evolve throughout its history. In his 1985 book, *When Was Wales?*, the historian Gwyn Alf Williams memorably describes Welsh identity as an ever-evolving process in which ‘the Welsh make and remake Wales’ constantly, predicting that this process will continue ‘if they want [it] to’.⁶ For a short while in the post-referendum period of the late 1970s and early 1980s it may have seemed that Wales was on the brink of losing its desire to remake Wales and Welsh identity.⁷ As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, however, the field of Anglophone Welsh writing continued to develop, following the failure of the 1979 referendum on devolution. Challenges had been rife in the 1980s, with industrial decline, protest, military action in the Falklands and widespread political dissatisfaction in Wales. Nevertheless, the launch of two new publishing houses, Seren and Honno Press, combined with the rebranding and launch of Welsh journals *Planet* and *New Welsh Review*, ensured that Anglophone Welsh writing had established a much stronger foundation by the close of the decade. What occurred at the start of the 1990s was, then, a process through which writers were able to build on these successes. Increased potential for publication again led to increased opportunities for culture to become a more substantial part of daily life in Wales.

As outlined in Chapter I, the campaign for Welsh devolution in the 1970s had been characterised by a lack of information and on-going division between different factions in Wales. Leighton Andrews recalls that mention of the 1979 referendum ‘triggered gloom and memories of division and defeat amongst advocates of devolution’, an attitude which would

⁶ Gwyn Alf Williams, *When Was Wales? A History of the Welsh* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 304.

⁷ See John Osmond, ‘Preface’ to *The National Question Again*, pp. x-xi (p. x).

need to be overcome in order for Wales to look towards the future.⁸ At the heart of such division lay concern among some commentators that the securing of a National Assembly for Wales would precipitate the decline of the United Kingdom, leading to the break-up of a previously unified nation.⁹ Having raised concerns about the dangers of clinging to unity in his essay ‘Are We Becoming More Divided?’, Raymond Williams further explores the idea in his 1983 essay ‘The Culture of Nations’. Arguing that unity can be used as a form of nationalist oppression, Williams claimed that attempts at unification can amount to an elaborate control mechanism which ‘operates to mobilize people for wars or to embellish and disguise forms of social and political control and obedience’.¹⁰ Certainly the image of a nation where the entire population was mobilized and controlled through state-generated nationalist propaganda would be cause for alarm, especially as Williams suggests British imperial ideology applies such methods. Williams’ solution to this potential problem is that division should be regarded not as a negative force, but as a potentially liberating one.

For Williams, the effects of a fear of division extend further than the differing national identities within the United Kingdom. In his 1981 essay ‘Freedom and a Lack of Confidence’ Williams outlines the tension between regional and national demands on writers within each nation. Reflecting on the potential for disharmony between regional and national identities in fiction, Williams argues that authors must ‘write in the full consciousness that other places and their pressures exist’.¹¹ According to Williams, a failure to demonstrate this consciousness may lead to authors frequently returning ‘to a past period, or to generalities beyond place and time’ (p. 145) through their writing. It is this problem which Anglophone

⁸ Leighton Andrews, *Wales Says Yes: The Inside Story of the Yes for Wales Referendum Campaign* (Bridgend: Seren, 1999), p. 29.

⁹ See Raymond Williams, ‘Are We Becoming More Divided?’ in *Who Speaks for Wales?*, p. 186.

¹⁰ Raymond Williams, ‘The Culture of Nations’ in *Who Speaks for Wales? Nation, Culture, Identity*, pp. 191-203 (p. 193).

¹¹ Raymond Williams, ‘Freedom and a Lack of Confidence’ (1981) in *Who Speaks for Wales?*, pp. 143-146 (p. 145).

Welsh writers were forced to confront in 1990s Wales; fiction writers faced a choice between returning to the past in search of a more certain sense of identity, or confronting an uncertain future in which regional and national identities may differ from each other. If the latter came, returning to the past would involve confronting the outcome of the 1979 referendum on devolution in Wales and the fact that every Welsh electoral region had recorded a decisive 'no' vote. Consequently, in order for Wales to secure devolution in 1997, the 'Yes' campaign would need to adopt a more positive approach.

Having established that Anglophone Welsh fiction develops different themes and strategies for engaging readers in the wake of industrial decline, Williams turns his attention to what he terms the 'regional novel' (p. 144). Here, Williams argues that writers assert their own 'place and identity, or more probably, places and identities' (p. 145) through the act of writing. In the past, the term 'regional novel' has been used in generic terms to refer to novels written or set in areas previously regarded as regions of the United Kingdom, and it is in this sense that Williams adopts it in his essay. Included within Williams' list of such places is fiction written, or set, in 'the Lake District or Cornwall or the Scottish Highlands or Wessex or... Wales' (p. 144). While the division of the United Kingdom into such areas may have been accepted in the past, its use in 1980s Wales remained deeply problematic. Firstly, in the years since its failed attempt to secure a measure of independence, Scotland had established itself more clearly as a nation in its own right.¹² It would, therefore, be possible to remove Scotland from the list of so called 'regions' cited by Williams, an act which would subsequently raise questions over the inclusion of Wales in the list. Secondly, as Williams points out, the term 'regional' could in fact be extended to any number of works of fiction

¹² Berthold Schoene has noted that by the late 1980s Scotland appeared to possess a confidence in its national identity which was unparalleled in many other European countries at the time. See 'Introduction' to *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 1-6 (p. 1).

which focus solely on a specific place, whether that place is London, New York or any other major city or county featured in fiction (p. 145). As a result, Williams' argument suggests that the label 'regional novel' may be used to refer to an extremely broad range of fiction, the parameters of which are not always clearly defined.

For the purposes of this thesis, the term 'regional' is used to refer to fiction which maintains a focus on a specific area or region of Wales. Having established that writers may maintain a 'regional' focus in their writing by concentrating on a specific area or locality, Williams goes on to note that it is, nevertheless, vital for authors to maintain an awareness of the other places which exist around them. According to Williams, writers must find a way of 'showing that it [their fiction] is not isolated' (p. 145) in order to prevent charges of parochialism. Consequently, writing which focused on specific areas of Wales would need to engage, however briefly, with the wider world. His argument therefore suggests that a sense of 'regional' identity need not render such literature redundant from a national, or international, perspective. Indeed, if authors were able to achieve this balance between writing on a regional and national platform, they would be better able to explore their political ideas and notions of identity, sharing their ideas with new audiences. This chapter will consider whether such a process was successfully undertaken by Anglophone Welsh writers of the 1990s and whether it enabled them to break away from the archaic and parochial form of characterisation and stereotyping referred to by John Humphrys.

Writing with a 'regional' focus can, therefore, be seen to serve a dual purpose within 1990s Wales. Literature which conveys a clear sense of spatial location has the potential to assert the identity of a specific place, in essence confirming its existence to the wider world. As discussed in the 'Introduction', Benedict Anderson's theory of the 'imagined community' relies on the development of feelings of a shared identity which are able to unite citizens of a nation, regardless of their limited opportunities to meet, in person, other members of the

nation. Any increase in writing which focuses on a specific area would naturally offer further opportunities to assert the identity and existence of that region to readers from other regions. Consequently, Anglophone Welsh writing which maintains a 'regional' focus may be seen, paradoxically, as significant to the development of national identity in Wales, as it contributes to the construction of a broader literary narrative of Welsh identity.

Building on the significance of 'regional' identity in literature, Raymond Williams also sets out a number of ideas regarding the significance of fiction in contributing to perceptions of national identity. Starting with the premise that 'there are no rules about the novel as a form' (p. 143), Williams then proceeds to consider the novelistic traditions which have emerged in recent years. Predominant among these traditions in Wales is the theme of industry.¹³ As explored in the previous chapter, industrial decline had affected Wales severely during the 1970s and 1980s. D. Gareth Evans describes how 'the Welsh steel industry shed over 50,000 workers, and coal was almost eliminated after the damaging miners' strike'.¹⁴ Thus, in the wake of industrial decline in Wales, Williams foresees the difficulties Welsh writers must inevitably face in moving forwards from a style of fiction which for a long time dominated perceptions of Welsh literary identity (p. 144). Certainly Williams is not the only scholar to note the centrality of industry in Anglophone Welsh writing and the potential difficulties caused as a result of its decline. Stephen Knight has made similar observations, describing the effects of industrialisation as having 'an intensely local nature', but nevertheless exerting a heavy influence over Anglophone Welsh writing before its dramatic decline.¹⁵ As demonstrated in the previous chapter, industry was no longer a central focus in

¹³ Williams explores the significance of industry in Welsh fiction in more depth in his already cited 1979 essay 'The Welsh Industrial Novel', included in *Who Speaks for Wales?*, pp. 95-111. Often explored examples of such industrial fiction from Wales include Glyn Jones's and Jack Jones's *Black Parade* (1935) and

¹⁴ D. Gareth Evans, *A History of Wales: 1906 – 2000* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 237.

¹⁵ Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), pp. 62-63.

Wales and literature from the 1990s continued to reflect this change, perhaps indicating a move towards the future and a new focus.

In light of such significant changes to the industrial landscape of Wales, this chapter builds on the assertion that a more overt connection between fiction and politics had begun to emerge in Anglophone Welsh fiction in the 1980s, by considering the connection between British and Welsh national identity in the years leading up to the 1997 referendum on devolution in Wales.¹⁶ Emyr Williams has argued that Wales has, over time, slowly ‘mov[ed] away from a context of conflict between British and Welsh nationalism, to a situation in which Welsh identity can be both an ethnic identity and a state identity within the evolving parameters of the United Kingdom and the Western European State’.¹⁷ Consequently, it may be possible to more clearly locate the ‘boundaries’ which Benedict Anderson argues act as parameters of the imagined nation, establishing more clearly the differences which distinguished Wales from other nations within the United Kingdom.¹⁸ According to the argument suggested by Emyr Williams, the identification of these boundaries should not create undue conflict between a Welsh and British sense of identity. This chapter examines Emyr Williams’ suggestion that it may be possible for Anglophone Welsh writers to depict a sense of Welsh identity that in no way contradicts or conflicts with a wider sense of British

¹⁶ In so doing, it also seeks to suggest that the political allegory noted in Chapter I is gradually replaced by a more overt and conscious depiction of political, national and social concerns in 1990s Wales. It may also be possible to expand the analysis in this chapter further to examine its relation to what Nick Bentley’s suggestion that the 1990s were characterised by ‘the politics of difference’ across the United Kingdom, as the prospect of a referendum on devolution became a reality. Nick Bentley, *British Fiction of the 1990s* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 9.

¹⁷ Emyr W. Williams ‘The Dynamic of Welsh Identity’, *National Identity in the British Isles*, ed. Neil Evans (Gwynedd: Coleg Harlech, 1989), pp. 46-59 (p. 58). Surveys based on the Moreno method have indicated that perceptions of Welsh identity fluctuated throughout the 1990s, with a peak of 29% of respondents claiming to feel ‘More Welsh than British’ around the time of the devolution referendum in 1997. Significantly, however, by 1999 responses to the same question indicated that a plurality of 36% regarded themselves as ‘Equally Welsh and British’, supporting Williams’s assertion that a sense of Welsh identity does not necessarily need to conflict with a wider sense of British identity. Christopher A. Bryant, *The Nations of Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) p. 5.

¹⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 50.

identity. In so doing, it considers whether fiction in 1990s Wales was able to retain, and further develop, a distinctive sense of Welsh identity as the nation faced the prospect of a second referendum on devolution.

The following section examines a range of Anglophone Welsh writing of the period 1990-97, considering how such fiction may be seen as contributing to the growing campaign for devolution in Wales. I will argue that this contribution is achieved through writing which recognises and explores regional concerns and interests in Wales, while still suggesting an overall sense of Welsh identity. Thus, I will suggest that in Wales regional writing functions as an important part of a wider political and nationalist movement, one which contradicts the gloomy conclusion of Gwyn Alf Williams, who describes the Welsh nation as ‘naked under an acid rain’ (p. 305). Raymond Williams’ concluding remarks in ‘Freedom and a Lack of Confidence’ are that ‘the novel, for all its difficulties, is still better able than any other kind of writing to unite the particular and the general’ (p. 145-6). In this chapter I will argue that, while the novel in Wales continues to play an important role in uniting local concerns and a sense of national identity, the genre of the short story is of equal significance in this process. I consider the reasons why the short story, a form which had previously been highly successful in Wales in the first half of the twentieth century, experiences a resurgence during the 1990s. It then continues to assess the impact of the short story on notions of local and national identity in 1990s Wales. In so doing, I will chart the progress of Anglophone Welsh writing as it looks increasingly towards the future for Wales. Finally, as Jane Aaron and M. Wynn Thomas point out, Anglophone Welsh writers often address politics subtly in their fiction, appearing ‘to work deviously’ by exploring themes or ideas apparently unrelated to the topic.¹⁹ This chapter will test that assertion by considering whether writers do indeed

¹⁹ Jane Aaron and M. Wynn Thomas, ‘Pulling You Through Changes’ in *A Guide to Welsh Literature: Welsh Writing in English*, ed. M. Wynn Thomas, pp. 279-309 (p. 298).

work deviously or whether the political intent in their work takes on a more overt role as the 1990s progress and a second referendum on devolution approaches.

Short fiction and the resurgence of the short story in Wales

One of the weaknesses of the 1979 devolution campaign had unquestionably been its failure to engage Welsh people in a clear and comprehensive political debate.²⁰ With this point in mind, it is significant that the genre of the short story witnessed a sudden revival during the early 1990s. Once one of the major genres of Anglophone Welsh writing, numerous Welsh writers had achieved success with the short story form during the first half of the twentieth century. Examples include some of Wales' best known writers, such as Dylan Thomas, Caradoc Evans, and Glyn Jones, among many others. The genre was also a popular form for a number of women writers in Wales, including Dorothy Edwards, with her acclaimed volume of short stories, *Rhapsody* (1927), and Hilda Vaughan with her magisterial short story, *A Thing of Nought* (1934). In light of such a tradition, it is clear to see why the short story is often regarded as one of the most successful genres of Anglophone Welsh writing, becoming a 'distinctive part of Welsh cultural heritage' over the twentieth century, as noted by Andrew Maunder in his analysis of the short story form in British literature.²¹ It is perhaps unsurprising that at a time of significant change and uncertainty in Wales, one of the mainstays of its cultural identity should witness resurgence.

²⁰ John Osmond cites a sense of confusion created by uncertainty, and the lack of a cohesive campaign from those in favour of devolution, as a major factor in the outcome of the referendum. Osmond notes that 'though the official line of the government and the [Labour] Party in Wales was in favour of the Assembly, neither mounted an effective campaign', adding that 'the Government did not even distribute a leaflet explaining its policy as it had in the European Economic Community referendum campaign'. John Osmond, 'Coping with a Dual Identity', *The National Question Again*, ed. John Osmond (Llandysul: Gomer, 1985), pp. xix-xlvi (p. xxxvii).

²¹ Andrew Maunder, *Companion To: The British Short Story* (New York: Facts on File Inc., 2007), p. 445.

Attempting to define the Anglophone Welsh short story *The New Companion to the Literature of Wales*, edited by Meic Stephens, offers two explanations for the rise of the genre. Firstly, the entry rightly points out that the short story was ‘the natural product, like the poem, of a still-poor society in which the writer was necessarily amateur, writing for brief periods in such time as he (sic) had’.²² Secondly, the entry argues that short fiction offered a medium ‘which could carry the exuberant rhetoric and the sheer delight in language which marked a particular generation, with the tradition of eloquence in Welsh still half-sounding in its ears, plunged into the sea of English with the zest of explorers’ (pp. 675-6). These two explanations in essence clarify what can be seen as the primary reasons for the popularity of the short story form among Anglophone Welsh writers during the first half of the twentieth century. The short story naturally offered a more viable option for publishing during World War II, when paper shortages had a major impact on the publishing world. Moreover, the short story offered a medium through which writers could engage more easily with readers by using a brief and accessible form.²³ Diane Davies has noted that short stories produced in Wales in the 1990s also placed considerable emphasis on presenting a similarly realistic image of Wales, arguing that ‘many of today’s writers and critics realize [...] that there is no future in imagining an artificial Wales, but only in engagement with the real nation in all its diversity’.²⁴ With its accessible format, the short story was therefore the perfect vehicle for writers to explore the diversity of different regions of Wales at a time when the nation was facing renewed debate over its political identity.

²² *The New Companion to the Literature of Wales*, ed. Meic Stephens (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998) p. 675.

²³ It is worth noting that there are exceptions to this theory, for example Alun Lewis, whose short stories often adopted a foreign setting, such as his collection *In The Green Tree*, published posthumously in 1948, which draws on his experiences as a soldier in India and Burma. Lewis was therefore able to utilise the familiar short story form to depict unfamiliar settings to his readers.

²⁴ Diane Davies, ‘Towards Devolution: Poetry and Anglo-Welsh Identity’ in *National Identity*, ed. Keith Cameron, (Exeter: Intellect Books, 1999) pp. 19-30 (p. 25).

In spite of its popularity during the first half of the twentieth century, the short story had experienced a sharp decline in the years since the late 1970s, with publications of short fiction at intriguingly low rates. Nevertheless, as the final decade of the twentieth century dawned, the short story returned once more to the forefront of Anglophone Welsh writing. If social and economic constraints and the desire to develop Anglophone Welsh writing formed the basis for the success of the short story in the earlier stages of the twentieth century, its revival in the 1990s may have derived from a similar set of contributory factors. The point at which the short story was at its most prominent in the 1930s and 1940s certainly has much in common with the social and economic situation in Wales in the 1990s. All three decades were marked by high Welsh unemployment, political and civil unrest and the effects of foreign conflict. Writing in 1994, Gareth Elwyn Jones noted that male unemployment rates ‘in pockets of Wales – some of the Mid Glamorgan housing estates, for example – have reached 80 percent’.²⁵ Yet the Anglophone Welsh short story in 1990s Wales is perhaps born out of a desire not only to portray conditions in areas of poverty and difficulty, but also to give voice to those who suffered most as a result of these difficulties. Such writing consequently held the potential not only to influence political debate in Wales, but also to affect the way in which Welsh culture was perceived. Furthermore, as Welsh publishing houses became a greater force in Wales, short story writers enjoyed increased opportunities to explore the ways in which Wales was represented both internally and on an international platform.

Within this short fiction from Wales, a regional tone can gradually be seen to emerge. For many Welsh authors, the short story offered an opportunity to explore events and concerns relevant to their local communities. Secondly, although still faced with some

²⁵ Gareth Elwyn Jones, *A Concise History of Wales*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 310.

difficulties, Anglophone Welsh writing was far more strongly established by the early 1990s than it had ever been in the past. Wales was now home to a number of Welsh publishing houses, while the prestigious Wales Book of the Year Award was established in 1992. In addition to the rise of independent Welsh publishing houses, as discussed in the previous chapter, a number of literary journals had also been established in Wales and regularly published short fiction and poetry by Welsh authors.²⁶ That is not, however, to say that the resurgence was linked to increasing numbers of new fiction writers in Wales. Writing as the editor of a collection of fiction and poetry published in 1996, Robert Minhinnick raised concerns about the lack of younger authors to emerge in Wales.²⁷ Nevertheless, a number of Welsh authors were able to use the genre to gain recognition in the 1990s, with journals such as *Planet* and *New Welsh Review* actively seeking short fiction from emerging writers.

A series of re-publications dominated the start of the 1990s, with collections of short stories by celebrated Welsh writers suddenly attracting attention. Interestingly, the majority of these collections were published by English-based publishing houses. In 1992, Oxford University Press reissued *Classic Welsh Short Stories* edited by Islwyn Ffowc Elis and Gwyn Jones, followed shortly in 1993 by *The New Penguin Book of Welsh Short Stories* and subsequently by *The Second Penguin Book of Welsh Short Stories* in 1994, both edited by Alun Richards. This sudden spate of anthologies consisting of stories by a range of well-known Welsh authors from the earlier twentieth century is indeed a remarkable turnaround in Wales' publishing fortunes. While the focus of the first collection was predominantly Wales' traditional and industrial past, the second volume contained a number of stories by contemporary Anglophone Welsh writers. In this respect the anthologies were of considerable value to the promotion of writing from Wales, drawing together celebrated

²⁶ See, for example, the discussion of *Planet* magazine and *New Welsh Review* in Chapter II.

²⁷ Robert Minhinnick, 'Introduction' in *Drawing Down the Moon: Poems and Stories 1996* (Bridgend: Seren, 1996), pp. 7-11 (p. 7).

Welsh authors such as Alun Lewis, Glyn Jones and Kate Roberts, with emerging writers such as Clare Morgan and Catherine Merriman. Furthermore, the volumes included stories translated from the Welsh language alongside those written in the English language, thus uniting the two linguistic cultures of Wales. In light of Benedict Anderson's argument that print culture is closely related to the rise of a national consciousness, these collections can then be regarded as an important facet of the development of national consciousness and an attempt to heighten awareness of a Welsh literary canon.²⁸

Welsh involvement in the production of these volumes was also significant; *The New Penguin Book of Welsh Short Stories* was edited by Alun Richards, who notes in his introduction to the collection that Wales 'is a diverse and small country' but one which offers a rich variety of literature.²⁹ His involvement suggests that there may have been a desire on the part of English publishers to include Welsh authors in the process of editing and publishing literature from Wales. While this desire can be seen as an undeniably positive movement in the development of writing from Wales, it may also merely have arisen from the fact that a well-known Welsh editor would attract additional publicity for the collection. Furthermore, this sudden spate of publications through London-based publishing houses may well have had commercial rather than political origins. In light of the political developments of the late 1980s, Wales had returned once more to the forefront of British debate. Opportunities for commercial success from Welsh writing may have been significantly increased, perhaps explaining Penguin's sudden decision to produce the anthologies.³⁰

Although English publication of writing from Wales may have been driven by commercial concerns and therefore retained a strong focus on the past, the Welsh publishing

²⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 67.

²⁹ Alun Richards, 'Introduction' to *The New Penguin Book of Welsh Short Stories* (London: Penguin, 1993), pp. ix-xi (p. x).

³⁰ Perhaps tellingly, Penguin had previously published *The New Penguin Book of Scottish Short Stories*, edited by Ian Murray, a decade earlier in 1983. *The New Penguin Book of Scottish Short Stories*, ed. Ian Murray (London: Penguin, 1983).

scene appeared to be more concerned with contemporary fiction. In 1992 Seren published a collection of short stories by Glenda Beagan entitled *The Medlar Tree*. Beagan had already published work in a select number of literary journals in the past, but *The Medlar Tree* was her first solo collection of short stories and appeared at a turning point in the relationship between literature and politics in Wales.³¹ Early indications of a drive towards political change can be noted in the collection, which marks a move away from the somewhat more comfortable memories of life which had dominated earlier anthologies by female writers in Wales, such as Honno Press's autobiographical collection *On My Life*. Instead, the short stories in *The Medlar Tree* introduced a climate of uncertainty and shifting identity. A regional focus remains prevalent in the collection, with a number of the stories having a North Wales setting. This location is itself significant, offering an alternative to the considerable amount of fiction from Wales which had depicted a South Wales backdrop during the 1980s, when the focus had been heavily centred on the effects of industrial decline.³² Indeed, Beagan's decision to set much of *The Medlar Tree* in her native North Wales indicates a desire to explore aspects of life in an area of Wales which had been somewhat overlooked in previous late twentieth century Anglophone Welsh fiction .

The collection opens with 'The Sea Book', a poignant account of two children's reaction to the act of arson carried out on their ancestral home. The story delves immediately into political territory, recalling the infamous firebombing attacks carried out on North Welsh holiday homes between the mid-1970s and the early 1990s. The Meibion Glyndwr arson campaign was notorious for targeting English-owned houses and caravans on the Llŷn peninsula. In 'The Sea Book' the house, significantly named 'Llwyn Onn', is destroyed by

³¹ See for example 'The Saddist' in *Planet* 69 (June/July 1988), 25-29.

³² Stephen Knight considers the impact of industrial decline and the tendency to look towards the past in *One Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. 175.

fire, symbolising the destruction of a valuable heritage.³³ The female protagonist, Heather, who had previously found summer visits to the house boring, is struck with an immense sense of loss following the fire. In the wake of the attack, she struggles to come to terms with the fire, initially blaming herself and describing the fire as a ‘judgement’.³⁴ Her feelings of guilt seem to stem from her initial reluctance to spend the summer in Llwyn Onn when she would have preferred to spend the summer in her hometown of Guildford, which suggests a reluctance to engage with her Welsh heritage (p. 7). Certainly the story serves as a poignant reminder of the arson attacks, which were notably most prolific during the years immediately following the referendum on Welsh devolution in 1979.³⁵

The attacks carried out by Meibion Glyndwr were, unsurprisingly, the subject of much debate. Writing in 1995, Gareth Elwyn Jones described the group as ‘a shadowy extremist organisation’, a conclusion also drawn by a number of media outlets across Wales and England.³⁶ However, not all commentators were in agreement with Jones’s condemnation of the group. Poet and Anglican priest R. S. Thomas caused controversy when he appeared to show support for Meibion Glyndwr by claiming to ‘admire their courage’.³⁷ Speaking in an interview with Ned Thomas and John Barnie, R. S. Thomas justified his comments by

³³ The name ‘Llwyn Onn’ has particularly strong connections to Welsh culture; its English translation, the ‘ash grove’, is also the title of a famous Welsh folk song and has been a symbol of Welsh culture since the early nineteenth century.

³⁴ Glenda Beagan, ‘The Sea Book’ in *The Medlar Tree* (Bridgend: Seren Books, 1992) pp. 7-13 (p. 11).

³⁵ D. Gareth Evans notes that in the year following the 1979 referendum on devolution and general election failure for Plaid Cymru forty-two arson attacks were carried out. D. Gareth Evans, *A History of Wales: 1906-2000* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 229.

³⁶ Gareth Elwyn Jones, *Modern Wales: A Concise History* Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 306. Nonetheless, the extent of the attacks which were carried out by the group was also initially underestimated by some elements of the media. For example, in 1981 *The Times* newspaper described the Meibion Glyndwr as a ‘small and comparatively ineffective extremist organisation’. Tim Jones, ‘Triumphant Start to Royal Couple’s Tour’, *The Times* (London), 28th October 1981, 1.

³⁷ R. S. Thomas speaking in an interview with Ned Thomas and John Barnie, *Planet 80* (April/May 1990), 28-50 (p. 39).

arguing that his remarks had been made ‘in answer to a loaded question’, adding that he ‘was glad that the Welsh spirit was not totally subdued’.³⁸ His statement suggests that the Meibion Glyndwr attacks were carried out as part of a nationalist campaign, reacting to the perceived oppression of Wales by England. Whatever the reasoning behind the attacks, their effects had a significant impact on the tensions in England-Wales relations. In 1993, newspapers reported instances of English families receiving warning letters warning them either to leave their Welsh holiday homes by a specified date or become the next victims of attacks.³⁹ Similarly, in ‘The Sea Book’ the attack on Llwyn Onn becomes a source of tension within the family. As news of the fire breaks, Heather’s younger brother, Gavin, seems to turn instinctively on their mother, who is English. Tellingly, Gavin accuses his mother of not understanding the pain of the attack because the house was not the home of her ancestors (p. 10). Certainly, their mother’s reaction to the fire is much calmer than that of her children. While saddened by news of the fire, Mrs Penry demonstrates very little emotion when she initially hears of the attack. We later learn that she has taken the arson as a personal attack on her for her English background, concerned that the actions have been carried out by people local to the house and its nearby town (p. 12). Her lack of emotion could, then, be explained as a desire to protect her children from this threat, rather than as a sign that she is not distressed by the attack.

In the wake of the fire we see the emergence of changing male and female dynamics in ‘The Sea Book’. Gavin is the only male character to appear directly in the story as, although he is mentioned, the children’s father never actually enters the story, despite being the first person the housekeeper asks for when phoning to inform the family of the fire. As the news sinks in, the children are initially hysterical and it is their mother who comes to the

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Peter Dunn, ‘Ethnic Cleansing the Welsh Way’, *Independent on Sunday*, Sunday 7th February 1993, 8.

fore. Mrs Penry takes charge of the situation, ordering her impassioned son to ‘sit down’ (p. 10) and then to make a cup of tea with a little whisky in it. Her strength in taking control of an emergency situation is indicative of a desire to protect her children from the reality of the attack and prevent the situation from escalating. The event contains echoes of scenes in Wales during the miners’ strikes of the 1980s in which women had seized the opportunity to become involved in protests, rallying to support their male relatives and secure their family’s future.⁴⁰ The way in which Mrs Penry assumes control in the moment of crisis in ‘The Sea Book’, while hardly an act of feminism, draws a female character to the centre of the fiction and is indicative of a desire to take charge of the situation. The scene certainly gives weight to Deirdre Beddoe’s assertion that ‘the last thirty years of the twentieth century witnessed more radical and sweeping changes in the lives of women in Wales than did the previous seventy years put together’, placing women at the forefront of the story and, in this instance, in control of the aftermath of a politically motivated attack on the family’s home.⁴¹

The different ways in which the characters react to the fire may also be indicative of heightening national tensions. The children are of a hybrid background, being only half Welsh and living in Guildford with a Welsh father and an English mother. Falling somewhere between the calm response of her mother and the impassioned anger of her brother, Heather’s reaction to the fire is one of confusion, perhaps indicating the complexity of her own national identity. As the story starts on a beach in North Wales, Heather appears to feel only the most tentative of connections to her Welsh ancestral home. Returning to Llwyn Onn after the fire, she views the wreckage of the house in a detached manner, describing it as ‘cold and unreal’

⁴⁰ Jane Aaron and Teresa Rees have argued that images such as ‘women on picket lines during the miners’ strike of 1984-5’ may have become part of our perception of what they term ‘the contemporary Welsh woman’, indicating the significance of such scenes. Jane Aaron and Teresa Rees, ‘Introduction’ to *Our Sisters’ Land: The Changing Identities of Women in Wales*, ed. Jane Aaron, Teresa Rees, Sandra Betts and Moira Vincentelli (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1994), pp. 1-14 (p. 2).

⁴¹ Deirdre Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows: A History of Women in the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 159.

(p. 12). In contrast to Heather, Gavin is immediately more at home in North Wales, playing on the beach and attempting to rescue a fish washed up on the shore, returning it to the sea. His actions are later repeated with a book about sea creatures which he rescues from the charred remains of Llwyn Onn. The book offers a connection between the children and their Welsh ancestors, having belonged to ‘their father, and his before that’ (p. 10). Gavin’s decision to throw the book into the sea is therefore a symbolic act of determination, recovering the book from the remains of the house and casting it into the nearby waters as he did with the fish at the start of the story. The action can be seen as symbolic, indicating the potential Wales has for survival beyond the destruction and devastation wreaked politically and industrially in the years since 1979.

While difficult to justify, the Meibion Glyndŵr attacks were indicative of deep political dissatisfaction and frustration. These emotions are subtly addressed in a number of the other stories in *The Medlar Tree*. ‘Scream, Scream’ offers a powerful example of such frustrations. In the tension-filled story set in a ‘quiet’ women’s ward of a hospital, a woman is admitted who screams unstoppably for a prolonged period every few years.⁴² The scream, which seems to come from deep inside her, demonstrates a pain and frustration so powerful that it cannot be expressed through words. The raw emotion of the scream temporarily silences the ward, leaving all who hear it haunted by its power. Here, the different reactions of the male and female characters present on the ward are extremely telling. The only male doctor in attendance wishes to give Mrs Jenkins morphine in order to silence her (p. 33), but he is overruled by the female characters who opt to allow Mrs Jenkins to scream freely until she stops by herself. At the end of the story they ‘wink conspiratorially’ (p. 33) at each other, celebrating the fact that their decision to allow Mrs Jenkins to scream herself out has been successful.

⁴² Glenda Beagan, ‘Scream, Scream’ in *The Medlar Tree*, pp. 26-33 (p. 26).

While less violent in its perpetration, the scream is no less significant than the arson attack in 'The Sea Book' when it comes to revealing the pent-up emotions of those who have suffered oppression for so long. As Mrs. Jenkins continues to scream, the sound begins to have a profound impact on all the women in the ward: 'it's as if the scream slowly inhabits them all, slowly expresses them all' (p. 31). The scream gradually comes to represent the suffering of each woman in the ward, from 'the anorexic girl who won't grow up and the doctor who has torn up her roots and crossed the world to do just that' (p. 31) to 'the wife of the managing director who is childless and bereft' (p. 31). The fact that the scream is able to express the pain of all these women means that it is also able to unite them, in spite of their differences in background and social status. Furthermore, the scream also represents a scream of pain at the approaching demise of Mrs Jenkins' family line. As the scream continues, we learn that Mrs Jenkins is 'the end of the line. The very end' (p. 32) and this is 'the scream of the last of the Jenkinses of Sgubor Fawr' (p. 32).⁴³ As such, the scream expresses a similar complexity to the emotions explored in 'The Sea Book' where the children face the end of a connection to their ancestors and to the past. Interestingly, the real reason for Mrs Jenkins' scream is never revealed, allowing it to represent all women who have suffered a form of oppression.

As the collection progresses, politics become gradually more dominant in Beagan's fiction. In 'Pink Summer Blues' a young girl, Hafwen, and her family are forced to deal with the consequences of a violent political protest. Hafwen's elder sister, Leri, has recently been arrested and charged with causing criminal damage by entering an estate agents and smashing the computers. The actions may be linked to campaigns by organizations such as Cymdeithas

⁴³ Katie Gramich further explores the significance of Mrs Jenkins' status as the last of her family line in *Twentieth Century Women's Writing in Wales: Land, Gender, Belonging* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 161.

yr Iaith, the Welsh language society, who were associated with such attacks; John Osmond notes, the group's activities had taken on a 'revolutionary character' during the 1970s.⁴⁴ As well as having a profound impact on her own life, Leri's actions have a powerful effect on the lives of her family. While Leri treats her actions 'like a kind of game', her family are less certain of their convictions.⁴⁵ Hafwen acknowledges that 'the language is important' (p. 66), but lacks the conviction of her sister when it comes to acting on her beliefs. The difference between the sisters is perhaps indicative of a wider issue in Wales with those unhappy about political and commercial English intervention in Wales, unwilling to act in violent protest against such oppression. Consequently, a story which recounts a single incident within one town in Wales is able to convey a wider sense of frustration, along with an uncertainty about how best to respond.

In 'Pink Summer Blues' we see once more the relevance of place to the perception of national identity. Hafwen describes her mother as being partly proud of Leri for 'the stand she's making' (p. 66), adding that her mother is from 'Tre Taliesin and you can't get more Welsh than that' (p. 66). Here, the fact that Hafwen's mother is originally from a certain place is interpreted by Hafwen as indicating a stronger sense of Welsh national identity. In a reversal of the relationship between Gavin and his mother in 'The Sea Book', Hafwen appears to regard herself as less Welsh than her mother. Nevertheless, she admits to feeling somewhat impressed by the sincerity of Leri's accomplices in the protest, reflecting on how 'they've thought it through, this business of sabotaging the computer links in the estate agents' (p. 66) and are fully aware of their actions. Yet she herself does not feel inclined to participate in any similar action, instead preferring the relative anonymity of her part-time job making candy floss, finding the repetitive actions both comforting and 'satisfying' (p. 65).

⁴⁴ John Osmond, *Creative Conflict: The Politics of Welsh Devolution* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1978), p. 110.

⁴⁵ Glenda Beagan, 'Pink Summer Blues' in *The Medlar Tree*, pp. 62-68 (p. 66).

The story demonstrates the diversity of reaction to protests such as those of Meibion Glyndwr and Cymdeithas yr Iaith, suggesting that not everyone regarded such actions as nationalist heroism. This mixed response is illustrated in the boys from Hafwen's school, who mock Leri's actions, and Hafwen's own mother, who expresses pride in front of Leri but when alone cries 'very quietly to herself' (p. 67). Here, the consequences of such a form of protest are illustrated, demonstrating how the actions of an individual striving to change politics in Wales can have a negative effect on those closest to them.

In considering the political impact of Glenda Beagan's fiction in *The Medlar Tree*, it is important to first identify why the collection was so significant. Its form as a collection of short stories, as already demonstrated, spoke back to a long and rich tradition in Wales. The form may have additional appeal to readers, with its short length allowing them briefly to enter the thoughts and feelings of a wide range of characters. Further to Raymond Williams' comment that writers must write with an awareness of the places and circumstances around them, Beagan offers readers a range of stories which depict characters from varied backgrounds and social situations.⁴⁶ In a number of stories Beagan focuses on the impact of politics on the lives of characters based in, or connected to North Wales, exploring how questions of national identity and independence affect the daily lives of local people. In this way, she is able to provide material which is relevant to her contemporary readers, depicting situations with which they can identify. Finally, *The Medlar Tree* explores aspects of life which target the concerns of people living in contemporary Wales; these topics include childhood, relationships, identity and the environment, among others. As such topics are combined with an initially subtle, but nevertheless powerful, political undercurrent, the stories contribute to heightened awareness of the need for political and social change in Wales.

⁴⁶ Raymond Williams, 'Freedom and a Lack of Confidence', *Who Speaks for Wales?*, p. 145.

If politics can be seen to be reflected in works of fiction such as *The Medlar Tree*, it is important to consider whether readers were responsive to this style of writing. A definitive answer to this question is difficult to determine. The climate for such fiction may well have been ideal when *The Medlar Tree* was published in 1992, coinciding with a general election in which the Conservative party were re-elected for a fourth successive term in spite of strong opposition from the majority of Welsh and Scottish voters.⁴⁷ As Jane Aaron rightly points out, industrial decline in Wales had already ‘lessened any sense of fellow-feeling with an English populace which bafflingly kept voting back into power a Tory government apparently intent on bringing Wales to its knees’.⁴⁸ The strength of *The Medlar Tree* may then lie in its ability to convey these feelings of frustration through fiction in a way which it was perceived that readers from within Wales and the wider world would be able to relate to.⁴⁹

While Beagan’s fiction sought to explore impassioned and illegal political reactions in Wales, a very different style of Anglophone Welsh writing was also securing attention. At the opposite end of the spectrum, fiction emerged which demonstrated an almost apathetic view of politics. One such example is Richard Davies’ debut novel, *Work, Sex and Rugby* (1993). In contrast to the powerful political undercurrent running through Beagan’s fiction, the novel is firmly focused on far more mundane topics. *Work, Sex and Rugby* depicts the exploits of a young Welsh man over the course of a weekend in a small town near Neath, a setting not entirely removed from many of the novels which preceded it. However, *Work, Sex and Rugby*

⁴⁷ *UK Election Statistics: 1945-2003*, House of Commons Library, Research Paper 03/59, 1st July 2009, pp. 11-13. Available at: <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons/lib/research/rp2003/rp03-059.pdf> [Accessed 10/04/13].

⁴⁸ Jane Aaron ‘Towards Devolution: New Welsh Writing’, p. 694.

⁴⁹ Prior to the publication of *The Medlar Tree* in 1992, Beagan had already seen a number of the stories from the collection published in magazines including *Planet* and *The New Welsh Review*. ‘Scream, Scream’ was also broadcast on Radio 4, suggesting that the stories were able to appeal to a relatively broad audience.

is not an industrial fiction; rather, the focus of the novel is, as the title suggests, the aspects of life which might concern a contemporary Welsh man in his early twenties. Reluctant to get out of bed in the mornings, relatively uninterested in his job and harbouring a sense of weary apathy towards his parents, Lewis is the antithesis of the young Welsh men in Anglophone Welsh writing as described by John Humphrys in his comments to the *Western Mail*.⁵⁰ Not an overly industrious employee, Lewis works as a builder under the supervision and guidance of his equally relaxed boss, Roy. As the two men rattle around the town in their van, enjoying a work routine frequently punctuated by tea breaks, they could not be further away from the clichéd depiction of ‘dust covered men singing in perfect harmony as they trudge back to the cottages from the pit’ of which Humphrys complains in his comments on Welsh literary identity.⁵¹ In *Work, Sex and Rugby* Davies therefore depicts a working life in Wales which has changed radically since the booming industry of the early 1900s and the rapid decline of the 1980s.

However much Davies’ narrative may focus on the daily existence of the protagonist, Lewis, politics are inescapable within the novel. The scars from the town’s industrial past are still in existence across the landscape and its impact is commented on intermittently in the narrative. Like much of Wales, the area depicted in *Work, Sex and Rugby* has suffered ‘in the wake of mass lay-offs’.⁵² However, unlike the characters in *The Medlar Tree*, the town’s inhabitants appear to have given up on any hope of revival for the area. The town is described as a place where ‘the old industries burnt or worked out with a hundred years of exploitation. Nobody had put anything in during the last twenty years, except the workers who had given

⁵⁰ In this sense Lewis is also the antithesis of characters such as Owen and William in Kate Roberts’ 1936 novel *Feet in Chains*, whose desire to work hard and improve their circumstances is strongly connected to a desire to support their family and better themselves. See for example, p. 48 where Owen insists that being able to take up a scholarship at the County School will enable him to better support his family in the future. Kate Roberts, *Feet in Chains* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2012) [1936].

⁵¹ John Humphrys, ‘Time to blow all the coal-dust clichés away’, p. 13.

⁵² Lewis Davies, *Work, Sex and Rugby*, (Cardigan: Parthian, 1993), p. 68.

their lives' (p. 69). This is a place which has been largely abandoned by government and industry alike. Later, the town is described as a 'tight forgotten industrial town' (p. 124), an image supported in the embittered memories of its residents.⁵³ Indeed, throughout the novel, processes are underway slowly to dismantle the remaining markers of the town's past. At one stage Lewis and Roy are drafted in to assist with the removal of rubble from the site of the town's old grammar school hall. The 'once imposing building' (p. 124) has been reduced to a 'disorganised pile of rubble' (p. 124), a sight which causes Roy to reflect briefly on his own time at the school. His memories are in the form of short anecdotes which seem to merge with his general dislike of the education system. In this way, the destruction of the building becomes a symbol of a systematic clearing of the town's past. The characters do not appear overly concerned with this process, being instead preoccupied with alternative areas of interest in their lives.

One such area of interest for the men in *Work, Sex and Rugby* is sport, primarily the progress of the town's local rugby team. Here, it would be possible for Davies to turn back towards previous stereotypes of Welsh attitudes to sport and in particular rugby. Yet the images of rugby depicted in the novel are not of crowds of Welsh men singing hymns and inspirational rugby songs as their team battles on in an attempt to bring glory to their town. Instead, the rugby which takes place in *Work, Sex and Rugby* appears to be largely a precursor to socialising. The team's coach, the aptly named 'Fats', lacks many of the traits expected in a rugby coach: 'in addition to a total lack of appreciation for the game he viewed most matches through an alcohol haze which was duly reflected in his team selections' (p. 39). Far from seeming perturbed by this situation, the players are mildly amused by the exploits of Fats, whose efforts at avoiding relegation are based on his desire to 'maintain his

⁵³ See for example Roy's reflections on the hardships suffered by his family as a result of the death of his father in a coal mining accident, p. 21.

own personal source of international tickets' (p. 39). Even here a subtle political undercurrent can be noted; it is hard to ignore the sense of stagnation which hangs over this scene. The struggling and ludicrous character of Fats can be read as representative of those who cling desperately to the past in a bid to avoid change. Once an indicator of national pride, sport has become little more than a means of passing time and socializing for the characters in *Work, Sex and Rugby*.

The apathy demonstrated in a number of the characters' attitudes to sport is also evident in Lewis's approach to other aspects of daily life. In his relationships Lewis struggles to commit to just one girl, instead finding the routine of a mid-week date useless for what he terms 'occasional women' (p. 9). Similarly, when it comes to household chores and routine activities such as food shopping Lewis displays a complete lack of interest. Living at home with his parents, Lewis hands over a weekly rent 'aware that he was getting a good deal, but not wishing to know how good lest it disappear' (p. 33). In sharp contrast, Lewis' mother is described as a 'phenomenon' (p. 14) of efficiency as she completes housework, preparation of meals and shopping with an almost robotic ease. Lewis appears bewildered by his mother's ability to work with such efficiency, a fact which highlights the difference between the two generations. While Lewis and a number of his friends appear to exist in a continual state of non-commitment and ignorance, reluctant to engage in industrious or political behaviour, the older characters in the novel demonstrate a work ethic reminiscent of those seen in the earlier industrial fictions of Wales. Lewis' father believes that Lewis should have continued in education, rather than leaving school at sixteen, while his mother is frequently annoyed and hurt by Lewis' casual attitude to drinking and sex.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Lewis's drinking eventually causes his mother to abandon her position in the kitchen and 'retreat upstairs' (p. 163) in protest against his behaviour. Here again, there is a marked contrast between Lewis's indifference to education and Owen's desperation to attend the County School in *Feet in Chains*.

Interestingly, Lewis Davies demonstrated an enthusiasm which few of the characters in his novel, seem to possess when he established the publishing house Parthian Books. Davies had originally founded Parthian Books in order to publish the novel, demonstrating his determination to make his own voice heard. Parthian Books was launched as an independent publishing house in 1992 and its growth subsequently played a defining role in how Anglophone Welsh writing balanced regional and national perspectives during the 1990s. From the outset, Parthian focused on publishing books by Welsh authors who had a fresh contribution to make, always without the insistence that its authors adhered to a prescribed sense of Welsh identity. Indeed, the Parthian motto encapsulates the company's desire for diversity, reminding readers that they aim to offer 'a carnival of independent voices'.⁵⁵ Even the use of the word 'carnival', with its celebratory origins instils the idea that Parthian wishes to promote diversity as a positive feature of Anglophone Welsh writing, rather than a negative or divisive force. This sentiment, reflected in the titles later selected for publication by Parthian, demonstrates a commitment to establishing a sense of identity which is not wholly reliant on one monolithic image of Welshness to which all authors, poets and other artists must adhere.⁵⁶

Approaching Devolution 1994-1997

With the topic of devolution once more at the forefront of debate in Wales, literature in Wales was poised to undergo another period of intense political and cultural debate. Writing

⁵⁵ See Parthian's website and their statement of aims at: <http://www.parthianbooks.com/about> [Accessed 10/04/13].

⁵⁶ See, for example, titles such as the diverse short story collection *Mama's Baby (Papa's Maybe) & Other Stories: New Welsh Short Fiction* (1999) and 'A White Afternoon' and *Other Stories: Parthian Anthology of New Welsh Short Fiction* (1998), which featured thirty short stories by Welsh language authors translated into English by editor Meic Stephens. The latter collection was of particular importance, being indicative of the desire to bridge the gap between Welsh and English language fiction in Wales, a study of which was not fully possible within the limitations of this thesis, but which could form a point of further exploration in future studies. Attempts to bridge the gap between Welsh and English language writing in Wales are discussed in more detail in Chapter IV of this thesis.

in 1996, Robert Minhinnick linked this debate directly to literature, issuing a cry for younger writers to emerge from Wales, adding that ‘what are fascinating now, ironically, are the creative opportunities provided by a Wales gradually deciding that a greater degree of independence could not possibly be worse than sixteen years of valueless Conservative rule, or the creative coma that a Labour Party-dominated national and local government would induce’.⁵⁷ For Minhinnick, Wales’ position was clear: ‘only a free or significantly “freer” Wales will ensure the long term survival of distinctive English language culture here’ (p. 10). His comments point towards a growing awareness of the political consequences of a vote against devolution for Wales, in keeping with Martin Johnes’ belief that Welsh support for devolution in 1997 was based on a fear of the consequences of rejecting a measure of political independence for Wales and a heightened awareness of the ‘political consequences’ of Welsh identity in the twentieth century.⁵⁸

Among the voices coming to the fore of Anglophone Welsh writing in the 1990s was that of Sian James. Already an established novelist, James’s first solo collection of short stories, *Not Singing Exactly*, was published in 1996. In the introduction to the collection, Katie Gramich points out that despite the possibilities for political commentary, James ‘does not seem particularly interested in politics: her cottages in Wales do not burn down, nor do her factory workers go on strike’.⁵⁹ Instead, a different kind of politics lies at the heart of *Not Singing Exactly*. Gramich adds that ‘sexual politics is at the centre of this collection’ (p. x), in a volume of short stories which depicts a wide range of places and situations through the eyes of female protagonists or narrators. With devolution once more the focus of attention in Wales, related political topics, such as the role of women in Wales, became a vital part of the

⁵⁷ Robert Minhinnick, ‘Introduction’ to *Drawing Down The Moon* (Bridgend: Seren, 1996), pp. 7-11, (p. 11).

⁵⁸ Martin Johnes, *Wales Since 1939*, p. 416. Johnes cites a change in the opinion of Labour voters in Wales as being particularly instrumental in the eventual outcome of the 1997 referendum, a sharp contrast to the party’s opposition to the prospect of devolution in 1979.

⁵⁹ Katie Gramich, ‘Introduction’ to *Not Singing Exactly* (Dinas Powys: Honno, 1996), pp. vii-x (p. x).

debate. It is here that the significance of Sian James's collection can be seen, since it clearly seeks to portray the reality of life for contemporary women. Her approach also demonstrates that Welsh writers did not need to address devolution directly in order to successfully contribute to debate on contemporary life in Wales.

Clearly not afraid to address controversial topics, the title story of *Not Singing Exactly* tackles the difficulties of adolescent motherhood, a life of unemployment and the issues of sexual inequalities. The protagonist in 'Not Singing Exactly' finds herself pregnant at the age of sixteen, subsequently marrying her boyfriend so as not to incur the wrath of her 'strict' step-father.⁶⁰ Reflecting on the situation, she confesses that women in her position do not consider abortion an option because they do not like to 'admit how frightened and stupid' (p. 155) they feel. Pressure to behave as if everything is fine is a recurring theme within the story, in which mother and sisters rally round at the wedding because they see no other option for the young couple (p. 154). The bleak picture continues when, having moved into a tiny flat and had two further children, the protagonist's husband is imprisoned for theft, leaving her 'just eighteen and trapped for ever in this long, damp room' (p. 157) with three young children. It is worth noting that all three children are girls, implying that, unless change takes place, the cycle may continue into their lives as well. In a moment of disturbing honesty the narrator states that 'of course I have to live by shoplifting because my giro doesn't stretch even to the bare necessities and I've learnt that it's no use asking for the things you need because they only send you from one office to another' (p. 157). Sandra Betts and Graham Day have argued that 'the "problem" of single mothers exploded into one of the nastiest of family policy issues in the 1990s and that 'government attitudes hardened as lone parents came to be regarded not as victims with special needs for financial and social support, but as irresponsible'.⁶¹ Thus, while

⁶⁰ Sian James, 'Not Singing Exactly' in *Not Singing Exactly*, pp. 153-162 (p. 154).

⁶¹ Sandra Betts and Graham Day, 'The Family in Wales: Change and Transformation', *Families in a Global Context*, ed. Charles B. Hennon and Stephan M. Wilson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 17-47 (p. 41).

the protagonist's situation in 'Not Singing Exactly' appears to be entirely hopeless, it is nevertheless representative of the problems faced by a number of women, both in Wales and other areas of the United Kingdom during the 1990s.

The bleak situation only worsens in 'Not Singing Exactly' as the narrator faces a humiliating ordeal after being caught attempting to steal a bracelet. When the shopkeeper tells her to lift up her skirt she assumes 'that he's making a deal with me' (p. 161) and offers no resistance. Having endured his gaze for several minutes she is then allowed to go, taking the silver bracelet with her. Perhaps the most distressing aspect of the scene is the cool sense of detachment the speaker demonstrates during the ordeal as she fixes her eyes on 'a spot on the wall just beyond his head' (p. 161), before calmly leaving the store. Walking away from the shop, she reflects only on whether she will be able to sell the bracelet in order to buy a much-needed pair of boots. It is this thought which alerts the reader most strongly to the stark reality of her situation, reinforcing her earlier comment that shoplifting and its consequences are necessary for survival in her current circumstances. The story seems to suggest that a number of women in Wales may be trapped by their circumstances and unable to react against an apparently patriarchal structure. In this situation, to remain complicit as does the speaker in *Not Singing Exactly* is presented as the only real option.

Other stories in the collection deal with similarly challenging topics, including domestic violence, unemployment and death. The final story, 'Happy as Saturday Night', is set in 'a tough part of Cardiff about four miles from the centre', where a group of female factory workers are preparing for a night out.⁶² At the start of the narrative the female protagonist describes how she and her mates 'has a great time on a Saturday. We works hard in the bleeding factory all week and it's all for Saturday night' (p. 201). Here, work is only briefly explained and appears to be a fund for the new outfits, hairstyles and drinks that fill

⁶² Sian James, 'Happy as Saturday Night', *Not Singing Exactly*, pp. 201-8 (p. 201).

the girls' Saturday nights. As with *Work, Sex and Rugby*, work has therefore become a means to pay for entertainment and the excitement of a night out, rather than an opportunity to develop a career or aspire to a better future. In addition to this lack of attainment, the story is also rooted in tension between male and female gender roles. While at a local club the girls become embroiled with stripper Mark, described as 'South Wales's answer to the Chippendales' (pp. 203-4). As in 'Not Singing Exactly', the male presence in the text heralds a negative turn of events when, having unsuccessfully attempted to seduce one of the girls, Mark finally 'makes a grab at Janice who's last out the door and pulls her back' (p. 205). A brief scuffle follows before Janice emerges crying and with her new dress torn down the back, the girls' evening out having been marred by the incident. Having reached home, Janice is later attacked by her male partner, while the narrator lies motionless, listening to 'the thud, thud, thud, thud' (p. 207), afraid and unable to help. Both incidents bring to a rapid end the excitement and energy of the first half of the story, a fact which the narrator is keenly aware of, since she confesses that: 'suddenly I hates life. Sunday afternoon when I has to go and see my miserable old Gran and then getting up at seven on Monday and all the week and working at the sausage factory with all the smells you can't get used to' (p. 207). Her sudden burst of honesty acts as a powerful reminder that beneath the façade they create, the lives of the young women in the story are extremely bleak.

The violence and exploitation by male characters in the story are not the only indicators that life is difficult for those in 'Happy as Saturday Night'. As in 'Not Singing Exactly', women appear to be highly vulnerable to exploitation in their daily lives. The food shops in their local area are described as 'terrible expensive' (p. 201), a problem which is attributed to the fact that 'they knows that mothers with lots of kids and no car will go to them whatever wicked prices they charge' (p. 201). What is striking from this description is that once again women are depicted as having very little choice when it comes to avoiding

such circumstances. Similarly, the group take a bus into Cardiff at the start of the night, but are forced to walk home when three of the girls leave following a row and the remaining two realise they cannot afford a taxi. As with a number of the other stories in the collection, very little hope of change is offered in the fiction. Crying together at the end of the story, the girls comfort each other with the assurance that 'it'll be okay next Saturday' (p. 208), a seemingly unrealistic promise given the disastrous events of the Saturday they have just experienced, and yet the moment of female solidarity seems to offer them some comfort. It is here that Sian James' collection is at its most powerful. Her stories portray the difficulties faced by poor Welsh women, without offering political suggestions for change or improvement, leaving her readers to consider what changes may be necessary and how these could be achieved.

While writers such as Sian James were working to address subjects of relevance to women in 1990s Wales, another ongoing area of controversy had resurfaced once more in political debate. Never far from the headlines in the period since the 1979 referendum, the Welsh language had once more returned to the forefront of discussion on the cultural future of Wales. In her analysis of the inter-referenda years, Jane Aaron notes that fiction from the late 1980s and early 1990s contributed to a change in attitude towards the Welsh language in Wales. Aaron argues that there was a shift in popular attitudes which made the Welsh language 'a force which could now serve to unite, rather than as hitherto, to divide'.⁶³ This very movement can be noted in a number of works of fiction from across Wales during the period prior to 1997. Christopher Meredith's 1998 novel *Sidereal Time* is a prime example of how attitudes to the Welsh language had developed in the years since the 1979 referendum on devolution. Like his earlier novel, *Shifts*, *Sidereal Time* is written primarily in the English language, yet there is a notable use of Welsh within the novel. *Sidereal Time* focuses on the

⁶³ Jane Aaron, 'Towards Devolution: New Welsh Writing', p. 696.

life of an English teacher based in South Wales, tracing her life and work over the period of a week. Significantly, the novel is divided into five sections, each representing a day of the week, named in the Welsh language. This use of Welsh, while not substantial, serves an important purpose in associating the Welsh language with daily life in Wales.

Nevertheless, there is an interesting lack of progression in Meredith's novel. The narrative depicts a week in which nothing of particular significance actually happens to the characters. Instead, the novel offers an account of the daily difficulties faced by Sarah and a number of her colleagues and students. Perhaps the most significant element of *Sidereal Time* is its focus on the individual. Once again placing a woman at the forefront of the fiction, the majority of the narrative is written from Sarah's perspective, tracing her thoughts and emotions as she attempts to balance the demands of her job with those of her family. Significantly, much of the narrative takes place in the school in which Sarah works, suggesting that this is where she spends most of her time. This pattern, alongside the fact that Sarah frequently recites the day's schedule to herself, suggests that work currently occupies the main role in her life. Far from being satisfied by this arrangement, however, Sarah seems to regard her job with a growing sense of weariness throughout the novel, even referring to it as a 'prison sentence' in one instance.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, *Sidereal Time* illustrates the life of a woman who is not restricted merely to the domestic sphere, working only a limited number of hours, but who works full time in addition to being a mother and wife.⁶⁵ Thus, Sarah's life is representative of many women in 1990s Wales who, as a result of the industrial and social changes in the 1980s, were forced to divide their time between work and family.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Christopher Meredith, *Sidereal Time* (Bridgend: Seren, 1998), p. 24.

⁶⁵ It is also significant that the gender divide in the school in which Sarah works appears to be much more balanced than the education system which Connie encounters in Alun Richards's 1973 novel *Home to an Empty House*, which is dominated by male figures.

⁶⁶ Deirdre Beddoe notes that 'the last thirty years of the twentieth century witnessed more radical and sweeping changes to the lives of women in Wales' than at any other point in the century in part due to the industrial decline and economic difficulties of the 1980s which had forced them into work. Deirdre Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 159.

Similar to ‘Happy as Saturday Night’, *Sidereal Time* makes very little direct mention of politics and yet its implications are clearly evident throughout the text. From the start of the novel Sarah’s life is dominated by the demands of her job and in this respect *Sidereal Time* adopts a very similar structure to that seen in Meredith’s first novel, *Shifts*, which starts with the workers clocking on for their shift and ends with them clocking off.⁶⁷ While Sarah is not required to clock on as a teacher, the novel begins in the morning, when she wakes up already planning her day at work. The close of the narrative comes as Sarah leaves school on Friday afternoon, placing work at the very heart of the narrative. Furthermore, as the novel progresses, the absurdities of the demands of Sarah’s life become ever more apparent. Expected to complete copious amounts of preparation and marking against the backdrop of rowdy and difficult pupils, Sarah struggles to meet the additional demands placed on her. Early on in the novel she is asked to complete a full timetable including details of ‘class designation, location, subject or nature of activity, pupil numbers for male and female separately, on each teaching session’ (p. 55). The request has political origins as ‘it forms the basis for Welsh Office statistics’ (p. 55), which illustrates the additional pressure generated by the current political system, as well as reducing the multiple demands of Sarah’s role to mere statistics.⁶⁸ To compound the difficulty, Sarah has her planning and preparation time taken away by having to cover for absent teachers. In this way, the presentation of the school can be read as a microcosm for politics in Wales, representing a struggle for autonomy.

While Sarah’s life is difficult and presents many challenges in her struggle to be successful at work and in her family life, the lives of many of her pupils are no less

⁶⁷ Christopher Meredith, *Shifts*, (Bridgend: Seren, 1997), p. 14 and p. 214.

⁶⁸ The Conservative government of the 1990s had, under the guidance of Welsh Secretary John Redwood, taken the decision to divide Wales into a total of twenty two separate education authorities. This action was largely regarded as being unnecessarily divisive, creating a considerable volume of additional administration work for each authority. It is also worth noting that since the introduction of the National Curriculum for England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 1988, Welsh teachers had been forced to teach according to a strict criteria dictated by the UK government. This system seemed to demand conformity between England and Wales.

complicated. *Sidereal Time* also traces the life of Steven, a usually errant pupil who is cajoled into preparing a presentation for one of Sarah's classes. As he creates his own medieval story, the hopeless circumstances of Steven's life are gradually revealed. His father has recently died and his mother now works to provide for the two of them. From the outset, circumstances appear to be stacked against Steven; his teachers, except for Sarah, seem to have very little expectation of him. At one stage, Steven's form tutor, Mr. Shattock, describes his frequent absences and lack of focus in lessons as 'a pretty pathetic start to the year' (p. 99), before demanding that Steven 'get [his] head out the clouds and be realistic' (p. 99). Interestingly, Shattock's advice seems to stem as much from a sense of concern about his own position as it does from any genuine interest in Steven's well-being. Shattock continues his talk with Steven by asserting that 'I've got to keep accounts for the likes of you' (p. 99) and implying that 'the Minister of Education came around and personally threw the switch on the electric chair for teachers who cacked up their register' (p. 99). Shattock's obvious desire to avoid any potential questions about attendance or his own role as a teacher again reinforce the fact that politics is an inseparable part of daily life for the teachers in *Sidereal Time*.

As both Sarah and Steven make their way through the week and are confronted by a series of external pressures, the novel's title takes on a new significance. Sidereal time is an alternative time-keeping method used by astronomers to help them track the movement of stars across the sky. Significantly, for the two main characters, time seems to move around them while they remain stationary. At one stage Sarah realises that she is 'doing yesterday today' (p. 183) when in fact it is Friday, a mistake she makes with other days of the week earlier in the novel (p. 100). Meanwhile, Steven's efforts to avoid becoming drunk by using a theory calculated to balance the timing and rate of drinking alcohol, fail abysmally. Steven implicitly refers to the sidereal time method in his presentation at the end of the novel when he attempts to explain the movement of stars and the passing of time to Sarah (p. 200).

Addled by drink, however, he is unable to fully explain the concept, although he does conclude that counting time by stars would lead to ‘a whole extra day every year’ (p. 201). This statement cuts to the heart of the novel, hinting at the unconscious desire for more time which both characters seem to crave. Once again, while politics is not directly linked to this argument, the fact that Sarah and Steven struggle with time throughout the narrative indicates a desire to be in control of circumstances which seem beyond them. In light of Wales’ struggle to secure devolution, their situation could be said to represent a craving for autonomy.

What *Sidereal Time* offers readers is a snapshot view of life in 1990s South Wales for working-class citizens. The narrative is not overly dramatised and none of the characters ever embarks on highly politicised speeches or attacks. Indeed, as illustrated by Sarah and Shattock’s behaviour, political forces are frequently regarded with a mixture of irritation and weariness, suggesting significant change is needed to improve circumstances. Furthermore, the language used asserts a strong sense of place, featuring certain aspects of the South Wales’ dialect, such as when schoolgirl Maggie addresses Steve as ‘butt’ (p. 68), although these uses are subtle and sporadic enough not to detract from the readability of the novel. A more striking linguistic feature of the novel is the use of phonetics in Sarah’s thoughts. The class titles are written in their phonetic form as ‘nine tee eleven ee’ (p. 7) throughout the novel, a technique which seems to emphasise the feeling that Sarah is thinking aloud. Furthermore, *Sidereal Time* is a novel which refuses to stand still, but ultimately progresses very little in its journey through a working week in Wales. Its significance lies in its ability to depict some of the daily struggles faced by Welsh people, drawing readers into a reflection on the political and social future of Wales.

As previously noted in Sian James’ short story ‘Happy as Saturday Night’, the inclusion of dialect had been used alongside words from the Welsh language in works of

fiction published during the build up to the 1997 referendum on devolution. Mike Jenkins' 1997 collection of short stories, *Wanting to Belong*, is set against the backdrop of life in a post-industrial valley in South Wales and incorporates a strong South Wales dialect into the characters' speech. For example, in 'Operation Slob' the characters regularly use the words 'yew what' or 'yewer' when talking to each other, reflecting patterns of speech associated with the valley areas and in particular Merthyr Tydfil, where the stories are set.⁶⁹

Nevertheless, while the use of dialect interspersed in speech throughout the collection echoes the use of the Welsh language in Anglophone Welsh fiction from the 1980s such as Christopher Meredith's *Shifts*, it is not a fully developed form of the 'code-switching' to which Kirsti Bohata refers in *Postcolonialism Revisited*.⁷⁰ The dialect included by Jenkins invokes a strong sense of place, but does not entirely prohibit access to the meaning of the words, indicating a desire to assert the identity of a specific place, while still enabling readers to access the stories in the collection without linguistic restriction. Consequently, the use of dialect within *Wanting to Belong* seems to be primarily to establish a regional identity, helping to create a strong sense of place within the stories. The fact that Jenkins achieved publication with a collection of stories which demonstrate such a close attachment to one place is indicative of an increasing belief in the Welsh publishing scene that there was a demand for such fiction. This belief was further cemented when the collection scooped the Wales Book of the Year Award in 1998.

Continuing the pattern seen in the short stories of Glenda Beagan and Sian James, *Wanting to Belong* creates a sense of place which is integral to the plot of each story. The stories in the collection address some of the key issues affecting the daily lives of young

⁶⁹ Mike Jenkins, 'Operation Slob' in *Wanting to Belong* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1997), pp. 28-41 (p. 29).

⁷⁰ Kirsti Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited*, pp. 125-126. See also the discussion of code-switching in *Shifts* in Chapter II.

people in this area. As with Beagan's story 'The Sea Book', Jenkins uses the stories in *Wanting to Belong* to explore the different identities of characters who live in a place to which they do not feel fully attached. For example, in the title story, 'Wanting to Belong', English-born Gary faces peer pressure from his classmates who scorn his accent and his ability to work hard in lessons.⁷¹ Angry with his parents and desperate to fit in with his peers, Gary eventually helps steal a car and drives it recklessly, resulting in them running over a passer-by (p. 14). Like many of the characters in the collection, Gary finds himself questioning his own identity after the incident. Interestingly, he finds that he knows 'where I don't belong' (p. 17) which is easier to define than his actual identity. His sense of confusion may well be seen as reflective of a wider uncertainty about identity.

In *Wanting to Belong*, many of the young people featured in the stories express a desire to be different, but most attach this desire to a need to escape from the area in which they live. 'Grudgebands' opens with the statement that: 'to be honest, I can't wait to get out... from this dump of a town', a comment which appears in a number of the other stories.⁷² The story's main character, Neil, has hopes of becoming a sports journalist, but feels his chances of succeeding in English are diminished when an English teacher nicknamed 'Terror Tomson' (p. 66) is assigned to his class. Neil later realises that the nickname stems from the teacher's terror 'of losing, of failing, of not being able to cope' (p. 67), rather than because he is terrifying. The recognition of similar emotions in the adults as those experienced by the younger characters is vaguely alarming for the reader. It is this attitude which is perhaps the most concerning feature of the collection. Rather than appearing full of hope for the future, the young characters depicted in the stories seem jaded by the pressures of school, aware of

⁷¹ Mike Jenkins, 'Wanting to Belong' in *Wanting to Belong*, pp. 7-17, (p. 8).

⁷² Mike Jenkins, 'Grudgebands', *Ibid.*, pp. 59-68 (p. 59).

their unclear sense of identity and concerned by the lack of prospects for the future.⁷³ In this way, *Wanting to Belong* indicates that change is needed at a regional, as well as national, level in Wales in order to improve prospects for the future.

As with *Not Singing Exactly*, *Wanting To Belong* does not address devolution directly, but tackles an area and a social demographic sometimes overlooked in wider political and national debate. As previously noted, both collections were later awarded the prestigious title of Wales Book of the Year, demonstrating their ability to extend beyond the scope of the characters and circumstances which they depict. They also illustrate the way in which literature from Wales was able to articulate ideas relating to ongoing debates on identity and quality of life in Wales, without directly addressing the topic of devolution. In this way, such efforts are indicative of a movement to encourage wider debate on issues of importance to Wales. This process mimics a similar one which was underway in Scotland during the 1990s, with writers attempting to broaden political debate across the country. Robert Crawford argues that it is no coincidence that Scotland witnessed a surge of both literary and academic works in the 1980s and 1990s when the possibility of devolution gradually became a genuine prospect for Scotland.⁷⁴ Collections such as *Not Singing Exactly* and *Wanting to Belong* were equally indicative of a similar process underway in Wales at the time.

It is worth noting that, in addition to his creative writing, Mike Jenkins had been heavily involved in the launch of the highly politicised journal, *Red Poets*, in the 1990s. The journal brought together poetry by a number of leading figures in Welsh socialist politics.⁷⁵

⁷³ See for example 'Eco Terror Hits Blaenmorlais!!!', where the young protagonist resolves to 'leave [his] dreams in the future', rather than pursuing them in the present: *ibid.*, pp. 42-58 (p. 58).

⁷⁴ Robert Crawford, 'Scottish Literature and English Studies' in *The Scottish Invention of English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 225-246 (p. 239).

⁷⁵ A number of the founding members and contributors to *Red Poets* were also high profile figures in Welsh socialist party Cymru Goch in the 1980s.

In the introduction to the first issue in 1994 Jenkins outlined his belief that ‘the poetry of Wales (in both English and Welsh) stands out – even by comparison to Scotland and Ireland – for its concern with politics in the widest sense’.⁷⁶ His words indicate a belief that there exists an integral link between poetry and politics in Wales and, significantly, that this connection is not hindered by a linguistic divide. Jenkins is also quick to emphasise that poetry from Wales ‘reflects a remarkable optimism’ (p. 1), as opposed to despair. Moreover, Jenkins makes use of the opportunity to extol the power of poetry as an incentive for change. Arguing that it is ‘fashionable to say that poetry changes nothing’ (p. 1), Jenkins claims that a number of poems have ‘changed the way [he] behave[s] and think[s]’ (p. 1). His conviction points to the potential poetry has to influence readers on a personal level, a belief which is highly significant given the political nature of the *Red Poets* collection and its publication in the years preceding the 1997 referendum on devolution.

Socialist politics which appealed to readers from a working-class background are in evidence throughout the first edition of *Red Poets*. The difficulties facing South Wales in the post-industrial period are a theme common to a number of the poems in the first edition. Jenkins’ own poem ‘The Las Pit’ tells of a ‘las pit in Wales’ which stands like a ‘volcano’ on the once bustling industrial landscape.⁷⁷ The poem’s speaker accuses the government of ‘puttin-aboot in/t’ the goolies of-a working-class’ (p. 4), in language which reflects the dialect and colloquial speech patterns of the South Wales valleys. Peter Thabit Jones’ poem ‘Unemployed: Walking in Jersey Park, Swansea’ also explores the difficulties of unemployment in Wales, recounting the speaker’s lonely walk through the park where ‘in a bitter, rebellious mood’ he picks ‘redundant flowers’ for his pregnant wife.⁷⁸ It is a bleak scene in which even nature seems to reflect the hopelessness of the speaker’s circumstances.

⁷⁶ Mike Jenkins, ‘Untitled Introduction’, *Red Poets Society I* (1994), 1.

⁷⁷ Mike Jenkins, ‘The Las Pit’ in *Red Poets Society I*, (1994), 4.

⁷⁸ Peter Thabit Jones, ‘Unemployed Walking in Jersey Park, Swansea’, *Red Poets I* (1994), 13.

Once again, the poem is given a specific Welsh setting through its title and subsequent references to Swansea. The combined effect of the first issue of *Red Poets* is undoubtedly one of bleak realism, emphasising the scale of the social and political problems which need to be addressed in Wales.

Attempts to broaden political debate in Wales also coincided with renewed efforts to increase the recognition of Anglophone Welsh writing in other nations. In 1995 *New Welsh Review* launched a campaign to secure a Nobel Prize nomination for Welsh poet R. S. Thomas.⁷⁹ A passionate campaigner for the Welsh language and a prolific English-language poet, R. S. Thomas had received much acclaim, both within Wales and internationally, for his poetry. Nevertheless, the campaign to secure a nomination for the Nobel Prize for Literature proved controversial. *New Welsh Review* editor Robin Reeves accused the London media of ‘characteristic short-sightedness’ in their reaction to the campaign.⁸⁰ Outlining his argument, Reeves states that: ‘in the clichéd tones which have become the hallmark of much of their treatment of Wales and Welsh issues in recent years, they suggest that R.S.’s observations on the Welsh condition somehow render him ineligible as a Nobel candidate because they have been controversial’ (p. 1). Irrespective of its accuracy, this damning account of the London-based media serves to further the perceived gap between Welsh and English culture, implying that Welsh culture has frequently been side-lined by the more dominant force of the English publishing media. Furthermore, Reeves suggests that R. S. Thomas’s willingness to address controversial topics is one of the reasons why he should be nominated for the prize, rather than an excuse to overlook his contribution to literature. The controversial topics to which Reeves referred may include Thomas’s exploration of subjects such as afforestation in Wales, the decline of the Welsh language and even his views on Wales as a nation with ‘no present’

⁷⁹ Robin Reeves, ‘A Nobel for Ronald Stuart’ in *New Welsh Review* 28 (Spring 1995), 1-2 (p. 1).

⁸⁰ Robin Reeves, ‘Writers and the Nobel Prize’ in *New Welsh Review* 29 (Summer 1995), 1-2 (p. 1).

and ‘no future’ in his 1952 poem ‘Welsh Landscape’.⁸¹ Nonetheless, the reaction of the English media suggests that English dominance in the literary world paralleled the balance of power in their political relationship with Wales.

As the second referendum on Welsh devolution approached, certain literary and media references to the event became markedly more direct.⁸² For example, *New Welsh Review*’s July 1997 issue opened with the declaration that ‘the people of Wales will be invited in a referendum in September to decide whether or not they want a Welsh national assembly’ , preparing both itself and its readers for a determined campaign.⁸³ The announcement marked a significant turning point in the direction of Welsh politics. Unlike in 1979, Wales was prepared for the naysayers and doubters. Writing in his editorial for *New Welsh Review*, Robin Reeves acknowledges that ‘Wales’s perception of London as the centre of political power and influence pre-dates even its conquest by the English in 1282’ (p. 1), but concentrates his message on outlining why Wales must vote in favour of devolution. According to Reeves ‘a “no” vote would be immensely damaging to Wales’s interests in all sorts of ways. A “yes” vote, on the other hand, will not only equip the country with a democratic forum for a new century and provide new impetus towards tackling Wales’s economic and social problems. It will also give a significant boost to Welsh dignity and self-esteem’ (p. 1). His emphatic assertion that devolution was a necessary step for Wales is certainly one of the most positive statements of the need for increased political autonomy in Wales. The change since the previous referendum, where Welsh journals offered a relatively noncommittal view of the respective campaigns, is particularly noticeable. Furthermore, if

⁸¹ R. S. Thomas, ‘Welsh Landscape’, *R. S. Thomas: Selected Poems* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 45.

⁸² John Osmond has noticed that although there were some direct references to the referendum in the Welsh media, this connection was not as strong as it was in Scotland where a ‘highly developed press and media’ system ensured that the introduction of devolution in Scotland was ‘as though a keystone had been placed in the arch of an already-existing structure’. John Osmond, *Accelerating History: The 1979, 1997 and 2011 Referendums in Wales* (Cardiff: Institute of Welsh Affairs, 2011), p. 3.

⁸³ Robin Reeves, ‘The Referendum on a Welsh Assembly’, *New Welsh Review* 37 (Summer 1997), 1.

the editor of *New Welsh Review* was firmly in favour of devolution, it was likely that any material selected for publication in the journal would be in keeping with his viewpoint.

The importance of securing a measure of independence for Wales did indeed become markedly more apparent in the fiction and poetry selected by Welsh journals for publication in the build-up to the 1997 referendum. A 1997 pre-referendum edition of *New Welsh Review* contained the short story 'King of Wales', by Brian Smith. The story directly addresses questions of devolution and the political future of Wales. Protagonist Leon names himself 'King of Wales' and argues that what Wales 'really needed was a Monarchist party and a royal personage who would provide the unity and stability to guide the country'.⁸⁴ His statements, while frequently absurd, pave the way for discussion of what Wales was really in need of politically as the twentieth century drew to a close. There is a humorous undercurrent running throughout the story as Leon adopts his name from the popular Disney film *The Lion King* and he and his friend Chris attempt to subdue doubters by beating them at a game of pool. Nevertheless, the story raises a number of serious questions about the forthcoming referendum on devolution and why it was perceived by many to be so vital for Wales to vote 'yes'.

In many ways the representation of Leon in 'King of Wales' embodies features of Wales in the late 1990s by representing a number of often marginalised societal groups, for he is both black and a fluent Welsh speaker. When standing on the streets of Cardiff to address the public, Leon does so 'first in English, then in fluent Welsh, appealing to their latent sense of national identity' (p. 12). Even this action is significant as it illustrates a desire to engage with a wider public which he believes has the potential to appreciate his message. Moreover, Leon seems to believe that the boundaries of Welsh identity do not have to be

⁸⁴ Brian Smith, 'King of Wales' in *New Welsh Review* 37, 11-14 (p. 12).

restrictive or exclusive, instead regarding them as changeable, echoing Benedict Anderson's assertion in *Imagined Communities* that the boundaries of national identity can be 'elastic'.⁸⁵ Defining Welsh national identity to his friend, Chris, Leon explains that linguistic limits are no longer a hindrance to Welsh identity as anyone 'Welsh-speaking or monoglot English, can claim to be Cymraeg' (p. 14). His definition, ending triumphantly with a Welsh word, acts to draw together the different factions which, if they remained divided, had the potential to jeopardise Wales' chances of securing devolution. Certainly, Leon's assertions about Welsh identity are confirmed at the end of the story when he symbolically pulls a sword from the stone, apparently confirming his status as a true Welshman (p. 14).⁸⁶ Indeed, as the story draws to a close, even the sometimes doubtful Chris appears to have been converted by Leon's argument, taking for granted that Wales will secure a National Assembly and resolving to 'be there on that momentous day and not skulking in the background' (p. 14). These final words are a direct incitement to readers, encouraging a more active involvement in the campaign to gain a measure of independence for Wales and warning against passivity.

The increase in political content no doubt played an important role in driving debate on devolution in Wales during the build-up to the referendum. It is clear to see from the nature of the editorials and articles published on the topic in journals such as *New Welsh Review* and *Planet* that debate on the future of Wales took centre stage in the months immediately preceding the referendum in 1997.⁸⁷ David Barlow points out in his essay on the media in Wales that, in media terms, 'Wales has been variously understood in Britain as a "region", "principality", "western extension of England", "national region", and more

⁸⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 11.

⁸⁶ This scene alludes to the famous legend involving Arthur who pulls a sword out of a stone in order to confirm his birthright and status as the true King of Britain.

⁸⁷ See, for example, John Barnie's editorial 'Where Next?', *Planet* 123 (June/July 1997), 3-6 and Robin Reeves editorial 'The Referendum on a Welsh Assembly', *New Welsh Review* 37 (Summer 1997), 1,

recently a nation'.⁸⁸ As I have sought to demonstrate, this gradual process had been set in motion by the gradually increasing volume and influence of journals and newspapers in Wales. Fiction also undoubtedly helped to prove that stereotypes about Welsh identity, such as those outlined by John Humphrys, had long been shattered. It is important not to underestimate the contribution made by authors whose fiction did not directly address politics during the 1990s. Such fiction further helped to create an atmosphere of awareness and debate in Wales, one which extended beyond the campaign for devolution. When Wales secured devolution by a narrow majority of less than 1%, the initial reaction from a number of Welsh writers was one of relief, rather than triumph.⁸⁹ An article published in *New Welsh Review* shortly after the dramatic conclusion to the referendum was entitled simply 'Ffiw!', a clear expression of the relief felt by those who had campaigned for devolution over so many years. Writing in the article were three generations of Welsh authors and poets, Nigel Jenkins, Gillian Clarke, and Richard John Evans, who all expressed their sense of joy at the results.⁹⁰

If, as Raymond Williams suggests, writers assert their own 'places and identities' then it is possible to see the work of writers in Wales during the 1990s as asserting their own sense of identity within Wales.⁹¹ Fiction written with a focus on either North or South Wales may not have sought to divide Wales, but to establish a true sense of identity for different regions

⁸⁸ David Barlow, 'Re-presenting Wales: Big Media, Small Nation' in *Pays de Galles: quelle(s) image(s)?/What Visibility for Wales?* (Brest: Université de Bretagne Occidentale, 2009), pp. 149-163 (p. 155).

⁸⁹ Referendum statistics available at: <http://wales.gov.uk/legislation/referendumpowers/referendumjourney/1997referendum/?lang=en> [Accessed 22/10/2012]

⁹⁰ Nigel Jenkins, Gillian Clarke and Richard John Evans, 'Ffiw!' in *New Welsh Review* 38 (Autumn 1997), 9-12.

⁹¹ Raymond Williams, 'Freedom and a Lack of Confidence', p. 145. The editorial in *Planet* magazine's first issue since the referendum offered a similar sentiment, beginning simply with the words 'we made it'. John Barnie, 'The Referendum' editorial, *Planet* 125 (October/November 1997), 3.

of Wales, as distinct from other parts of the United Kingdom. In writing honestly about the areas they knew best, writers were able to depict a Wales which readers could relate to.

Indeed, this sense of place and identity would be vital in the process of setting up a Welsh Assembly for Wales and leading Wales, both culturally and politically, into the twenty-first century.

Chapter IV – ‘Warning – Welsh Assembly!’: Post-devolution Welsh fiction in English¹

It could be argued that in 1997, following a second referendum in which the Welsh electorate voted in favour of devolution in Wales, the ‘imagined community’ of Wales became a reality.² Almost twenty years after they had first rejected the concept, the Welsh electorate had voted in favour of a measure of political autonomy for Wales. After a lengthy struggle, Wales was now in possession of a tangible political symbol of its national identity. Yet the results of the 1997 referendum reveal a complex picture, showing that the ‘Yes’ campaign was victorious by a narrow margin of less than one per cent.³ As mentioned in the previous chapter, initial literary reactions to this result were largely those of relief rather than outward jubilation, indicating an understanding of the magnitude of the decision. Welsh results contrasted starkly to those in Scotland where over seventy five percent of voters were in favour of devolution, a response which indicated a much greater level of support for devolution than that seen in Wales.⁴ Unsurprisingly, Scottish authors were among the most jubilant about these results and Gavin Wallace notes that the ‘fundamental contribution Scottish literature has made to national identity was conspicuously celebrated in the opening ceremony of the Scottish Parliament on 1st July 1999’, establishing a firm connection between literature and politics in the country.⁵

It is clear that, in many respects, the relation between literature and politics in Wales was not as clearly defined as its Scottish counterpart in the wake of the 1997 referenda.

¹ Ifor ap Glyn, ‘Warning – Welsh Assembly!’ in *The Big Book of Cardiff*, ed. Peter Finch and Grahame Davies (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 2005) pp. 22-3.

² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006) [1983] p. 6.

³ *Results of Devolution Referendums (1979 and 1997)*, Research Paper No. 97/113, House of Commons Library, available at: www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/RP97-113.pdf [Accessed 18/02/13], p. 17.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵ Gavin Wallace, ‘Voyages of Intent: Literature and Cultural Politics in Post-Devolution Scotland’ in Berthold Schoene (ed.) *Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 17-27 (p. 17).

Writing about modern British fiction, Dominic Head claims that Wales had faced ‘a crisis of identity that came to a head with the “no” vote in the devolution referendum of 1979’.⁶ If this crisis did indeed exist in the period between the referenda, it would be logical to expect that in the wake of a vote in favour of devolution, Welsh identity would finally achieve a sense of independence and stability. As discussed in the previous chapter, however, the second referendum on devolution in Wales proved to be as controversial as the first, with even those celebrating the result appearing to acknowledge the enormity of the challenge facing Wales as the process of creating a National Assembly began.⁷ These concerns were evident even in the opening ceremony for the Assembly in 1999. A poem, presented by Ifor ap Glyn as part of the ceremony, offered a keen awareness of the scale of the change that was underway in Wales and the need for redefinition of perceptions of Welsh identity. The poem, ‘Warning – Welsh Assembly!’, called on people from across Wales to ‘leave [their] prejudice by the door’ and let the Assembly ‘challenge our way of thinking’⁸.

In spite of the enthusiasm for change projected by Ifor ap Glyn in his lively poem, not all literary commentators shared the same sense of optimism for post-devolution Wales. Writing in an essay published in 1998, playwright Dic Edwards argued that ‘culture reflects unity. Without unity there is no culture. Wales is not a unity and so there is nothing that can be called Welsh culture’.⁹ Edwards’s argument about the lack of unity in Welsh identity seems to rely heavily on the presupposition that culture must be homogenous in order to exist. As explored in previous chapters, attempts to project a unified image of Welsh culture

⁶ Dominic Wood, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 144.

⁷ This sentiment was emphasised by Ron Davies in a special lecture to the Institute of Welsh Affairs. Lecture by Ron Davies AM/MP to launch Institute of Welsh Affairs Gregynog Paper ‘Devolution: a process not an event’, Reardon Smith lecture theatre, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, (Thursday February 4th 1999).

⁸ Ifor ap Glyn, *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁹ Dic Edwards, ‘Theatre for the Evicted’ in *State of Play*, ed. Hazel Walford Davies (Llandysul: Gomer, 1998), pp. 3-16 (p. 3).

frequently threatened to restrict Anglophone Welsh writing in the 1970s and may conceivably have had a negative impact on the devolution referendum of 1979 and even on the development of Wales as a nation.¹⁰ During the 1990s the growth of new publishing houses and the further expansion of literary culture in Wales had ensured a more inclusive range of writing was available. This expansion continued in the wake of devolution as Welsh writers sought to explore their nation's identity at the start of a new century and a new chapter in Welsh political history. In this chapter I will seek to demonstrate, *pace* Dic Edwards, that literary culture and identity not only exist in post-devolution Wales, but thrive on a sense of diversity.

Furthermore, Dic Edwards has argued that a sense of Welsh identity should be reliant on the ability to speak and use the Welsh language, an argument which appears to become increasingly questionable in the post-devolution period. Some of the most prolific Welsh writers of the post-devolution era have to date included those who write in both English and Welsh, suggesting that the sense of division which once existed between Wales' two linguistic cultures may no longer be the source of contention it once was.¹¹ Nevertheless, the complexity of Welsh reaction to devolution seems to suggest that, while perceptions of the 'imagined community' of Wales may have been to some extent confirmed by the vote in favour of devolution, the boundaries of this community and its identity still remained a contentious issue. As Benedict Anderson states in *Imagined Communities*, even the largest nations ultimately have 'finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations' (p. 7). It is therefore possible to see devolution as an opportunity for the redefinition of the boundaries of Welsh national identity. The results of this process would be twofold: firstly,

¹⁰ See Raymond Williams, 'The Culture of Nations' in *Who Speaks for Wales? Nation, Culture, Identity*, pp. 191-203 (p. 193).

¹¹ M. Wynn Thomas discusses this lack of harmony which had existed between use of the Welsh and English language in writing from Wales in *Corresponding Cultures: The Two Literatures of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), p. 1.

the redefinition of the boundaries of national identity would allow for reflection on the nature of Welsh identity in the post-devolution era; secondly, Wales' position in relation to other nations, particularly in a political sense, would be similarly renegotiated.

If the boundaries of Welsh national identity were to be renegotiated in the wake of devolution, restrictions such as those suggested by Dic Edwards might become obsolete. In the introduction to the second edition of their volume on the discursive qualities of national identity, Ruth Wodak, Rudolf de Cillia, Martin Reisigl and Karin Liebhart outline their theory that there is 'no such thing as one national identity'.¹² Instead, they argue that different identities are constructed 'according to audience, setting, topic and substantive content' (p. 4). Their argument is pertinent to the field of Anglophone Welsh writing which, in the post-devolution era, depicts a variety of identities dependent on place, intended audience, and social or economic status. Yet these differing perspectives on identity do not necessarily detract from a sense of unity, but instead contribute to the formation of an overarching sense of identity, representative of the diversity which exists within contemporary Wales. I will therefore argue that the introduction of devolution in Wales afforded Anglophone Welsh writers the opportunity to explore this diversity fully, without pressure to conform to any singular perception of Welsh nationality. In the course of this chapter I will examine a range of post-devolution texts through the lens of Anderson's and Wodak *et al's* theories in order to establish whether any patterns emerge in terms of topic, as well as intended audience, setting, and social and economic status. Changes to these four features may provide an important insight into the process through which the boundaries of Welsh national identity are redefined in the wake of the 1997 referendum.

¹² Ruth Wodak, Rudolf de Cillia, Martin Reisigl and Karin Liebhart, 'Introduction' to *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, second edition, ed. Ruth Wodak (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 1-6 (p. 4).

With such potential changes in mind, there can be no doubt that multiculturalism has played an important part in this process of redefinition in the post-devolution era. In her 2002 autobiographical novel, *Sugar and Slate*, Charlotte Williams describes Wales as ‘mixed up’, hinting at the complexity of contemporary Welsh identity.¹³ Interestingly, the narrator seems to regard this complexity as a positive feature of contemporary Wales, allowing her to feel that she can belong in this country which is ‘almost as mixed up as I was’ (p. 169). Such an assertion seems to affirm Wodak et al’s theory that national identity cannot be defined by one monolithic image. Drawing on examples from contemporary Anglophone Welsh writing, I will argue that multiculturalism is celebrated as a positive feature of Welsh culture in the post-devolution years, rather than as a divisive force as it may previously have been regarded.¹⁴ In addition, I will seek to demonstrate that representations of multiculturalism in Wales reflect recent social changes, increasing the potential for engagement with a broader audience and expanding the developments seen, to some extent, in the build-up to the 1997 referendum on devolution.

In addition to the redefinition of the boundaries of national identity, the renegotiation of the relationship between Wales and other countries provided another complex challenge in the wake of devolution. While devolution was undoubtedly a high profile alteration to the political system in Wales, it is also important to consider the impact of the process of globalization underway at the start of the twenty-first century. Suman Gupta notes that there is often ‘a kind of anxiety about the term globalization’, perhaps due to a fear of an ‘autonomous momentum’ or an ‘uncontrollable currency’ which may accompany the process.¹⁵ Here, I will consider the way in which Anglophone Welsh writers address the

¹³ Charlotte Williams, *Sugar and Slate* (Aberystwyth: Planet, 2002), p. 169.

¹⁴ Neil Evans traces Wales’ multicultural past and the division which has arisen as part of this process in his essay ‘Immigrants and Minorities in Wales, 1840-1990: A Comparative Perspective’ in *A Tolerant Nation? Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Wales*, ed. Charlotte Williams, Paul O’Leary and Neil Evans (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 14-24.

¹⁵ Suman Gupta, *Globalization and Literature*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), p. 5.

concept of globalization in the post-devolution era. In so doing, I will consider whether increasing connections to the wider world and concerns about the perception of Wales on an international stage, have an impact on the production of literature at a national, and even regional, level in Wales. Through such analysis I hope to determine how the rise of globalization contributes to the redefinition of national identity in post-devolution Wales, including the way in which Wales is presented to other nations through literature.

It is particularly relevant at this juncture to return to the connection between literature, culture, and politics in Wales. As previously mentioned, Raymond Williams outlines the potential difficulties which may be encountered in a changing cultural landscape in his 1975 essay, 'Welsh Culture'. In his essay Williams argues that culture is frequently perceived as being 'for high days and holidays: not an ordinary gear but an overdrive', an assertion which implies that Welsh culture was not, at least at the time, associated with daily life.¹⁶

Furthermore, Williams suggests that the reason for this difficulty with 'culture' was an inability to escape from the stranglehold of the past.¹⁷ Arguing that the Wales of the 1970s had 'too much on its back' (p. 9) to fully embrace its cultural identity, Williams predicted that real independence would come in the time of 'new and active creation' (p. 9). This chapter will argue that in the wake of devolution in Wales culture has become a more prominent feature of daily life, prompted in no small part by Anglophone Welsh writers presenting an increasingly diverse image of the 'imagined community' of Wales through their fiction.

Moreover, in this chapter I will argue that in the wake of devolution Anglophone Welsh writing reflects the enormity of the changes underway in Wales during the period. Such writing contributes to the redefinition of the boundaries of national identity as authors

¹⁶ Raymond Williams, 'Welsh Culture' in *Who Speaks for Wales: Nation, Culture, Identity* ed. Daniel Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 5-11 (p. 5).

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 9.

offer diverse representations of twenty-first century Wales. I will seek to demonstrate that this process is reliant on a more confident perception of Welsh identity, which has developed in the fiction in the years since devolution was established. By exploring examples from contemporary writing, I hope to establish that post-devolution Anglophone Welsh writing marks a period of reconciliation between Wales' complex political, cultural and linguistic past and its aspirations for an independent future which reflects the new political meaning ascribed to the country.

Bridging the Gap

The introduction of devolution in Wales was not a rapid one; indeed, the vote in favour of devolution for Wales marked only the start of a lengthy process to restructure Welsh political power. Delivering a lecture in 1998, Labour Assembly Member Ron Davies famously commented that devolution was 'a process and not an event' and that 'its impact will be on the whole of our public, economic, social and political life'.¹⁸ The National Assembly was not officially opened in Wales until 1999, with the first Assembly Members being elected during May of the same year. Even the decision on where to house the new National Assembly had not proved easy, causing a considerable amount of speculation and disagreement between political parties and the public. Plans were unveiled for a brand new assembly building which would be built in Cardiff Bay at the cost of approximately twenty-seven million pounds, while a rival bid suggested housing the assembly in Swansea's Guildhall. Several arguments were raised against the option to build a new assembly building in the Bay, not least the fact that as a region Cardiff had voted against devolution in both the

¹⁸ Ron Davies 'Devolution: a process not an event', Reardon-Smith lecture theatre, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, (Thursday February 4th 1999).

1979 and 1997 referenda.¹⁹ The decision proved so controversial that a special report by the BBC in 1998 branded the process a ‘bad advertisement for the ability of Wales to run its own affairs’.²⁰ Resolution was eventually reached when Assembly Members voted in favour of the proposals for a new building in Cardiff Bay, although it would take until 2006 for the new Senedd building to be completed and officially opened.

In addition to the dispute over the location of the Welsh Assembly, devolution in Wales has afforded the opportunity for the redefinition of place and identity. Writing in 2007, Katie Gramich argued that ‘The “Yes” vote in the Devolution Referendum of 1997 and the subsequent creation of the Welsh Assembly have undoubtedly changed both the concept and the reality of ‘Wales’ as a political and, arguably, a cultural and social place’.²¹ For Gramich, the emergence of this new sense of place is a defining factor in the resurgence of Welsh female writers during the twenty-first century.²² These developments indicate that Anglophone Welsh writers may have been able to reflect new political and cultural settings following the introduction of devolution for Wales. Here, I will seek to demonstrate that the relationship between literature and politics in Wales has been strengthened in the wake of devolution, creating a renewed sense of Welsh identity which enables authors to freely explore post-devolution spaces in Wales. Certainly there can be no doubt that devolution had a profound impact on perceptions of Welsh identity, bringing the matter to the forefront of

¹⁹ Peter Finch has noted that, even in the wake of the 1997 referendum, ‘for most of the Welsh population Cardiff remains a centre for permanent suspicion’. Peter Finch, ‘Culture and the City – Cardiff’ in *Planet* 138 (December 1999/January 2000), 19-25 (p. 19). This sense of concern over the location of Cardiff as the centre for devolution can be noted in a some of the works of fiction selected for analysis later in this chapter, such as John Williams’s *Cardiff Dead* in which the opening of the National Assembly is satirised by some of the characters living in Cardiff who feel little connection to the New Assembly. This satirical scene is explored in detail on pp. 192-3.

²⁰ Glyn Matthias, ‘What Next for Wales?’, a BBC Special Report, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/special_report/for_christmas/new_year/devolution/39994.stm [Accessed 26/04/2013].

²¹ Katie Gramich, *Twentieth-Century Welsh Women’s Writing: Land, Gender, Belonging* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 183.

²² *Ibid*, p. 183.

the minds of even those who had voted ‘no’ in the referendum.²³ To return to the theory outlined by Wodak et al, differing presentations of Welsh political and cultural settings would contribute to the creation of a diverse and multi-faceted sense of national identity in the wake of devolution.

In the years immediately following the 1997 referendum, a number of texts emerged within the field of Anglophone Welsh writing which explored what can be seen as a process of transition from pre- to post-devolution Wales. These texts offer an insight into the dynamic of what was clearly a period of unprecedented cultural and political change in Wales.²⁴ The problems of pre-devolution Wales are addressed at regional level by Rhondda-born writer, Rachel Trezise, in her novel *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl*. Although published in 2000, shortly after the official opening of the Welsh Assembly, the majority of the novel is set against the backdrop of early 1990s post-industrial Wales, making it an interesting platform for comparison between pre-devolution and post-devolution regional and national identity. For the most part, the teenage protagonist, Rebecca, appears bored by her life in the Rhondda valley. She is not alone in this attitude; Rebecca reflects on the hopelessness of this period at a crucial moment in the novel, claiming that ‘my generation, the products of unemployed parents, divorce and downright poverty, tried desperately to find satisfaction in joyriding and class B drugs (which were barely affordable), cider drinking in lanes and underage sex’.²⁵ The novel presents a bleak picture made all the more sobering by the fact that it contains

²³ Interestingly, a number of figures who had been highly instrumental in the ‘No’ campaign in the prelude to the 1997 referendum took on political roles within the Welsh Assembly following its creation. Prominent among these was Nick Bourne, who had chaired the campaign against devolution in Wales, but later assumed the role of leader of the Welsh Conservatives within the National Assembly. Such involvement indicates an acceptance of devolution, even among those who were not initially in favour of its introduction in Wales.

²⁴ It is worth emphasising that the texts selected for inclusion in this Chapter have been chosen because of they represent a range of fiction and authors with diverse backgrounds are intended to be indicative of the range of fiction produced in Wales in the wake of devolution. For a broader discussion of the reasons behind these choices see pp. 31-3 of this thesis.

²⁵ Rachel Trezise, *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl* (Cardiff: Parthian, 2000), p. 78.

numerous autobiographical elements. The absence of hope depicted by the novel is supported by figures released following the 2001 census, which indicated that over 40% of inhabitants aged between sixteen and seventy-four in the Rhondda area lacked any formal qualifications.²⁶ Thus, while devolution is never mentioned directly in the text, the urgent need for change in this area of Wales cries out loudly from within the narrative. The correlation between statistics and the scenes depicted in *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl* also indicate that the identity constructed by Trezise in the novel reflects social circumstances in that region of Wales.

While the need for change may echo strongly throughout *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl*, its characters seem to possess a very fragile sense of identity. As the narrative progresses it becomes clear that there is a sense of uncertainty and ambiguity surrounding the identities of Rebecca and many of the other residents of the town. For the most part Rebecca seems lost; memories from her early childhood are few and far between, concentrating mainly on ‘snapshots’ of what was once a relatively secure life. As Rebecca ages, her descriptions mature into a bleak depiction of reality, from which she seems unable to escape, even with the aid of copious amounts of alcohol and drugs. The town still remains a place made up of ‘rotting green wood’ fences and ‘a dirty brown river’ (p. 9), while school is an enforced process in which Rebecca participates only sporadically. At this stage, any regional identity associated with Rebecca’s place is undeniably one of lost hope mirrored by a landscape scarred by the past. As the mines which once dominated the valley slowly shut down, the novel shows unemployment and insecurity taking hold of the town and its

²⁶ *Census 2001: Key Statistics for Local Authorities*, a report compiled by the Office for National Statistics in 2003, p. 239. Available to download at: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/release-calendar/index.html?newquery=*&newoffset=10&theme=%22%22&source-agency=%22%22&uday=0&umonth=0&uyear=0&lday=&lmonth=&lyear=&coverage=%22%22&designation=&geographic-breakdown=%22%22&title=Census+2001+Key+Statistics&pagetype=calendar-entry&sortBy=releaseDate&sortDirection=EITHER [Accessed 26/06/13].

inhabitants. Even the rare moments of happiness in the novel are not enough to shatter the uneasy feeling that this is a valley and a place in decay.

It is here that the significance of the surroundings chosen as the setting for the novel becomes most apparent as the effects of industrial decline are revealed through Rebecca's reflections on Hendrefadog, the small town in which she lives. In one description, the depiction of the town seems to reject the idea of working-class solidarity and the existence of a close-knit community within former industrial areas in the Rhondda. Rebecca describes the inhabitants of Hendrefadog as being 'misled into believing they had a reputation for being very friendly, welcoming people' (p. 78). Yet, after spending a short amount of time in England Rebecca is struck by the realisation that her home town is made up of what she describes as 'inbreeding hypocrites who were spouting bullshit about living in the best place in the world' (p. 78) without having travelled to other places for comparison. Rebecca goes on to blame this lack of awareness of other places on the fact that the majority of residents are too busy 'signing on and marrying the boy next door and passing the time of day' (p. 79) to venture beyond their local area. Her words suggest a working class area which has become inward-looking in the wake of industrial decline, with little awareness of the existence of other communities beyond their own. Summarising the problem, Rebecca concludes that 'the thing with the Rhondda was the constant lack of choice' (p. 84), citing its unclear location as 'neither city nor country' (p. 84) as a major factor and indicating that following the closure of the mines the area has lost its sense of identity. It is an image which challenges ideas of cosy working-class solidarity and instead implies that the bond of shared industrial experience and identity has been lost for the residents of Hendrefadog, leaving them trapped and isolated. Moreover, it is also worth noting that the sexual abuse Rebecca suffers as a child is inflicted by her stepfather, a former coalminer, further contributing to the image of decay and bitterness which has affected the region and its inhabitants in the wake of industrial decline.

The fact that he takes such actions against his stepdaughter further shatters any remaining myth of the noble collier, presenting him as the anti-hero of the novel.²⁷

While Rebecca and the characters in *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl* seem to lack an overriding sense of regional identity, neither do they appear to possess any overarching feeling of identification with the rest of Wales. On one occasion, Rebecca attempts to escape her hometown, fleeing not to another part of Wales, but to England. Her lack of connection to Wales and desire to escape is not an uncommon feature of fiction set prior to the 1997 referendum on devolution. Her desire to escape echoes the sentiments of a number of the characters in Mike Jenkins' 1997 collection of short fiction, *Wanting to Belong*. As discussed in the previous chapter, Jenkins depicts a forgotten and destitute town, which lacks connections to the rest of Wales and from which the majority of the characters wish to flee. With a sense of national or regional identity apparently missing from both these texts, it seems that the characters' only perception of their identity relies heavily on distancing themselves from features of a place with which they feel disconnected. In this way, the novel utilises setting and content to invoke a sense of place which is of particular relevance to the area in which it is set. In this respect, the novel's setting seems to take into account recent political developments and offers a depiction of a place which is familiar to its author.²⁸

Thus, for the characters in *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl*, their sense of both regional and national identity in the pre-devolution years seems to be defined primarily by what they are not. The place which they occupy is not a busy city, neither is it what it once

²⁷ A number of works in twentieth-century Anglophone Welsh writing had depicted the image of the noble collier, not least Lewis Jones' industrial novels *Cwmardy* (1937) and *We Live* (1939). As noted in the previous chapter, this image was still in evidence, to a certain extent, even in the latter stages of the century in novels such as Roger Granelli's *Dark Edge*, which portrayed a miner and a policeman as hero and villain respectively.

²⁸ Rachel Trezise has discussed her presentation of the Rhondda valley in the novel in an interview with Kirstie McCrum where she acknowledges that her presentation of place is for herself and her own memories of growing up in the region. Rachel Trezise in an interview with Kirstie McCrum for Wales Online, 28th May 2013, available at: <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/lifestyle/showbiz/rachel-trezise-new-book-cosmic-4024339> [Accessed 05/09/2013].

was, an industrial heartland. Instead, it is caught between the two, trapped somewhere between the metropolitan and the provincial and unable to find any new sense of identity. The circumstances depicted are simultaneously of significance to that specific area of Wales and reminiscent of changes underway across Wales in the wake of industrial decline. It is this very problem which the new Welsh Assembly was forced to address following its creation, when it was faced with a country which, particularly in the once industrial South, was torn between an irrecoverable past and an uncertain future. It would be difficult to argue that this uncertainty is completely dispelled by the introduction of a Welsh Assembly for Wales, but a sense of change is clearly evident in Anglophone Welsh writing with a post-devolution setting.

The beginnings of such a change can be noted even in the closing stages of *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl*. In a final tragic twist, Rebecca's maternal grandmother, Rose, is diagnosed with terminal cancer and Rebecca finds herself caring for a woman who is slowly 'losing her mind' (p. 145). At first the reality of this situation overwhelms her, resulting in a briefly recounted suicide attempt. Yet as she awakes to a frustrated family, Rebecca seems to find a new hope in the future she has struggled to believe in. Finally overcoming the fears and abuse which have dogged her throughout her life, Rebecca's mind is 'filled with possibilities' (p. 147), including university and driving lessons. When Rose dies, Rebecca attributes her change in attitude to her grandmother, explaining that 'she equipped me with everything I would need to begin a new forceful life of my own making. The strongest woman I have ever known handed out to me her gift-wrapped strength' (p. 147). Their relationship is symbolic of the dramatic changes which were already underway in Wales in the period. As Rebecca turns towards the future, gaining strength from her grandmother, Wales also faces the task of moving into a future full of hope and uncertainty, drawing its strength from the past. It is poignant that Rebecca's new-found sense of independence comes

at the start of 1997, the year in which her country would finally gain a measure of independence. The significance of this date seems to draw regional and national events together, connecting Rebecca's life in the Rhondda valley to events taking place across Wales. Furthermore, it is the unsung heroine of the novel, Rebecca's grandmother, who is able to help Rebecca move on from the abuse she received as a child at the hands of her stepfather.

The relationship between Rebecca and her grandmother can also be read as a rewriting of Welsh history which dispels romanticised myths regarding the gender roles of the past. The sexual and emotional abuse Rebecca endures in the novel is inflicted by her stepfather, a former coalminer who rapes her on numerous occasions throughout her childhood and yet manages to escape conviction. Rebecca initially appears broken by this abuse and the results of the trial in which her step-father, Brian, walks free from court, an event Rebecca describes as akin to the physical rape she endured (p. 72). Likewise, Rebecca's mother maintains a casual lack of interest in the difficulties faced by her daughter throughout much of the novel. Far from occupying the role of archetypal 'Welsh mam', Rebecca's mother appears strangely disconnected from her daughter's life.²⁹ A prime example of this disconnection comes when Rebecca receives her GCSE results while her mother is 'on a Greek or Spanish island' (p. 95) enjoying a holiday with her latest partner. The combination of abuse and neglect Rebecca suffers indicates a demise of the family structure which, like a strong sense of community, was once considered a notable feature of Anglophone Welsh writing.³⁰ Significantly, the process of psychological recovery from these

²⁹ Deirdre Beddoe discusses this emblematic image of Welsh women as 'the wife and mother [...] and the custodian of the home' in *Out of the Shadows: A History of Women in Twentieth-Century Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 13.

³⁰ This deconstruction of the image of the protective parental figure is echoed in Edward Thomas's 1993 play 'Flowers of the Dead Red Sea'. The play features the character Joe coming to terms with the fact that his mother is mad and his father is dead. Edward Thomas, 'Flowers of the Dead Red Sea', *Three plays: House of America, Flowers of the Dead Red Sea, East from the Gantry* (Bridgend: Seren, 1994), pp. 101-166.

events appears to stem from the time Rebecca spends with her dying grandmother in the closing stages of the novel. Here, a quiet and unassuming female figure is presented as the only person able to help her granddaughter recover from the trauma inflicted by a former collier.

The strength which Rebecca draws from her grandmother may be taken as indicative of the increased role occupied by women in Anglophone Welsh writing in the post-devolution years. As has been established, Welsh women writers had played a critical role in broadening the literary spectrum during the 1990s and their development continues throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century. It is further poignant that Rebecca's story in *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl* is of a girl who has survived a horrific upbringing and ultimately looks towards the future rather than the past. In the closing pages of the novel Rebecca describes herself as a 'survivor' (p. 151), accepting that while the rape and abuse she has suffered can never be forgotten, she is able to look towards a more positive future. Significantly, Rebecca makes the decision to become a writer, hoping to share her thoughts and experiences with others. This important decision is further indicative of a desire to achieve autonomy and regain control of her own life, a move which echoes the introduction of devolution in Wales. In this respect Rebecca's name can be read as symbolic, recalling the infamous 'Rebecca Rioters' of the nineteenth century, who protested violently against the imposition of tolls on the roads of Wales. Rebecca's resilience and her decision to become a writer herself is described by Stephen Knight as symbolic of a nation which, in spite of a lengthy struggle to secure devolution, is 'not yet defeated'.³¹ Her story sets the tone for Anglophone Welsh writing at the start of the post-devolution era, indicating a shift away

³¹ Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, p. 187. This sense of survival despite the odds can also be noted in the title of Angharad Tomos' 1985 novel *Yma O Hyd (Still Here)* which drew on Tomos' own experience of imprisonment as a result of her actions during Welsh language campaigns in the early 1980s.

from the difficulties of the past and towards what Rebecca hopes will be a more prosperous future. The transformation in her personal life also suggests that her perception of the boundaries which define her own identity have been redefined, echoing the process of political redefinition underway in Wales at the time.

Rebecca's palpable sense of anger and despair regarding circumstances in the Rhondda area in which she lives can also be noted in Richard John Evans' 2000 novel *Entertainment*, which depicts life in the South Wales Valleys in the early 1990s. In the novel all the characters reveal a sense of frustration and anger at their current circumstances, yet they seem to lack the power to initiate change. Largely unemployed and lacking any real prospects, the characters drink heavily and appear disenchanted with their local area. At one stage Philip climbs a bridge above the river running through the town, where he realises that 'this pissy little stream was what had carved out the entire Rhondda valley in the first place', noting as he does so 'the industrial revolution and its social and geological upheavals'.³² Any sense of the positive effects of industrialisation is immediately undermined, however, by the sight of a burnt-out car in a nearby field and the image of 'a small playground in between two terraces' (p. 28) in which Philip visualises 'melted swings, the textualised roundabout [and] the carpet of broken glass' (p. 28). The grim reality of these images reveals a sense of decay which seems to cling to the area throughout the narrative, suggesting that in the wake of industrial decline the region has been left with little hope or support.

Philip's sense of frustration in *Entertainment* is mirrored by that of his best friend Jason who, having been born without the use of his legs, has never fully accepted his disability and demonstrates considerable anger about his circumstances. When offered help from a local support group Jason claims that he doesn't want 'to fucking deal with it' (p. 13), preferring instead to wallow in his depression. His rejection of the group indicates a

³² Richard John Evans, *Entertainment* (Bridgend: Seren, 2000), p. 28.

reluctance to embrace change and an unwillingness to engage with others who face similar problems and experiences. Regardless of his own difficulty in accepting his disability, it soon becomes apparent that Jason faces an appalling amount of discrimination and abuse.³³

Venturing out alone, Jason regularly receives a torrent of verbal abuse about his wheelchair and on several occasions is attacked by other local youths. Along with the images of decline and hopelessness, these events further contribute to the feeling that change is of vital importance to this area.

Significantly, the primary source of hope in *Entertainment* comes from Philip's younger sister, Claire. Unlike her brother and Jason, Claire is keen to work hard at school and is full of ambition, announcing at an early age her intention to be 'a theatre director, and perhaps a theatre manager with a tremendous influence on British drama' (p. 19). Her position as a young woman and her determination to succeed are what prevents the novel depicting a slow decline into total despair. Claire's work with a local theatre group on a project to involve young people in drama proves difficult, but she is nevertheless able to draw Philip and Jason into the activity. Jason in particular benefits from the experience as it affords him an opportunity to vent his frustration at the social and economic injustice which surrounds them. The differences between the three main characters illustrates that any hope for the region in the future lies with those such as Claire whose determination to succeed may enable them to overcome the difficulties they face. Like Rebecca in *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl*, Claire is able to use her ambition and creativity to reach beyond the limitations of her present circumstances. In so doing, Claire becomes the embodiment of Raymond Williams' theory that in order to gain a measure of true independence Wales must embrace 'new and active creation' in order to progress.³⁴

³³ See for example pp. 124-127 in which Jason is attacked while on board a train travelling through the South Wales valleys.

³⁴ Raymond Williams, 'Welsh Culture', p. 5.

Moreover, the hope for the future which is generated through the creative aspirations of Rebecca in *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl* and Claire in *Entertainment* is indicative of a desire to rewrite their identity. For both creative output enables them to redefine their place within society, again mirroring the process of redefinition of national identity underway in post-devolution Wales.³⁵ For Claire in particular, creativity is an opportunity to make a difference beyond her local community and indeed, beyond Wales. Her desire to have ‘a tremendous influence on British drama’ (p. 19) suggests an ambition which is not limited to the place where she has grown up and become familiar with. Instead, Claire believes that she can have an influence beyond Wales, a dream which manages to connect Wales with wider Britain. For Claire, a background in local theatre and her identity as a young Welsh woman will provide the starting point for what she hopes will be a career which transcends cultural and geographical boundaries. As such, Claire’s hope for the future can be interpreted as symbolic of the potential for expansion to the parameters of national identity in post-devolution Wales. Her ambition is confirmation that the boundaries of national identity do not have to be ‘finite’ and can incorporate a desire to simultaneously unite with other nations on a cultural level.³⁶ Claire’s hopes for the expansion of personal and political horizons are in sharp contrast to the sense of isolation and limitation which are a prevailing feature in the depiction of female characters in Anglophone Welsh writing from the 1970s. Consequently, Claire’s confidence in the existence of an ‘imagined community’, with whom she can engage

³⁵ In this respect Claire’s prominent position within the novel foreshadowed the outcome of the first Assembly elections in 1999 in which twenty four out of a possible sixty seats were secured by women. Alys Thomas and Martin Jennings have described this outcome as ‘significant as women’s political representation in Wales had been historically low in both the UK Parliament and at local government level’. Alys Thomas and Martin Jennings ‘The Composition of the Fourth Assembly’ in *Key Issues for the Fourth Assembly* ed. Owain Roberts (Cardiff Bay: Research Service publication, 2011), pp. 14-15 (p. 15).

³⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 7.

outside of her local area, indicates how significantly notions of Welsh identity have expanded in the intervening decades.³⁷

Unlike *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl*, *Entertainment* reaches its close some time before devolution became an assured prospect for Wales. Yet a sense of change is already afoot not only for Claire, but also for the other characters in *Entertainment* when the novel ends in 1994. In the final stages of the novel Philip finds himself the victim of an attack by local men which leaves him struggling to move. In a symbolic turn of events, Jason helps Philip to safety by carrying him as he lies across the arms of his wheelchair (p. 176). This simple act is one of empowerment for Jason and marks a moment of realisation for both men as they come to understand that their ‘buggering about’ (p. 177) drinking and causing trouble is doing little to improve their circumstances. The realisation that they need to be proactive if they are to improve their circumstances is significant as it indicates a growing sense of awareness that it is possible for them to survive in spite of difficult circumstances or a troubled past.

A similar focus on survival can be noted in Trezza Azzopardi’s 2001 first novel *The Hiding Place*, which traces the history of the Gauci family following father Frank Gauci’s arrival in Cardiff in the 1960s. The majority of the novel is occupied with the childhood experiences of protagonist Dolores and her several sisters as they grow up surrounded by a multicultural community in the docklands of Cardiff. An air of abandonment surrounds the opening scenes of the novel, which depict the Gauci family’s life in just two rooms above the café they own in Cardiff Docks.³⁸ The tale of Dolores’ birth, recounted simultaneously with that of her father Frank’s loss of his business and savings at the gambling table, draws

³⁷ See Chapter I and the depictions of Amy in Bernice Rubens’ *I Sent a Letter to My Love* and Alun Richards’ *Home to an Empty House* in which the female characters demonstrate an awareness of other places, but struggle to find the impetus to engage with these places.

³⁸ Trezza Azzopardi, *The Hiding Place* (London: Picador, 2000), p. 8.

attention to the darker side of life in this once thriving docklands. Frank's own gambling addiction and tendency towards violence indicates that the unhappy circumstances which dominate *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl* and *Entertainment* have been prevalent in Wales in the past not only in the South Wales' valleys area, but also within cities. Once again the need for change is dominant within the text, highlighting the scale of the challenge which was faced by the new Welsh Assembly in its mission to provide Wales with a better future.

One of the most striking features of *The Hiding Place* is undoubtedly the complexity of its structure. Stephen Knight has described the narrative in the novel as 'a skilfully crafted intercut structure' which manages to suggest the social impact of 'the decline of a great port'.³⁹ In addition to this effect, *The Hiding Place* reflects increasing changes in narrative structure which can be noted, more widely, in Anglophone Welsh writing in the post-devolution period, such as in Niall Griffiths's first two novels *Grits* (2000) and *Sheepshagger* (2001), which recount the stories of groups of young people in 1990s West Wales through a combination of stark prose descriptions, rapid dialogue and the use of dialect. In *The Hiding Place* both the content and the structure of the novel can be seen to reflect social and political changes within Wales in the years following the 1997 referendum on devolution. Significantly, Dolores' narrative begins by tracing events which took place before her birth, suggesting that she is in control of the recounting of her story and gains a sense of power through the way in which she is able to select and describe specific incidents within her childhood.

Any power the character of Dolores may seem to have grasped through the narrative structure of *The Hiding Place* is in sharp contrast to the sense of powerlessness which Dolores and her sisters struggle against within their family as they grow up. In particular, Fran's obsession with building and lighting fires seems to stem from a desire for control as

³⁹ Stephen Knight, *A Hundred Years of Fiction*, pp. 185-6.

she waits for the moment when ‘she can’t control the fire’ (p. 103) any longer. This yearning for power is reminiscent of that seen in a number of works of fiction from the pre-devolution era, indicating that there is a connection between the characters’ inability to act freely and a lack of political autonomy in Wales. This yearning for power in the lives of the characters is interwoven with images of topographical changes in Wales to create a unique sense of identity. The irony of the story is that Fran’s actions lead only to a further lack of control as she is eventually placed into the care of social services as a result of her behaviour. Fran’s bleak story is mirrored by that of older sisters, Marina and Celesta, who are effectively sold into arranged marriages by father Frank, further cementing the idea that change is needed to liberate these women from such desperate circumstances.

Similarly to *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl* and *Entertainment*, the novel then seems to highlight the need for change at both a political and social level. Significantly, having depicted this bleak situation, the narrative then moves forward to a reunion of the dispersed Gauci family in post-devolution Wales. While the Wales which Dolores returns to does not appear to have been completely changed by devolution, the early indications of change are evident in descriptions of Cardiff. Many of the buildings in the area in which Dolores and her family formerly lived have been demolished to make way for new housing and ‘avenues shimmering with trees and pavement cafés’ (p. 236). The image of pavement cafés in particular emphasises the transition from the decay of the old docklands area to the new, metropolitan style Cardiff Bay, symbolising another move away from the past and towards the future.⁴⁰ The scene also invokes images frequently connected with European life, thus connecting the Welsh city with a wider, global sphere. The fact that these changes appear to be presented as a positive feature, indicates that an increased connection with other places

⁴⁰ These cafés depicted in the new Cardiff Bay are in sharp contrast to those presented earlier in the novel, which are strongly associated with men and gambling tables. See for example, *The Hiding Place*, pp. 13-14 and p. 24.

beyond Wales is something which can be regarded as constructive to the process of regeneration.

The novel's sudden leap forward in time also coincides with an apparent change in Dolores' approach to the future. The trip to Cardiff and her subsequent reunion with her sisters affords Dolores a sense of reconciliation with the past, helping her to come to terms with the difficulties of her upbringing. The novel's closing scene sees Dolores finally reunited with her sister Fran, who looks 'like a refugee from a war zone' (p. 282), recognisable only by her name, which is tattooed on her arm. The scene indicates that in spite of their troubled upbringing both characters have made the transition into adult life. Their ability to do so can be read as reflective of the way in which devolution has finally been introduced in Wales, in spite of the difficulties faced by the process. It is important to note that the reunion of the sisters lacks a patriarchal figure, with the family in fact drawn back together in memory of their late mother. This change suggests that devolution may have contributed to the disassembling of the patriarchal structures which were so visible in the early stages of the novel. As Wales has gained a measure of political independence, so too the women in the novel appear to have been liberated from the oppressive environment in which they were brought up.

These characters' ability to overcome difficulties and move towards the future is a feature common to much Anglophone Welsh writing in the post-devolution period. Katie Gramich notes that both *The Hiding Place* and *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl* are 'representative of the Welsh women's writing of the new millennium, and in many ways contrast starkly with their peers of a century earlier in their focus on conflicting and hybrid identities, family breakdown and domestic abuse. Both have first-person female narrators who tell their own brutalized life stories and affirm their own unlikely survival'.⁴¹ The

⁴¹ Katie Gramich, *Twentieth-Century Women's Writing in Wales: Land, Gender, Belonging*, p. 192.

survival of these female narrators is made all the more significant by the fact that their reconciliation with the past comes at a time when Wales is facing the start of the process of devolution. The coincidence of these two events indicates that Welsh identity is itself undergoing a period of reconciliation and a move towards the future. Here again culture can be seen as being inextricably linked to the process of political change underway in Wales at the time.

The theme of regeneration is particularly significant in Anglophone Welsh writing from the years following the introduction of devolution. In the early stages of *The Hiding Place*, the Cardiff docklands areas are portrayed as a dark and forlorn area where people struggle to survive. When Dolores returns to Cardiff in the post-devolution period, the city has been transformed and is now 'busy, set and full of purpose' (p. 200). Significantly, the houses in which Dolores and her family grew up are about to be demolished to make way for new buildings, suggesting an attempt to erase the scars of the past in favour of the creation of a new future. As such, the novel indicates that the changes to physical places as a result of regeneration and the introduction of devolution are not without social implications. Here, the new political and commercial meaning ascribed to the area has resulted in major alterations to the sense of place and the dispersal of the Tiger Bay community depicted earlier in the novel.

Published in 2000, shortly after the official opening of the Welsh Assembly in 1999, John Williams' novel *Cardiff Dead* also depicts a capital city in transition and explores the difficulties faced by the inhabitants of the city chosen to house the National Assembly. The city in Williams' novel is one of two halves, caught between the challenges of the past and regeneration and hope for the future. Its inhabitants often appear uncomfortable with their surroundings and there is a distinct sense of unease in the many pubs and clubs visited by the novel's main characters. While its outward image may be one of unity and modernity, *Cardiff*

Dead suggests that the inauguration of the new Welsh Assembly is a performance rather than an accurate representation of Welsh culture and identity. Commenting on the opening ceremony for the new Welsh Assembly, the protagonist Mazz describes it as ‘an absurdist panoply of Welsh cultural life’, unrepresentative of contemporary Wales.⁴² Watching the concert, Mazz points out that the scene seems to have been engineered to suit narrow perceptions of Welsh identity. The finale, featuring popular Welsh singers, male voice choirs and a rousing chorus of ‘Every day I thank the Lord I’m Welsh’ is a moment which Mazz finds particularly ironic. Commenting to his friend, Lawrence, Mazz states that it is ‘great to know you’ve got a culture boils down to one famous play, two sixties cabaret stars, a male-voice choir and a twelve-year old opera singer’ (p. 269). While perhaps representative of some perceptions of Welsh identity, the scene certainly does little to extend the image of Welsh identity beyond that often the subject of clichéd images of Welsh nationality. It is worth noting that this satirical tone is mirrored in a number of works published in the wake of devolution in Wales. For example, in Joe Dunthorne’s 2008 novel *Submarine*, which offers a humorous exploration of the life of a teenage boy in post-devolution Wales. The novel has proved popular both in Wales and internationally and to date has been translated into ten languages. At one stage in the novel protagonist Oliver sarcastically asks his Father if devolution is ‘about how people from Cardiff are closer to apes?’⁴³

Regardless of the image projected by the ceremony, *Cardiff Dead* seems to suggest that the day of the Welsh Assembly official opening marks a turning point in Welsh identity.⁴⁴ The ceremony coincides with the funeral of Charlie Unger, a Cardiff musician whose death leads to the gathering of many characters from Cardiff and beyond. Charlie

⁴² John Williams, *Cardiff Dead, The Cardiff Trilogy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), pp. 211-453 (p. 268).

⁴³ Joe Dunthorne, *Submarine*, (London: Penguin Books, 2008), p. 164.

⁴⁴ Postcolonial theorist Stephen Knight has described the novel as ‘the voice of postcolonialism’ in Wales for its depiction of a defiantly Welsh sense of identity. Stephen Knight ‘Welsh Fiction in English as Postcolonial Literature’, *Postcolonial Wales*, pp. 159-176 (p. 174).

seems to epitomise Cardiff's past, especially that of Tiger Bay. Certainly, the fact that Charlie's funeral coincides with the official opening of the National Assembly indicates a moment of change from past to future in the cultural and political history of Wales. At the funeral Charlie's daughter, Tyra, sobs throughout the service, realising that she is 'crying for herself, crying for Charlie, crying for Tiger Bay, crying for all the places and people who were lost and gone' (p. 258). Her distress is indicative of the emotional impact of the physical changes occurring in Cardiff, suggesting that the process of regeneration is not without its difficulties for the residents of Wales' capital city.

It is significant that *Cardiff Dead*, along with two other novels by John Williams entitled *Prince of Wales* and *Two Bars, A Pub and A Nightclub*, were published by London-based publishing house, Bloomsbury. The decision to publish novels which focus so heavily on Cardiff and life in contemporary South Wales is perhaps indicative of a growing interest in Welsh culture in the wake of devolution. Jane Aaron and M. Wynn Thomas attribute this decision to a change in the mind-set of London-based publishers, who spotted a fresh appeal in Anglophone Welsh writing in the post-devolution years.⁴⁵ Aaron and Thomas cite Malcolm Pryce's series of Aberystwyth-based crime fictions as a further example of this change, with the series also being published by Bloomsbury.⁴⁶ It is possible that this renewed focus on Anglophone Welsh writing is not only because the field offers a fresh appeal in the wake of devolution, but also because of a growing attention to Welsh culture on an international stage. While interest in Cardiff, as Wales' capital city and the home of the Welsh Assembly, was perhaps an inevitable outcome of devolution, it is interesting that Bloomsbury took a similar interest in a series of novels based in West Wales. The decision indicates that there is interest in a variety of areas in Wales, although it is worth noting that

⁴⁵ Jane Aaron and M. Wynn Thomas, 'Pulling You Through Changes', p. 301.

⁴⁶ See for example the first novel in the series, *Aberystwyth Mon Amour* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001).

Aberystwyth is also the site of a large Welsh Assembly building, built alongside a number of offices across Wales in a scheme designed to ensure that the Assembly was visible and accessible to citizens from all parts of Wales.

Speaking in an interview with Nick Hasted for *The Guardian* in 2001, John Williams expressed an awareness of the difference between regional and national identity in Wales. Williams pointed out that as a Welsh writer he frequently found himself being asked if he thought his novels spoke for Wales. Reflecting on this question, Williams described the idea as ‘absurd’ but added that ‘it makes you think, what can your work speak for? Cardiff feels as big a place as you can possibly attempt to do that for, really [...] What pleases me about these last two books is how much they're read there. It makes my job seem concrete, and useful.’⁴⁷ It is notable that Williams cites the interest of local readers as a measure of the success of his role as an author, as well as acknowledging the diversity of the audience from which his readership is comprised. Furthermore, his dismissal of the idea that a single novel could be representative of an entire Welsh identity supports the theory that Welsh identity in the post-devolution era is complex and may vary in different regions of Wales, meaning that it cannot necessarily be depicted under a single unified image.

Perceptions of post-devolution Cardiff were further challenged in a collection of poems and short stories published in 2005, entitled *The Big Book of Cardiff*. Published to coincide with Cardiff’s centenary as a city, the collection brought together authors and poets in what proved to be quite a diverse exploration of life in the city. In an introduction which highlights the importance of the collection, editors Peter Finch and Grahame Davies point to the changes which have taken place in Cardiff in recent years. Opening by posing the

⁴⁷ ‘An Anarchist at the Dockside’. John Williams in an interview with Nick Hasted, *The Guardian* Saturday 23rd June 2001. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2001/jun/23/fiction> [Accessed: 09/03/13].

question, ‘how do you imagine Cardiff to be?’, Finch and Davies go on to outline different perceptions of the city.⁴⁸ Each viewpoint is offered from the perspective of different places, both inside Wales and from further afield:

If you’re middle-aged and have never been here maybe you think the hills run right to the shoreline and there’s coal in the streets. If you’re from north-west Wales, maybe it’s a colonial outpost of the English empire – governmental, stern, alien, nothing to do with you. If you’re from America, where knowledge of the Principality barely exists, it’s the town that gave the world Shirley Bassey. If you’re from Cardiff, New South Wales, you might know it’s the city that steel once came from. If you’re a member of the local population you might still imagine it to be part of the West Country (p. 7).

This assertion seems to cut straight to the heart of the complexity of Welsh regional and national identity in the early years of the twenty-first century. For Finch and Davies, Cardiff is ‘all of these things and none of them’ (p. 7), suggesting that the writing in *The Big Book of Cardiff* will reflect that same sense of diversity and complexity.

The Cardiff which is presented in *The Big Book of Cardiff* is arguably one which has been reimagined in its new capacity as the home of the Welsh Assembly. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the editors describe what they see as a ‘new Cardiff’ (p. 7), a creation which they claim has been in existence since the 1980s when the major regeneration programme for Cardiff docklands was established. For Finch and Davies, however, the final catalyst for regeneration came in 1997 when devolution ‘became a reality and the National Assembly for Wales was established in 1999’ (p. 8). In that respect, the editors regard the collection as a successor to Meic Stephens’ 1987 *A Cardiff Anthology*, demonstrating the extent to which Cardiff has grown and developed in the years since Stephens’ collection was published. Nevertheless, while its focus may be on Cardiff, the anthology is nonetheless indicative of the impact of devolution on a wider Wales. In particular, a number of the stories focus on the connection between Cardiff and other places in Wales. In ‘A Walker on the Wall’ Anthony

⁴⁸ Peter Finch and Grahame Davies, ‘Introduction’ to *The Big Book of Cardiff* (Bridgend: Seren, 2005), pp.7-9 (p. 7).

Howell writes of the flatlands which separate Cardiff and Newport, while a number of the stories and poems connect to different areas in and around Cardiff.⁴⁹ The significance of this editorial decision is clearly to demonstrate that Cardiff is not an isolated city, but a place of importance in Wales, relevant to wider discourses on Welsh national identity.

Connections to other places in *The Big Book of Cardiff* also extend beyond other areas of Wales, demonstrating a growing sense of connection between Wales and the wider world. For example, in his short story 'A Kind of Liverpool/Cardiff Thing', Niall Griffiths draws comparisons between Cardiff and Liverpool. Staying in the newly redeveloped Cardiff Bay, the protagonist reflects on how Cardiff has a unique identity which distinguishes it from other places he has visited. To this end, claims that 'of the long list of coastal cities I've drifted through confused and craving, the city of Cardiff appears', emphasising its distinction from other cities.⁵⁰ This sense of distinction may originate from the speaker's own affinity with Cardiff, suggesting he feels that the city has a clear sense of identity with which he is able to connect. Moreover, the way in which the narrative switches easily between Cardiff and Liverpool further confirms the idea that Wales has not been isolated by devolution, but perhaps even enjoys increased links to other cities and cultures within the United Kingdom. The story certainly seems to encourage comparison, rather than conflict, between Welsh and British identity.⁵¹

As a result of this comparative approach, the overwhelming tone of *The Big Book of Cardiff* is one of hope for the future of Wales, contributing an enthusiastic examination of the boundaries of Welsh identity in the wake of devolution. In particular, Gillian Clarke's poem

⁴⁹ Anthony Howell, 'A Walker on the Wall' in *The Big Book of Cardiff*, pp. 109-118.

⁵⁰ Niall Griffiths, 'A Kind of Liverpool/Cardiff Thing' in *The Big Book of Cardiff*, pp. 85-96 (p. 86).

⁵¹ Emyr W. Williams 'The Dynamic of Welsh Identity', *National Identity in the British Isles*, p. 58. Interestingly, similar comparisons between Wales and other places within the United Kingdom can also be noted in contemporary Welsh drama. For example, in Peter Gills' play *Cardiff East* one of the characters reflects that 'I didn't feel Welsh 'till I went to Yorkshire', suggesting that her travel to other places has confirmed her sense of Welsh identity. Peter Gill, *Cardiff East*, p. 86.

‘Letting the Light In’, which draws on depictions of a number of different places in Cardiff, describes Wales as a ‘reimagined nation’.⁵² In the final stanza of the poem, Clarke ends with a rallying cry to ‘make fine buildings’ (p. 45) and ‘see what stone, steel, slate and glass,/can make out of air and water and sunlight’ (p. 45). In drawing together four of Wales’ remaining industrial products, Clarke draws readers towards a future in which Wales is rebuilt as a new and powerful nation, with Cardiff as its epicentre. The description of Wales as ‘reimagined’ (p. 45) points towards a sense of rebirth and regeneration, reflected in the transformation of the Cardiff Docklands in the post-devolution years.

The stories in *The Big Book of Cardiff* further demonstrate the air of transition which exists within Anglophone Welsh writing in the years immediately following the decision to introduce devolution in Wales. Their combined effect is one of variety, linked by the apparently universal agreement that devolution has the potential to become a turning point in the tumultuous history of the Welsh nation. Along with novels such as *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl*, *Entertainment* and *Cardiff Dead*, the collection illustrates a changing pattern in Anglophone Welsh writing in the years immediately following the introduction of devolution for Wales. These works are united by the way in which they reflect a gradual shift away from the past and towards the future and the prospect of a devolved Wales in which culture and identity must be further explored in order to become a significant part of everyday life.

Fragmented or Unified? Diversity in Post-Devolution Wales

The majority of the texts discussed thus far in this chapter have centred primarily on South Wales and have depicted post-devolution Wales as an increasingly diverse and complex nation. As already demonstrated, this diversity frequently manifests itself in the class or

⁵² Gillian Clarke, ‘Letting the Light In’ in *The Big Book of Cardiff*, pp. 44-45 (p. 45).

social differences between characters depicted in Anglophone Welsh writing. Census results from the start of the twenty-first century indicated a noticeable increase in the ethnic diversity of England and Wales, reporting that fourteen percent of respondents described themselves as an ethnic group other than white.⁵³ These figures demonstrated a significant rise since the 2001 census when over ninety one percent of respondents identified their ethnic group as ‘White’ and seem to confirm Dai Smith’s assertion that ‘Wales is a singular noun but a plural experience’.⁵⁴ As such, it is hardly surprising that these changes are reflected in the fiction produced by Welsh writers in the wake of devolution. Such developments were not necessarily limited to Wales, but are reflective of a changing trend across the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, Paul Chaney and Charlotte Williams have argued that from an ethnic minority perspective the National Assembly saw a ‘disastrous start’, perhaps due in part to the fact that no black or Asian politicians were elected as Assembly Members in the first Assembly elections held in May 1999.⁵⁵ Chaney and Williams attribute this lack of Assembly Members to a ‘lack of political trust’ (p. 205) and uncertainty over the nature of Welsh identity. Clearly in order for the Assembly to be able to engage fully with all Welsh citizens it was necessary to encourage further debate on the meaning of Welsh identity in contemporary Wales. To do so would ensure that multiculturalism became a part of everyday cultural life and a feature of post-devolution Anglophone Welsh writing.

In light of such major changes to the political landscape of Wales and the subsequent need to redefine Welsh identity, it is perhaps unsurprising that in the wake of devolution Welsh writers were keen to reflect on the meaning of Welsh identity. In an article published

⁵³ Statistics available to view online through the Office for National Statistics at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/sty-ethnicity-in-england-and-wales.html> [Accessed 26/04/13].

⁵⁴ Dai Smith, *Wales: A Question for History* (Bridgend: Seren, 1999), p. 36.

⁵⁵ Paul Chaney and Charlotte Williams, ‘Getting Involved: Civic and Political Life in Wales’ in *A Tolerant Nation? Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Wales*, ed. Charlotte Williams, Paul O’Leary and Neil Evans (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 201-213 (p. 205).

in *New Welsh Review* in 2001, writer and artist Isabel Adonis considered the question of black Welsh identity in contemporary Wales, commenting that:

If anyone asks me what it feels like to be a black Welsh woman, I'm stuck for an answer. It doesn't feel like anything at all; it feels like being human. I am my natural colour, and I live in my natural home, no problem.⁵⁶

For Adonis, the question of identity does not necessarily have to be a complex one. Building on the sentiments expressed in some pre-devolution fiction, Adonis asserts her belief that Welsh identity in the twenty-first century cannot rely on a homogenous image. Indeed, Adonis argues that the term “black Welsh” is not an identity: on the contrary, it is a duality and a contradiction’ (p. 28). Adonis therefore supports the assertion made by Emyr Williams that separate strands of identity need not necessarily be in conflict with each other, but may in fact coexist.⁵⁷ Once these separate strands are drawn together, the result is not reliant on regional, national or ethnic divisions, but instead incorporates individual features to create a unique sense of Welsh identity in the post-devolution period. Furthermore, the theory outlined by Wodak et al suggests that an ability to appeal to a diverse audience is indicative of literature which is able to represent changing social circumstances and imagine a new sense of identity. Since the ethnic identity of Wales had changed dramatically by the start of the twenty-first century, writing which reflected such changes would be better placed to offer a more accurate depiction of the boundaries of Welsh identity.

Published five years after the referendum on devolution in Wales, Charlotte Williams’ 2002 novel *Sugar and Slate* encapsulated a unique moment in the redefinition of Welsh identity. Her semi-autobiographical account traces the life of a young woman caught between Guyana, Africa and Wales. Williams cuts straight to the heart of the complexity of Welsh

⁵⁶ Isabel Adonis, ‘Black Welsh identity: the unspeakable speaks’ in *New Welsh Review* 54 (Winter 2001), 27-8 (p. 27).

⁵⁷ Emyr W. Williams ‘The Dynamic of Welsh Identity’, *National Identity in the British Isles*, p. 58.

identity, reflecting on what she describes as ‘poor old mixed up Wales’.⁵⁸ As previously touched upon, it is significant that this complexity of Welsh identity seems to appeal to the character, who claims that Wales is ‘almost as mixed up as I was’ (p. 169). Once again, the mixed identity of post-devolution Wales is presented as a positive feature, where a lack of uniformity indicates a broad range of identities. Gary Younge remarks on this feature of post-devolution Welsh identity in a review of the novel for the *Guardian*. Reflecting on the publication of the novel in 2002, Younge argued that: ‘its arrival is timely. With devolution in Scotland and Wales, mixed-race peoples have both the opportunity and the necessity to reappraise their own racial histories and identities’.⁵⁹ Younge’s suggestion points to the post-devolution period as a welcome opportunity for those in Wales and Scotland to project a new, diverse sense of identity more representative of their respective contemporary societies.

It is this moment of transition and the potential for such change that the narrator connects most strongly with throughout *Sugar and Slate*. Proclaiming a love for Wales and its ‘contours and its contradictions’ (p. 169), the narrator highlights the complex process of redefinition which Welsh identity has undergone in the years since the introduction of devolution. Nevertheless, Williams is quick to point out that this process of redefinition is far from over, acknowledging that Wales as a nation had previously been guilty of ‘rapidly rewriting history to make sense of itself as some kind of monolithic whole and it just wasn’t working’ (p. 169). Williams’ conclusion again asserts the idea that Welsh identity does not necessarily need to conform to a monolithic sense of identity in order to exist and evolve. Indeed, as demonstrated by the novel, it is clear that in the years since devolution Wales has projected an image of identity which is far from monolithic. As discussed in previous

⁵⁸ Charlotte Williams, *Sugar and Slate*, (Aberystwyth: Planet, 2002), p. 169.

⁵⁹ Gary Younge, ‘The Congo Boys of Cardiff’, *The Guardian*, Saturday 1st June 2002, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2002/jun/01/featuresreviews.guardianreview10> [Accessed 28/09/2013].

chapters, much of the campaign for devolution in 1979 had been constrained by a desire for uniformity. In subsequent years, acceptance that different places and concerns occupied different regions of Wales played a major role in the successful campaign for devolution. Yet the installation of a National Assembly for Wales marked only the beginning of a process of evolution which would ultimately result in an attempt to unify Welsh identity through diversity. As ably demonstrated by *Sugar and Slate*, Anglophone Welsh writing was at the forefront of this process of change.

These differences which exist in Welsh identity in the post-devolution era extend beyond variations in race and culture. Differences also extend to regional identities, an idea which Williams expresses as her novel reaches its conclusion. For Williams there is a clear distinction between North and South Wales, a subtle difference which may not immediately be visible to those outside Wales, but one which is nonetheless poignant in the debate over Welsh identity in the twenty-first century. The protagonist in *Sugar and Slate* describes North Wales as being ‘very different’ (p. 169) from South Wales, with its inhabitants perhaps more closely connected to those in Liverpool or Chester than to other parts of Wales. Once a point of major division in the debate over Welsh identity, differences between North and South Wales are evidently still problematic in contemporary Wales as depicted in *Sugar and Slate*.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, the narrator expresses hope that this difference will lessen with time, dreaming of ‘a future Wales where the search for one voice gives way to a chorus of voices that make up what it is to be Welsh’ (p. 191). Diversity is sought as a source of hope for the future of the Welsh nation, a feature to be embraced rather than regarded as a threat to Welsh identity.

⁶⁰ Angharad Price has noted that differences between North and South Wales are explored in a comic fashion in the *Dyn Dwad* series of novels by author Dafydd Huws. The novels were first published in the late 1970s and concern the figure of Goronwy Jones, a man from North Wales who moves to South Wales and encounters frequent linguistic misunderstandings there. ‘Dim Oll’? Ymateb Nofelwyr Cymraeg i Ddatganoli’ *Llên Cymru*, 34.1 (October 2011), 237-247 (p. 239). This article is discussed in more detail on p. 204.

It is not only multiculturalism which has contributed to the diversification of Anglophone Welsh writing in the post-devolution years. The twenty-first century has also seen a significant rise in the volume of lesbian and gay literature from Wales. Jane Aaron has argued that in the wake of devolution such writing has ‘presented its difference more confidently in Welsh writing’, marking a significant transition in the presentation of Welsh identity.⁶¹ Aaron notes in particular the generic breadth of such writing, including fiction, drama and poetry.⁶² The variety of mediums used by authors to explore lesbian and gay relationships in the wake of devolution is itself a further sign of the diversification of Anglophone Welsh writing. The rise is also a sign that post-devolution Anglophone Welsh writing is able to reflect even minority sections of society. Figures released in a report by Statistics for Wales suggested that in 2010 only approximately two percent of the population of Wales would define their sexuality as lesbian, gay or bisexual.⁶³ While there is a certain amount of ambiguity about these figures, the recorded numbers clearly show that the majority of the Welsh population regard themselves as heterosexual. The increase in Anglophone Welsh writing which features lesbian, gay or bisexual characters can then be read as indicative of a culture which is able to reflect a broad range of social groups, regardless of their relative size.

Approaches to lesbian and gay writing in the post-devolution years depict a rapidly diversifying and expanding culture. John Sam Jones’s 2000 collection of short stories, *Welsh Boys Too*, delves into a world which is dominated by the gay relationships which occupy

⁶¹ Jane Aaron, ‘Towards Devolution: New Welsh Writing’ in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 685–699 (p. 698).

⁶² Aaron draws on the examples of playwright Roger Williams and poet Gillian Brightmore in her analysis, p. 698.

⁶³ These statistics were published in the report ‘Sexual Identity in Wales – April 2009–March 2010’ by Statistics for Wales and is available to read at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2010/101216sb1042010en.pdf> [Accessed 21/06/13]. There is, however, some uncertainty about these figures which were collated as a result of sample data collection and do not include the 2.7 percent of respondents who did not respond to the question.

much of the narrative. In contrast, Erica Wooff's 2002 novel *Mud Puppy* takes a very different approach, presenting lesbianism as just one part of life in contemporary Wales.⁶⁴ The novel, which is set in Newport, is set against the backdrop of a city which is in the process of redefinition following the industrial decline and economic difficulties of the 1990s. *Mud Puppy*'s protagonist, Daryl, adopts a humorous tone when discussing her identity, explaining that she is descended 'from a long line of mud' in a playful reference to the mud which covers the banks of the tidal river in Newport.⁶⁵ Similarly, Daryl later claims that 'being Welsh is very sexy at the moment' (p. 5), indicating a sense of security in her own identity as a young woman from Wales. As with *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl*, *The Hiding Place* and *Cardiff Dead*, the majority of the characters included in *Mud Puppy* are of a working-class background and the novel presents Newport as an area in transition, making it a setting which aptly reflects the shifting identity of the Welsh nation in the post-devolution years. Yet the plot centres as much on the relationship between struggling artist Daryl and her father as it does on the lesbian relationship between Daryl and local girl, Ani.

Not all explorations of lesbianism to emerge from Welsh writing have reflected the same sense of nonchalance about sexuality seen in *Mud Puppy*. Welsh-born Sarah Waters' novels have explored the complexities of lesbian relationships in different time periods, including *Tipping the Velvet* (1998) and *Fingersmith* (2002), which are set in Victorian Britain. Both novels were later adapted for television by the BBC, bringing Waters' work to a UK-wide audience. Although none of her novels to date has included a Welsh setting or characters, Waters has still been instrumental in raising the profile of lesbian and gay writing in Wales, as well as on an international platform. In recent years Waters has been involved as a judge for the prestigious Iris Prize, an international prize awarded annually to a lesbian and

⁶⁴ Kate North's 2008 novel *Eva Shell* takes a similar approach in its depiction of Cardiff. *Eva Shell* (Blaenau Ffestiniog: Cinnamon Press, 2008).

⁶⁵ Erica Wooff, *Mud Puppy* (London: Women's Press, 2002), p. 5.

gay short film. Founded in 2007 and awarded during the Iris Prize Festival week held in Cardiff each year, the prize is part of a calendar of events aimed at raising the profile of lesbian and gay writing from Wales. Sarah Waters has spoken about the festival, hailing it as an excellent feature for Cardiff. In an interview with Kirstie McCrum for the *Western Mail*, Waters outlined her concern that ‘we don’t always think of Wales as being at the forefront of initiatives like this’, adding that the festival says ‘great things about the direction in which Wales is moving’ in the twenty-first century.⁶⁶ To date, none of the winners of the prize has been from Wales, but previous festivals have included the work of Welsh film makers and producers and the success of the prize in attracting international interest is a sign of the way in which it has connected Wales with the wider world.

Like representations of multiculturalism, depictions of lesbian, gay or bisexual characters and relationships in Anglophone Welsh writing are important precisely because of the diversity which they signify. The presence of such writing in Wales further contributes to the impression that Welsh identity is multi-faceted and cannot be reduced to a single homogenous image. In addition, the fact that this writing has expanded significantly in the years since devolution was introduced in Wales seems to suggest that Anglophone Welsh writers feel able to assert a more diverse range of sexual identities in their work.⁶⁷ For some authors these assertions are subtle, while for others they are made openly within their writing, such as in Stevie Davies’ 2004 novel *Kith and Kin* in which the image of a daffodil, traditionally an emblem of Welsh identity, is associated with the ‘sickly sweetness of other

⁶⁶ Sarah Waters in an interview with Kirstie McCrum for the *Western Mail*, 1st October 2011, p. 12.

⁶⁷ While there had been notable homosexual authors in Anglophone Welsh writing in previous years, they had frequently been forced to express their sexuality more subtly within their writing. Huw Osborne, for example, notes that Rhys Davies’ Welsh romances may be read ‘in terms of his less marketable need to identify with Wales as a gay man’, emphasising the way in which homosexuality in Davies’ writing was often suppressed as it did not conform to what Osborne describes as ‘the rigid industrial Nonconformist sexual codes of Welshness’. Huw Osborne, *Rhys Davies: Writers of Wales Series* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), p. 76.

people's sex'.⁶⁸ Such images challenge traditional perceptions of Welsh identity and contribute to the rapidly expanding scope of Anglophone Welsh writing in the post-devolution period. Moreover, the fact that such diversity exists within Anglophone Welsh writing means that authors are better able to assert a wide range of identities through their fiction. In so doing, the boundaries of national identity are further extended.

Crossing the Linguistic Divide in Post-Devolution Anglophone Welsh Writing

Having established in the previous chapter that a connection exists between regional and national identity in Anglophone Welsh writing, it is important to consider how this relation develops in the years since devolution in Wales. The topic inevitably raises questions about the linguistic culture of Wales in the post-devolution period, returning to an argument which had caused much division for many years. An increase in communication between Welsh and English language fiction from Wales in the post-devolution era can be seen to reflect the changing landscape in Anglophone Welsh writing in the twenty-first century. Statistics obtained during the 2001 and 2011 census results indicate that the proportion of people able to speak, read or write in Welsh dropped from 20.8% to 19% by 2011.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, in spite of this decline, Welsh language fiction continued to thrive in Wales at the start of the twenty-first century.⁷⁰ Interestingly, the 2001 and 2011 census results both indicated that percentages of Welsh-language speakers were highest in areas which had also voted in favour of devolution by the largest margins in the 1997 referendum. This fact is highly significant, suggesting that a connection between use of the Welsh language and a desire to secure

⁶⁸ Stevie Davies, *Kith and Kin* (London: Phoenix, 2004), p. 103.

⁶⁹ 'Welsh Speakers by Local Authority, Gender and Broader Age Groups 2001 and 2011 Census', published by the Office for National Statistics and available at: <https://stats.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Welsh-Language/WelshSpeakers-by-LA-BroaderAge-2001And2011Census> [Accessed 19/04/13].

⁷⁰ It is worth noting that this rise may be in part due to an increase in funding for Welsh language fiction in the years since devolution was introduced in Wales.

political independence for Wales may have been in existence in this period. Even the act of translation from Welsh to English has proved controversial; Menna Elfyn notes that her decision to produce a collection of poetry with facing-page English translations in 1995 proved unpopular with some Welsh readers. Speaking in an interview with David Woolley, Elfyn claims that such criticism did not deter her from similar publications, instead arguing that ‘I write in the Welsh language because it’s the language of my imagination but I also write for the whole world’.⁷¹ Her words reveal a desire to engage not just with those who are able to speak the Welsh language, but to use literature as a means to reach out to new audiences.

Author and academic Angharad Price has explored the reaction of Welsh writers to devolution in an article for Welsh journal *Llên Cymru* in 2011, entitled ‘Dim Oll’? Ymateb Nofelwyr Cymraeg i Ddatganoli’ (‘Nothing at all? Welsh Novelists’ Response to Devolution’). Here Price argues that the outcome of the 1997 referendum appears to have elicited a particularly complex reaction from Welsh language novelists.⁷² For Price the period has been marked by a rise in fiction which satirises contemporary politics in Wales, such as Robin Llywelyn’s novel *Un Diwrnod yn yr Eisteddfod* (*One Day at the Eisteddfod*) (2004) and Marcel Williams’s *Senedd a Satan* (*Senedd and Satan*) (1999).⁷³ Nevertheless, Price notes that some demonstrable changes have taken place in the field of Welsh writing since the introduction of devolution in 1997. Novelist Fflur Dafydd, whom Price cites in her article, suggests that devolution provided her with ‘a load of themes and tens of sub-plots which

⁷¹ Menna Elfyn in an interview with David Woolley, available at: <http://www.mennaelfyn.co.uk/Interview.html> [Accessed 20/04/13]. Elfyn goes on to explain her belief that the translation of her work into other languages, such as Spanish and Norwegian, has also allowed her to perceive her work as a poet differently.

⁷² Angharad Price, ‘Dim Oll’? Ymateb Nofelwyr Cymraeg i Ddatganoli’, p. 237. All subsequent English quotations from this article were translated by Katie Gramich. Price points out that the apparent lack of reaction on the part of Welsh-language writers is in stark contrast to the reaction manifested in the wake of the failure to secure devolution for Wales in 1979.

⁷³ Both novels offer an almost farcical portrayal of the role of the new Welsh Assembly and the politicians elected to it.

wouldn't have been possible [...] ten years before' (p. 245). Dafydd goes on to reflect on the significance of the process of translating her Welsh-language fiction into English, a step she refers to as the 'apparent bridging between two languages' (p. 245) in order to engage meaningfully with non-Welsh speaking audiences. This desire to engage with wider audiences seems to be increasingly evident in Welsh writing in the wake of devolution.

Fflur Dafydd's perception of the importance of translation touches on one of the most striking features of post-devolution Welsh writing. Translation has always been a significant part of Welsh culture, but as M. Wynn Thomas has noted 'although Welsh-English translation was originally [...] an aspect of Wales's relationship to England, it eventually developed into an aspect of Wales's relationship to itself'.⁷⁴ This assertion appears particularly pertinent in post-devolution Welsh writing which features a number of works of fiction translated from Welsh into English to accommodate an increasingly Anglophone Welsh population. It can be argued that this is a further indication of the desire to contribute to the creation of national identity and promote engagement with as wide an audience as possible in the post-devolution period. The outcome of such a process could potentially be the production of a renewed sense of nationalism, reliant on multiple identities.⁷⁵ Thus, the sense of identity constructed by the translation of Welsh writing has the potential to reflect the multicultural and rapidly diversifying social status of Wales in the twenty-first century. The process of translation may also be an act not so much of extension to the boundaries of national identity, but of the removal of barriers which existed between the two linguistic cultures of Wales. Moreover, the translation of Welsh-language fiction also broadens the

⁷⁴ M. Wynn Thomas, *Corresponding Cultures: The Two Literatures of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), p. 127.

⁷⁵ Ruth Wodak, Rudolf de Cillia, Martin Reisigl and Karin Liebhart, 'Introduction' to *The Discursive Construction of National Identity Second Edition*, p. 4.

potential readership beyond Wales, pointing towards a heightened consciousness of the relevance of Welsh writing to other places and cultures.

The removal of such barriers features thematically within a number of texts which have been translated in the post-devolution era. In her analysis of Welsh writing after devolution, Angharad Price refers to Grahame Davies's 2005 novel *Rhaid i Bopeth Newid*, which was translated into English, by the author himself in 2007, under the title *Everything Must Change*. The novel draws Price's attention for its exploration of the effects of devolution on Wales and its culture. It was this focus which also caught the attention of Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas, who described the book as 'the first post-national novel' to appear in Wales.⁷⁶ The novel juxtaposes fiction and fact by alternating the fictional story of Welsh language campaigner, Meinwen, with that of the French philosopher and activist, Simone Weil. While Weil's story unfolds against the backdrop of war, Meinwen finds herself facing a very different battle in post-devolution Wales as she fights to support the survival of the Welsh language. For Meinwen, the Welsh Assembly initially appears to offer limited support for her cause. A committee established to consider the role of the Welsh language in Wales is rapidly renamed as the 'Languages of Wales Committee' in order to reflect ethnic diversity within Wales, a move Meinwen regards as an attempt to 'put Welsh in its place'.⁷⁷ It is worth noting that not all of the characters in the novel share Meinwen's view of the Welsh Assembly. Fictional First Minister Haydn Davies is a former activist who has taken the decision that he is able to 'have more influence inside the system than shouting from the margins' (p. 128). As such, Meinwen's own refusal to utilise the system as part of her campaign work appears to be a rejection of the political system in place in Wales.

⁷⁶ Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas, quotation included on the cover of Grahame Davies, *Everything Must Change* (Bridgend: Seren Books, 2007). The description of the novel as 'post-national' seems to indicate that Wales has entered a new period since the introduction of devolution, which no longer places such significance on the centrality of national identity.

⁷⁷ Grahame Davies, *Everything Must Change* (Bridgend: Seren Books, 2007), p. 54.

Meinwen's reluctance to broaden the field of her debate is one of the on-going themes of the novel. Reflecting on her role within the Welsh language movement to date, Meinwen decides that 'she and Dewi represented the Movement's core values' (p. 111), refusing to consider the possibility of what she regards as the 'more sophisticated [...] terminology and tactics' (p. 111) used by younger members. This refusal to move forward in her method of protest and political lobbying is portrayed as a hindrance to the effectiveness of Meinwen's campaigning. Veiled threats of 'direct action' (p. 129) during important meetings do little to further her cause and often appear to counteract her efforts. More troubling still is the extent to which Meinwen chooses to isolate herself from others, adopting a dislike of physical contact which mirrors that seen in the portrayal of Simone Weil.⁷⁸ Meinwen's character differs from Weil's, however, in her determination to remain isolated from all but her most trusted friends. While Weil was renowned for her efforts to work alongside members of the working class, including taking jobs as a factory worker and a farm labourer, Meinwen chooses to engage only with those who share her political beliefs. Like Weil, however, Meinwen develops a disturbing tendency for self-denial, refusing food in the same manner as Weil. Ultimately, Meinwen's refusal to embrace a new style of politics in Wales becomes a barrier to her attempts to protect the Welsh language.

Meinwen's sense of forced isolation extends beyond her social circle to the wider Welsh nation. Her character becomes increasingly isolated from the 'imagined community', trapped as she is within her own narrow sphere and unable to see beyond her own beliefs. Indeed, this political isolation is mirrored by Meinwen's home, the huge Yr Hafan house which stands on a hill and had previously been a base for activists. Meinwen notes that the house now feels 'like a monument to a vanished world' (p. 84); as such, it aptly represents

⁷⁸ The novel records Weil's tendency to refer to her dislike of human contact and her fear of germs as her 'disgustingness' (p. 23).

the dated approaches employed by Meinwen as part of her campaigning. Her vision for Wales seems to be one of similar isolation, which may leave Wales unable to operate effectively on a global platform. This problem is highlighted by the character of Mallwyd, Meinwen's former University lecturer and a keen Welsh language activist. Mallwyd's desire to preserve the Welsh language at times threatens to undermine his ability to communicate his ideas to a wider audience. Addressing a crowd of protesters at a meeting to oppose the creation of an American security equipment factory in Haverfordwest, Mallwyd chooses to deliver his speech in the Welsh language, in spite of the fact that only 'ten per cent of the audience could understand' (p. 212) the language. His decision to do so undoubtedly limits the effectiveness of his argument, reducing the potential impact he is able to make with his speech.

It is this determination to maintain separation between the Welsh and English languages and cultures which ultimately leads Meinwen to a desperate act of violent protest. Infuriated by the Welsh Assembly's refusal to introduce a property act which would protect affordable housing for Welsh people, Meinwen resorts to smashing the windows of an estate agent in Caernarfon in protest. Her action results in a prison sentence, during which she contemplates suicide before finally realising that isolating herself from others will do little to further her cause. Running parallel to this process is the story of journalist John Sayle who delights in branding the beliefs of Meinwen and her fellow campaigners as 'racist' (p. 26). Sayle's character acts as a further barrier to political progress and communication between Welsh and English language factions of Wales. Branding the Welsh language campaigners the 'Taffyban' (p. 46), Sayle heightens existing divisions in his bid to manipulate political processes. The full extent of Sayle's manipulation is finally revealed in an email in which he complains of 'bloody cultural diversity' (p. 279) and 'ragheads and sheepshaggers' (p. 279). Such dangerous attitudes are thus depicted not only as a threat to Welsh language

campaigners, but also to the cultural diversity of Wales as a nation. Significantly, through exposing Sayle's true attitude, Meinwen draws together those maligned by the journalist and simultaneously demonstrates an understanding of the diversity which exists within post-devolution Wales. The moment seems to empower her, leaving her with the knowledge that

she could survive, and so could her culture. Sometimes it might take agreement, sometimes it might take aggression, sometimes diplomacy, sometimes daring; sometimes rashness, sometimes restraint. But whatever it took, she would do it, and through engagement now, not isolation (p. 282).

The close of *Everything Must Change*, then, suggests that the only way forward in post-devolution Wales is by acknowledging the diversity in existence and embracing the new political processes established as a result of the National Assembly.

In sharp contrast to the solemnity of Davies' novel, Catrin Dafydd's 2007 novel *Random Deaths and Custard* offers a very different and, at times, comedic perspective on linguistic culture in post-devolution in Wales. Already a published Welsh-language author, the novel was Dafydd's first in the English language and proved popular, being long-listed for the prestigious Wales Book of the Year Award. Certainly the novel seems to epitomise Charlotte Williams' theory of a 'mixed up Wales', comprising of a narrative which effortlessly merges English and Welsh language words in a complex, but endearing, mix. A strong South-Walian dialect runs throughout the novel, which explores the life of a young girl, Sam, as she attempts to balance her complex family relationships with her job in a custard factory, all while narrowly avoiding a series of random deaths. Scenic descriptions do not feature heavily in the text and only minimal references are made to the appearance of Sam's home town. Instead, a sense of identity is created through the way in which the characters communicate with each other and perceive the places around them.

As with the setting in *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl*, place in *Random Deaths and Custard* is perhaps best defined by what it is not. Comparisons are made to Cardiff which, despite being located merely a few miles from the valley in which Samantha lives, is

portrayed as akin to a foreign country. Characters from Cardiff appear more glamorous and more beautiful than those Samantha encounters in her everyday life. The stylish and alluring Dwynwen, sent to the custard factory to oversee Sam's work translating English packaging into the Welsh language, is a prime example of such distinction. As well as being fashionable, with an air of 'excitement' (p. 55) and authority about her, Dwynwen is also a fluent Welsh speaker. Dwynwen's bilingual status is confirmed by the fact that she speaks 'half in Welsh and half in English' (p. 56), cementing her position between the two linguistic cultures of Wales. Dwynwen's ability to speak both languages and switch effortlessly between cultures affords her opportunities which elude Samantha. Thus, the novel seems to suggest that bilingualism is an important skill in post-devolution Wales, one which will extend the potential for communication across the nation.

Although unable to use Welsh as fluently as Dwynwen, Samantha does attempt to make use of her linguistic skills at numerous points in the novel. Having been inspired by her workplace encounter with Dwynwen, Samantha immediately makes an attempt to refresh her knowledge of the Welsh language by using it to communicate with a Welsh-speaking neighbour. Here, the stark difference between Samantha and Dwynwen is at its most visible. As Samantha approaches her neighbour's house she recalls her motives, stating that 'I went that night, with Dwynwen in my 'ead, to the Welshies' house up the street' (p. 57). Even when intending to improve her own Welsh-language skills, Samantha still refers to the Welsh-speaking family using a slang word which indicates the degree of separation which still exists between her and those who use Welsh regularly. Even more poignantly, the family are distinguished from the rest of the street by the fact that they are 'so rich that the husband built the house on a patch of green' (p. 57), alongside the estate on which Samantha lives.

It is not only language which contributes to the differing identities of the characters in the novel; the distinction between the identity of those who live in the valleys and those with

connections to the wider world runs much deeper. Recounting the factory's wide variety of custard production, Sam notes that as well as a huge range of 'custard in tins, custard in cartons...strawberry-flavoured custard, chocolate custard and powdered custard' (p. 20), they also manufacture organic and wheat-free custard 'for the posh people in Cardiff' (p. 20). This distinction indicates that there is a class difference between the inhabitants of Cardiff and those who live in Samantha's home town. It is a theme which runs throughout the novel, with Samantha and the characters in the custard factory apparently regarding themselves as different from people in other parts of Wales and yet still retaining a sense of connection to them. It is, however, significant that this connection to other parts of Wales appears to rely on a comparative approach. An overall sense of Welsh identity seems to transcend the social and class differences between the two areas and their differing regional identities. Benedict Anderson describes the significance of this overarching sense of community in *Imagined Communities*, stressing that 'regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship'⁷⁹.

Connections between the valleys in which Samantha and her family live and the wider world are given a new dimension with the return of Samantha's brother, Gareth, who has been serving as a soldier in Iraq. Shattering any illusions of heroism, Gareth's return home draws the reality of war into the valleys of South Wales. Despite initially seeming to be coping with the demands of his job, Gareth soon begins to reveal the impact that his experiences of war have had on him. His emotions come to a head during a farewell dinner held for him before he returns to Iraq. Breaking down in the middle of the meal, Gareth eventually admits that he does not want to go back to Iraq. The horrors of his experiences are soon revealed as he describes the 'fuckin' faces and their fuckin' blood. Everywhere.' (p. 122). Eventually admitted to a mental health unit for treatment, Gareth's predicament

⁷⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 7.

reinforces the connection between South Wales and the wider world, illustrating the effect that external events can have on families and individuals in Wales. Furthermore, Gareth's job connects his family in South Wales to the rest of United Kingdom as he serves with the British army.

As the novel's title suggests, the plot features a number of deaths which affect the development of Samantha's identity in *Random Deaths and Custard*. The sudden death of her grandmother initially leaves Samantha strangely isolated in her quest to learn the Welsh language. Yet, as she reflects on her grandmother's life, Samantha finds herself increasingly determined to strengthen her knowledge and understanding of the language. In the funeral she sings a Welsh hymn 'really loud' (p. 94), as if through the singing she will confirm her own identity as well as that of her grandmother. Likewise, in the immediate aftermath of her grandmother's death, Samantha finds herself watching episodes of the Welsh-language soap opera, *Pobol y Cwm*, so that she can tell 'Nanna the story of what 'ad happened' (p. 64) in the latest episodes. The act of recounting these events to the body of her grandmother appears to be a cathartic experience for Samantha, offering her a final opportunity to communicate with her grandmother. It is a moment which Samantha knows she will never repeat, but nevertheless a vital one, providing one last link between herself and the woman who represented the strongest connection to the Welsh language, and its associated cultural heritage, in her family. Their relationship can be seen to echo that of Rebecca and her grandmother in *In and Out of the Goldfish Bowl*, another a strong matriarchal figure whose death offers her granddaughter an opportunity to reflect on her identity and gain new strength through their relationship.

More recently, in 2012 Angharad Price's novel *O! Tyn y Gorchudd*, a semi-autobiographical work which had won the prose medal at the 2002 National Eisteddfod and was subsequently named Welsh Language Wales Book of the Year in 2003, has been

translated and published in English as *The Life of Rebecca Jones*.⁸⁰ The novel has since proved popular in both languages. Indeed, the English translation elicited a very positive review by Boyd Tonkin in *The Independent*, which described the novel as ‘a peak of modern British writing’, suggesting that the moving family story set in early twentieth-century Maesglasau connects with audiences not only in Wales, but on a much wider platform.⁸¹ The fact that the translation of *O! Tyn y Gorchudd* was carried out by another successful bilingual author, Lloyd Jones, is a further indication of the disassembly of what had once been regarded as an absolute divide between Welsh and English language writers in Wales.⁸²

Delving even further into the past, Seren’s series of Tales from the *Mabinogion* has won increasing critical attention in the decade since devolution was introduced in Wales. The series offers modern retellings of the stories from the *Mabinogion*, all written in the English language by a number of Welsh poets and fiction writers. Chosen settings for the stories range from the spaceship of Gwyneth Lewis’s *The Meat Tree* (2010) to the run-down housing estates of Cynan Jones’s *Bird, Blood, Snow* (2012). The diversity of the settings chosen for the stories in the series demonstrates a willingness to engage with a broad range of themes and content through the retelling of these ancient Welsh stories. Moreover, the stories published to date cross a range of different genres, indicating a willingness to experiment with form. The initial decision to commission this series of books based on the *Mabinogion* is also significant, as it has drawn a well-known Welsh language text into contemporary Anglophone culture. In this way, the series combines new and active creation with Welsh heritage, a key part of what Raymond Williams envisioned as the way to ensure that culture became part of ‘daily life’ in Wales.⁸³

⁸⁰ Angharad Price, *The Life of Rebecca Jones* trans. Lloyd Jones (London: MacLehose, 2012).

⁸¹ Boyd Tonkin, Review of *The Life of Rebecca Jones* in *The Independent*, Friday 20th April 2012, available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/the-life-of-rebecca-jones-a-novel-by-angharad-price-trans-lloyd-jones-7660996.html> [Accessed 28/06/13].

⁸² M. Wynn Thomas, *Corresponding Cultures*, p. 89.

⁸³ Raymond Williams, ‘Welsh Culture’ in *Who Speaks for Wales: Nation, Culture, Identity*, p. 5.

Having considered the way in which Welsh history and linguistic culture are used as part of the process of renegotiating the boundaries of Welsh identity in the wake of devolution in Wales, it is important to consider the way in which Anglophone Welsh writing engages with other nations on an international platform. The years since devolution have seen a significant rise in international interest in writing from Wales, regardless of linguistic boundaries. One example is the Scrittura Giovani project, established in 2002, which brings together writing by four young writers from Wales, France, Germany and Italy in an annual bilingual collection. Each collection has a designated theme and the chosen stories are translated into the relevant languages, ensuring that fiction from across linguistic and cultural divides can be shared by authors and readers alike. Authors selected to represent each nation are also given the opportunity to perform and discuss their work at a number of major international literary festivals and events, further extending the outreach of the project.

Many of the stories selected to represent Wales in the Scrittura Giovani project have a strong political focus. The first contribution came in 2002 from Rachel Trezise in the form of a short story entitled ‘Jigsaws’, which presented 1970s Rhondda to a global audience. This story was followed in 2003 by a Welsh-language contribution from Angharad Price, reflecting on the importance of place.⁸⁴ The diversity of the writing selected to represent Wales is indicative of the breadth of writing produced in Wales in the post-devolution era. Moreover, such diversity further supports the idea that Welsh identity is not reliant on one single image. For Wales, the project has meant wider engagement with its literary culture and the chance to raise the profile of Welsh authors on an international platform. Another example of the internationalisation of Welsh culture is the work of the Mercator Project

⁸⁴ Price’s contribution was the short story ‘Rhwng Mon ac Arfon’ (‘Between Mon and Arfon’), available at: <http://www.scrittregiovani.it/testi-dett.php?id=28> [accessed 04/03/15]. Subsequent contributions included stories by Owen Sheers, and Welsh-language authors Fflur Dafydd, Aneirin Karadog and Owen Martell.

which aims to connect multilingual communities across Europe, with a particular focus on countries with regional or minority languages. The Welsh branch of this project is based in Aberystwyth, alongside the Wales Literature Exchange centre, which offers financial support to European publishers for the translation of Welsh or English language literature from Wales.

As if to further cement international interest in Anglophone Welsh writing, the Université de Bretagne Occidentale in France hosted a conference in 2009 which focused on images of Welsh politics and culture in the decade since devolution was introduced. The conference was followed by the publication of a collection of essays arising from papers delivered at the conference, entitled *Pays de Galles: quelle(s) image(s)?*. The collection explored different aspects of Welsh culture and politics in the post-devolution years, citing devolution as one of the reasons why the collection was produced. Anne Hellegouarc'h uses her introduction to the volume to highlight the importance of devolution in Wales, commenting that: 'it is now nearly ten years since Wales has had its National Assembly... Yet, it is paradoxical that the visibility of the sumptuous new Senedd should stand in direct contrast to the relative invisibility of the Welsh nation itself'.⁸⁵ While the 'relative invisibility of the Welsh nation' to which Hellegouarc'h refers may not be entirely accurate, it is evident that the introduction of devolution has raised the profile of Welsh literature and culture on an international stage. John Lovering has argued that 'devolution is a global phenomenon of the 1990s', citing examples of other countries across the world affected, either directly or indirectly, by devolution in the period.⁸⁶ Lovering's point is particularly valid in the case of

⁸⁵ Anne Hellegouarc'h, 'Introduction' to *Pays de Galles: Quelle(s) Image (s)?/What Visibility for Wales?* (Brest: Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique, Université de Bretagne Occidentale, 2009), pp. 15-22 (p. 15).

⁸⁶ John Lovering, 'Globalisation is Good for You' in *Planet* 137 (October/November 1999), 5-12 (p 5).

Wales where devolution appears to have inspired fresh explorations of Welsh identity and culture, bringing the topic to the attention of new audiences.

The Wales which exists over a decade after the introduction of devolution is unquestionably very different from that which was in existence prior to the 1997 referendum. For the most part, the nation may still be imagined, but its boundaries have become more clearly defined in the intervening years. The breadth of writing published in Wales in the twenty-first century has served to redefine the image of Wales as a culturally independent nation, both on a national and international platform. This diversity has also contradicted the assertions made by playwright Dic Edwards that without a homogenous definition of Welsh identity there is ‘nothing that can be called Welsh culture’.⁸⁷ As demonstrated in the fiction explored in this chapter, post-devolution Anglophone Welsh writing reflects a nation which is diverse and multi-faceted, with a culture which does not conform to just one unified image. The fact that the subject of Welsh identity and, in particular, Anglophone Welsh writing has attracted interest on both a UK and international platform is further evidence that Welsh culture exists in a lively and diverse form in the twenty-first century. This eclectic mix offers Anglophone Welsh writing a unique identity of its own as it draws together different places and identities from across Wales, demonstrating that uniformity is not a prerequisite for national identity. As a result, it is possible to argue that the boundaries of Welsh identity have not only been redefined in the years since devolution, but broadened to better represent the diverse and multifaceted nature of contemporary Wales.

⁸⁷ Dic Edwards ‘Theatre for the Evicted’, p. 3.

Conclusion: A Decade of Devolution

While relatively little research has been carried out into the relation between literature and devolution in Wales, recent years have seen a growing amount of interest in wider cultural responses to devolution. Writing on the effects of devolution on visual art in Wales in 2006, William Housley described an ‘air of debate, interest, frustration and, in some cases, anger’ which had characterised discussions in the National Assembly over Wales’ cultural development on a number of occasions in recent years.¹ Among his examples, Housley cites the collapse of the plans for a Cardiff Centre for the visual arts as a particular source of frustration with regard to the development of the visual arts and architecture in post-devolution Wales. Nevertheless, Housley goes on to assert that these problems ‘have not prevented something of a resurgence in the profile of the visual arts in Wales’ (p. 79) developing in recent years. The resurgence of which Housley writes echoes Peter Lord’s assertion in his 2000 study of visual culture in Wales that the final years of the twentieth century were witness to a ‘growth in our own self-confidence and a wider change in perceptions of nationality’.² Lord’s words point to a process of redefinition of perceptions of national identity in visual culture from Wales which mirrors the redefinition which this thesis has identified as being underway in Anglophone Welsh fiction of the period.

Crucially, Lord bases his assertion that the close of the twentieth century led to a growth in self-confidence in Welsh identity on the argument that ‘it has often been alleged that a national consciousness heavily conditioned by the needs of differentiation from a dominant neighbour is a characteristic Welsh weakness’ (p. 9). Consequently, Lord reasons that the ‘political and economic decline of that neighbour [England]’ (p. 9) has led to this

¹ William Housley, ‘Artists, Wales, Narrative and Devolution’, *Devolution and Identity*, ed. John Wilson and Karyn Stapleton (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 77-94 (p. 79).

² Peter Lord, *Imaging the Nation* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 9.

growth in self-confidence in Wales. Moreover, Lord suggests that the establishment of the Welsh Arts Council in the 1960s, along with increased government funding, led to ‘greater direct support for artists and the production of a wider range of exhibitions for the public than ever before’ (p. 9). To complete these changes, Lord argues that a change in the attitudes and curatorial practices at the National Museum of Wales, along with the creation of new categories in the National Eisteddfod, provided increased opportunities for Welsh artists and architects to exhibit their work.³ What Lord suggests, therefore, is that a process of cultural redefinition had long been underway in Wales, but had been accelerated by political and economic changes during the twentieth century. Certainly, the images chosen for inclusion in *Imaging the Nation* support this assertion, invoking a sense of cultural identity dating from 1500 to the twentieth century and a period which Lord describes as ‘post-war renewal’ (p. 387) for Welsh visual culture. Consequently, *Imaging the Nation* tells the story of Wales through its art, making Lord’s contribution a significant one which should not be overlooked. His efforts to establish Welsh art as distinct from British art act as an attempt to convey, and assert, a stronger sense of Welsh cultural identity.⁴

In 2006 the Welsh Assembly also published its own review of the arts in Wales, with the opening statement seeming to confirm a complex link between the arts and politics in

³ *Imaging the Nation*, p. 361.

⁴ It can be argued that Lord’s efforts to establish a wider acknowledgement of Welsh art as a field in its own right have been mirrored in literature by an increase in criticism of Anglophone Welsh writing. As noted in Chapter II, the Association for Welsh Writing in English was established in 1984 and has continued to grow in the intervening years (see p. 119). Recent years have witnessed a continuation of this growth, with Anglophone Welsh literature now featured on a number of undergraduate English Literature degree courses offered by Welsh universities. For example, Cardiff University now offers undergraduate students the opportunity to study Anglophone Welsh literature in a comparative context in the first year of the English Literature degree scheme, with further opportunities to study Anglophone Welsh poetry and fiction available later in the degree. Similarly, Bangor University recently initiated a ‘Four Nations’ module which encourages students to explore literature from Wales alongside Anglophone Scottish, Irish and English writing.

Wales, for it asserts that ‘The Wales Arts Review was born out of political controversy’.⁵ The purpose of the Review was to assess the current system of arts funding in Wales and was based on data collected from discussions with stakeholders, public meetings, written evidence and an international arts forum. While the subsequent report acknowledged ‘the importance of the arts in Wales’ (p. 5) and ‘the desire to see the arts becoming even more ambitious, innovative, strategy-driven and inclusive’ (p. 5), it also added that ‘the present relationship between the Arts Council of Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government [did] not allow these desirables to be achieved fully’ (p. 5). This latter statement echoed the sense of frustration to which Housley referred in his concerns about the promotion and development of the visual arts in Wales, indicating that devolution had not solved all of the problems faced by the arts in Wales. The publication of the Review led to the establishment of the Arts Strategy Board in the Welsh Assembly, which was designed to offer guidance on matters such as arts policies and development strategies. Interestingly, however, the Board is run in an advisory capacity and has no formal decision-making powers, maintaining a significant degree of separation between politics and the arts in Wales.

Among the issues raised in the Wales Arts Review was the fact that a number of respondents felt that regional arts and culture officers had ‘very limited powers delegated to them and that their views were not, it would appear, particularly influential in Arts Council of Wales national policies/decisions’ (p. 29). Moreover, the members of the Review panel also argued that ‘it is apparent that the degree of direction by the Assembly Government of Arts Council of Wales work has increased to reflect Government policies’ (p. 19), particularly in relation to its allocation of project funding. Here again the Review emphasised the way in

⁵ *Wales Arts Review: A Dual Key Approach to the Strategic Development of the Arts in Wales*, Welsh Assembly Government Report, November 2006, p. 1. Available at: <http://wales.gov.uk/depc/publications/cultureandsport/arts/artsreview/reporte.pdf?lang=en> [Accessed 02/04/2014]. This review should not be confused with the digital arts magazine, *Wales Arts Review*, which has recently come to prominence.

which devolution had altered the wider relationship between politics and culture in Wales. In setting up the Arts Strategy Board, the Review panel hoped to address this problem which revealed the complex nature of the process of redefining the relation between culture and politics in the wake of devolution. The Arts Strategy Board, comprised of members from across different sectors of the arts and culture in Wales, is still in operation and also explores a wide range of social topics such as the role of cultural organisations in tackling poverty in Wales. Furthermore, the criteria for the distribution of Arts Council of Wales funding have been amended a number of times in the years since devolution and now includes specific criteria for determining the social impact of potential projects. Organisations applying for grants are now required to address the ‘Public Benefit’ of their project, with funding guidelines for this requirement describing the Council as ‘especially keen to extend the reach of our funding into areas of acknowledged deprivation’.⁶ While the desire to encourage social and economic benefits from arts projects is important, it does have the potential to restrict funding for organisations that are unable to balance creative and artistic goals with addressing the social and economic criteria determined by the Council and the Welsh Government.

Conscious of the limitations of the study, this thesis has focused solely on the way in which literary and political interaction has been affected by the process of securing and introducing devolution for Wales. Literature can, however, be seen to share similarities with other areas of the arts in Wales in the sense that devolution has necessitated a degree of redefinition in the relationship between culture and politics. Yet what this thesis has sought to demonstrate is that, for Anglophone Welsh writing, this process of redefinition actually began well in advance of the 1997 referendum, in part as a result of Wales’ failure to secure devolution in 1979. Having begun with Benedict Anderson’s concept of the ‘imagined

⁶ Arts Council of Wales, *Funding Guidelines: Arts Grants for Organisations*, published April 2014, p. 8. Available at: <http://www.artswales.org.uk/what-we-do/funding/apply/organisations> [Accessed 21/05/2014].

community', it has illustrated the way in which Anglophone Welsh fiction has contributed to the creation of a renewed sense of national identity in Wales, in light of the campaign for devolution.⁷ Consequently, it has explored Anderson's argument that although 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them' (p. 6), they are able to develop an 'image of communion' (p. 6) through their participation in cultural or political activity. More specifically, it is the development of this image of communion through Anglophone Welsh fiction which I have identified as being particularly significant to the relation between literature and devolution in Wales.

The purpose of this study has not been to argue that Wales as an 'imagined nation' did not exist prior to the 1997 referendum on devolution. Instead, it has sought to demonstrate that the combined effects of the 1979 referendum on devolution, along with the political turmoil and industrial decline of the 1980s, led to a renewed sense of Welsh identity by the start of the 1990s. The result was a process of rediscovery in Wales in which fiction writers and commentators were able to contribute to increasing debate over the political future of Wales. With the growth of a number of independent publishing houses in Wales, existing Anglophone Welsh writers of the 1990s were joined by emerging writers such as Glenda Beagan and Mike Jenkins as they mapped out their perceptions of contemporary Welsh identity through their fiction. The outcome of this process was fiction which engaged more overtly with political debate in Wales, as well as drawing attention to the difficulties faced by different regions of Wales. Subsequently, Anglophone Welsh fiction from the final years of the pre-devolution era was positioned to draw readers' attention to the political, social and economic concerns faced by different regions, further emphasising the existence of the 'imagined community' of Wales.

⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006 [1983]), p. 6.

While this thesis has argued that an awareness of the ‘imagined community’ of Wales was reinforced by cultural artefacts such as fiction during the final decades of the twentieth century, it has also suggested that the introduction of devolution did not mark the culmination of this process.⁸ It is apt to return at this juncture to Gwyn Alf Williams’ statement that Welsh identity is the subject of an ever-evolving process in which ‘the Welsh make and remake Wales’.⁹ As demonstrated by the fiction explored in Chapter IV, the introduction of devolution did not halt this process, but instead offered a fresh foundation on which to base future remodelling of Welsh identity. Charlotte Williams’ 2002 suggestion that Wales is ‘mixed up’ is particularly poignant in that it highlights the fact that devolution did not provide an answer to every question about Welsh identity.¹⁰ Williams’ open recognition of the diversity of contemporary Wales is also an acknowledgement of the existence and complexity of the ‘imagined community’ of Wales. Williams ultimately regards the mixed identity of post-devolution Wales as a positive feature, its lack of uniformity indicating a multifaceted sense of identity. Writing in 2000, Kirsti Bohata noted that:

cultural hybridity is often viewed in terms of cultural threat, and nowhere more so, perhaps, than in Wales where hybridity is often discussed in terms of degrees of Anglicization, loss of Welshness, annihilation of identity.¹¹

For Bohata, this tendency to regard cultural hybridity as a threat was most visible in Welsh writing from the earlier part of the twentieth century.¹² Interestingly, she goes on to argue that

⁸ Adam Price supports the idea that devolution did not mark the end of the process of redefining Welsh national identity, arguing that Wales ‘can in many ways still be characterised as a tentative, emerging nation’. Adam Price, ‘Reinventing Radical Wales’ in *Politics in 21st Century Wales*, Rhodri Morgan, Nick Bourne, Kirsty Williams and Adam Price (Cardiff: Institute of Welsh Affairs, 2008), pp. 66-84 (p. 66).

⁹ Gwyn Alf Williams, *When was Wales?* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 304.

¹⁰ Charlotte Williams, *Sugar and Slate* (Aberystwyth: Planet, 2002), p. 169.

¹¹ Kirsti Bohata, ‘Beyond Authenticity? Hybridity and Assimilation in Welsh Writing in English’, *Nations and Relations: Writing Across the British Isles*, ed. Tony Brown and Russell Stephens (Cardiff: New Welsh Review Ltd, 2000), pp. 89-121 (p. 89).

¹² In making this argument Bohata draws on the tension between Welsh and an apparently interchangeable English/British identity as it is portrayed in the works of Alun Lewis. See for example, p. 102.

‘contemporary writers in Wales have sometimes embraced the notion of cultural hybridity’ (p. 108), an idea which seems to be confirmed by Williams’ declaration in *Sugar and Slate* that ‘I love [Wales’] contours and its contradictions’ (p. 169). Cultural hybridity need not, therefore, be regarded as a threat to the survival of Welsh identity, but may strengthen it as it moves towards a new and devolved future.¹³

Crucially, then, this thesis has shown that the sense of ‘communion’ to which Benedict Anderson refers in *Imagined Communities* need not be reliant on a sense of uniformity.¹⁴ Instead, as illustrated by the examples drawn on in my thesis, a sense of identity can still be invoked even if it is diverse. I have sought to demonstrate that the introduction of devolution in Wales acted as a catalyst, encouraging writers to re-examine perceptions of national identity in twenty-first century Wales. A rapid growth in multiculturalism in Wales and an increasing awareness of how Welsh identity is perceived on an international platform have also contributed to the changing status of the Welsh nation. In the case of the latter, devolution appears to have afforded Welsh writers the opportunity to achieve much wider recognition for their work, beyond the United Kingdom. While a limited number of projects exploring matters relating to national identity were already underway in Wales in the pre-devolution era, the introduction of a National Assembly for Wales has inspired further debate. One notable such example is the Mercator Centre Institute for Media,

¹³ As mentioned in Chapter IV, Anglophone Welsh fiction can again be regarded as being somewhat ahead of Welsh politics in this respect. While literature may have represented the cultural hybridity of Wales more accurately at the start of the twenty-first century, Welsh politics still lacks a parallel sense of diversity with no black or Asian politicians elected in the first Welsh Assembly elections in 1999. See Paul Chaney and Charlotte Williams, ‘Getting Involved: Civic and Political Life in Wales’ in *A Tolerant Nation? Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Wales*, ed. Charlotte Williams, Paul O’Leary and Neil Evans (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 201-213 (p. 205). Following the 2011 elections this number had risen to two Assembly Members from an ethnic minority background, together comprising just over three per cent of the Assembly’s total of sixty Members. John Wood and Richard Cracknell, *Ethnic Minorities in Politics, Government and Public Life*, (Westminster: House of Commons Library, 2013), p. 8.

¹⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 44.

Languages and Culture, based at Aberystwyth University, which was founded in 1988 in response to the European Commission's decision to support research and exchange work for minority European languages. The network has continued to develop its output following the introduction of devolution in Wales and is currently responsible for a number of projects, including the Wales Literature Exchange, a scheme which bears the slogan 'Translating Wales, Reading the World'.¹⁵ The project has a particular emphasis on translating the work of Welsh writers to make it accessible to readers around the world, while also celebrating the act of translation as a form of art in its own right.

Devolution has, then, it seems, succeeded in drawing European attention to Wales not only politically, but also culturally. As mentioned in Chapter IV, in 2002 Wales was included in the formation of the Scrittura Giovanni scheme which was established with the support of the European Union's Cultural Programme and brought together young authors from different linguistic backgrounds across the European Union. Similarly, the work of Wales Arts International has been instrumental in offering support to arts groups and artists within Wales in recent years. The project is run collaboratively by the Arts Council of Wales and the British Council, but works closely with the Welsh Assembly Government to provide opportunities for Welsh artists on an international platform. In addition, Wales Arts International is currently in the process of implementing a five year strategy for the development of the arts in Wales, which aims to 'maximis[e] the international opportunities for the arts in Wales' and ensure 'international impact and recognition for arts from Wales'.¹⁶ Such work further indicates the way in which devolution has offered increased opportunities for international recognition for the Welsh arts.

¹⁵ The project receives financial support from a number of agencies, including the Welsh Assembly Government, Literature Wales and the Welsh Books Council for Wales. For a more comprehensive explanation of the project and its aims see the Wales Literature Exchange website, available at: <http://waleslitexchange.org/en/> [accessed 17/02/15].

¹⁶ Strategy available at: <http://www.wai.org.uk/about-us/creating-2013?diablo.lang=eng> [Accessed 09/04/14].

The analysis included in this thesis has focused primarily on fiction, as opposed to other literary genres. The decision to concentrate on fiction was based, in part, on an awareness of the limitations of this study. While it may be interesting to compare developments within Welsh poetry since 1970, it would not have been practical to do so within the scope of this thesis. The most recent findings of the *Devolved Voices* project seem to indicate that there may be some differences between the development of post-devolution fiction and poetry. To date, the project has identified some shared characteristics, such as the rise in women's writing since 1997, but has also indicated that a number of post-1997 poets have experienced a less certain sense of Welsh identity in interviews for the project. The reasons for this apparent disparity between poetry and fiction in post-devolution Wales are undoubtedly complex and will require further analysis following the completion of the *Devolved Voices* project. It may, however, be that these differences are due to in part to differing perceptions of what it means to be a Welsh writer in post-devolution Wales.¹⁷ Here the depiction of politics through the medium of drama from Wales may offer an important contrast for future research as a particularly overt approach to politics was adopted by a number of Welsh playwrights in the final decades of the twentieth century.¹⁸ Steve Blandford has argued that the visibility of Welsh dramatists such as Ed Thomas during the lead-up to the 1997 referendum on devolution draws attention to 'the very high profile that dramatic

¹⁷ For example, see Kathryn Gray's interview with Katherine Stansfield who, having been born in Cornwall and moved to Aberystwyth as a student, reflects that while she does not feel directly engaged with Welsh politics, she does feel a certain amount of connection to a Welsh literary culture. Stansfield also suggests that engaging with journals such as *New Welsh Review* and the publications of Seren press heightened her awareness of Anglophone Welshwriting. 'Interview with Katherine Stansfield' as part of *Devolved Voices*, available at:

http://www.aber.ac.uk/devolvedvoices/?page_id=1067 [Accessed 20/05/14].

¹⁸ Such plays included Peter Gill's *Cardiff East*, which was staged at the National Theatre in London in February 1997 and explored the meaning of national identity in contemporary Wales. Peter Gill, *Cardiff East* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997).

fictions have enjoyed in defining and redefining Wales'.¹⁹ It would be particularly interesting to broaden existing studies by comparing a selection of drama from Wales with works of Anglophone Welsh fiction in order to chart their contrasting relations with politics and their differing presentations of national identity.

The final question for this thesis to consider is whether Wales, as it is depicted by its Anglophone fiction writers, can be regarded as independent. There are number of compelling reasons why this cannot be the case from a political perspective. It is undeniable that over a decade after the introduction of devolution in Wales, the nation still remains heavily dependent on the Westminster government for political and economic support. Yet, perhaps unsurprisingly, literature appears to have remained a step ahead of Welsh politics, securing a greater sense of independence in the process of publishing literary works by Welsh writers following the outcome of the 1979 referendum on devolution and continuing to thrive in the post-devolution era.²⁰ Constitutionally, devolution may not offer independence, but it can be argued that Anglophone Welsh fiction has taken a step closer to securing a *cultural* form of independence.

Furthermore, studies of literature from Wales could be said not only to respond to, but to embrace the gradual growth of confidence noted by Housley and Lord in the visual arts in the wake of devolution. Recent years have given rise to a number of interdisciplinary projects which have sought to connect Anglophone Welsh writing more closely with other aspects of Welsh arts and culture. In 2010 Swansea University officially opened its Richard Burton

¹⁹ Steve Blandford, 'Dramatic Fictions in a Postcolonial Wales' in *Postcolonial Wales*, ed. Chris Williams and Jane Aaron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), pp. 177-192 (p. 177). Blandford notes in particular the fact that Thomas was interviewed by a number of UK national newspapers such as *The Observer* about his political views in the prelude to the 1997 referendum.

²⁰ This increased sense of independence is evidenced in the number of independent publishing houses which have been established in Wales since the 1979 referendum on devolution and which have offered increased opportunity for Welsh authors to secure publication without the need for approval from editors outside of Wales.

Centre for the Study of Wales, a research centre dedicated to the promotion of cultural, literary and historical studies of the nation. The Centre's ethos is that 'Wales is a plural society with important co-existing and complementary cultural and historical traditions in both the Welsh and English languages', as well as retaining important connections to other areas of the United Kingdom and wider Europe.²¹ In addition, connections have been made between the visual and literary cultures of Wales and the wider United Kingdom. For example, in 2013 the National Museum of Wales hosted an exhibition of British artist Peter Blake's illustrations of Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood*.

In March 2011, almost fourteen years after the referendum which secured devolution for Wales, the Welsh electorate were invited to decide whether law-making powers for the Welsh Assembly should be increased. The results of this referendum were both complex and insightful. Turnout was low, with only thirty-five percent of the electorate opting to vote.²² Yet of those voters, a more decisive sixty-three percent voted in favour of extended law-making powers for the National Assembly. Thus, the results suggest that while political engagement may not have been increased in Wales in the years since devolution, voters had begun to recognise its significance for the future. In contrast to the relatively complex results of the 2011 referendum on extended law-making powers for the National Assembly, 2011 was also the year in which a new National Census was taken. For the first time Welsh voters were given the option to select 'Welsh' as their national identity. Almost two thirds of the population took that option and listed their identity as 'Welsh', in spite of figures which indicated that numbers of Welsh language speakers had decreased slightly in the last

²¹ See the Richard Burton Centre website, available at: <http://www.swansea.ac.uk/riah/richard-burton-centre/> [Accessed 25/03/14].

²² *Results of the National Assembly for Wales Referendum 2011* (Cardiff: National Assembly for Wales, 2011), p. 1. Available at: <http://www.assembly.wales/Research%20Documents/Results%20of%20the%20National%20Assembly%20for%20Wales%20Referendum%202011%20-%20Research%20paper-04032011-211809/11-017-English.pdf> [Accessed 09/03/15]

decade.²³ The results seems to confirm Benedict Anderson's assertion that 'nations can now be imagined without linguistic communality', indicating that Wales may have moved beyond at least some of the linguistic barriers which its writers encountered during the 1970s.²⁴

Furthermore, as the results also confirmed that the Welsh population had become increasingly multicultural during the preceding decade, the census suggested that Welsh identity may have become more reliant on cultural and political identification with Wales.

The results of the 2011 census seem to indicate that a majority of the Welsh population would not agree with the statement made by playwright Dic Edwards at the start of the twenty-first century that 'culture reflects unity [and] without unity there is no culture. Wales is not a unity and so there is nothing that can be called Welsh culture'.²⁵ As demonstrated in the fiction explored in my final chapter, post-devolution Anglophone Welsh writing reflects a nation which is diverse, with a culture which does not conform to just one unified image. The Wales which exists a decade after devolution does not rely on a single language to unite it, but rather embraces the various cultures, religions and ethnicities from which it is now formed. This eclectic mix indicates that the boundaries of national identity in

²³The census indicated that despite a population increase, the proportion of people able to speak Welsh had decreased marginally from 20.8% to 19% by 2011. Full details of these changes can be found in the report *2011 Census: First Results on the Welsh Language*, produced by the Office of National Statistics and available at: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2012/121211sb1182012en.pdf>. [Accessed 21/06/13]. It is worth noting that it is difficult to assess how accurate these figures are, as census data is collected for each household and may not reflect the opinions of all individuals in the nation. The census results can be compared to results compiled from Moreno surveys in Wales which indicate that the numbers of respondents identifying as 'Welsh not British' since devolution have increased considerably from 13% to 22% in 2007, 31% of respondents still chose to identify themselves as 'Equally Welsh and British' in 2007. See Martin Johnes, *Wales Since 1939*, p. 431 for a full list of figures. The discrepancy between these results can be regarded as an indication of the complexity of measuring national identity, but may well suggest that a sense of Welsh identity does not necessarily come at the expense of a wider sense of British identity. Matthew Jarvis offers a more full discussion of the discrepancy between the results of the Moreno survey and those of the 2011 Census in his report 'National Identities: Some Thoughts About the 2011 Census' for the Devolved Voices Project. Available at: <http://wordpress.aber.ac.uk/devolvedvoices/author/maj52/> [accessed 02/02/15].

²⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 135.

²⁵ Dic Edwards 'Theatre for the Evicted' in *State of Play*, ed. Hazel Walford Davies (Llandysul: Gomer, 1998), pp. 3-16 (p. 3).

Wales have gradually been expanded, demonstrating that homogeneity is not a prerequisite for national identity. For the most part, national identity may still be imagined, but its boundaries have been redrawn and its writers have contributed to a greater sense of awareness of how the Welsh nation is defined. The breadth of writing published in Wales in the twenty-first century has therefore served to redefine the image of Wales as a culturally independent nation on both a national, and international, platform.

With a referendum on Scottish independence due to take place on 18th September 2014, the question of national identity has risen once more to the forefront of political and cultural debate across much of the United Kingdom. The events of 1979 and 1997 are enough to suggest that whatever the outcome of the referendum, there will follow a period of adjustment in Scottish culture in which the nature of Scottish identity is likely to face further reassessment. Perhaps inevitably the forthcoming Scottish referendum has caused further debate about the political status of Wales. In particular, Wales' First Minister, Carwyn Jones, joined the debate, asserting his belief that if Scotland were to secure independence 'there would need to be a fundamental rethink of the nature of the relationship between the three nations left within the UK'.²⁶ Certainly, recent opinion polls have appeared to support Carwyn Jones' concerns, indicating a high level of Welsh opposition to the concept of Scottish independence.²⁷ Interestingly, a number of high-profile literary figures have become involved in the debate, including Scottish author Irvine Welsh who has argued that Scottish political independence could prove beneficial for British culture. Writing on the subject, Welsh argued that 'political separation could promote the cultural unity that the UK state, in

²⁶ 'Carwyn Jones Calls for "Radical" Constitutional Rethink If Scotland Leaves UK', BBC News, 31st January 2012, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-16556146>, [Accessed 27/04/14].

²⁷ See, for example, the results of a recent YouGov poll of 1000 Welsh people in which 62% of respondents were opposed to the idea of Scottish independence. Results available through Wales Online at: <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/wales-says-no-scottish-independence-7007185> [Accessed 27/04/14].

its current form, with its notions of “assumed Englishness” is constantly undermining’, putting forward the idea that a greater degree of political separation may strengthen cultural identity by extending its diversity.²⁸ Welsh’s argument may be controversial, but it does reinforce the idea that further literary and cultural redefinition is likely to be initiated throughout Britain, whatever the result of the forthcoming referendum.

It can be argued that debate about devolution and, more recently, the potential prospect of Scottish independence, have heightened what Benedict Anderson terms ‘national consciousness’ throughout the cultural sphere.²⁹ Drawing to a close his reflection on the impact of devolution on visual art in Wales, William Housley remarks on ‘the contested character of “Welsh art”’,³⁰ arguing that ‘it is characterised by contested boundaries’ (pp. 91-92) which may reflect ‘certain cultural and social realities of post-devolution Wales as well as the contested character of artistic practice in general’ (p. 92). Housley’s assertions are analogous with those identified in the Anglophone Welsh texts discussed in the preceding chapters. Over a decade into the twenty-first century, the question of what it means to be Welsh has not gone away, but, as aptly demonstrated by a number of Anglophone Welsh writers included in this thesis, the answer has become increasingly diverse in the wake of devolution.

²⁸ Irvine Welsh, ‘Scottish Independence and British Unity’, *Bella Caledonia*, available at: <http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2013/01/10/irvine-welsh-on-scottish-independence-and-british-unity/> [Accessed 29/04/14].

²⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 37.

³⁰ William Housley, ‘Artists, Wales, Narrative and Devolution’, p. 91.

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