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**„*Welsh, am I?*  
Questions of Stereotypes, Identity and Belonging in  
Anglo-Welsh Village Literature“**

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# 1. Anglo-Welsh Village Literature

## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

Anglo-Welsh literature is a field that has not received great attention yet, especially outside of Wales. It is the literature of a subgroup, a hybrid group of people who consider themselves Welsh, because they grew up and lived in Wales, but who chose to write in English, either because they possess no knowledge of Welsh, or because they want to give a voice to the English-speaking Welsh in Wales. Meic Stevens, founder of the magazine *Poetry Wales* poses the question of “what it is that makes Welsh writing in English Welsh” (Interviewed in Lloyd 1997: 39). It is this question this thesis sets out to answer by analysing four Anglo-Welsh books (i.e. *My People* by Caradoc Evans, *How Green Was My Valley* by Richard Llewellyn, *Border Country* by Raymond Williams and *The Tower* by Tristan Hughes). These works were written between 1915 and 2003 and shall be examined in terms of national identity and stereotypically Welsh elements, with focus on language, nationalist attitudes, politics and history, religion, traditions and geography. This thesis draws on theories from Matthew Arnold, Homi Bhabha, John Edwards, Jan Penrose, and Edward Said, amongst other theorists. Theories by Welsh academics on the formation of their own nation and national identity are especially taken into consideration, in order to get a balance of viewpoints from without and within Wales. As each of the above-named factors that constitute identity would yield sufficient material for individual theses, the analysis given here can only provide a somewhat superficial overview, but comprises the most defining aspects in the portrayal of national identity and individual belonging found in Anglo-Welsh village literature. As this thesis blends cultural studies with literary analysis it can, so as not to exceed the limits, only serve as an introduction to the topics given above and it will be left to other people to delve thoroughly into one or all of the discussed aspects.

## 1.2. WHAT IS ANGLO-WELSH VILLAGE LITERATURE? A DEFINITION.

Anglo-Welsh writing is the term (somewhat reluctantly<sup>1</sup>) given to all works of literature produced in Wales and by Welsh authors, using English as the favoured medium, in opposition to their original „native“ tongue, Welsh. Anglo-Welsh writing

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1 cf. Jones, Glyn. *The Dragon has two Tongues: Essays on Anglo-Welsh Writing and Writers*. Rev. Ed. Cardiff: Wales University Press, 2001, p.1

occupies a special niche in the library of the world. It is ambivalent, as it neither equals Welsh literature, nor English literature, nor does the term “international English-language literature” cover it. The first, because the writers writing solely in Welsh see themselves as the real advocates of their nation and are inclined to regard Anglo-Welsh writers as „traitors“, who betray their heritage and their nationality by using the language of the conqueror - English. The latter two, because the works of Welsh writers writing in English are specifically Welsh: they are set in Wales, concerned with Welsh history and culture, and portray a society that can only be Welsh. They represent a people colonised: What sets them apart from the English is a different cultural background. What they share is a common language. Glyn Jones defines Anglo-Welsh writers as “those Welsh writers whose entire work, or, in one or two instances, whose best work, has been done in English in the twentieth century.” (Jones 2001: 8)

The second part of the title, „Village Literature“, is the term of choice for narrowing down the vast spectrum of Anglo-Welsh writing and setting the focus on literature that deals exclusively with village communities and the individuals they comprise. Wales is a prevalently rural nation, shaped by mountains and valleys that leave only limited space for cities and larger towns. Thus, most of Welsh life used to take place (and still does) in villages and small towns. The majority of bigger towns is located near the border to England or along the South coast – both areas that have seen a considerable amount of English immigration in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which makes them – by definition – less Welsh in the original sense than the „undisturbed“, often remote villages. A large percentage of Anglo-Welsh works feature village scenarios, as they are thought to convey the true Welsh Identity<sup>2</sup>. Following this line of thought, John Gwilym remarks that “if Anglo-Welsh literature must deal with Wales or have some 'local colour' in order to prove itself Welsh then it must inevitably be 'provincial if not parochial' (qtd. in Jones, 2001: Introduction xxiii). It is these communities and a provincial atmosphere that supply the settings for the books analysed in this thesis and it is these societies that the protagonists set out from and the background against which they try to define their own identity.

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2 cf. Trosset 1993: Trosset records this attitude from Welsh-language speakers.

## **2. The Question of Identity and Factors shaping it**

### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

“Every person handles or manages – consciously or subconsciously – his or her identity.” (Bausinger in Vestergaard 1999: 13)

The question of identity is one that an observer constantly stumbles upon in most situations that regard the Welsh nation, be it when travelling through Wales, reading Welsh literature or talking to Welsh citizens. Most Welshmen and -women seem in a constant need to justify and explain their origin and, consequently, their loyalties to an outsider. Proudly, they insist on being regarded Welsh, as opposed to British. This claim of a different national identity is a means of setting themselves apart from another national group, namely the English, and to validate their claim for being recognized as such. The roots of this behaviour are to be sought in the national history of Wales, which is one of constant struggle against and oppression suffered by by their English neighbours. The Welsh started to counteract, especially in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century, by trying to set themselves and their nation apart from England in a positive way. Already being regarded as “other” by the coloniser, but at the same time as “inferior”, they tried to strengthen their qualities as different, but to weed out their perceived inferiority with pride of their origin. How Welsh identity and its perception changed in the course of history and how historical and economic events shaped Welsh identity is outlined in chapter 2.2. Wales as a colonised nation and rising sentiments and movements of nationalism are likewise discussed, drawing on theoreticians like Murray Pittock, Edward Said and Homi Bhabha.

Chapter 2.3 deals with language as a carrier of identity and questions of identity that arise from Wales' status as a bilingual nation. The language of the coloniser, English, had a higher prestige until mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, as it was “identified with economic and material success” (Jones 1994: 211), an argument on which Matthew Arnold<sup>3</sup> built his demand to extinguish the Welsh language and form a monoglot nation. Language, especially native language, however, is an important factor of defining identity. An important, prestigious vessel for transporting identity via language is literature: it is a writer's means of raising and discussing the delicate question of identity. To make conjectures from a novel as to the author's personal life

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3 Qut. In Pittock 1999: 64

and their own position as far as their identity is concerned is certainly dangerous. In Wales, however, especially in the spheres of Anglo-Welsh writing, the story often evolves around a core of defining a character's position – in their family, their community, and their nation. A considerable percentage of Anglo-Welsh works, especially early ones, are of autobiographic nature or heavily inspired by personal experience<sup>4</sup>. Doubtlessly, the reason for that high a number of publications dealing with personal and national identity cannot be a coincidence. As the aim of this thesis is to provide as holistic a view of the question of identity in Anglo-Welsh writing, the English-writing author as a spokesman of the Welsh and their country cannot be disregarded and a short sequence is therefore devoted to the Anglo-Welsh writer, their motivation and the question of identity. The second chapter, therefore, comprises the phenomenon of language as a shaping factor of identity, based on theory by John Edwards, George Yule and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and, furthermore, outlines struggles of Wales to assert itself as bilingual nation, as well as the difficulties that arise for writers in Wales from choosing between the two languages in order to express themselves.

Besides historical influences and the momentum of a national language, the lay of land plays a vital role in structuring a country and, hence a people. Villém Flusser, philosopher of communication, speaks of cultural identity as “allegiance to a certain place, the feeling of being at home within a city or region or country” (qtd. In Vestergaard 1999: 11). Certain places or regions are defined by borders, which are frequently drawn along natural barriers such as rivers or mountains. Other borders were created by man, like Offa's Dyke, which was erected around 800AD as a barrier between Wales and England. Chapter 2.4 provides an overview over the role of geography and topography in shaping identity, based on theory by Kirsty Bohata and Jan Penrose.

Finally, identity emerges from a set of old traditions that unite a group of people. One of the leading roles is hereby claimed by religion. Religion draws people together in groups and priests provide them with guidelines for everyday life. Life and the course of the year are structured not least by religion, with feasts such as Easter and Christmas. In Wales, especially, with its nonconformist movement against the Anglican Church membership of a certain religion used to be a statement of identity.

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<sup>4</sup> e.g. Rhys Davies, *Print of a Hare's Foot* (1969), Jack Jones, *Unfinished Journey* (1937), Lewis Jones, *Cwmardy* (1937), Dylan Thomas, *A Portrait of the Artist as a young Dog* (1940) R. S. Thomas, *The Echoes return slow* (1988)



Developments of the Church in Wales and religious movements and their impact on society, as well as changes throughout the past century are outlined in chapter 2.5. Another way of the Welsh of establishing and asserting their unique position against England is by holding on to and emphasizing their Celtic origin: Attempts to reintroduce the Welsh language in people's everyday lives and into schools, the revival of the National Eisteddfod<sup>5</sup>, the popularisation of Celtic art and handicraft are examples of measures taken in the past century. Attention is especially devoted to singing and the art of poetry, following the old Welsh bardic traditions. An overview over the reintroduction of the eisteddfod and the importance of poetry and song for the individual is also provided in this last chapter. Theory is provided by Matthew Arnold<sup>6</sup> and John Edwards and the empirical reports of Glyn Jones and Carol Trosset.

The complex concept of identity is, thus, within the limits of this thesis reduced to the factors of history, language, topography and traditions in order to facilitate the analysis of Welshness in the four selected Anglo-Welsh novels. Against the background of the theory provided in the subsequent chapters, identity questions in the works are extracted, compared and examined in chapter 4. Special focus is laid on the change of perceptions of identity over time. Flusser<sup>7</sup> argues that the concept of identity as allegiance to a certain place has been outdated with technological development. Bausinger calls cultural identity and globalisation antagonists and asserts that identity is a dynamic concept in need of readjustment as reaction to a change of circumstances (12ff.). This flux of identity can be observed in the novels that span a time of 90 years and is, therefore, of interest.

## **2.2. THE HISTORY OF WALES AND QUESTIONS OF IDENTITY**

### **2.2.1. HISTORY AND ECONOMY<sup>8</sup> (FT. COALMINING AND THE GENERAL STRIKE)**

Within the limits of this thesis it is not possible to provide a complete history of Wales. The focus shall therefore be on the elements that are going to be discussed in

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5 Eisteddfodau are originally social “get togethers” that have grown into celebrations of the national arts and music. The biggest Eisteddfod is a festival of arts and music at an annually moving location. The tradition of eisteddfodau is looked at in more detail in chapter 2.5.2

6 Mostly quoted in Pittock 1999 and Schwyzer 2004

7 Qtd. In Bausinger, Herman. *Intercultural Demands and Cultural Identity*. In Vestergaard, Torben (ed.). *Language, Culture and Identity*. Aalborg: Aalborg University Press, 1999: 11

8 The information found in this chapter is mainly taken from Jones, J. Graham. *The History of Wales: A Pocket Guide*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1990

further detail and with relevance for the works of literature analysed. Attention will be drawn to the relationship of and the difference between Wales as the colonised nation and England as the coloniser, as Anglo-Welsh literature is a hybrid of both.

The Welsh history is one of constant rebellion against the gradual subjugation by their English neighbours. With the defeat of the last Prince of Wales, Llywellyn ap Gruffudd, in 1282 Wales lost her independence to England. She was invaded by King Edward I, who began to secure his claim to Wales by building numerous strongholds and, consequently, placed Wales under English law by issuing the Statute of Wales in 1284. To secure the border English lords settled in the border areas and Edward's boroughs and brought with them the first English immigrants. To further weaken the captured country Edward deprived the native Welsh of their rights of inhabiting towns, trading, carrying arms and, later, even of buying, owning and selling land. Predictable tensions between the boroughs and the inhabitants of the countryside arose from this unequal situation. They were further kindled by outbreaks of plague and famine during the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Owen Glyndŵr's revolution<sup>9</sup>, an attempt to put an end to the often unscrupulous rule by English landlords had a promising start with the occupancy of several castles. Glyndŵr set up a parliament in Machynlleth, won French and Scottish alliances and was crowned Prince of Wales by friends and family, but his support died down after a decade. Meanwhile, the Welsh maintained their second class status, as is characteristic of a colonised nation<sup>10</sup>. In order to increase their status and obtain the right to own land, many Welsh petitioned to "be made English", which was the first step to anglicisation. The next step was taken with the Union legislation of 1536 and 1543, also called Laws in Wales Act, when English legislation and administration were extended over Wales with the aim of creating a United Kingdom where English language was to be the medium. Consequently, all official and legal purposes in Wales were from then on dealt with in English. However, from this time on Welsh citizens enjoyed a status equal to the English and were even granted parliamentary representation and their own council. The equality of rights induced a large number of Welsh to emigrate to London in search of better jobs.

Most citizens of rural Wales were employed in agriculture, but compared to England, Wales always lagged behind as far as the modernity and efficacy of their methods were concerned. In addition, tough and hostile soils yielded only poor

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9 In the year 1400

10 cf. Jones, J. Graham 1990: 36

results and proved more suitable for raising cattle than farming. New methods of farming and also for the exploitation of the national resources of coal, slate and various metals<sup>11</sup> were brought to Wales mostly by English entrepreneurs and investors; businesses that grew considerably in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The local administration of justice was in the hands of rich families, who held a great deal of power. These families regarded the knowledge of English as prestigious and subjected their children to an English education. At the same time, however, Welsh grammar schools were established in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and publication of Welsh books was promoted.

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century most Welshmen were loyal to the English crown, but many resented the English legal system and tried to fight against it, but consistently failed due to a lack of structure in their plans. The hostile lands and geographical isolation led large numbers of people from rural regions to industrial areas or to America to seek their fortunes there. The advent of the railway in the 19<sup>th</sup> century facilitated the transport of food, people and goods and enabled Wales to export coal, slate and iron on a large scale. Industrial towns sprung up, especially in the South Wales valleys that offered coal in abundance. These villages and towns saw close-knit communities flourish, as they attracted people with various clubs, societies, choirs and chapels that rendered the otherwise poor living and hygienic standards bearable. Child-labour, open sewers, hard working-conditions produced diseases and respiratory illnesses and the low wages made it impossible for miners to escape poverty. Riots, strikes and the formation of trade unions meant to improve conditions for workmen, but their strives bore fruit only in 1867, when the Reform Act awarded the right to vote to tenant farmers and industrial workers. In order to change the situation in Wales, the Liberation Society (est. 1844) made it their goal to educate people and equip them with the ability to form and give voice to their own opinions. These endeavours were also a reaction to an inquiry into the Welsh education system in 1846, conducted by an English committee. This “Blue Book Report” exposed the poor education standards and produced some turmoil and ultimately led to the establishment of boarding schools and university colleges in Aberystwyth, Cardiff and Bangor<sup>12</sup>. Elementary education became compulsory and was free of charge. It was, however, conducted in English. Between 1880 and WWI Wales saw both a depression in the rural areas and agricultural sector and a growth of industrial production,

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<sup>11</sup> e.g. copper, iron, tin

<sup>12</sup> 1972, 1983 and 1984, respectively.

especially in coal mining. At the same time county schools and universities were set up and with rising education standards and a growing literacy rate, class levels began to be evened out.

WWI was followed by a severe depression that left 23.3% of people unemployed, which led to a wave of mass emigration and a strong localisation of life: people became rooted to one place around which they built their lives. Strengthened communities emerged. The first nationalist party *Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru* (English: National Party of Wales) was founded in 1925, but received little support at first. WWII brought large numbers of English evacuees and immigrants to Wales and due to a perceived threat to Welshness and the identity of Wales the movement of *Undeb Cymru Fydd* (English: The Young Wales Union) was established in 1941 to aid the welfare of Wales by promoting the usage of the Welsh language. During the war unemployment sank as a result of a reduced number of miners in the valley. Consequently, conscriptions were issued to combat the problem and wages rose after a miners' strike to protest against the thinning labour force.

In 1955 Cardiff was declared capital of Wales. The 1950s gave rise to the popularity of *Plaid Cymru* and also marked the beginning of a more prosperous age in Wales, with the advent of radio and television, motorcars and a free National Health Service. The close-knit communities of the valleys were vanishing rapidly, as mobility was facilitated and enabled more people to seek work elsewhere. A stop was put to these developments in the 1980s, when the conservative party took over the lead and the reduction of public expenses led to a rise of unemployment once again. Coal mining and steel production were steadily declining and the industrial sector shrank when the service sector gained momentum.

During Margaret Thatcher's term of office, property prices sank and houses became affordable for the majority of people, but unemployment remained high. These factors led to young, hopeful people leaving Wales for jobs and, at the same time, brought elderly in-migrants from England to the picturesque countryside, where affordable houses in the quiet and beautiful rural countryside held strong attractions<sup>13</sup>. The high levels of mobility naturally affected local communities and, as Jenkins reports, “[n]etworks replaced neighbourhoods as people's lives became more fragmented, rootless and atomized.” (Jenkins 2007: 244) This phenomenon can be observed in the two more recent books *Border Country* and, particularly, *The Tower*.

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13 cf. Jenkins 2007: 243f.

Wales still retained a reputation as a “low-skill and low-wage manufacturing economy” (245), but living standards increased and so did health levels, literacy and social tolerance. At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century society had become more diverse, multicultural and eclectic, and people's lives started to drift apart. Former common, linking markers of identity, like religion or language, began to fade, as everybody began to construct their own, individual identity<sup>14</sup>. The books analysed mirror these historical developments and serve as witnesses of a - sometimes reluctantly - changing society.

One of the key topics in *Valley* and *Border Country* is the coal mining industry of Wales. The utilisation of natural resources once used to be one of the biggest sectors of employment in Wales. Landlordism and clearance had their heyday in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the Welsh soil, rich in coal, tin, copper and slate, began to be systematically exploited by a workforce of underpaid local workers. In the north, slate quarries became a common feature in the mountains and coal pits upturned the landscape in the south. While English (and some Welsh) landlords grew rich, the majority of the Welsh remained poor. The non-existence of a guaranteed minimal wage, social security systems and workers' unions led to secret workers' gatherings, the formation of unions and a number of strikes<sup>15</sup>. These became an important theme in Anglo-Welsh literature of the time<sup>16</sup>. Coal mining, especially, provides the background for a number of books, including *How Green Was My Valley* and *Border Country*.

The aforementioned poverty and poor hygienic standards of the workers and the disproportional enrichment of mine owners and overseers induced a series of strikes, scattered over more than a century. In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century a number of strikes had led to a slight improvement in the wage-situation, a short period of relief that was crushed when in 1875 the workers' union suffered severe damage from another strike. Furthermore, the previously fixed wages got tied to a sliding scale. The amount of money workers now received for their labour resulted from the weight, amount and quality of the coal harvested. Controllers frequently tried to trick and slight workers by declaring the coal be of a lesser quality than it actually was. Strikes

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14 cf. Jenkins 2007: 304f.

15 The most important strike was the General Strike in 1926, when coal miners once again made an attempt to be heard by the officials. Workers in other fields, like bus and train drivers, and factory workers showed their support for the coalminers and joined them.

16 Examples are *Cwmardy* (Lewis Jones), *How Green Was My Valley* (Richard Llewellyn), *Shifts* (Christopher Meredith), poems by Idris Davies, Jack Jones' autobiographical novels (e.g. *Rhondda Roundabout*), among others.

did not die down then, but in 1898 an exceptionally bitter strike in South Wales led to the foundation of the South Wales Miners' Federation: miners' movements were triggered, Welsh-language newspapers were issued and miners and quarrymen alike fought a fight for Socialism. Conditions were finally improved in 1908, when the Coal Mines Regulation Act introduced a regulation that limited the daily maximum time of work spent underground to eight hours. Miners further tried to improve their situation by other strikes, like the Cambrian strike in 1910, which started in the Rhondda Valley and affected other mining areas too. Employers tried to fill the strike-induced gaps with immigrant workers, but did not fully succeed. 1912 the Minimum Wage Act was finally implemented and brought security to the workers by guaranteeing them a minimum wage for the first time. Conditions were still far from ideal and the miners kept fighting for higher wages and shorter working days. These demands were never met, but unemployment soared<sup>17</sup> when after WWI trade declined and collieries started to be closed from 1921 onwards. The Triple Alliance of miners, railwaymen and transport workers broke down, but joined ranks again in a general strike in May 1926, bringing Britain to a standstill<sup>18</sup>. Nothing was achieved by the strike, though, and miners were compelled to return to work on humiliating terms after 6 months of strike. Demand in coal continued to plunge in the course of the century until by 1992 only 4 mines were still in operation.

Back in the heyday of coal mining, though, a unique social world formed in the mining villages, especially the south Wales valleys. There was an upper class of coal owners, managers, overseers, a middle class consisting of shopkeepers and other professionals and the common miners as the working class. Despite the poor-quality housing, the crowdedness, and bad health conditions life in these towns and villages was vibrant, communities were tight-knit and stable and there were manifold societies, institutes, clubs and singing festivals. It is these communities that inspired the production of a certain type of Anglo-Welsh writing, the Welsh industrial novel, which is in this thesis represented by *How Green Was My Valley* and partly also *Border Country*.

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<sup>17</sup> 27% by 1930. cf. Jenkins 2007: 235f.

<sup>18</sup> cf. Jenkins 2007: 290

### **2.2.2. COLONIALISM, NATIONALISM AND THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY IN WALES**

Wales, as an originally Celtic country that was conquered by the Anglo-Saxons and integrated into England with the Laws in Wales Act<sup>19</sup>, is a country with two faces: An old, Celtic face, where traditions are upheld and pride for an old language and old myths, songs and folk customs is tangible, and a newer, but firmly established Anglicised layer, with a common language and long imported and absorbed customs. Both shaped and continue to shape the nation that is Wales and the people who live in it. Wales is a country of hybridity, with some elements closer to the original, Celtic Wales, and some influenced by English customs and laws. Beneath the surface there has always been conflict between both poles that has not been solved in the course of history.

Theorists concerning themselves with the forces at work when nations are colonised argue that “homogenous identities succeed from suppression of diversity and suspension of belief in this diversity or its value”<sup>20</sup>. When claiming Wales for themselves with the Acts of Union and trying to quell the rebellions against the British rule, the empire tried to integrate Wales by forcing it into a likeness of England. They attempted to disestablish Welsh national identity and impose a united “English” identity. According to Pittock “British Identity [...] rested (and rests) on an imposed assumption of homogeneity with the central concerns of the core English state which preceded it” (Pittock 1999: 24). Homogeneity, however, cannot be obtained by forcefully superimposing a different set of values onto a nation.

Identity cannot be deliberately changed through historical acts or by decree, as certain images – seen from inside and outside, respectively - still prevail and are hard to overcome. Like other colonised nations<sup>21</sup> the Welsh were treated with suspicion and dislike, especially during Victorian times. They were compared to their English neighbours and differences and especially deficits were magnified. Mean caricatures emerged and the Welsh were described as “[...] fierce, laggardly, unreliable, dishonest, dirty, universally unresourceful and lacking any methodicality, their womenfolk little better than slatterns and 'universally unchaste', their children bastards more often than not [...]” (Blue Book Report by Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, qtd. in Pittock 1999: 117). What had before been neglect of the Celtic nation west of England had turned to open hostility and the stereotype of the unruly, barbaric

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19 The Laws in Wales Acts or Acts of Union were passed between 1535-1542 and, amongst other effects, stripped the Welsh of their legal system and prohibited the use of the Welsh language in Wales

20 Pittock 1999: 102

21 cf. African colonies, or, on a more national level, Scotland and Ireland

Welshman was created. The Welsh were seen as uncivilised, stupid and poor “inhabitants of Goatland” (Pittock 1999: 29) and all forms of industrial or social progress in Wales were attributed to the benevolent and guiding intervention of the English. The verdict on an exhibition of Welsh Art and Industry in 1866 bears testimony: “All the progress and civilisation in Wales has come from England, and a sensible Welshman would direct all his endeavours towards inducing his countrymen to appreciate their neighbours, instead of themselves” (11).

When a nation meets with an opposing, oppressive force whose aim is to create homogeneity, national identity is born, according to Said<sup>22</sup>, who sees a direct and inextricable link of imperialism and resistance to it. It is not surprising that with so much opposition the consciousness for nationalism and national identity started to grow in Wales. The 17<sup>th</sup> century saw the dawn of a Welsh publishing industry and the National Eisteddfod<sup>23</sup> was reinstalled in 1819<sup>24</sup>. Real national consciousness, however, only gradually emerged during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was intensified by the agricultural depression, the romantic movement and the inspiring developments in Ireland. The focus shifted from the prestigious English language, the mastery of which used to mean a rise in status and better paid employment, to the native Welsh language and culture, formerly considered distinctive of rural Wales and associated with backwardness. The University of Wales - comprising Cardiff, Lampeter, Aberystwyth and Bangor - was officially instituted in 1896. A symbol of national pride and achievement, it cooperated with secondary schools in Wales and educated prevalently Welsh students<sup>25</sup>. For the first time, Wales was perceived as a nation different and separate from England, that deserved to be independent and free<sup>26</sup>.

With the national revival that started after 1880, publishing and writing in Welsh started to flourish again and reached their peak after World War I: the University of Wales Press was established in 1922 and writers set up platforms for the publication of their literary works and the first nationalist political party in the history of modern Wales, *Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru*, was formed in 1925. One of the party's main aims was to protect the Welsh language and they still take measures to encourage its usage. Pittock affirms that the linguistic difference was Wales' prime means of stating

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22 Qtd. In Pittock 1999: 6

23 An Eisteddfod is a social gathering, where bards compete and a winner is selected. The National Eisteddfod takes place annually in August. It is a travelling festival that is held at a different location in Wales every year. (cf. <http://www.eisteddfod.org.uk/english/content.php?nID=2>; visited on 08/10/2011)

24 cf. Pittock 1999: 117

25 cf. Morgan 1981: 109-10

26 cf. Jones 1990: 126



nationality and when comparing Wales to Ireland and Scotland, who likewise fought to be acknowledged as different from the English colonisers, he claims that “Wales defended its Welshness primarily through language, a Welsh press, Welsh-language publication” (116). Proof for this statement are various measures to reintroduce the threatened native language into people's everyday life. Thus, the first Welsh-medium school opened in Aberystwyth in 1939<sup>27</sup>, the Welsh Language Act, which lifted the status of the Welsh language to that of the English, was passed in 1967, and the first Welsh-medium TV-station, S4C, was enforced in 1982 by a campaign of former president Gwynfor Evans' and his threat of a hunger strike<sup>28</sup>. Language as a symbol of national pride, therefore, is probably the main distinguishing factor between the Welsh and the English and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

## **2.3. Language as a Key Issue**

### **2.3.1. LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY**

“Absolutely nothing is so important for a nation's culture as its language” (Wilhelm von Humboldt, qtd. in Edwards 205)

An individual's identity is shaped by many influential circumstances: the society children grow up in, their education, their parents' education, the family's financial situation, contact to other people and the circles they move in, the country they grow up in as opposed to living a life on the road, and stigmata and prestige attached to these factors<sup>29</sup>. While they all shape identity, they also account for and form an individual's language. Language thus becomes an instrument for expressing identity. A person's native language is not decided with their birth, but is acquired by way of cultural transmission from speakers within the culture the learner grows up in. In order for a community to work, the system of communication must be intact, which is only possible if the community shares a set of signs, rules, assumptions and expectations. At the same time, these shared values constitute a community.

In bilingual countries, the question of language and the affiliation with a certain language is more complex. One language might be the indigenous language, while

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27 cf. Jones 1990: 161

28 cf. Pittock 1999: 118

29 cf. Bausinger in Vestergaard 1999: 12

another language, which was later imposed by a conquering nation, might perforce have become the official language, used for administration, taught in schools, spread by the media. The implication such measures carry is that the superimposed language is “better” than the “unofficial” other language that is spoken by people but not used in official settings. With an omnipresent, dominant language, this second language is often driven back into the domestic, non-public sphere<sup>30</sup>, unless measures are taken to promote the usage. However, both varieties usually carry certain stigmata, depending on the social group a speaker belongs to.

From observational work in the field of sociolinguistics it is known that members of a group deliberately choose a certain form of language to declare their membership to this group – both within the group as well as towards outsiders, in order to demarcate them as such. This phenomenon occurs most evidently in youth culture and gang circles. Jargon marks people as members of a certain interest group, while register denotes language used in a specific context<sup>31</sup>. All these variations within a language are linked to anchoring. John Edwards<sup>32</sup> affirms that people are in need of social anchors, be it in close family, in a classroom setting, in a village, or within the fairly broad context of a nation. As people tend to feel close to others whom they perceive as similar and yearn for their acceptance, they try to accommodate the manners of their behaviour and speech to this group so as to become a part of it. Language accommodation, therefore, happens consciously and unconsciously with the aim of ingratiating oneself with another person or group. The opposite effect is an intentional divergence, whereby people with a different speech style or language are excluded from a group<sup>33</sup>.

Language and speech style are not only consciously employed by people who wish to demonstrate that they are part of a group, but from the observation of a person's language and expression conclusions regarding their person and social environment can be made. People of different social statuses and different class, thus, generally differ in their manner of expressing themselves, which can also be traced back to the stage up to which they pursued their education. According to Johnstone's<sup>34</sup> intercultural communication perspective model, individuals' worlds are separated by social boundaries, within which a certain native language and culture constitute

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30 cf. Thomas, Ned. *The Welsh Extremist*. distributed by Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, 1971: 35, 85

31 cf. Yule 2007: 194-218

32 Edwards 2009: 22

33 cf. Edwards 2009: 31

34 cf. Johnstone in Vestergaard 1999: 30f.

identity. Thus, 'cultures' are, for example, associated with ethnic groups, with class, or with a certain milieu<sup>35</sup>. The circles emerging from this definition all have their own kind of language or jargon to express themselves. From a person's style of speech, the recipient can conclude the sender's social standing and education. From a possible regional accent or dialect, they can also infer the speaker's origin or information about where the speaker spent the greater part of their lives or has an emotional connection to. Many of these colourings and differences in speech are delivered unconsciously: they happen as the product of a number of influences. A person can, however, also shift freely between different registers and speech styles, which usually never fails to create a certain effect. In the case of Welsh writing in English, authors often consciously choose locally coloured language for their dialogues and narratives, in order to draw attention to their novels' and protagonists' Welshness<sup>36</sup>. By using "uncoloured" standard-English for their narratives, the authors set themselves apart from their characters, though; they assume a different position, which in the eyes of Ned Thomas<sup>37</sup> is a difficult one as the author constructs himself as somebody speaking not the language of the society portrayed, but rather the language of the audience - the outsiders. The author assumes an identity unequal to the society he portrays, thus setting himself apart from it. He becomes an somewhat detached observer.

"Language constitutes reality", claimed Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o (qtd. In Bohata 2004: 109) and this statement rings true for Anglo-Welsh writing. The stories are genuinely Welsh, they are written by Welsh people, for Welsh people and deal with Welsh problems. Language that is divergent from the English standard, and yet close enough to be considered British marks Anglo-Welsh as expressive of Welsh identity, and due to the importance of a national language and its implications for Wales the feature "language" is to be regarded in this analysis.

### **2.3.2. LANGUAGE ISSUES IN WALES**

"In areas which are less Welsh, using the Welsh language is a political statement in itself." (Bowie, in McDonald 1993: 178)

"Using Welsh is a way of affirming that Wales exists." (ibid. 179)

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35 In the novels analysed, one of the most distinctive circles is the miners' community in *Valley*.

36 cf. Bohata 2004: 109 ff.

37 cf. Thomas, Ned. Printed Interview in Lloyd, David T. *Writing on the Edge – Interviews with Writers and Editors of Wales*. Amsterdam – Atlanta: Rodopi B.V., 1997: 16

Wales is a bilingual nation. Roughly a fifth of Welsh people currently use Welsh in their daily life, the rest speak mostly English. This present-day situation developed out of history and national politics. Constant oppression and the felt need to be treated with respect led to the fight for the Welsh people's own national rights and their demand of an identity that distinguishes them from the English conquerors. The probably most important discriminating factor is the knowledge and tradition of a different language: Welsh was spoken in Wales almost exclusively before English was forcefully introduced<sup>38</sup>. The fact that the Welsh had their own language was unpleasant to the English-speaking rulers, whose interest was the expansion of England rather than the addition of a Celtic part. Homogeneity was the goal, and the belief that Wales' inhabitants would become like the English if they stopped speaking Welsh led to a ban of the Welsh language from schools with the Education Act in 1870<sup>39</sup>. The fact that children were the most easily mouldable part of society led William Williams, then MP for Coventry, to the revelation that education was the perfect instrument of control, because it was a “cheaper and easier way of creating an obedient population than the use of force” (qtd. In Bohata 2004: 20). His hope was that Welshmen would learn English and forget Welsh if they were not exposed to it at school. *Valley*, particularly, features passages where children spoke Welsh in school and were consequently punished by their schoolteacher anxious to weed out every trace of Welsh<sup>40</sup>.

Another blow was dealt to the prosperity of the Welsh language by waves of migration: In pursuit of higher education and more promising careers, many young Welsh fled their rural hometowns and went to England, while at the same time big groups of in-migrants from the neighbour-state arrived, especially after World War I, in search of labour in the steel towns and coal pits in the south of Wales and along the eastern border. The northern coastal towns attracted elderly people who sought and found a place to settle down after their retirement.

With children educated via the medium English and a growing number of English immigrants, the daily usage of Welsh started to dwindle. According to Morgan<sup>41</sup> the

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38 The Acts of Union banned the usage of Welsh for legal and official purposes. cf. Jones 1990: 49-50

39 cf. Pittock 118: the usage of Welsh was prohibited in schools, as English became the compulsory medium. Only in 1939 Welsh-medium schools were beginning to be re-established.

40 cf. *How Green Was My Valley*: A little girl is forced to wear a board inscribed “I must not speak Welsh in school” around the neck (p. 320) – a symbol of shame. Huw, also, is repeatedly slighted by his teacher because of his language and his origins in a coal mining village.

41 cf. Morgan, Williams, Glanmor 1981: 244

decline of the language was tangible after WWI, even though still more than 80% of people on Anglesey, in north, central and west Wales still spoke Welsh. The number of Welsh monoglots was, however, dropping rapidly in the 1920s, with most representatives aged 65 and older. The depression of agriculture and mass-unemployment led to the emigration of young people and left only the old behind<sup>42</sup>. The usage of Welsh remained fairly high in the aforementioned regions, which are very remote and safeguarded by mountains. Morgan<sup>43</sup> reports that in the more isolated areas of North Wales' the first language remained Welsh, with an inability to speak English, while the majority of people in urbanised, industrialised towns were bilingual, with English becoming more dominant. Some cities with high numbers of English immigrants, such as Wrexham and the border areas in general, were soon even considered monoglot English. Similarly, the western regions in South Wales (Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire) were strongholds of the Welsh language, while in the cities along the coast (Cardiff, Barry) and along the borders (Monmouthshire) Welsh was spoken by a minority and almost vanished, respectively. English had become the language of business and commerce, of learning and the arts<sup>44</sup>, and with children exposed to English rather than Welsh, the language suffered a steady recession. The deepening linguistic fracture that resulted from deliberate policy and migration, and the duality it led to are recurring themes in Anglo-Welsh literature<sup>45</sup> and also feature in the books analysed below.

The 1960s saw a revival of Welsh nationalism, caused by the declining heavy industry and the collapse of the Empire. The manifestation of this renewed nationalist feeling was defensively cymrophone, mostly concerning linguistic issues<sup>46</sup>. Thus, in 1967 the Welsh Language Act was passed, which awarded equal status to both languages and the first Welsh-medium TV-station S4C was secured in the 1980s by a fierce campaign of *Plaid Cymru*. The current statistics, however, state that only 20% of Welsh population are speakers of Welsh, while a vast majority use mainly English or do not even have sufficient knowledge of Welsh to use it for communication. Inhabitants of Wales belong either to the minority that still speaks Welsh, or to the larger numbers of the anglophone population.

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42 Emigration of the young as the reaction to unemployment is addressed in *How Green Was My Valley*, where the majority of the Morgans' children leave their village to seek work elsewhere. Angharad goes to Cape Town, Davy to New Zealand, Ianto to Germany and Owen and Gwilym to America (417).

43 cf. Morgan 1981: 244

44 Ibid. 245

45 Bohata 2004: 21 and 25

46 Pittock, 1999: 111

The tangibility of the tension between Welsh speakers of Welsh and speakers of English is recorded by Carol Trosset, who published the results of her observative study on Welshness in 1993<sup>47</sup>. She reports a certain degree of insecurity of Welsh speakers of English before “pure Welsh”. They are reported to feel inferior and not truly Welsh, a feeling which results from being excluded from monophone Welsh events, such as the national Eisteddfod, which is considered the purest expression of Welsh nationality, and everything related to Welshness. The position of the Anglo-Welsh inhabitants is, therefore, not exactly clearly established and some pieces of Anglo-Welsh literature are an attempt to define and justify this position. In how far this is true for the works analysed will be discussed below.

### **2.3.3. LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE: WELSH VS. ANGLO-WELSH**

“The status of Welsh writing in English is generally very low.” (Bohata 2004: 12)

“While using cheerfully enough the English language, I have never written in it a word about any country other than Wales, or any people other than Welsh people.” (Jones, *Dragon*: 36)

The truth of the first observation is easily explained: Welsh-language speakers read Welsh-language books, but English-language speakers have a much broader choice of literature. Anglo-Welsh literature is rather specific and does not have as high a standing as some English classics. The result, and at the same time root, of the problem is that Anglo-Welsh works are neither part of school curricula, nor is the publication scene big enough to inspire wide public interest.

Another reason is the feeling of patriotism that is inevitably linked to the native language: In the fight for their own national identity, the Welsh language is used as the main weapon<sup>48</sup>, and the Welsh language writer is the warrior who wields it, according to Glyn Jones, who in *The Dragon has Two Tongues* reflects on both Welsh and Anglo-Welsh writing. “The Welsh writer in Wales”, he is quoted in the introduction, “is not a man apart [...], but rather an accepted part of the social fabric with an important function to perform”, which, according to editor Tony Brown<sup>49</sup> is

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47 Trosset, Carol. *Welshness performed: Welsh concepts of person and society*. Tucson & London: The University of Arizona Press, 1993

48 Pittock 1999: 116

49 Jones, *Dragon*: introduction xxv

the preservation of communal values, the protection of the community's identity and the declaration of its values and hopes. Jones sees the position of the Anglo-Welsh writer in this same tradition with his function as the builder of a bridge between two identities, but Harri Pritchard Jones, a Welsh language writer, rejects this notion. He points out that the Anglo-Welsh writer is linguistically cut off from the community, rather than “a firmly accepted and essential part of [it]” (qtd. by Brown in *Dragon*: xxii), which makes Anglo-Welsh writers ill suited as authentic fighters for Welsh national identity. Glyn Jones was aware of these obstacles and expressed his (and supposedly all Anglo-Welsh writers') inner identity conflict in his introductory letter to Keirdrych:

“I was deeply conscious, certainly, of being a Welshman, and when I met young English poets of my own generation [...] I was often acutely conscious of the differences between them and myself. But although by the time I am speaking of I was able to speak Welsh, I had, unlike you, written no poems in the Welsh language. Also, I had taken very little part in Welsh literary life, in the eisteddfodau and so on.” (*Dragon*: 2)

Jones feels drawn to the English language and culture rather than his own, but at the same time knows that his place is not in England. He is torn between two cultures and claims that the majority of Anglo-Welsh writers have been in the same situation. His autobiography stands as example in the attempted explanation of the conflicting situation of Anglo-Welsh writers. Jones traces the roots of this inner struggle to the school system that had been anglicised with the Education Act in 1870<sup>50</sup>. He was subjected to lessons about English history and exposed to English literature only, with the Welsh *Mabinogion*<sup>51</sup> treated only in English translation. Welsh local history and church history were disregarded, as well as Welsh literature. Traditional school eisteddfodau were not organised at Jones' school either. “It must be obvious that anyone receiving the sort of education I have described would be far more likely to become some sort of Englishman than a Welshman profoundly aware and proud of his heritage, a writer of English rather than of Welsh” (25). His explanation seems reasonable: Surely, adolescents who speak Welsh at home, but in school are only confronted with English literature and are obliged to express themselves – both orally and in written form – in English, are bound to become more confident in a language

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50 The Education Act (1870) decreed that English was to be used as the compulsory medium of communication in Welsh schools. cf. Pittock.1999: 30

51 The *Mabinogion* is a collection of eleven Welsh medieval prose stories, rich in Celtic mythology and folk-tales. It represents the Golden Age of narrative prose in Wales during the middle ages. (cf. [www.mabinogion.info](http://www.mabinogion.info). 2010. Will Parker. 28 October 2011)

that they are forced to exploit in more detail than in their native language in which they are only fluent to the limited extent of expressions needed for their everyday lives. Many Anglo-Welsh writers, like Glyn Jones or Dylan Thomas come from Welsh-speaking families, but felt drawn to the beauty of the English language, which they encountered at school and brought home with them, forcing their parents to use the Lingua Franca with them<sup>52</sup>. Likewise, families often considered it wiser to speak English to their children in order to help them get along in school or had taken to speak English rather than Welsh themselves<sup>53</sup>.

The Anglo-Welsh writer is, therefore, a product of society, mostly of educational standards and given the circumstances touched upon above, the emergence of Anglo-Welsh writers is not surprising. Jones (rightly) believes

“[...] that the language which captures [a writer's] heart and imagination during the emotional and intellectual upheavals of adolescence, the language of his awakening, the language in which ideas [...] first dawn on his mind, is the language likely to be the one of his creative work” (*Dragon*: 14).

This explanation as to why Anglo-Welsh literature started to flourish in the 20<sup>th</sup> century seems reasonable. Bohata<sup>54</sup> sees Anglo-Welsh writing in the tradition of postcolonial writing. She draws this conclusion from the fact that numerous Welsh writers use the language of imperial or colonial domination to describe the cultural and politico-economic status of their home country, which is one of the most distinctive features in postcolonial writing. She claims that a large number of tropes typical of postcolonial writing can be found in Anglo-Welsh literature.

Besides the fact that many writers, due to an insufficient command of Welsh, are given no choice as to what language is to be the medium through which their stories are told, one of the benefits of Welsh writing in English is the extended range of readers that can be reached by using a more universal language. Contrary to Welsh language writers, whose audience are the Welsh people exclusively, Anglo-Welsh writers design their works not only for their own people, but rather for anyone who knows English and will read their books. Thereby they „create“ their own readership<sup>55</sup>, but also face the question of their own identity: they would name Welsh

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52 cf. *Dragon*: 23

53 Dylan Thomas' parents were both of Welsh-speaking descent, but increasingly used English. Thomas' father was an English teacher and Dylan himself was raised in English and hardly spoke any Welsh. (cf. *Dragon* 168)

54 Bohata 2004: 9

55 cf. *Dragon*: 175



and not English their native tongue and would with all pride declare their membership of the Welsh nation rather than identifying themselves as British – or worse: English. This attitude towards a Welsh identity by English-speaking Welshmen is frowned upon by R. Tudur Jones: “They call themselves Welshmen and yet they lack the one distinctive qualification that gives the Welshman his cultural uniqueness, namely command of the Welsh language” (qtd. In Bohata 2004: 110). It is an attitude and prejudice that Anglo-Welsh writers used to face from their Welsh-speaking compatriots. R.S. Thomas counters by affirming that “despite [their] speech [they] are not English” (qtd. in Bohata 2004: 105), a statement that carries a trace of non-belonging: The Anglo-Welsh writer is, by this definition, located somewhere between the “pure” Welsh-speaking Welsh and the English.

Bowie<sup>56</sup> quotes political analyst Denis Balsom who proposed a “three Wales”-model, according to which there is a Welsh-speaking, Welsh-identified Wales, next to a non-Welsh-speaking, Welsh-identified Wales, next to a non-Welsh-speaking, non-Welsh-identified (so called “British”) Wales. By this definition, the Anglo-Welsh writer belongs into the second category, as a mixture of the other two. Their hybrid nature transpires in their literature, when they decide to publish a book. Until the 1970s Wales lacked publishers for English-language works, which forced writers to attempt getting published by an English publisher, who would often require that the books meet the needs and expectations of the English audience, a circumstance that prevented them from writing uninhibitedly about Wales<sup>57</sup>.

It is usually contrary to the writers' interest to pass a book as an “English” piece of writing, as their key interest is usually their own nation. In order to achieve distinction from English literature and to acquire significance, the Anglo-Welsh writer has to be “inextricably committed to and involved in the predicament of his country” (Harri Webb, qtd. In *Dragon*: 127, footnote 20). One way of achieving this goal is by focusing on the language as the most obvious differentiating factor. Language and code-switching are deployed purposefully: all Welsh writers, even if they have no command of the Welsh language, possess a certain residual knowledge of the language<sup>58</sup> and of its celtic mysticism and this knowledge – rudimentary as it may be – is often used as a kind of code that alienates the English in Anglo-Welsh writing for non-Welsh readers, but at the same time invokes in its Welsh audience a

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56 Bowie 1993: 184

57 cf. Bohata 2004: 115

58 Ibid. 105-6

feeling of belonging to a circle of insiders. Bill Ashcroft labels the usage as a hybrid English like this a “device of otherness”, which is “utilised to establish the difference and uniqueness of [a] post-colonial text” (qtd. in Bohata 2004: 106).

The language of the books, if not used to mock<sup>59</sup>, is a tool used to assert the authors identity and their position between two cultures. It acts as a guide to a place where the writers, and not at last the Welsh people, belong and as such it is of vital importance in Anglo-Welsh writing and, therefore, also in this thesis.

## **2.4. GEOGRAPHY AS A DEFINING FACTOR**

The location and topography of a place is just as defining an element in the question of belonging and identity as language and tradition are. Wales is separated from England by Offa's Dyke, a topographical feature created by man with the objective to generate a distance between both nations. Just as effective as the manmade dyke was in dividing Wales and England, as monumental is the influence of natural variations in topography on the structure of a nation. They organise a country and set conditions for their inhabitants and, therefore, carry meaning.

According to Kirsti Bohata<sup>60</sup>, place, as a space to which meaning is ascribed, is a concept of great importance in postcolonial discourse and literature. She claims that familiar landscape is invested with a vast emotional and political momentousness and features heavily in Welsh culture. It is a particularly topographically defined nation, with its mostly rural regions, mountainous national parks, ragged coastline and a vast amount of natural resources. These lands, combined with the ancient myths and folklore tied to them, are of high, not at least emotional, value for their inhabitants, whether they promise fortune or toil. They determine people's work and lives. They carry the meaning of “home”, with all its good and bad factors.

Bohata quotes Ned Thomas, who in his book *The Welsh Extremist* discusses the importance of landscape in and for Welsh culture: “One should not underestimate what it means to live in a country where fields and rivers and hills and villages conserve old and human feelings, and where the consciousness of these things is still widespread and can move one like the contours of a loved face” (Bohata 2004: 80). Examples confirming this statement can be found in all of the books analysed within the frame of this thesis; in *Valley*, for example, Huw frequently seeks refuge and a

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59 To mock is the purpose of the artificial language used in *My People*.

60 cf. Bohata 2004: 80 ff.

place for silent contemplation on the hilltop, where he looks at his and the community's lives from a perspective sharpened by the distance and height of his position and has revelations about the valley's future. At the same time, he feels a strong sense of belonging to the land that lies before him:

“[...] I heard the rich, male voice of the men of the Valley, golden, brave, and clean, with heart, and with loftiness of spirit, and I knew that their voice was my voice for I was part of them as they were of me, and the Valley was part of us and we were part of the Valley, not one more than the other, never one without the other. Of me was the Valley and the Valley was of me, and every blade of grass, and every stone, and every leaf of every tree, and every knob of coal or drop of water, or stick or branch or flower or grain of pollen, or creature living, or dust in ground, all were of me as my blood, my bones, or the notions from my mind.” (*Valley*, 214/5)

Jan Penrose<sup>61</sup> points out that a “mystical bond between people and place” contributes to the construction of a nation and Bohata detects a repeated destruction of said bond in Welsh and Anglo-Welsh writing, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This destruction was brought on by constant interceptions by the ruling nation, England, and hardships, like the depression of the 1920s and 1930s.

The importance of landscape and geographical features and its preservation cannot only be found in literature, but also in national politics: One aim of the political party Plaid Cymru, according to their website<sup>62</sup>, is to ensure “health of the natural environment”, which concurs with Pyrs Gruffudd's<sup>63</sup> claim that at the time of the formation of Plaid Cymru “Welshness was understood in profoundly geographical terms” (qtd. In Bohata 2004: 81). Like Penrose, he attributes a spiritual significance to Welsh countryside.

Wales is known for its untamed and beautiful landscape and also for its rural character. As has already been mentioned in chapter 2.2, the majority of inhabitants in Wales used to make their living from agriculture, which accounts for the rural character of the nation. It is, however, not only the people that shape the landscape, but it is much more the topographical properties of a region which form societies and influence patterns and strategies of settling and town-building: lands rich in natural resources are likely to retain their inhabitants and attract immigrants, while infertile and hostile grounds usually stand unoccupied, as people tend to move away in order to find an easier way of living. Topographical surveys usually find valleys to be rich

61 Qtd. In Bohata 2004: 80

62 <http://www.english.plaidcymru.org/> 16 October 2011

63 Dr. Pyrs Gruffudd is a senior lecturer at Swansea University. He specialises in Cultural Geography and Landscape.

and fertile, while mountains pose natural impediments. Landscape can thus direct the flow of people's migrations: Coastlines and flat lands are easy to claim and comfortable to live in, the evidence of which can be found in the south and east of Wales: they are hotspots where towns have grown into cities and immigrants from England were attracted by the availability of work (i.e. coalmines and ironworks) and space. Mountainous regions, however, are less hospitable and, therefore, draw fewer new inhabitants, but are home to usually rather small, long-established communities.

It is no coincidence that what is often called “the Welsh heartlands”<sup>64</sup> can be found in and around the Snowdonia mountain ridge in the North and the rocky Pembrokeshire coast in the far West. Anglesey, being an island separated from the Welsh mainland by the Menai Strait, can also be added to this category. These regions are comparatively hard to reach, geographically cut off from the flat borderlands and boast few attractions for prospective immigrants. Vibrant towns in these areas are scarce and only sprang up where either universities or the prospect of exploiting the abundant natural resources of slate and coal tempted entrepreneurs<sup>65</sup>.

An area more affected by immigration are the “South Wales Valleys”<sup>66</sup>. The umbrella term denotes a number of valleys in the industrialised southern part of Wales, where coal mining and iron and steel works thrived. The “class” of the coalminers can mostly be found in this area, which is why the valleys provide the setting for a considerable number of Anglo-Welsh novels and short stories dealing with the coalminers' lives and toils.

Geography and topography, thus, are shaping elements – not only for the landscape, but likewise for communities, national thought and politics. With the increasing mobility and technical advance in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these boundaries have changed and shifted. On the one hand they have become less important, as mountains can more quickly and easily be conquered nowadays, and more defining on the other hand, as the remoter parts sit mostly unaffected by the changes and thus remain “purer” (i.e. more traditionally Welsh). Lowe et al.<sup>67</sup> claim that rural villages “[have] traditionally been a 'cosy corner' in which an

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64 These areas are still mainly inhabited by speakers of Welsh, its communities are not subjected to rapid changes or floods of immigration and traditions are kept more likely to be kept alive than in more central or eastern areas. cf. Trosset 1993

65 e.g. the university towns of Bangor and Aberystwyth, places with a harbour or railway station for the export of slate, like Porthmadog, and places that boast slate or copper and provide work, like Amlwch (copper).

66 cf. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South\\_Wales\\_Valleys](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Wales_Valleys)

67 Qtd. by Murdoch and Pratt in Cloke et al. 1997: 51

'Anglocentric'<sup>68</sup> culture, one opposed to the multiculturalism increasingly evident in many cities, could nestle down safe from harm". Murdoch and Pratt<sup>69</sup> dub rural societies "timeless zones", where old-fashioned ways of life are adhered to longer. *My People*, *How Green Was My Valley*, *Border Country* and *The Tower* differ in setting. They portray a village in the South Western Welsh heartlands, one in the coal mining valleys, one at the English borders and one on the island of Anglesey, respectively. How these different locations influence and shape their communities will be analysed briefly in chapter 4.5.

## **2.5. TRADITIONS AND RITES AS A MEANS OF EXPRESSING IDENTITY AND BELONGING**

### **2.5.1. INTRODUCTION**

"Ethnic identity is allegiance to a group [...] with which one has ancestral links. [...] Some sense of a group boundary must persist. This can be sustained by shared objective characteristics [...], or by more subjective contributions to a sense of "groupness", or by some combination of both. Symbolic or subjective attachments must relate, at however distant a remove, to an observably real past." (Edwards 2009: 162)

Community life is rich in traditions and communal events and celebrations that have developed over the centuries. They are all linked to a common past and have been passed on from generation to generation, holding the group together and also serving as boundaries that keep out people who are not members of the group. According to Ernest Renan "national identity [...] rests upon feelings of shared heritage" (qtd. in Edwards 2009: 154). A shared past and shared traditions are a powerful social device to demonstrate common roots, a common lifestyle shared by a community, and maybe - on a larger scale - a nation. Edwards, in his discourse about ethnicity and nationalism repeatedly speaks of "objective markers of identity" (160), which are important to a certain group or a nation. Amongst these markers he lists language, religion, cuisine and traditions. With the revival of Welsh nationalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, emphasis was gradually given to all of these markers, thus, emphasizing indigenous Welsh traditions that would set Wales apart from England and would underline its uniqueness and individuality. One measure taken was the passing of the

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<sup>68</sup> The same must be true for Welsh culture, which is even more remote and seclusive.

<sup>69</sup> *ibidem*

Welsh Church act in 1914 that saw the separation of the Welsh churches from the established Church of England and rendered Wales autonomous with regards to her religion. Another culturally significant step was the reintroduction of the national Eisteddfod, an exclusively Welsh-language event, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, the celtic history of Wales with all its mysticism and myths about dragons and druids has been stressed and also advertised and commercialised. Schwyzer<sup>70</sup> cites the works of antiquarian Sir John Prise of Breconshire and Richard Davies, Bishop at St. David's, who see the Welsh nation as “conceived and constituted as a community of longing, united by a collective orientation toward its own vanquished antiquity” (81). This 'antiquity' denotes a past the English have no part in, which makes it exclusively Welsh, which is the reason for its significance.

This feeling of staying in touch with the “past” and the notion of an unchanged world can longest be maintained in remote, rural settings: agrarian communities in Wales used to be mainly self-sufficient: livestock breeding and agriculture were the foremost means of securing a living, what tools were needed were locally produced, and it was unnecessary for most people to set foot outside their village. Due to this seclusion every community developed its own traditions and rites, mostly connected to farming, the passing of the year, life, death and fertility<sup>71</sup>. Customs were – and still are – part of the pattern of life and are important to people, especially to those living in the countryside. With increasing mobility and migration within a nation traditions naturally started to spread to other villages. They influenced each other and then became characteristic for a wider area.

It is traditions that mark a community and it is also traditions and rites that stereotypes stem from. Edwards remarks that “there are many social perceptions that group members hold in common; at one level, we can think of these as *stereotypes*, at another as *culture* itself” (154). Stereotypes are not treated individually in this thesis, but are included in the umbrella term of 'culture'. Together with the traditions given above – religious, bardic and mythological – they are dealt with in the following chapters.

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70 Schwyzer, Philipp. *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory in early modern England and Wales*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004

71 Jenkins, J. Geraint. *Life & Tradition in rural Wales*. 1973. Chalford: Amberley, 2009: 163f.

## 2.5.2. CHURCH AND THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN VILLAGES

### 2.5.2.1. THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN VILLAGES

Religion in Wales played a major role in establishing a national consciousness and a sense of group identity<sup>72</sup>, due to the omnipresence of the chapel in people's everyday lives and activities. Chambers mentions the Welsh's long valid characterisation of “a religion shaped people” (Chambers 2005: 1), a categorisation that stems from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a time of religious enthusiasm and heyday of the nonconformist strands of Christianity. By disestablishing themselves from the older Anglican Church and constructing a distinctly Welsh religious identity for village communities, the Church in Wales set their nation further apart from England. Nonconformity and chapel membership became a consciously employed figurehead to assert an individual's and a community's Welshness and tensions developed between church-goers and chapel-goers. Chapters 2.5.2.1 and 2.5.2.2. provide an overview of the importance of religious leadership for villages from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until nowadays and the development of the religious situation in Wales in general.

In villages power structures were fairly simple and usually divided between clergy and gentry (if present). Lee<sup>73</sup> quotes Rev. A. Taylor's book *Hodge and his Parson* which was written in 1892 and describes the relationship of farmer and parson in English villages:

„In a great number, I should say in the vast majority of parishes, the squire, the parson and the large farmers form a „ring“ which controls all parochial affairs, so that no outsider has a chance even of knowing what goes on, much less of exerting any real influence on the management of those affairs. This „ring“ practically is the vestry. Whoever heard of labourers coming to vestry meetings and expressing their view of affairs. If they did come, what would be the good? Who would listen to them? And the parson is *ex officio* chairman of the vestry. He is the leader, in Hodge's eyes, of this exclusive ring.“ (187)

Similar situations are depicted in *My People*, with the *seiat*<sup>74</sup> as the Welsh equivalent to the vestry. It comprises a number of influential people, such as large landholders, rich farmers, and the parson, and serves as a local jury that is responsible for the execution and implementation of justice. Religion and its representatives, thus, held an especially powerful position.

As most people were uneducated and illiterate, they sought wisdom, moral

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<sup>72</sup> cf. Morgan, D. Densil. *Wales and the Word: Historical Perspectives on religion and Welsh identity*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008: 4

<sup>73</sup> Lee 2006

<sup>74</sup> *Seiat* is Welsh for “fellowship”, “meeting”.

guidelines and inspiration from those who were better educated than themselves. The best educated people in a village used to be the priest and the teacher and both were generally treated with the highest degree of respect. They could influence and direct individuals' behaviour. According to Jenkins<sup>75</sup>, priests were as well known as celebrities nowadays. They lived in the village, superior beings among their flock, whose problems they knew and helped ease, aided by their connection to God. Their exalted status inspired obedience in the villagers and was used to combat 'wrongs' such as drunkenness, idleness, or ignorance<sup>76</sup>.

Another positive way in which priests exerted their power was by attending to and providing for the poor of the community: parsons organised help and support for the poorest of community by such measures as the bequests of land, and gifts of money or goods. Not every parson's motivations to help the poor were wholly selfless, though. By extending a helping hand the loyalty and gratitude of the lowest-standing in society could be secured and a relationship of dependence could develop, which was in danger of being misused<sup>77</sup>.

Village priests were not only local figures of authority, judges, and role models in moral issues, but also played an important part in education: to educate their congregation, especially as far as the acceptance of their social function and station is concerned, was one of their main functions. Along these lines, Lee poses the thesis that steps taken to educate villagers did not simply serve to ensure that labourers had a certain standard of education, but were also used to administer social discipline and to advance the interests of the elite<sup>78</sup> - i.e. by teaching the poor to understand and accept their station, support of which can be found in Evans' *My People*.

A more positive side of an involvement of the village priest in the education of his parishioners is the role of the talent scout<sup>79</sup>. If a young person – presumably exclusively boys – possessed promising talents and intellectual maturity, it was either the priest or the village teacher who supported them in finding ways to obtain higher education, a task that was not always easy, as, especially in rural settings, suspicious feelings and an unwillingness to pursue higher education prevailed<sup>80</sup> in the 19<sup>th</sup> and

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<sup>75</sup> Jenkins 2009: 171 ff.

<sup>76</sup> One curate of an English parish is quoted in Lee 2006: 168. He attributes the “mounting toll of idleness, ignorance, absenteeism, and drunkenness in the parish” to the problem of the parish's lack of a resident clergyman, a problem that also affected Wales, especially in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. (cf. Morgan 2008 and Jenkins 2009)

<sup>77</sup> Examples can be found in the portrayal of society in *My People*.

<sup>78</sup> cf. Lee 2006: 131 f.

<sup>79</sup> cf. *How Green Was My Valley* and *Border Country*

<sup>80</sup> Lee mentions a hostility of farmers towards education, which was rooted in the fear of losing labourers:



the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Naturally, with the growing standard of education that was bestowed on the individual and communities, the technical advance, and the general gradual decline of Christianity during the 20<sup>th</sup> century village priests lost their influence over parishioners, a problem that caused complaint in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century already<sup>81</sup>, and which became more acute in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The respect paid to members of the clergy, though considerably diminished, still remains intact in most rural communities nowadays, albeit mostly with the elderly, whose whole everyday life revolves around the village and the village community<sup>82</sup>.

#### 2.5.2.2. CHURCH VS. CHAPEL – THE WELSH CHURCH ACT

“[C]hapels have been custodians of the language and of a distinctive way of life, where the links between nonconformity and Welshness have been, and still are, many and powerful, and where Welsh literary and cultural movements and societies [...] still draw their support [...] overwhelmingly from chapel membership.” (Jones, *Dragon*: 194)

Jones speaks of a phenomenon that affected Wales in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when nonconformist chapels became the centre of village life. In matters of religion, Wales very early went her own way, separate from the English church, even though immediately after the annexation of Wales Welsh church became prevalently protestant and initially services were even held in English. An act of parliament in 1653 ordered Welsh bishops to provide Welsh translations of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer<sup>83</sup> and Anglicanism grew scarce due to the lack of a competent and sufficiently educated clergy. Furthermore, a considerable number of the priests that had been sent from England to take orders were ignorant of the local tongue, an impediment that prohibited them from performing their duties, such as paying visits to the sick. They allegedly also turned a blind eye to immoralities such as bigamy and adultery and Jones<sup>84</sup> reports a flourishing of superstitious practices and indecencies such as games, dancing and visits to the Pub on Sundays.

Still, the Welsh officially remained religious, but not out of conviction and faith. “For many Welshmen religious observance remained an amalgam of custom,

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education for their children was deemed unnecessary, but their help in the fields was indispensable. He further reports landowners' fear that their labourers would become too educated and, consequently, less willing and compliant workers. (cf. Lee 2006: 135 f.)

81 cf. Lee 2006: 169 f.

82 This observation was made by myself on several occasions and in various settings.

83 cf. Jones 2001

84 cf. Jones 2001: 58

superstition, dread of the supernatural and of man's fate after death, and a basic knowledge of some Bible stories" (Jones 2001: 57-8). Under James I Nonconformity first came into being and dissenters from the regular church were soon to be tolerated<sup>85</sup>. They were mainly popular in large parishes or isolated villages and Jones characterises them as "people of independent means and spirit" (73).

Inspired by the English puritans they protested against privileges enjoyed by Anglican churchmen and fought for the religious and political liberty of the individual. With these goals they set out to educate the people of Wales following an egalitarian ideal. Measures taken include founding the *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (1714) using the English medium, the introduction of Welsh-medium Circulating Schools<sup>86</sup>, where clergy and itinerant teachers taught reading and writing skills to children and adults using the bible as textbook, and the establishment of Sunday Schools. Those were, likewise, based on the scripture and rapidly became hugely successful, as they encouraged children and adults to form, express and discuss their own opinions. In short time the Bible and religious thought became part of everyday speech and everyday life.

The Evangelical Revival in 1735 rendered Nonconformity with its new, vigorous, inspiring sermons popular with the common people and its influence spread to other religious movements, which were characterised by a cerebral and more sober and old-fashioned approach. Peripatetic priests like Christmas Evans<sup>87</sup> travelled through Wales to preach in various communities and left a large number of converts in their wake. Their sermons attracted underprivileged and undereducated masses, because they appealed to "the heart as well as to the head" (Jones 2001: 84):

"Nineteenth-century Welsh Nonconformity was of the people, by the people and for the people, an exceedingly popular religious option unencumbered by a socially superior, hierarchical church government which represented the interests of an alien class." (Morgan 2008: 115-6).

Nonconformists believed that everybody was dealt a certain lot in life, which they were obliged to accept. They preached acceptance and non-involvement, while at the same time empowering the people and equipping them with the ability to read, using the Welsh bible as basis. Puritan virtues like integrity and temperance were reinforced, and sin and evil were taught to be avoided. One of the results of an

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<sup>85</sup> 1889 the Toleration Act allowed dissenters to worship. cf. Jones 2001: 73

<sup>86</sup> cf. Jenkins 2007: 160f.

<sup>87</sup> Christmas Evans is considered the personification of transformation in the Welsh religious landscape. cf. Morgan 2008: 17f.

increasing nonconformist lifestyle was the condemnation of drunkenness and visits to the public houses on Sundays. These were seen as the main reason of a degradation of society and Nonconformists combated them by passing the Welsh Sunday Closing Act in 1881<sup>88</sup>. This feeling of sense and order inspired by the Nonconformists, combined with the availability of education and an emotionally appealing style of preaching, soon moved chapels into the centre of attention: they dominated people's leisure activities, especially in rural areas<sup>89</sup>. By mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Nonconformist chapels boasted five times as many followers as the established Anglican church. With increasing nationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the influence and popularity of Nonconformity rose dramatically and correlated with a rise of power and duties of the chapels.

A blow was finally dealt to the movement by the Blue Book Report, which lamented the lack of educational standards in Wales and named the Welsh language and also Nonconformity the two greatest evils responsible for the deficiency. Unsurprisingly, it called Nonconformist leaders to their arms. The cry for a raise of the status of the Welsh language, formerly a simple means of communication and the social marker of lower classes, became loud and chapels became involved in Welsh literature publication and the promotion of typical Welsh cultural forms, like the Eisteddfod. The representatives of religious nonconformity obtained a badge of assertive Welshness<sup>90</sup> which quickly spread all over Wales and led to a new unifying national consciousness.

Finally, the plea for a church that stands independent from the English churches became louder and reached success in the passing and later implementation<sup>91</sup> of the Welsh Church Act, which legally disestablished the Welsh from the Anglican church<sup>92</sup>. The people of Wales were now no longer compelled to pay tithes to the Anglican churches.

Considerable success on different levels, however, did not serve to sufficiently mask the other, rather negative image of Nonconformist chapels: parochialism, narrow-mindedness and intellectual obscurantism<sup>93</sup> were attributed to the movement and it is this face of the chapel that Caradoc Evans portrays in *My People* in 1915. A downwards spiral began.

88 The Act rendered it illegal to open public houses on Sundays.

89 cf. Jones 2001: 87

90 cf. Morgan 2008: 115-119

91 1914 and 1920, respectively

92 cf. Jones 2001

93 cf. Morgan 2008: 184

The 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially after WWII, was one marked by increasing mobility and facilitated migration. Villagers started venturing out of their settlements more frequently and tight-knit communities became looser. The advent of the radio and the motorcar provided the parishioners with a greater variety of opportunities to pass the time. The Sunday Closing Act came to be disregarded, and by 1975 only 6 districts<sup>94</sup> still kept their pubs closed on Sundays, a tradition that finally died in the 1990s. Another blow was dealt by the steady decrease in the number of Welsh speakers and the accelerated anglicisation of several areas. The English language was deemed the language of progress and of socialism, while the Welsh language was increasingly associated with puritanism and Wales' liberal past.

Even though Nonconformist chapels tried to combine the concepts of Christianity and socialism<sup>95</sup>, people found it hard to embrace this union of supposedly incompatible ideas. Nonconformity, once a modern, inspiring, radiant movement, had by the 1950s come to be regarded oppressive and puritanical, in contrast to Anglicanism, which at that time appealed to the communities more than chapel religion<sup>96</sup>. The change in attitude towards a Welsh national identity within the Church went so far, that by 1975 the Anglican church was perceived just as “Welsh” as the Church in Wales. The 1980s brought the downfall of the heavy industries and the change of lifestyles was paralleled by a falling interest in religion and christianity, which had by that time lost its distinctive Welsh element<sup>97</sup>. From the beginning of the global age and with changes in social structures and the advance of modernity, church and religion, like in most western countries, started to lose their significance and have been receding to the margins of society since. Chambers<sup>98</sup> quotes Richard Fenn, who sees the problem of the decline of the popularity of religion in postmodern age not simply as a religious problem, but talks of a “deprivileging of *all* cultural resources, secular and religious, as *authoritative* accounts of the world” (Chambers 2005: 37).

The decrease of religion's importance for a Welsh national identity was accelerated by large numbers of English in-migrants into the South of Wales, especially at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They created a need for English language church services and the general tendency of English priests to adhere to

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94 cf. Jones 2001: 157

95 cf. Morgan 2008: 221

96 Ibid. 227 f.

97 Ibid. 230 f.

98 cf. Chambers 2005

English Baptist church ethos led to the gradual disappearance of the distinctive Welsh element of the chapels. British mainstream evangelicalism started to prevail and nonconformity could no longer be regarded as an expression of a unique Welsh religious identity.

The role of Nonconformity as a representative of Welsh identity finally expired with the loss of the Welsh language and generated the need to redefine modern Welsh identity<sup>99</sup>, a question which started to go separate ways from religion in Wales after the 1980s. Glanmor Williams remarked in 1991 that “for the first time since the sixth or seventh centuries AD, when the Welsh could be said to have come into existence as a separate people, being Christian is not, for the majority of them, an essential part of being Welsh.” (qtd in Morgan 2008: 232) and Paul Chambers affirms that “the influence of institutional religion on Welsh society is now a thing of the past” (Chambers 2005: 2). Unsurprisingly, with a fading interest in religion large numbers of the plentiful chapels fell into disrepair or were converted for use as hostels, pubs or private homes<sup>100</sup>.

### **2.5.3. THE POWER OF SONG: BARDS, CHOIRS, POETRY AND EISTEDDFODAU**

“Mor o gan yw Cymru i gyd.” (Wales is a sea of song)<sup>101</sup>

Music, as a special language that is effective even without words, is a strong marker of identity. According to Davies, several forms and variations of music emerged from a community's need to “express their feelings collectively in an ordered concerted fashion” (Davies, in Crossley-Holland 1948: 62). Music in this function is used on various occasions, sad as well as merry. It can also be used to help people bond or to ease work, examples of which are soldier's marching songs or harvesting songs, sung by the workers to lighten their labour. It is maybe the most natural way for individuals to signal their belonging to a certain group or a certain culture, and cannot be disregarded as an expressive of national identity.

Wales' musical roots lie in the long bardic tradition that goes back before Roman times, when bards combined song and poetry and recited the magnificent deeds of heroes, kings and illustrious ancestors<sup>102</sup>. The popularity of bards even led to

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99 cf. Morgan 2008: 119-120

100 cf. Jenkins 2007: 274

101 Quote of unknown origin, found in Crossley-Holland 1948: 30

102 cf. Crossley-Holland 1948: 11

the introduction of codes of laws that set down their duties and rights and hints at bardic organisations and fraternities. One of those was created by Iolo Morganwg<sup>103</sup> in 1792: the Gorsedd of Bards. The Gorsedd is “a society of poets, writers, musicians, artists, and individuals who have made a notable contribution to the nation, its language and culture” (<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/gorsedd/introduction/>) and also describes an event, where the druids and bards of Wales meet at ancient, mystic places, like stone circles, clad in their bardic robes.

The Gorsedd cannot be described without mentioning the tradition of the Eisteddfodau and its national importance. Held in Welsh, eisteddfodau are competitions for poets, musicians, bards and writers. The initial event was hosted by Lord Rhys at his castle in Cardigan in 1176, and became a tradition thereafter. Bards from the whole country (of Wales) would participate in the competition to win a chair at the Lord patron's table<sup>104</sup>.

Eisteddfodau can have different proportions: from small, local competitions at school to the big annual National Eisteddfod they occupy an important place in Welsh culture. According to Edwards<sup>105</sup>, festivals like these are manifestations of symbolic ethnicity which are immediately associated with a certain culture. He mentions the danger of ethnic manifestations like these becoming neutered, when too large a body of outsiders responds to them<sup>106</sup>. The eisteddfod, however, is not endangered in this way, as, according to Trosset<sup>107</sup> it is “an enactment of fundamental elements of Welsh culture” done by the Welsh and only for themselves. The language barrier suffices to make non-Welsh speakers feel out of place or even unwelcome. It is, therefore, not only a language barrier, but also prevents people from assuming a certain identity. This characteristic renders the eisteddfod a quite extreme example of the celebration of Welshness via traditions, one that is mainly enjoyed by a very limited circle. In accord with that, Trosset mentions that the majority of Anglo-Welsh feel that Welsh-language traditions are closed against them, even though they are - and have always been - citizens of Wales.

Apart from the specialised and institutionalised character of the eisteddfod, song, poetry, the power of words and language have always been attributes associated

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103 Alias Edward Williams (1747-1826), “a pacifist, an antiquarian, a hymn-writer and an able lyrical poet who called himself 'The Bard of Liberty'.” (cf. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/884/>). He was also one of the foremost sponsors of the eisteddfod. (cf. Jones 1990: 87-8)

104 *Eisteddfod: History*. 7 December 2011. <<http://www.eisteddfod.org.uk/english/content.php?nID=66>>

105 Edwards 2009: 160

106 cf. Oktoberfest or St. Patrick's Day, which are celebrated internationally.

107 cf. Trosset 1993: 42

with the Welsh folk by insiders and outsiders alike. Crossley-Holland<sup>108</sup> sees the roots of this cultural phenomenon in the Celtic origins of the nation, when he observes the high status of music in the Celts' lives, as well as the abundant presence of tales featuring the magical powers of music and song in the Welsh fairy tradition. He mentions the *hiraeth*<sup>109</sup>, a feature found in Celtic music, which he identifies as “a note of emotion [that] echoes and re-echoes in the poetry and music of Wales, and indeed in that of all Celtic races, through the ages” (Crossley-Holland 1948: 16).

The expression of emotion via music and especially song - as song is independent of instruments and can be practiced by everyone - features heavily in discourses about Welsh National identity. The pre-eminence of song also stems from a clash with rising Nonconformity in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which suppressed dancing, instruments and bawdy folk-songs. Instead, choral- and hymn-singing were encouraged and became popular among the masses. The so-called *cymanfa ganu*<sup>110</sup> (“gathering for song”) takes its origins from people meeting in church to sing songs of praise together. Often, over a thousand participants join in. Together with bardic music and folk music hymn- and choral-singing form the corpus (albeit oral) of Welsh music tradition.

The fact that Wales has always had her own fully established musical tradition<sup>111</sup>, which evolved independently from England or Ireland, further serves to distinguish Wales from England: Their music belongs to themselves. Hardly any of the essays in *Music in Wales*, for example, forget to stress the meaning of music for the Welsh and their natural giftedness and beautiful voices.

Throughout the centuries this perception has not changed; music, singing and poetry are still important to everybody who considers themselves Welsh. Regardless of a person's profession or family situation, a certain poetic element is almost compulsory in their lives, an observation that Trosset<sup>112</sup> records after numerous encounters with people that are involved with Welsh poetry and music (e.g. a shepherd, who had been a disciple at a bardic school and carried a secret bardic

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108 cf. Crossley-Holland 1948: 11

109 According to the online-Dictionary provided by the university of Lampeter, *hiraeth* means “1. homesickness *n.m.f.* grief or sadness after the lost or departed *n.* (hiraethau) longing *n.m.* (hiraethau) yearning *n.m.* (hiraethau) nostalgia *n.m.* (hiraethau) wistfulness *n.m.* (hiraethau) earnest desire *n.m.* (hiraethau) “  
(<http://www.geiriadur.net/index.php?page=ateb&term=Hiraeth&direction=we&type=all&whichpart=exact>.  
Prifysgol Cymry – Y Drindod Dewi Sant / University of Wales – Trinity St. David. Jan 22 2012)

110 cf. Allen, W.R. *The choral Tradition in Wales*. In Crossley-Holland, Peter. *Music in Wales*. London: Hinrichsen, 1948: 30-43

111 cf. Crossley-Holland 1948: 16

112 Trosset, 1993: 19-20

name, or a businessman who frequently won eisteddfod competitions). In her research, she learned that the engagement in musical pastimes was an old tradition and concluded that people adhered to it, because it was considered Welsh (27).

Time and zeal are still devoted to a thorough musical education and the development of a good singing voice<sup>113</sup>. Numerous musical schools, choirs and choral societies can be found all over the nation, as well as organisations and societies concerned with preserving and fostering the tradition of song. Choirs sprang up in different settings, be it religious or industrial. Welsh miners' choirs are one example of the the significance of song for the individual and the empowering effect on a group, which has also earned international renown.

Apart from the enthusiasm for music, a certain sense of eloquence has often been attributed to Welshmen and -women, regardless of the language they spoke. Trosset<sup>114</sup> claims that this fact does not only hold true for the well educated groups comprising scholars, poets and preachers, but also for common people like farmers. A sense of eloquence and poetry is found exceptionally often with people of “normal” occupations. Jones affirms that in the days of his grandfather<sup>115</sup> the majority of Welsh poets come from humble surroundings. “They were schoolmasters, colliers, ministers of religion, shopkeepers” (Jones 2001: 12).

Contrary to what might be expected of poets who had not received more than elementary education, Welsh poetry is far from simplistic, but has long been refined. Several specific, partly complex, Welsh metres like the *cywydd* and the *englyn* are strictly adhered to, with special attention paid to rhyme schemes and the sounds of words<sup>116</sup>. Some of the metres are tailored to the Welsh language to such an extent that they cannot even be transferred to the English language effectively. Jones<sup>117</sup> explains this seemingly odd refinement in poetry with a shift towards English customs: the art of poetry used to be practiced by the land-owning class until they lost interest in crafting Welsh poems with the gradual process of anglicisation. As a reaction to these changes the broader Welsh society, regardless of class and background, started to indulge in poetry, singing and preaching and made the lyrical arts a characteristic

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113 Trosset remarks that to an untrained ear the children competing at eisteddfodau sound like trained singers. (47)

114 cf. Trosset 1993: 35

115 Jones' grandfather must have lived in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He was the son of a farmer who had received barely any education, but in his days was a luminous figure in *eisteddfodau* and carried a bardic name. (*Dragon*: 11-12)

116 cf. *Dragon*: 117 f. on the properties of the two metres: 123

117 Ibid. 120-121



tradition of the Welsh folk.

Due to high illiteracy rates, songs, poetry and stories were often not recorded in written form, but were passed on orally. In this way, several pieces got lost over the centuries, whereas others were passed on from generation to generation. Songs were learnt by ear, picked up at church or at a bardic festival, which explains why a large number of traditional - because popular and, therefore, oft-sung - songs has always been well known throughout the nation. The oral tradition, also important in passing on ancient tales<sup>118</sup> and etymologies connected to the names of places, is one that Wales is proud of and never tires to express.

In conveying messages and songs orally, language, again, has a key role, and the Welsh language serves as the best medium to transport stories from past to future, further mystifying them. It is therefore only logical, that Crossley-Holland points out that language and music cross-influence each other, rendering the former musical and the latter uniquely poetic<sup>119</sup>. How important voice, language and song are in Wales also becomes blatantly apparent in Welsh and Anglo-Welsh literature and manifests itself in the fact that poetry in Wales - in either language - has an incomparably higher status than prose. It sells more successfully and can also be witnessed at an *eisteddfod*<sup>120</sup>, where poetry receives most attention of all disciplines. Even in Anglo-Welsh prose writing, especially when it is concerned with Welsh societies, poetry and song are strongly present and the books analysed present no exception.

### **3. The Works**

#### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

Despite the fact that Anglo-Welsh writing occupies a fairly small field of literature, the selection of four representative works is difficult, as it brings a number of complications: four books, composed at different points in time within a century, each before a different political and social background can hardly lead to a concise picture of the portrayal of national and personal identity in the whole compound of

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118 e.g. the *Mabinogion*

119 cf. Crossley-Holland 1948: 22

120 Jones 2001: 117

Anglo-Welsh village literature. The choice of books was not made at random, but includes three of the most acclaimed and iconic Welsh books written in English and a recent collection of short stories. With the exception of *The Tower* (2003), which is still too recent, they have been discussed by renowned Welsh scholars and can be found in most academic works on Anglo-Welsh writing<sup>121</sup>.

Caradoc Evan's *My People* (1915) was one of the first Anglo-Welsh pieces of writing to be successful outside of Wales. His comical short-stories depict the grotesque aspects of Welsh peasant life. Richard Llewellyn's *How Green Was My Valley* (1939) is a portrait of a Welsh mining community, full of stereotypes and seen through the nostalgia-dimmed eyes of an old man looking back on his childhood. It was translated into various other languages and made into a film by John Ford in 1941. The focal point of *Border Country* (1960), written by Raymond Williams, is not so much Wales itself as the protagonist, who grew up in a Welsh village close to the border and went on to pursue a career as university professor in England. *The Tower* by Tristan Hughes is the most recent of the books. It is a collection of short stories that evolve around villagers living on the island of Anglesey in North Wales and portrays the concerns of the individuals and their notions of home and identity. The probably best-known piece of Anglo-Welsh village literature, *Under Milk Wood* (1954) by Dylan Thomas is not dealt with in this thesis, as it is a poetic piece rather than a novel. The characters seem like abstractions of real people – they are more like puppets orchestrated by Thomas to play a play of one day of life. Thomas focused on the repetitiveness of life and people's peculiarities and individual trifling toils and games in an almost universal way and his play for voices is, therefore, ill-suited to be compared to the other works analysed in this thesis.

The following chapters provide a detailed analysis of the four books chosen: They explore elements which make these works distinctly Welsh and the degree to which the question of identity is tangible in the books, focusing on the elements Language, Nationalism & Pride, Celticism, Historical Implications, Geographical Factors, Religious Elements and the Tradition of Song.

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121 cf. *The Dragon has two Tongues*, *Welsh Writing in English*, *Writing on the Edge* amongst others.

## 3.2 *MY PEOPLE* (1915) – CARADOC EVANS

### 3.2.1. PLOT SUMMARY

*My People* marks the beginning of a distinctive Anglo-Welsh literature<sup>122</sup>. In 15 short stories *My People* relates anecdotes from the lives of people in the fictional village of Manteg, which is set in south-west Wales. The protagonists are peasants, village priests or small business people and the stories tell of individual aims and goals and of ways villagers choose to deal with and make sense of life. One of the main themes is an almost fanatical compulsion to be faithful and pious and visit the chapel every Sunday. Deeds, however gruesome, are justified before the community by officially being done in the name of the Lord and the village priest; sacrifices are deemed necessary for absolution. Villagers collaborate only until they have no need of the others' support anymore and otherwise strive to protect their lands and daughters from greedy and cunning farmers, legacy hunters, relatives and lusty young men. Pure, romantic love seems not to exist, but is crushed by schemes of cold calculation for the most profit<sup>123</sup>. The characters in the stories appear uncaring, blunt, endlessly scheming and gossiping, highly pious and superstitious, “either whining hypocrites or vulgar, lecherous creatures of a kind that in real life we instinctively avoid” (Western Mail review, qtd. in Evans 1987: 37). Every family has skeletons hidden in their closets, but pretend to be perfectly pious and flawless. Their own faults, however, do not prevent them from judging their fellow citizens.

The book is opened by the story of a rich farmer, Sadrach Danyrefail, a member of the *seiat*, who strictly observes all religious rules and traditions, including regular conversations with God, but fails to protect and love his family. His everyday life is governed by service to the chapel and the augmentation of his farm. His wife he declares mad and locks up in the loft, after which deed he takes in a servant woman. This behaviour clearly exceeds the limit of what the public would hold decent, but throughout the village blind eyes are turned. When six of Sadrach's children die due to accidents and neglect, he accepts the fact as the lot God assigned him and buries them without exhibiting any emotions. In the subsequent stories<sup>124</sup> Sadrach appears

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122 cf. Bohata, 2004: 106

123 e.g. In the story “A Heifer without Blemish” marriage between two people is negotiated without emotion, but based on the necessity of an old couple's son taking a wife in order to run the farm. The young man charges his prospective wife with the task of selling a cask of butter to prove her sales talent, whereas the girl is concerned with learning all details about the size and profit of the farm she is going to marry to.

124 In “A just Man in Sodom” Sadrach is accused of dishonour and in reply spits into the face of the accuser (cf. *People*: 106), in “As it is written” he “prove[s] the foreign hussy” (i.e. the step-daughter of the protagonists)

as an influential judge on the high seat of the village and has no shame in intruding in the lives and businesses of his fellow villagers. All stories carry the same tenor: women are treated as objects, dependent on men's good-will. They are married for their usefulness and wealth rather than love. Blind obedience to church and its representatives is mandatory. Superstition and the belief in strange apparitions and mysterious forces at work have a firm grip on village community and override compassion and a good sense of community.

The question of identity and belonging is difficult to apply to this book as the protagonists do not generally reflect on philosophical matters like these, but shall nevertheless be attempted in the course of the thesis. More intense focus is given to analysing typical Welsh elements.

### **3.2.2. CARADOC EVANS (1878 - 1945)<sup>125</sup>**

Caradoc Evans was born in Rhydlewish, from where he moved to Cardiff and later to London to work as a draper, before he eventually took to journalism and writing. The ideas for his stories were taken from life itself and from the people Evans knew and met and stories he had been told by friends and relatives. When Evans read the Welsh bible for the first time, he began to see parallels between the biblical city of Sodom and the rural Wales he knew and decided to write *My People*, 15 short stories portraying different characters in the fictional village Manteg. Evans spent his life mostly in London and knew Wales only from his childhood days and occasional visits. While the deeply sarcastic collection of short stories was well-received and praised in England, it caused an uproar in Wales. The portrayals were deemed untrue, “hideous nonsense” and Evans was called a renegade. The anger of the Welsh public and literary circles led to a ban of the book from libraries and an attempt to discourage bookstores from selling it. Evans himself claims that the purpose of the book was to “save Wales from itself” (9) by holding up a mirror to peasant society. Asked by his publisher, Andrew Melrose, if no more beauty were to be found in the lives and character of the Welsh, than were depicted in “that startling and mordant collection of sketches”, Evans answered that it was the ugly side of Welsh peasant life that he knew most about (33). He saw himself as a social realist and insisted on the “truth” of his writing. The common tenor meanwhile is that, albeit polemic in its grotesque

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“with hard questions” (*People*: 123)

125 cf. Introduction by John Harris to Evans, Caradoc. *My People*. 1915. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Chippenham: Seren Books. 1987

depiction of Welsh rural life, *My People* demonstrates Evans' powers of careful observation and his ability to explore and exploit the English language and "modern Anglo-Welsh literature could not have wished for a more impressive beginning." (Evening Standard, qtd. In Evans 1987: 46).

### **3.3. *How Green Was My Valley* (1939) – RICHARD LLEWELLYN**

#### **3.3.1. PLOT SUMMARY**

Richard Llewellyn's book *How Green Was My Valley* is set in a South Welsh mining village. The partly autobiographical novel is about an old man, Huw Morgan, who is about to leave his home village that has grown less and less picturesque with the growth of the coal industry and rising slag heaps and is looking back on his life. First person limited narration is used throughout the novel to effectively retell tales and anecdotes from Huw's life in chronological order: from his first day and consecutive troubles at the English school, over eavesdropping secret meetings of the coalminers' union, over chapel attendance on Sundays, over to tales of a vibrant and cordial family life, from his siblings' marriages over trivial matters such as stolen turkeys and their recovery, to more serious matters such as the miners' strikes. The tone is nostalgic and the book sees a microcosmic family ageing and falling apart as children move away, paralleled and framed by the steady decline of the village, until, at the end, the slag heaps cover the deserted home of the Morgan family. The morality of village people decreases perceptively and Huw's illusions of the perfect, tight-knit, ever supportive village community are gradually challenged in the course of his life.

*How Green Was My Valley* is rich in stereotypically Welsh images, such as coalminers who sing on their way home from work, eisteddfodau, rugby, and the beautiful valleys and hills. The novel found a wide readership and fandom around the world, but is viewed critically by Welsh academics. Glyn Jones accuses Richard Llewellyn of "dragging in [...] every cliché from quartettes of harpists to women in tall hats" and distorting the truth by sentimentality<sup>126</sup>. Raymond Williams calls it "the export version of the Welsh industrial experience" (qtd. in Thomas 2003: 73) and Dai "David" Smith speaks with an even more critical voice, stripping the novel of any "real" value for the Welsh:

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126 Glyn Jones, 53

“As economics this is infantile, as history a falsification, as literature concerned with uncovering human dilemma on a societal whirligig, it is feeble, but as Romance, dealing in comforting stereotypes and concerned to tease out a thematic explanation of social disaster, it is perfect. The novel [...] reduces human history to the emotional level of any tawdry Hollywood “B” picture.” (qtd. In Thomas 2003: 73)

Despite the criticism and missing acclamation and laudation of the book in Wales itself it fits into the category of Anglo-Welsh village literature and the richness in stereotypes and nostalgic tone combined with the author's origin in London render it the perfect contrasting literature to compare the other selected works against.

### **3.3.2. RICHARD LLEWELLYN (1906-1983)**

Richard David Llewellyn Lloyd is a person that is difficult to track. The Encyclopedia Britannica<sup>127</sup> and Literary Lives<sup>128</sup> - among other references - list him as being born in St. Davids, Pembrokeshire, Wales, which, according to other sources<sup>129</sup>, is an untruthful claim made by himself: allegedly he was born to Welsh parents in London. He spent most of his lifetime outside of Wales, travelling and working in England, Europe and America. Even though by definition Llewellyn might not be a true Anglo-Welsh writer due to his origin, his books are always discussed within the frame of Anglo-Welsh literature. Source and inspiration for his books are local Welsh mining communities and the inhabitants of Wales' valleys, whose stories he collected on his visits to Wales, where he engaged in thorough research of coal mining and coal miners' lives<sup>130</sup>. Hardly any of the stories and anecdotes related are based on Llewellyn's own life, which might account for the nostalgic tone and the abundance of stereotypes in *How Green Was My Valley*. Wales was clearly dear to his heart, as several of his novels are set in the Welsh countryside. According to Harris<sup>131</sup>, Llewellyn sees and portrays the rural landscape as the true home of a nation, *Heimat*, with the valley as pastoral paradise. Country communities are idealised and he poses the claim<sup>132</sup> that the universal belief that “relationships are sounder in a sacred rural

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127 cf. "Richard Llewellyn." *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2011. Web. 22 Nov. 2011. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/345151/Richard-Llewellyn>>

128 Sutherland, John. *Literary Lives*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001: 207 f.

129 e.g. the *Richard Llewellyn Papers* stored in the National Library of Wales, compiled by Annette Strauch, The University of Texas Austin: Harry Ransom Centre in *Richard Llewellyn: An Inventory of His Papers at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center*, the Wikipedia and many others

130 cf. Harris, J. *Popular Images* in Thomas 2003: 120

131 Harris, J. 2001: 208

132 Ibid.

setting” can especially be found in Wales. His style of writing is much lauded, the story appeals to a wide-spread community of readers and *Valley* sold in high numbers (1,000 copies per week over the first 2 years<sup>133</sup>).

The reactions in Wales, especially from a scholarly perspective, were to a considerable extent less enthusiastic. Harris<sup>134</sup> speaks of a dislike for the melodrama and inauthenticities. Glyn Jones spoke of “literary hokum” and Keirdrych Rhys<sup>135</sup> advised to “ignore this trash”. Harris locates a problem that Welsh scholars had with Llewellyn in the fact that he was an “invader”, who had undeservedly become successful with a nostalgic story about their home country, to a degree that only few Anglo-Welsh writers achieved.

### **3.4 BORDER COUNTRY (1960) – RAYMOND WILLIAMS**

#### **3.4.1 PLOT SUMMARY**

*Border Country* is the first part of a trilogy followed up by *Second Generation* (1964) and *Fight for Manod* (1979). The protagonist, Matthew Price is a lecturer in London, who was raised in the Welsh border village of Glynmawr which he left after his basic education. When his father, the railway signalman, Harry Price, suffers a stroke, Matthew returns to Wales to help his mother look after him. Back in Glynmawr, in the house of his parents, among the people he grew up with, memories of his past return and he finds himself re-adopting the role he abandoned on leaving the village. The villagers call him Will, the name his mother gave him, instead of Matthew, the name on his birth certificate, which he only starts using after his emigration to England and with the start of his academic career.

The novel has two layers of time: a present-time layer which narrates Matthew's return to Glynmawr and the events happening there, including several encounters with the villagers who had seen him grow up, his father's illness and, finally, his death. The second narrative layer is set in the past. It tells the story of Will's childhood, beginning with his parents' arrival in Glynmawr, their settling into community and the story of their making friends, their work and the process of raising Will. This time layer also covers economical and political issues of the 1920s,

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133 Harris, J. 2001: 209 f.

134 Ibid.

135 Keirdrych Rhys was editor of the magazine *Wales* and facilitated Anglo-Welsh literature.

such as the General Strike, which involved railwaymen, besides coalminers, steelworkers and transport workers. *Border Country*, thus, also gives an account of working class conditions in the 1920s, which renders the novel historically valuable.

Within the course of the book Matthew/Will revisits his past. He reflects on his life and the course it took and wonders what turns it would have taken if he had made different decisions at certain points. He also reflects on the two aspects of his personality: the one he left behind in the village and the one he had obtained on moving away. Throughout the book his take on his own personality changes as he tries to understand on how circumstances in his life affected him.

### **3.4.2 RAYMOND WILLIAMS (1921-1988)<sup>136</sup>**

Raymond Williams, well known expert in literary criticism and cultural studies and famous for works such as *Culture and Society* and *Writing in Society*, was born and grew up in Llanfihangel Crucorney, a small village along the border in South Wales. The path of his career took him to Cambridge University, where he became don and wrote a number of significant works in the field of cultural studies. His background was definitely important for his field of work and, thus, Gramich<sup>137</sup> detects much of Williams' Welshness woven into his academic texts and criticises commentators' neglect of the connections. She ventures the thought that Williams often based his theories on the exploration of his own hybridity and autobiography. Along these lines, a number of parallels between himself and his book's protagonist Matthew Price reveal the autobiographic nature of *Border Country*: Like the protagonist's father, Harry Price, Williams' father was a railway signaller, and like Matthew, Williams left Wales to study and to eventually become a professor at an English university<sup>138</sup>.

Even though he never returned to Wales, Williams became a Welsh Nationalist and joined the nation's second largest party, Plaid Cymru. He was a committed socialist and nationalist and regarded his homeland Wales as colonised nation<sup>139</sup> that should have its own rights. Wales is the nation that his works of fiction revolve about. The novels *Border Country*, *The Fight for Manod*, *The Volunteers* and the incomplete novel *People of the Black Mountains* deal with communities in the Welsh

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136 cf. Thomas 2003, several articles, especially Ward, John Powell. *Borderers and borderline Cases*: 102-105 and Gramich, Katie. *Welsh Writers and the British Dimension*: 271-274

137 cf. Gramich in Thomas, M. Wynn (ed) 2003: 272 f.

138 Williams was Professor for modern drama at Cambridge 1974-1983

139 Bohata 2004: 14



borders and are a reflection of Williams' own development<sup>140</sup>. The main theme of the trilogy is the examination of individual identities and the questions of belonging, which, in the border area of Wales, have a special significance. Due to the proximity to the border, communities are uncertain when it comes to decide to which nationality they assign themselves. Thus, Williams is reported to have said that in his family home they “talked about “the English” who were not us, and “the Welsh” who were not us.” (qtd. by Powell in Thomas 2003: 107).

Williams, with his achievements in socialist criticism and literature, was highly influential and considered a great thinker, whose opinions were highly valued. The compound of his publication includes a wide variety of books and papers in the field of cultural and literary criticism, six novels, five short stories and three plays. The working class and communism were dear to his heart and feature in most of his novels. His style of writing is plain and simple, which was a deliberate choice that preserves the tradition of the industrial novel in Wales<sup>141</sup>.

### **3.5. *THE TOWER* – TRISTAN HUGHES (2003)**

#### **3.5.1. PLOT SUMMARY**

Like *My People* Hughes' *The Tower* is a compilation of short stories, which are connected by the frequent reappearance of the same characters, who all live in a small village on the island of Anglesey (or Ynys Môn, in Welsh). The tower is a landmark, a monument against which the passing of time and the changes that come with new generations of villagers are measured. It stands, clearly visible, on top of a hill and is initially introduced in the first of the 7 stories, “God's Breath”. The story goes back 2 generations and tells the tale of the narrator's grandmother, who came to work in the tower as a maid. The remaining 6 stories are set in the present and portray individuals that remain in a shrunken and somewhat empty village community, individually.

Whereas the characters of Caradoc Evans' stories are all similarly Welsh, distrustful, superstitious and greedy, Hughes clearly differentiates. In a non-sarcastic tone he relates the individual tales, introducing villagers of old, English immigrants, the young generations and their outlook on life, the village elders and their nostalgic

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140 cf. <http://www.newstatesman.com/society/2008/02/work-life-williams-english>

141 cf. Knight in Thomas, M. Wynn (ed.) 2003: 79

lookout on the past, and middle-aged islanders who harbour a desperate urge to escape isolated island life. Hughes' characters bear witness to the change of times, the change of values, the individualisation of people with sacrifices to the village community. The focus is on the characters' feelings, the meaning they seek in their lives, their attitudes towards Wales and towards Anglesey.

Readers first encounter an anonymous narrator who retells his grandmother's story of work at the tower and the eerie fate of its former inhabitants, her employers. Next, Gemma is introduced, whose hippie husband brought her to Anglesey from England to explore the mysticisms and druidic past of the island. The third story, "The Tower", tells of the tower's new owner, a rich immigrant from Liverpool, who believes in his own superiority over the island's farming and working community. Stories of established villagers follow, including Jack Bach, a young man employed at the tower, father of an infant, trying to escape reality with the aid of magic mushrooms, wishing he could leave for real. Two further examples of loners on the island are Jack Cucu, a quiet farmer whose peace is disturbed when the woman he loved and grew up with returns to Anglesey to exhibit the pictures she drew of her childhood home, and Reverend Morris, whose brother found a new life and family in America and whom he blames for leaving him and the the rural beauty of the island behind. Bringing up the rear is a young islander who left Wales for London, trying to escape his past and to find a new life, but instead finding alienation and a doomed relationship that results in the abortion of his child. His troubles leave him with a feeling of emptiness, bereft of a home, a past and a future. Hughes portrays the villagers as people in the pursuit of happiness and their individual way of finding out what it entails.

Hughes' is one of the newest works of Anglo-Welsh village literature and a fine example of a present time village portrait, with all the effects that modern age had on it, including increasing mobility, the emigration of young people and in-migration of English. The quest for individual identity is the key theme, which becomes more important than altruism and the common good of the village community. The villagers no longer have fixed, immutable roles that are imposed on them by society, but need to question, evaluate and establish their own positions within a community that can possibly no longer be described as such.

### **3.5.2. TRISTAN HUGHES<sup>142</sup> (DATES UNKNOWN)**

Hughes was born in Atikokan, Canada, and moved to Ynys Môn with his parents at the age of 2. He grew up in a small village community, listening to the stories the villagers told, which gave him an idea of the island's perception by its inhabitants and also the historical and mythological links on connections of certain places and landscapes. He spends his life divided between Canada and Wales, which he both equally calls home. He speaks of “a slight feeling of detachment - a sense that being from two different places means you don't entirely belong to either of them, that you're always looking at them from the outside and the inside at the same time” (Interview by Anthony Brockway) which transpires in *The Tower*. This perception of his own split or hybrid identity renders Hughes' book valuable for this thesis, as all his characters are embarked on their personal quest of identity and belonging.

## **4. Comparative Analysis: How Welsh are the Books?**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

After introducing identity shaping factors, post-colonial theory, and Welsh traditions, the thesis now proceeds to analyse the briefly presented books with regard to these factors. The construction of identity is examined, paying attention to the Welsh nation, the village community, and, first and foremost, the individual protagonist, where the occasion arises. Parallels and differences are worked out and special characteristics are considered and presented.

Whereas the small number of books cannot be an accurate representative sample of Anglo-Welsh literature, they serve to convey an impression of how Welshness is constructed in Anglo-Welsh literature and how the question of identity gains momentum with the progress of the 20<sup>th</sup> and turn to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Anglo-Welsh writing not only differs from English writing in topic and content, but sometimes stands out by narrative technique and, more obviously, language. The effects achieved by bending the English language to Welsh sentence structures and interspersing Welsh interjections can give texts a certain structure and local feel.

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142 Richard Hughes is so recent a writer that I was not able to find any references to him in the limited number of printed works at my disposal. The information for this chapter is mainly taken from 2 Interviews found online, at <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/elizabeth.ercoklly/tristan.htm>, conducted in 2006, and <http://www.chroniclejournal.com/content/news/local/2011/10/09/q-and-eye-lake-author-tristan-hughes>, published on October 9, 2011.

Within the limits of this thesis this practice is found prevalently in *My People* and *How Green Was My Valley*, which will be looked at separately and in more detail than *Border Country* and *My Tower*, where the importance of language recedes somewhat and gives priority to other Welsh issues. The latter two will be analysed only briefly and collectively.

## 4.2. LANGUAGE AND NARRATIVE: WELSH VS. ENGLISH

### 4.2.1. WELSHNESS IN LANGUAGE AND NARRATIVE IN *MY PEOPLE* AND *HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY*

*My People* is a compound of short stories which are internally linked by the reappearance of certain key characters throughout the stories. Each story follows a different family or character and relates either the tale of one person's whole life or of an anecdote taking place during their lives. Some stories start with a situation told in the present tense, followed up by the factors that had led to said state of affairs<sup>143</sup>. Other stories introduce themselves as an anecdote, like “The Woman who sowed Iniquity”, whose opening lines “This is the chronicle of Betti Lancoch, who was the daughter of Essec [...]” (94) announce a potentially interesting story and add a touch of gossip, by supplying information on the ancestry of the protagonist – a feature typical of Welsh storytelling and also a common way of referring to people in Wales<sup>144</sup>. The narrative mode switches between third person limited and omniscient perspective, richly enlivened with dialogues and direct quotations. First person narration occurs twice and only briefly in “A Father in Sion”<sup>145</sup> and “Be this her Memorial”<sup>146</sup>. The identity of the narrator remains undisclosed and lends the stories an air of gossip: the narrator is not important and the stories might have been retold and exaggerated several times and, therefore, not be entirely truthful, even though

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143 cf. “The Way of the Earth”: “Simon and Becca are waiting for Death. The ten acres of land over Penrhos – their peat-thatched cottage under the edge of the moor – grows wilder and weedier. For Simon and Becca can do nothing now.” (64) - “In the days of his sin and might Simon had been the useful man of Manteg. He [...] possessed himself of a cart and a horse, and became the carrier between the cartless folk of Manteg and the townspeople [...]” (65)

144 The slim variety in Welsh names renders measures like listing the ancestors necessary as points of reference. It is also a remainder of the old system of naming people by providing the name of the father and sometimes even the grandfather or more ancestors, linked by *ap* (which translates as “(son) of”). Before surnames came into being, a person would have been called Tudur ap Tudur ap Dafydd etc. To list a line of ancestors is, therefore, still common in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

145 “What occurred in the loft over the cowshed [...] I cannot tell you.” (*People* 54)

146 The chapter starts with the theory that “Mice and rats [...] frequent neither churches nor poor men's homes” (*People* 108) and continues with the announcement “The story I have to tell you about Nanni [...] contradicts that theory.”

the narrator knows more than a random villager might.

Evans paints a nightmarish scenario of the village of Manteg and its inhabitants, an effect that results from a storytelling technique he copied from Marie Lloyd, who deliberately leaves blanks in her narration for the audience to fill<sup>147</sup>. In Evans' case, beautiful scenery, cordiality and other positive aspects of village life and good characteristics of people are mainly omitted – a technique that distorts the characters of the stories and brings out their negative sides only. Evans' style of language is likewise special, mixing Old Testament diction and biblical references with imitations of Welsh sentence structure and Welsh particularities, examples of which are given below.

The biblical colour, while rendering the narrative ancient, mythical and reminiscent of biblical parables, according to Harris<sup>148</sup>, also serves another function: it becomes “a satiric weapon for attacking those who would commandeer biblical language and precepts for their own dark ends” (10). Evans intended to turn the ministers' “hateful weapon”, the Bible, against them<sup>149</sup>. He believed that, as the English translation of the Bible was kept close to the grammatical structures of the original Hebrew and Ancient Greek, a closeness to the times and circumstances under which it was composed was maintained. In this line of thought, he saw “dialogue as a key to understanding the life and conditions of his characters” (11) and used biblical language to emphasize the importance of religion for everyday life in Wales, corrupted by the hypocrisy and false piety of his protagonists.

The setting of *My People* is less biblical, though, than it is Welsh. Explicit reference to the Welsh language is made by the characters themselves in “As It Is Written”<sup>150</sup>. Samson the postman delivers a letter to Mali about her son Dan and informs her that Dan intends to return home with his new English girlfriend. The dialogue that evolves between Mali and the postman<sup>151</sup> makes clear that the language spoken in the village is actually Welsh and speakers of English are alien and unwanted. As Evans was of the opinion that replicating people's style of speech reflects the nature of the characters and their lifestyle, a distinctly Welsh colour is applied to the dialogues, using various strategies: The most obvious and straightforward Welsh element in the stories are the characters' names, which strike

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147 cf. Introduction by John Harris, *People*: 12

148 Evans 1987: 10, Introduction by John Harris

149 Evans had no respect for deans and ministers whom he regarded as the sowers of evil. (Evans 1987: 9)

150 Evans 1987: 120-126

151 cf. *People* 121

the reader who is used to English literature as unconventional and alien, due to their Welsh origin. Twm, Ianto, Rhys, Lloyd the Schoolin' are Welsh names and sobriquets. Lloyd the Schoolin' or Betti Lancorch<sup>152</sup> bear witness to the Welsh custom of using attributive “bywords”, deriving from either the occupation of the individual in question or the location of his home, in order to distinguish people with the same name. Especially in villages this method of distinction came to use. Thus, in order to distinguish one Evans from another, one might be called “Evans the Schooling” (if he is a teacher), while the other is called “Evans the Shop”<sup>153</sup>. This custom pervades all the books analysed in this thesis, and is even commented on by an English character in *The Tower*<sup>154</sup>. The use of Welsh names in Anglo-Welsh literature signifies to the reader a certain national setting: Readers accustomed to English literature might briefly hesitate when stumbling upon the first Welsh name in a novel and consequently adjust the images in their minds to “Welsh”. In addition to these, Evans also welshifies more cosmopolitan names by altering the spelling: Pedr, Betti and Abram are the Welsh variants of spelling Peter, Betty and Abraham. The farms and towns – Capel Sion, Penrhos, Castellybryn - also bear typical Welsh names and lay the setting, together with another of Evans' strategies: modification of language.

One way of modifying language is achieved by translating Welsh proverbs and sayings directly to English. Unusual phrases that appear uncommon and awkward in the English language remind the reader that the stories are, indeed, not set in an English-speaking area, but in rural South-West Wales, where Welsh is the first language. God, for example, is spoken of as “Big Man” (literally translated from Welsh: gwr mawr), whereas in the quote “The religious Respected Bryn-Bevan was there, and did he not say that the abodes of the old English are refreshment places on the way to the Pool?” (121), “the Pool” is the synonym for hell, derived from “pwll diwaelod” (literally: “abysmal pool”, but Welsh for “hell”).

Another strategy of rendering the narrative specifically Welsh is the onomatopoeic spelling of English words which are iconically and frequently mispronounced by people whose first language is Welsh. Thus, Mr. Jenkins appears in the correct typography in the narrator's discourse, but is spelled Mishtir Shinkins<sup>155</sup> in the character's discourse to mimic a strong Welsh accent. The typical Welsh

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152 Lancorch being the name of the farm she owns, not the surname.

153 Manifold examples can also be found in Dylan Thomas' radioplay *Under Milk Wood*.

154 cf. *Tower* 66, “The Tower”: “Jack Bach and Bobby Tŷ Groes and Dewi Tew (they all had these stupid nicknames and he made a conscious point of not using them [...])”

155 cf. Evans 1987: 64-72 *The Way Of The Earth*

double affirmation “yes, yes” is reproduced as “iss, iss”<sup>156</sup>, keeping close to the regional variation of pronunciation.

Furthermore, the grammatical structures of Welsh as well as certain interjections and endearments are adopted and complete Evans' unique style of writing. The Welsh Verb-Subject-Object structure is applied to produce utterances with a Welsh colour. “How say Catrin!” (*People* 135) follows the Welsh pattern of “Sut siarad Catrin?” and the manner of the Welsh adjective following the noun is mimicked likewise, e.g. “Shop Draper” [*sic!*] (126) instead of draper's shop or “Boy bach”<sup>157</sup> foolish!” (58) instead of foolish little boy. A more elaborate explanation and examples for adjusting sentence structure is found in the next part of the chapter, in the context of *How Green Was My Valley*<sup>158</sup>.

Besides the indirect manner of changing typography and grammar, the narrator also provides direct references to Wales and the Welsh way of expressing themselves. “‘Mishtir Shinkins. There's religious he is,’ said Simon, addressing William Jenkins in the third person, as is the custom in West Wales when you are before your betters” (69). By addressing the audience with the personal pronoun “you”, Caradoc lends the story an air of anecdote, told to a group of people ignorant of Wales and Welsh customs and by way of explanation acquaints them with the situation. The readers are assumed to be outsiders, i.e. not Welsh.

These references, combined with the seemingly odd grammatical constructions, serve to consciously remind the reader that the linguistic setting of the book is indeed Welsh. They also have the effect of lending the protagonists of the story an uneducated touch and serve as a powerful tool to construct the sarcastic air that envelopes the book.

Similar strategies are applied by Richard Llewellyn, albeit in an endearing rather than ridiculing fashion. A tremendous difference between *My People* and *How Green Was My Valley* is the difference in tone: Where the images in *My People* are distorted by the heavily applied sarcasm, situations in *Valley* are tainted by nostalgia throughout the whole novel. This tone is accounted for by the fact that Huw looks back on his childhood and childhood memories tend to be romanticised. The richness in positive stereotypes adds to the common nostalgia.

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156 cf. “Go you off yourself tomorrow to the April Fair to search for a woman,” said Deio. - Tomos said “Iss, iss, indeed, then.” (Evans 1987: 59)

157 *Bach* is Welsh for “little” and a common term of endearment. Evans makes extensive use of the adjective and even goes so far as to apply the rules of mutations for certain initials and reproduces it as “fach”.

158 The language in *Valley* is free of biblical colour and, therefore the particularly Welsh elements are easier for me to pinpoint.

Like in *My People*, the first and foremost Welsh element in *How Green Was My Valley* are the characters' names, who are almost exclusively traditionally Welsh. Names like Huw, Angharad, or Dai are frequent, even in modern Wales<sup>159</sup>. Even if the names have parallels in English, the Celtic typography is favoured (e.g. Huw = Hugh, Gwilym = William, etc.). As markers of history and nationality these names add a certain local colour, much the same way that language does.

Immediately obvious in the narrative is the difference between the narrator's discourse and the characters' discourses: While the Huw's indirect voice makes use of a standard English variety, he gives other characters, when quoting them in direct speech, a distinctively Welsh-coloured voice by modelling the grammar of the English utterances to the Verb-Subject-Object structure of Welsh. An imitation of this structure can be found as early as 1599 in Shakespeare's *Henry V*, in Fluellen's<sup>160</sup> reiterated articulations of "look you" rather than simply sticking to the English imperative "look". The same technique is used frequently by Llewellyn, for example when Bronwen, Huw's sister in law, encourages him, using the words "Fight you, now" (29), or when his mother tells him "Come you, then" (58) or "Wait you by there" (60). Similarly, a large number of direct utterances stating a character's perception of the situation starts with "there is" in emulation of the common Welsh sentence starters "*ydy'n*" or "*mae'n*", followed often by an attributive phrase (i.e. adjective) and then the subject. In reproduction of this feature the verb is often reduplicated after the adjective, adding the right subject. An example is "There is cold it is." (*Valley* 14).

In places where the English language favours a possessive pronoun, the Welsh expresses the same meaning by adding "*efo'r ti*" (with you), "*efo'r hi*" (with her) and the like. This structure appears several times, for example: "Are you cold?" - "No, except my feet, they're like stones with me." (*Valley* 61)

Besides the adoption of Welsh sentence structure for English utterances, the usage of common Welsh endearments in English translation is another means of "welshifying" speech and can be found both in *My People* and *Valley*. "*Bach*" (little) as endearing adjective is often used after a name, or 'old' is often used in a slightly derogatory or ridiculing way. These adjectives are employed even when their actual

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159 Even though "English" names have become more and more popular, especially along the borders and along the Southern coast, people living in the Welsh "heartland" (i.e. the North, the West and Anglesey) still often bear traditional Welsh names (cf. Recent telephone books)

160 Fluellen is Shakespeare's attempt to give an onomatopoeic version of the frequent Welsh surname Llewellyn, the ll being articulated as a strongly aspirated /hl/.



meanings do not hold true in the respective situations, for example in “O Davy, my little one” (Valley 55) or “Singing before the good little Queen” (Valley 277): neither is Davy, Huw's adult brother, little, nor can the same be said for the Queen, whom none of the characters have encountered. The adjective “little” only expresses the speaker's emotional closeness to and favour for the subject in question. In the situation where the sentence “There is soft you are to eat old cake when you can have jelly with you” (Valley 18) is taken from, the cake is not in fact old, but simply not desirable considering the availability of jelly.

These strategies are valiantly deployed to imbue the utterances with a Welsh tint, and recreate the feel of a Welsh village, where Welsh would have been the sole medium of communication, for a larger-scale readership, also beyond the borders of Wales. The contrast to the sequences about Huw's struggles at the English school and English-speaking teachers is made almost tangible by using absolutely correct 'Standard English' in the teachers' speeches. The attitudes that transpire from small details in language, will be discussed in chapter 4.3.

#### **4.2.2. WELSHNESS IN NARRATIVE AND LANGUAGE IN *BORDER COUNTRY* AND *THE TOWER***

*Border Country* and *The Tower* both boast a very simple, unaffected style of writing and in the narrative itself a difference to English writing is not detectable. The narrative in *Border Country* is split into two interlacing stories, one set in the present and the other in the past, starting with the arrival of Will's parents in Glynmawr. These episodes almost have the quality of flashbacks, as they help understand the development of Will's/Matthew's character. The story is told from the third person limited perspective of Matthew/Will Price, who in his speech and demeanour has adopted the English style of his professional surroundings at an English university.

The story mixes Welsh and English elements, which reflects Matthew's/Will's own mixed status. Welsh names, like Gwyn, Glynis, Cemlyn, are frequent throughout the book, but paralleled by just as big a number of English names, like Harry and Will. This fact is an indication of the novel being set near the border and several decades later than *Valley*.

Welsh elements in Williams' narration appear in the direct quotation of speech, but are limited to very few examples produced by the villagers. Grammatical adaptation is reminiscent of *Valley* and *My People*. Will's father, for example, orders “Go you down and get your breakfast” (BC 328). Familiar is also the usage of the

adjective “old” as derogative: “I don't want to go from here', Eira said. 'I don't want to live in the old town'” (213). Welsh endearments, like “dada” for dad, “mun” for man to tag a sentence, and “boy” and “girl” as form of address, regardless of the age of the addressee, are used throughout the story.

Other allusions to language differences are not reflected in the narrative itself, but are addressed as conscious thoughts, for example, when the backgrounds of Ellen and Harry Price, Matthew's parents, are described:

“Across the river, in Peterstone, the folk speak with the slow, rich, Herefordshire tongue, that could still be heard in Ellen. On this side of the river is the quick Welsh accent, less sharp, less edged, than in the mining valleys which lie beyond the Black Mountains, to the south and west, but clear and distinct – a frontier crossed in the breath.” (35)

Regional accents are not represented, but mentioned factually, so they cannot be imagined by the readership if they are not acquainted with the peculiarities of the local tongue. This factual attribution of a certain accent or dialect, however, defines a character as either an established member of community, or, by indicating that they are from another town or from a valley, mark them as outsiders of various degrees. Dr. Evans<sup>161</sup>, who is married to Will's first love, speaks with the intonation of a mining valley. Even though he has lived in Glynmawr for several years and more recently than Will, Will cannot help to see him as an intruder of sorts. Williams uses language, even when only mentioning a different dialect or intonation, very consciously, albeit sparsely, to depict the multifaceted face of an ever-changing community.

Language is also commented on in the context of Matthew Price's moving to England<sup>162</sup>: he thinks about the change of language that comes with crossing the river to England and reflects on the conscious choice he makes to either keep his accent or adopt a new one. At another point in the book the issue resurfaces: when Matthew has already spent a considerable time in his hometown again, reintegrating into the community he left years before, and then calls his English wife, she cannot help noticing that Matthew is changing in changed surroundings. She observes that “[his] voice is quite different already” (346), most likely commenting on his accent rather than his actual voice quality.

One of the reasons why language and an observable difference to the English enunciation plays a minor role in *Border Country* is doubtlessly connected to the

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161 cf. BC 177

162 cf. BC 268

locality of the setting: Glynmawr is located in immediate proximity to the border (i.e. England), in an anglicised area where Welsh is rarely spoken or paid attention to and English is the medium of communication.

The stories in *The Tower* are told using different narrative techniques. The 5 core-stories are written from the third person limited point of view of various established villagers (an irresponsible young working-class father, a nostalgic old reverend, a farmer who has not yet overcome a lost love) and immigrants (two English hippies on the quest for the mystic Anglesey, a Liverpoolian renovating the tower). This core is framed by two stories told from a first person limited perspective, albeit by two different narrators. Thus, the book seems to close a circle, while in fact the ends of this circle do not connect.

The composition of the stories appears very deliberate: the first story links the book to the past, featuring the youth of an elderly woman and giving a taste of the vibrancy of life in those times. The underlying note is one of nostalgia, attributed by the story-like character. The core stories tell tales of present lives and struggles in a more unadorned, real tone, whereas the last story gives a glimpse of an uncertain future, presenting the narrator as a person confused and harbouring thoughts riddled with questions and doubts. At the same time, all stories are linked, as the same characters fleet in and out of them.

*The Tower* is set on the island of Anglesey (Ynys Môn), a traditionally Welsh speaking area. It is therefore not surprising that the stories have a higher Welsh quality than *Border Country*. This quality is not conveyed by the syntax of the narrative, but by other factors, like the abundant usage of Welsh names (Rhiannon, Delyth, Dai Bach) and place-related nicknames (Gruffudd Felin [G. 'the Mill'], Bobby Tŷ Groes [B. 'the house at the crossroads']). Supplementing the Welsh names are the Welsh terms of endearment *nain* and *taid* (grandmother and grandfather, respectively), which are even used in Anglicised areas today. There are Welsh place-names, like Y Marion and Plas Gwalia ("Place Wales") and interjections like "Esgob mawr!"<sup>163</sup> (*Tower* 4) or "Duw!" (83). "Sais" for Englishman is used in a derogative way to convey the attitude of the islanders towards English immigrants. Its disparaging nature becomes clear in the context, for example when the narrator's grandmother in "God's Breath" calls a rich Liverpoolian immigrant and his wife "[t]hese Sais moneybags" (5).

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<sup>163</sup> "Esgob mawr" translates as "big Bishop" and is a common interjection in Welsh that can also be found in *My People*. "Duw" translates as "God".

Contrary to *Border Country*, Hughes sometimes mimicks the villagers' accent in direct speech to produce a more noticeable effect on the reader. This is most apparent in “The importance of being elsewhere”, which features several dialogues between two male members of the young generation of islanders:

“A-rright Bachie,' he called out, his voice sounding huge in the quiet morning.

'A-rright,' Bachie replied.

'Fokk, yer up early mate,' Bobby croaked, unsettling a layer of obstinate, tarry mucus that clung to the inside of his throat.

'How many have you got?' Dewi asked.

'I dunno, thirty, forty maybe,' Bachie replied.

'Well, that's a start, then.'” (79)

As to the degree in which these utterances represent a local accent or rather the general British slang of the young cannot be satisfactorily determined. The stress on the /r/ in “a-rright”, however, indicates that Welsh speakers, like Scots, tend to articulate it as an alveolar trill rather than an approximant. As the other stories do not feature any particularly conspicuous differences to Standard-English, it is possible that Hughes' main concern in the scene is to mimick the speech of youth. Unlike most places in Wales, young people on Anglesey usually speak both Welsh and English, making the island a genuinely bilingual place, a fact that Hughes briefly mentions in “Persistence”, where a Polish baker only says “Cake, cake”, because “he didn't speak more of their languages” (*Tower* 102). The information can easily be missed, because it appears logical and not explicitly noteworthy that people do speak both. A quote of a TV sports programme in a pub also appears in Welsh and flashes another bit of Welsh colour<sup>164</sup>.

The question of the degree of Welshness in narrative is difficult, yet, not impossible to answer. Glyn Jones and Jeremy Hooker<sup>165</sup> speak of a predilection of Anglo-Welsh poets and novelists to exploit the past. According to Jones “the first place for an Anglo-Welsh writer to look [...] is obviously backwards, so that he may know as much about the Welsh part of his country's traditions as he normally does about the Anglo” (Jones, *Dragon* 193). Schwyzer even attributes to the Welsh an “identity as memorious people.” (Schwyzer 2004: 94). Llewellyn, Williams and Hughes all treat topics and story lines of their own past, going back one generation. Llewellyn begins the story of Huw's life at the point where he is packing his

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164 cf. *Tower*: 88

165 Hooker claims that “Anglo-Welsh poetry is a poetry of memory”. (Interview in Lloyd 1997: 46), cf. Hooker, Jeremy. *The Presence of the Past*. Seren: 1987

belongings, ready to leave the village. Huw then looks back on his life, starting at a time where he was still a baby, carried by his mother. Williams takes two story lines, one beginning with Matthew's/Will's parents alighting from the train to settle in Glynmawr and the other one starting with Matthew's/Will's catching a bus in Wales in order to get to the same village. Hughes introduces a protagonist who, instead of telling his own story, relates the story of his grandmother starting work in a new position. All three authors use their narrative to link the present to the past, which, on one hand, has a certain causal effect, as it is a means of explaining how the present state came to be, and on the other hand presents a lament to the simple ways of the past that often appear in a better light compared to the future.

*My People* presents the exception in this case, as the narrative appears more like a photograph: a momentary portrait of the inhabitants of a village. It boasts a singular structure by weaving a web of short stories into a complete, linked, bigger picture, a technique that doubtlessly inspired Tristan Hughes in the composition of *The Tower* and might also have had an influence on Dylan Thomas' autobiographical collection of short stories<sup>166</sup>, which evolve around the same person. If Caradoc Evans was the first person to construct a narrative in this way and if this form can, therefore, be considered typical of Wales, cannot be determined within the limits of the thesis.

As far as *Border Country* and *Valley* are concerned, they belong to a special category of the post-industrial novel, a genre that is typical of Wales, due to its history and role in coal and slate production. The lament of hardships in the mines, the culture connected to it and especially the decline of this culture are iconically Welsh<sup>167</sup>.

All four books are, furthermore, special with regards to language. The degrees and intensity of Welsh elements may vary between the books, but all of them have a certain Welsh character that distinguishes them from English literature. The local coloration of language is a tool that is effectively employed by the authors to create this difference, to tinge the book Welsh and give the characters a certain national identity, or to create a distance between them and a country. Distance and belonging are looked at from a different angle in the next chapter.

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166 i.e. *Portrait of the Artist as a young Dog*.

167 cf. Ned Thomas: "The valleys tradition is dying [...]. So those elements of Welsh life which might have been claimed as idiosyncratically Welsh though not necessarily in the Welsh language – mining, the close communities of the valleys and so on – are fading. [...] a lot of people define Welsh as that." (Interview with Ned Thomas in Lloyd 1997: 19)

### 4.3. ATTITUDE: WALES VS. ENGLAND

Unarguably interlinked with the application of two different “languages”, which was dealt with in the previous chapter, is the ideological implication of each. As was discussed above, language is one of the most defining factors in the question of identity. The usage of a certain language signals the belonging to a specific group. England as the conquering nation and also the immediately bordering one has always been the one the Welsh strove to define themselves against, which has led to the formation and adoption of different attitudes. Nationally coloured literature reflects the lives and mindset of a people at a certain time in history including their thoughts and motivations and none of the analysed works omits the protagonists' and other characters' opinions of their nation and their role within it – be it one of unquestionable loyalty to either side or one of careful consideration.

In *How Green Was My Valley* the ideological difference linked to language becomes apparent through the fact that the villagers (including the Morgans) speak Welsh – expressed by adapted grammar - while the teachers of the National School that Huw attends speak – or strive to speak – Standard English and demand the same from their pupils. They “must on no account be allowed to speak that jargon in or out of school. English, please, at all times” (168). A conscious attempt to remodelling the children<sup>168</sup> and their national identities takes place, by forcing them to speak English and by educating them in English history and English literature. The strong bands to the home country (i.e. Wales) are severed or thinned out and new connections to the colonising nation (i.e. England) are forged. Huw reflects on the struggle with the English language and the position and status it is attributed in Wales:

“English grammar and composition is difficult even for the English, but worse and worse for a Welsh boy. He speaks, reads, writes, and he thinks in Welsh at home, in the street, and in Chapel, and when he reads English he will understand it in Welsh, and when he speaks English, he will pronounce the words with pain and using crutches. So stupid are the English, who build schools for the Welsh, and insist, on pain of punishment, that English is to be spoken, and yet, for all their insistence, never give one lesson in the pronouncing and enunciation of the spoken word.

And Good God in Heaven, if you cannot read English aloud and in the

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168 cf. Pittock 112, and Glyn Jones: “It must be obvious that anyone receiving the sort of education I have described would be far more likely to become some sort of Englishman than a Welshman profoundly aware and proud of his heritage, a writer of English rather than of Welsh.” (25)

English of the King, half the beauty is taken from you. O and what pity, to hear a noble tongue chewed, and besmirched, and belittled by such monkeys in the form of men as our Mr. Jonas-Sessions.” (319)

Mr. Jonas-Sessions, the school headmaster, expresses a deep hatred for his Welsh origins and the respective language and is depicted almost as a traitor to his nation. Huw observes that Jonas' “greatest trouble was his Welsh blood, so ashamed he was of it, and so hard he tried to cover it” (177) by “[speaking] English with pain, making his words to sound more English than the English” (175).

Jonas tries to shake off the identity that was imprinted on him with his birth. The fact that he is Welsh and the perceived inferiority, which is mainly rooted in the lower educational standards compared to England, tortures him. Regarding his native tongue he professes that “Welsh never was a language, but only a crude means of communication, between tribes of barbarians stinking of woad” (327). The schoolmaster is ashamed of his background and his shame turns into contempt towards his fellow Welshmen, especially the villagers who, usually employed in coal pits, did not receive a thorough education and are the absolute scum of the nation with their “dirty coal mining ways” (177). The educated Mr Jonas feels misplaced in a village community, where education is only of second importance to earning money and providing for a family. He longs for a life in a more educated and refined society and is the classic example of the sort of inhabitant of a colonised nation who embraces the colonising culture as a superior idol that all inhabitants should aspire to.

Mr. Jonas-Sessions stands in contrast to the Morgan family and their fellow coal miners who are deeply integrated in a tightly-linked Welsh community with all its traditions, solidarity and also gossip. While he despises his surroundings and looks down on them, the latter acknowledge the community they are part of and accept their individual roles within it. Their being Welsh is a fundamental part of this role and allusions to the Morgan family's pride in being Welsh are frequent.

One scene sees Gwilym Morgan and his sons paying a visit to “Elias the Shop” to reclaim some turkeys he allegedly stole from them. When he refuses to confess to the theft, the Morgan boys use force to retrieve the birds, which excites a furious outburst from the shopkeeper:

“I will have the English law on you!”

‘Well,’ said my father, ‘you have had a bit of Welsh law to-night, for a change. I will be glad to see what will English law do in return.’” (141)

The scene compares to several others in the book: two prize fighters from Huw's village assault Mr Jonas<sup>169</sup> as a revenge act for all the humiliation he caused Huw in class; and a suspected murderer is not handed over to the police but hunted down by a few prominent villagers and left to the murdered girl's family to exact their retribution<sup>170</sup>. At a later point in the book, Huw even beats up his old teacher, to which deed his parents react with pride instead of the expected punishment. These scenes show the villagers' resentment of settling matters in court. Instead, they follow their own sense of justice and carry out corresponding measures. Law – more precisely the law imposed on Wales by England – seems to be very distant and ineffective and presents no threat to them.

England and London, for the villagers, are faraway places that only few of them will ever visit. Ianto Morgan had gone to London to seek his fortune, but fails. On his return home he is treated like the prodigal son who left his family for a different world<sup>171</sup>. In fact, London is too distant for Gwilym and Beth to attend their daughter Angharad's marriage there<sup>172</sup> and, as for them it is a strange and alien place, they stay at home.

Generally, the protagonists in *Valley* tend to exhibit an anti-English attitude and live their lives in a deeply Welsh community and setting. Educated villagers like the schoolmaster, the shopkeeper or the owners of the coal mine tend to have either a negative attitude towards the rather narrow-minded village community and regard the English superior, or, in the case of the village priest, are more open-minded and try to bestow this open-mindedness on their fellows.

The sarcastic social satire *My People*, whose focus is on the narrow-mindedness and schemes and conniveries of its characters, in itself shows a thoroughly negative attitude towards *Welsh* peasantry, which is doubtlessly a reflection of the author's attitude<sup>173</sup>. Within his stories, however, the characters hardly take a glimpse outside of their little world to turn their attention to the English-speaking part of Britain. The only scene in reference to England and the English is painted in “As it is written”,

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169 cf. *Valley*, chapter 19

170 cf. Chapter 17

171 cf. *Valley* 114 ff.

172 cf. *Valley* 265

173 According to poet Robert Minihinnick, speaking Welsh was “a badge of poverty” in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially in South Wales “where it was obvious that more and more people were proving that you can get through the day without speaking the language.” He also remarks that Welsh-speaking people from his area often feel ashamed of their language. (qtd. In Lloyd 1997: 62-3) *My People* and the fact that it is composed in English gives the impression that Evans experienced similar sensations and tried to escape the stigma attached to the language.



where Mali and Shaci hear of the return of their son, who works in a shop in a nearby town. On receiving news that he is bringing his prospective wife, with the name of Alice Wite [*sic!*], they enmesh themselves in a net of prejudices and speculations:

“Here she is. Alice Wite – that's her name, Mali, Miss Wite.'

'That's vile English,' said Mali.

'English, little Mali.'

'Doesn't the boy say how much yellow gold she possesses?'

'No-no, woman.'

'Then she hasn't got any. Wite, indeed! There's a bad concubine! For what then Dan doesn't throw gravel at the window of some tidy wench who can speak his native tongue?'" (121)

Prejudices against the English (especially women) are then brought forward by the characters, including Alice being a hussy, characterised by alleged wastefulness, stricken with barrenness, with her only motive to lure young Dan away from his home. The whole village talks itself into scorning an English woman they do not know, expecting only evil to emerge from the union. The situation is finally resolved when they find out that Alice is in fact the owner of the shop Dan works for. When Dan's mother learns that Alice brings money into the family, her attitude changes abruptly:

“There's good you were to come. Dan's maid, dear me, has travelled a long distance this day. Weary she is. Gracious now, isn't she tidy? English she may be, but has not the Big Man told us to love our enemies? Shop Draper! There's wealth for you.” (126)

Alice is still seen as “enemy”, but her wealth buys her acceptance in the village community. The villagers' hard feelings against the English and the English language are reflected throughout the whole story and Alice Wite is spoken to only in Welsh, as none of the community except Dan and Mr. Bryn-Bevan, the educated village priest, are in command of English. As the village is mainly self-sufficient and the need to venture as far as the next town only affects a small number of people, like merchants and priests, attention is paid to the English only when they come as “intruders” like Alice Wite. The other stories are mostly focused on the established villagers and do not feature any England-related topics and concerns.

*Border Country* provides a more unique setting which is coupled with different attitudes: contrary to the villages featured in *My People* or *Valley*, Glynmawr is not hidden away in a valley or situated deep in the Welsh heartlands, but in immediate vicinity to England. The villagers are not as undisturbed and remote from the influence of the English and, even though there is no explicit mention, the village is

probably richer in in-migrants as well. The Welsh language plays hardly any role in the book, as the characters clearly are English speaking. That this predicament is on their minds, even bothers them, is revealed in a conversation about books, which young Will has with his friend:

“And we've got a book,' [Will] said, 'called *English Authors*. We read each other out of it.'  
'Aye, English,' Elwyn said. 'Only here we're Welsh.'  
'We talk English, Elwyn.'  
'That's different.'  
'How's it different?'  
Elwyn hesitated, and then laughed. 'Come on now,' he said, 'race you to the gate, give you half-way start.'” (127)

Elwyn wants to establish the fact that the Welsh deserve to be taught about their own literature and authors instead of the coloniser's literature, but fails to see the complete picture with all its implications, i.e. that he himself is not “purely Welsh” as he does not speak the language. His opinion is not thought through and perhaps only picked up from other people voicing the same sentiments. When Will challenges Elwyn's statements he cannot counter the argument, becomes uncomfortable and changes the topic. The conversation reflects a popular way of thinking, which arises from anger with the current situation and is often handed down from person to person without thoroughly considering the situation and possible difficulties that would arise from a change.

Despite Elwyn's accusation that it is mostly English literature that is read in school, patriotism is exhibited by the school teacher, when he reads out a poem starting with the words “[f]or the valour and honour of Cymru” (204). In the same chapter Gryffydd ap Llewellyn is mentioned, whose “memory will live for ever in the hearts of the sons and daughters of Wales” (211). These scenes show attempts to raise awareness of a Welsh nationality and pride in their homeland in the children's minds and hearts, even though the poem itself is read in English and therefore presents a strange detachment from its meaning and ends. It also runs contrary to the school scenes in *Valley*, where patriotic sentiments are sought to be quelled.

The protagonists of *Border Country* speak English and Will gets ample support when he contemplates leaving for England to pursue his career. Even so, the villagers remain sceptical, as they are afraid that this member of their community will become alienated. When they talk about Will's field of work and his colleagues in England, they derogatorily call them “that lot” (351). The villagers do not fully understand nor

approve Will's choice of moving away, which he finds out on his elongated visit, as they see him as somebody who made a conscious choice of abandoning them, even though this message is never delivered in full but can only be read in between lines.

Will's present perception of Wales is mostly influenced by landscape, nature and the peace and quiet that comes with it. He regards his former home as a safe and simple place on the one hand, but as a limiting force on the other: the constant monitoring by his fellow villagers and their minding, even if it is not their business, estranges him. He has become used to the anonymity of London and being embraced by the villagers again makes him feel detached from his professional surroundings but also renders him uneasy in his hometown from which he had been absent for a long time.

Will travels between his two lives and his loss of a clearly defined identity transpires from the book. He finds himself in a position where he feels a necessity of defending his two worlds against each other. In each setting he adapts, but never fully achieves a feeling of undoubted belonging to either. His attitude towards Wales and England is fairly objective and mostly neutral, as both are a part of him, even though within the book he struggles to reassert and redefine his position.

Matthew Price's position in *Border Country* compares to Alun, the protagonist of "Ynys", the last short story in *The Tower*: like Matthew, he left Wales for a career in England. Unlike Matthew, though, his links with his past were severed when his father died and his uncle sold their family home. Despite the fact that he has a well-paid job and a flat in London he failed to properly establish a new life there and considers Wales his real home which he lost. From his monologue transpires that city folk perceived the celtic nation as inferior:

"[M]y friend's girlfriend [...] asked me if I was ever homesick. Now I know it sounds strange, but none of my friends had ever asked me this before. I suppose it never occurred to them. And why would it? When you live in London, and have come from Wales, I think they assume you are grateful, relieved even. I mean it's not like you've come from America or Australia or Kazakhstan, some *real* country that you might actually miss."  
(145)

For the character moving to London is supposed to be an ascent to a better world and it takes him several years to realise that his own sentiments ran counter the general assumption.

A similar sentiment is also harboured by upstart Liverpoolian Derrick Giles, who reconstructs the iconic tower as a luxury guest house. He chose a lonely

picturesque spot in Wales to lay foundations for his future life and despite his insisting that he treats locals as equals without patronising, he looks down on them: “If he was honest about it, most of his neighbours weren't exactly the brightest bulbs in the bunch; good, simple people but just hicks really” (58). He is convinced he is helping the local industry and farmers by purchasing from them and employing local workers, but as an outsider who tries to buy his way into a local community, Derrick is only outwardly courted. In reality, the locals despise him and laugh at him behind his back and take advantage of his trust<sup>174</sup>. The narrator's grandmother in “God's Breath” accuses him of using all his wealth to usurp a certain status in a country that is not his own: “These Sais<sup>175</sup> moneybags, you know, they come here so they can play at being lord of the bloody manor; that's what they want to be: the lord of all they survey” (*Tower*: 5).

In the villagers' opinion intruders have neither a right of commandeering them, nor chances of real integration, especially when they are from a different class. This fate is shared by Gemma and Skinner, the protagonists of “Ley Lines”, who came to Anglesey for the druidic past and the mystical power of the island. Skinner's contempt for the locals, who treat the old sacred places with disrespect and are ignorant of their alleged powers, is matched by the locals' amusement and annoyance at the Englishman who wishes to be Welsh and envies them for their celtic descent. The locals constantly use him for sport, by calling him “Sais hippie”, which drives him into fits of rage: “Now the hippie part he must have been familiar enough with, but the Sais bit sent him ranting and raving through the whole afternoon” (38). In trying to reconstruct his identity, Skinner faces a constant struggle against the reality he finds himself in: the attitude of the villagers and the present state of the island, which is not nearly as mystical as the past he romanticises. He feels he belongs into a certain idealised setting and society, which he cannot find and, thus, remains an outsider.

*The Tower* is filled with stories about characters who all have a firmly established attitude towards their island and towards the wider world. Characters who want to escape, like Jack Bach in “The Importance of being Elsewhere”, Megan in “Persistence”, who longs to travel the world but only comes back to Wales to use images of her past as models for her drawings or Catrin in “Of Rocks and Stones”, who feels imprisoned on the island and finally escapes from both her marriage and the Island.

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174 Bobby Tŷ Groes sleeps with Derrick's wife (85).

175 *Sais* is Welsh for “English”.

Opposed to the characters who long to leave are “stayers” like Jack Cucu, or Reverend Morris in “Of Rocks and Stones”. He sees Wales as a place of beauty, a place of perfection, unchanging over time and conveys his feelings in unfinished letters to his brother in America, whom he sees as a deserter and whom he cannot forgive leaving. The facade he tries to uphold for his own sake begins to crumble in a conversation with Catrin, when she deconstructs the place of unchanging beauty to reveal underneath it a place of old age and stagnation:

“I’ve been here for as long as I remember and one morning I just wake up and I’m thinking I’m not staying any more, I’m not going to sit around like one of those old buckets of rust downstairs, waiting till I’m nothing but dirt and dust. I don’t have to. I am thinking it’s not like I’m some heap of stones stuck forever on the ground. I can get on a plane and go.” (134)

This passage sums up the general tenor that underlies all stories in *Tower*: they are filled with either nostalgia and the desperate attempts to hold on to the glories of the past, or with desperate weariness of the place that seems empty and never changing.

“Ynys” combines both sentiments and weighs them against each other to let them cumulate in the conclusion that Wales is indeed a place tied to the past, which is easy to leave behind for a better life, but which is also impossible to let go. This last story follows the protagonist in his own process of finding a place where he belongs: from turning his back on the island that does not seem to mean anything to him to reattaining a strong feeling of belonging to the place of his childhood and the strong love for Wales. The danger of losing one’s roots in a conflicting search for identity is brought to conclusion by the narrator: “How much must you lose before you realise that one patch of ground, one piece of sky, one hill, one tower, mean everything?” (149).

From *My People* to *The Tower* attitudes towards the Welsh homeland and England and the English language differ considerably: the villagers in *My People* and *Valley* live in the Welsh heartlands before the times of facilitated mobility and transport. The villages were mainly self-sufficient and dependance upon one another was high, which necessitated bonding. The village communities defended themselves against forces from the outside and a strong pro-Wales and anti-England sentiment is expressed by most characters. During the course of *Valley*, however, the majority of Morgan children find the conditions of life and work unbearable and feel forced to leave Wales behind to start afresh in foreign countries. The tone of the novel turns sad towards the end, as the Morgans’ house is left empty and village life has become

so colourless and insignificant that even Huw leaves it. Sadness and disillusionment pervade the last pages, and mourning for a changing and deteriorating Wales.

*Border Country* occupies a middle position: attitudes towards Wales and England are less stark, due to the proximity to the border, the prevalence of the English language and the opportunity to leave for better fortunes. Still, a fairly strong sense of community and solidarity with fellow Welshmen<sup>176</sup> is conveyed by the characters, even though they are aware of their not absolutely pure Welshness. Matthew's attitude, especially, is challenged, due to his status as traveller between two worlds.

A strong shift in perception is noticeable in *The Tower*, where feelings of nostalgia for the village and the island and contempt for the English intruders are challenged by a general feeling of emptiness, discontent and missing purpose. None of the characters are happy in their surroundings, even though they try hard to persuade themselves otherwise. This feeling of unhappiness leads to scorn for the people who escaped their surroundings, but who, likewise, have not necessarily found happiness. The lacking feeling of community leads to shifting and uncertain attitudes towards the homeland and the outside. The villagers do not share these attitudes but each develop and shape them in isolation, based on their experiences and observations.

#### **4.4. HISTORICAL AND SOCIO-POLITICAL INFLUENCES IN THE BOOKS**

Realistic literature usually reflects a society at a certain point in time, shaped and influenced by the circumstances that affected it. The books at hand are no exception, even though caution must be exercised with *My People*, with regard to distortions brought about by the satiric character of the book. *Valley* and *Border Country* are immediate and retroactive reactions to changes and events in the industrial sector: The fight for fair wages, the formation of unions and organisation of strikes feature in both works, as do the aftereffects on the characters and the gradual change of society and village life. *The Tower* shows a thinned-out village community, devoid of its self-sustaining purpose and affected by heavy in-migration and emigration. It reflects the present times, where people are wealthy enough and free to travel and follow their own interests, without having to take their neighbours into consideration. This kind of spirit underlies the whole book.

*My People* does not feature any historical references and it is, therefore, not entirely clear whether it is set at the time when it was written, or if it alluded to the

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176 cf. The support for the miners in the General Strike.

past. Traditions like communal hay-making, *eisteddfodau* and obedience to church, combined with the absence of any form of modernisation, electricity or cars clearly locate the book before World War I, but these characteristics will be dealt with in the respective chapters. The narrative, despite being split into several short stories, is closed in itself and creates a bubble around the village, which is not penetrated by issues of wider political concern. The local *seiat* and especially the village priest are in charge of jurisdiction and the government of the village, and events that happen without are not important for the community: the focus of the stories is on the dynamics of the village itself, which are magnified and at the same time reduced to grotesques in satirical manner.

*Valley* and *Border Country* are industrial or post-industrial novels, with one of the main foci on the industrial change of the area. The Morgan family are all employed in the coal mine and discussions of strikes and fights for better working condition over dinner are common. In this scenario, a conflict between two different generations is portrayed: Gwilym, the head of the house, and well-respected member of the *seiat* and the community, at first opposes the strikes and even falls out with his son Davy over the matter. Davy voices his anger about the mine owners and causes a commotion that threatens to split the family<sup>177</sup>. Huw cannot understand the meaning of it and asks his brother:

“But what is it Davy wants?’

“Fight against the bloody English,’ Gwilym whispered [...] Gwilym was only fourteen then and just started work on the coal face [...]. And here he was, the quietest of us all, swearing, and not only that, saying something that was so wicked it made my body ice.” (27)

The mine owners and industrial pioneers in Wales often came from England<sup>178</sup> and provide yet another source of national conflict. An expression of anger against the ruling classes bursts forth even from the calmest family member and shows how deep the hatred against perceived oppressors runs. The young men of the village meet at the mountain top, where Davy tries to convince them to fight. Gwilym Morgan happens to walk to the spot on the wrong day and to interrupt the meeting. He spontaneously gives a speech and asks the crowd to be patient rather than fight<sup>179</sup>. This attitude wins him enemies, who accuse him of having joined ranks with the mine

177 cf. *Valley*: 38: Young Gwilym and Owen leave the house to side with Davy. Gwilym the elder tells them this move means abandoning the family and orders them not to return as long as they maintain their attitude.

178 cf. Jones 1994: 163 ff. mainly English pioneers established steelworks and coal mines

179 cf. *Valley* 45

owners, but Gwilym simply adheres to a temperate, faithful position without drastic measures. When he and two of his sons go to negotiate with the owners of the coal mines<sup>180</sup>, the old man finally realises that conditions are not going to improve: “O, boy, boy,’ he said, and if he had had the tears they would surely have come then. ‘How you and your sons will live, I cannot tell. [...] The ground is cut from under our feet. Nothing to be done. Nothing” (224).

Llewellyn tells of the struggle and despair of the miners in a village. He depicts the effects of unemployment triggered by the strike. The hardships in times of hunger, want and desperation are told through the randomly observing eyes of a boy of school age:

“Next morning I was allowed only two slices of bread, with butter on only one, and no jam. For school, I had a pie and bread and cheese with lettuce, but no tea. [...]

It was strange to go out in the street and find the men out there, on chairs, or sitting on window sills, or just standing in the gutters. There was a feeling of fright in it, too, for the street was always empty at other times.” (225)

The portrayal of challenging times goes so far that Huw shares his food with one of his friends at school, whose family can barely afford food and had to sell their carriage to provide for the family<sup>181</sup>. How the mines dominated people's lives and affected a whole community becomes clear, because without the mines the vast majority of villagers forego food. When the strikes end with the promise of an introduction of minimal wages, the whole village celebrates, even though Davy and Ianto remain sceptical of improvements:

“Davy was a long time in London with not much to show except knowledge of what was going on in the Unions up there, and sending reports down to our branch. I did most of the letter writing, and I was able to see the Union having strength as from the flow of my pen.

Every week new members by the hundred, and every week more and more voices shouting for action against the owners. Shorter working hours, more money, ballots for places where the seam was richest, closing the collieries against outside labour, all had their champions, and all ready to fight.

Ianto had been speaking night after night for weeks, not for action against the owners, but against the Government. Mr. Gruffydd [i.e. the village priest, *author's note*] was with him, there. They wanted to stop the royalties paid to landlords [...]" (369)

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180 cf. *Valley* 223f.

181 cf. *Valley*: 228



This scene shows how a fight of Welsh colliers against unfair working conditions equals a fight against the English government, which was already hinted at above.

The Morgan family also provides examples for how workers who caused problems were discharged and how this cast a light of suspicion on the rest of the family: Ianto gets dismissed from the mines<sup>182</sup> and finds work in an iron factory instead and Hugh leaves the mines for a career as a carpenter. Ianto and Davy later leave for New Zealand, because they have given up hope that life in Wales might change for the better<sup>183</sup>. The decline of the coal mines is foreshadowed already, as people resent depending on them and look for different fields of work.

That mines did not only afflict families with hardships, but could and did cause deaths is featured in the book twice: Ifor dies under the collapsed roof of a stall<sup>184</sup> and old Gwilym Morgan dies, crushed under a rock. His death symbolises the end of an era – together with the diaspora of his sons it signifies the termination of vibrant valley life and the failure of the working people to achieve an improvement of lifestyle and conditions. After this incident, Huw also leaves the valley and the book ends, having come full circle to the starting point of the story. The quintessential historically relevant statement of *How Green Was My Valley* is how life and families were destroyed by the mines and steelworks, without any hope for a better future in Wales. Even the title bears a heavily nostalgic tone and expresses mourning for a beautiful past in a pastoral, peaceful village that will never return to its state.

Thematically similar, albeit set at a distance of time, space and direct involvement is *Border Country*. Glynmawr is located at a comparably small distance of the mining valleys, and life is not portrayed as riddled with hardships as in *Valley*: people go about their business quietly and without complaint. Despite these differences, *Valley* and *Border Country* are connected by the General Strike. It affects the villagers of Glynmawr only from a distance, but still causes a commotion and several discussions, when the railwaymen, instigated by their union, choose to attend the strike in support of the miners. The strike of the railwaymen does not find generous support in the village, but, on the contrary, is criticised.

'There's no dispute about the railwaymen's wages.' [Major Blakely, Englishman, *author's note*] [...]

'I don't claim more understanding than I've got, but I know this. Part of the fair price for any man is a fair price for his brother. I wouldn't want it if the miners went without.' [Harry Price, Matthew's father, *author's note*]

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182 cf. *Valley*: 370

183 cf. *Valley*: 417

184 cf. *Valley*: 363f.

'Then are the miners your brothers and the rest of us not?' Blakely asked.

'The miners are locked out. That or take a cut in wages. It's your owners, isn't it, your government, holding the rest of us up?'

'I know you men think you're being loyal,' Blakely said evenly. 'I admire you in a way, but you're quite fatally wrong. The coal owners can't afford more. The whole industry is depressed. And the Government can't let our national life break down. You may think your motives are good, but the facts, unfortunately, are against you.'" (BC 143)

Most of the villagers do not appreciate the railwaymen's support of the miners. The Prices' landlady insists that Harry apologises for going on strike and that he ends it immediately<sup>185</sup>.

In non-mining villages miners are seen as the lowest class of people, the scum that is looked down upon. This sentiment can be found in *Valley*, when Angharad Morgan marries into a rich family in town and her house keeper gossips about her: "Poor, poor little Master Iestyn. A slut from a coal mine fouling his home, and him thousands of miles away. O, dear, dear. Ach y fi" (*Valley* 373). Her attitude is shared by schoolmaster Mr. Jonas-Sessions: "Coal miners. Living like hogs, with nothing in life but beer and bruisers and using the Chapel as a blind. Welsh. Good God, what a tribe" (*Valley* 326/7). He goes so far as to equate his stereotypical picture of coal miners to the Welsh in general. His negative criticism also affects the chapel, which is most powerful in small villages, i.e. the most Welsh and least anglicised places.

All these passages draw to the surface the antagonism between Wales and England, as the blame for most political events that affected Wales in a bad way is laid on the English. The support of the miners is, therefore, a nationalist, political statement. It shows that this dispute runs deeper than many other issues and the railwaymen in the novel have to choose whether they support their fellow Welshmen or obey orders from the government. Harry Price, who never betrays his moral principals, stands up to the Englishman Major Blakely, and even Jack Meredith, a railwayman, who barely gets along with his co-workers and actually opposes the strike, surprisingly, makes a gesture of solidarity. When he declares his willingness to work, he is ordered to take up duty in a town 6 miles away:

"Even Jack Meredith was officially on strike, though he indignantly denied this. [...] 'Are they daft or what? I'm not going down there.'

'But you offered yourself for work, Meredith. Here it is.'

Meredith got angry. Blakely had offended him by calling him 'Merridith', in the English manner, and in any case he did not like him."

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185 cf. BC 148-9

(BC 151)

While Jack Meredith operates mostly on principles of national pride and scorn for the English, Harry Price actually cares for the miners. After finding out that the strikes did not achieve an improvement, he is disillusioned. Moreover, the railwaymen's secure positions become unstable due to their support of the strike<sup>186</sup>. The union abandons her members after the end of the strike, and some workers are penalised: Harry also temporarily loses his job.

"No use blaming anyone,' [Harry] said, looking up.

'We can blame the Union,' Morgan said. 'Blame them, blame the T.V.C.<sup>187</sup>. What they call it off for, sell us and the miners out, when we were strong?'

'They're all in London,' Harry said. 'They see things different.'" (BC 161)

Harry addresses the problem of distance and personal involvement. He indirectly accuses the authorities in London of not knowing – and possibly not caring - about the actual degree of hardships and difficulties in Wales. Apart from the General Strike, *Border Country* is free of allusions to big historical and political events. The increase of mobility and technology is unobtrusively portrayed by the two strands of story that are interwoven and present a leap of several decades. While in the story of Will's childhood not everybody had a car and people used to share the tools and means of transportation they had, the village presents itself in a slightly more modernised way at the time of Matthew's visit, even though in essentials the community seems not to have been affected by many changes. The time of World War II, which took place in the gap of time between the two narratives, does not feature in the novel, only World War I is mentioned briefly in the beginning:

"In 1919, a year before coming to Glynmawr, Harry and Ellen had been married in Peterstone church. They had known each other as children, and were engaged when Harry came home from France with a bullet through his wrist. He had gone back, and later been gassed, so that one lung was permanently damaged and he could not smoke." (BC 35)

In how far the war accounts for Harry's quiet manners and correct and moral behaviour, definite assumptions cannot be made, but they might be connected.

*The Tower* was written and is set at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. All stories reflect the changes in national politics and the world in general: Moving has become easier with the advent of cars. People are not required to live and work in the

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186 cf. BC 149-161

187 Television Centre (i.e. BBC)

same town or village anymore, but it has become common to commute. In “God’s Breath” the protagonist – the narrator’s grandmother – starts working at the mill, the remnant of which is the tower, and attending to her job requires her to move to her workplace<sup>188</sup>. In the other stories, which are set in the present, dimensions have shifted: people are travelling effortlessly between England and Wales or go on holiday to distant countries. Reverend Morris in “Of Rocks and Stones” criticises the “peripatetic exploits of restless sons, daughters and grandchildren, toing and froing from places [he has] only ever seen from photographs” (123). Moving around has not only become easier but regular. Whereas the majority of characters in *My People* hardly ever left their village, exploring other parts of the country and even of the world is part of life in *The Tower*.

Historical points of reference in the book include the Burmese war<sup>189</sup> and also WWII, which is not named explicitly, but can be inferred, for instance when Jack Cucu in “Persistence” thinks back to his childhood: “the only foreigners he’d seen who weren’t English were the German prisoners who’d worked in their fields during the war” (*Tower* 102). These wars were of international character and their effects do not affect the whole book, but naturally had an impact on some of the secondary characters, which are appear mostly as a brief mention as they are dead already. Contrary to *Valley* and *Border Country*, no commotions in Wales itself that might have had an impact on the village community are featured in *Tower*. Events happen on a more international scale and present Wales as a part of the wider world<sup>190</sup> and not only involved in conflicts on a national level.

With regard to the historical and political influences on the books, the main observation to be made is that *Valley* and *Border Country* were to the highest degree shaped by the futile struggle of the lowest part of the working class for better working and living conditions. The ruling classes and, first and foremost, the British government are criticised and the inferior position the Welshmen have next to their English neighbours is pointed out and fought against. This problem of status has not completely subsided in *Tower*, where a certain negative sentiment towards immigrants is exhibited by the villagers. In these stories, however, the “bad” English are individuals on a personal quest and they are not seen as mighty rulers anymore, but become persons of ridicule for the islanders.

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188 cf. *Tower*: 9

189 Burma was under British rule from 1824 to 1948.

190 cf. Bowie 1993: 191

*My People* stands out in this category, due to its satiric character and the lack of allusions to politics and changes affecting Wales: the stories are free of any political function in defence of the celtic nation, but serve merely as sketches to portray peasant society in rural Wales. The focus is on the manipulative force of the church and will be analysed in chapter 4.6.1.

#### 4.5. GEOGRAPHY

The role of topography for the development of a feeling of belonging, and with it the shaping of identity was explained in chapter 2.4. For Wales, the celtic nation, nature has always had a special, slightly mystical significance. For being Celts, they were romanticised and during the Celtic revival Wales was seen as a rural idyll<sup>191</sup>. Remnants of this idyll still have a strong presence in literature. Sites of ancient meaning, such as holy wells, neolithic tombs and stone circles, which can be found aplenty, or places which remained untouched, like some mountains, rivers and the sea are used as unchanging points of reference in ever-changing times.

*Valley*, *Tower* and *Border Country* abound in long ekphraseis filled with nostalgia, melancholia and longing. To become one with nature is a way of getting in touch with oneself and serves to obtain a better view over a situation. Thus, Huw and his father frequently climb one of the encircling mountains to “find peace” (*Valley* 40), Gwilym mainly to think<sup>192</sup> and to write his sermons<sup>193</sup>, Huw also to reflect on the transformation of the valleys<sup>194</sup>. The position at the top of the hill allows them to compare the neighbouring valleys to their own and to grasp the misery their valley is drowned in (represented by the slag heap) as opposed to the rich green valley on the other side of the hill.

To Huw nature itself is alive and reflects the feelings and situation of the miners. He observes that nature reacts to the amassment of slag that covers whole hillsides:

“Below us, the river ran sweet as ever, happy in the sun, but as soon as it met the darkness between the sloping walls of slag it seemed to take fright and go spiritless, smooth, black, without movement. And on the other side it came forth grey, and began to hurry again, as though anxious to get away. But its banks were stained, and the reeds and grasses that dressed it were hanging, and black, and sickly, ashamed of their dirtiness, ready to die of shame, they seemed, and of sorrow for their dear friend, the river.”  
(99)

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191 cf. Pittock 1999: 3, 101

192 cf. *Valley*: 46

193 cf. *Valley*: 43

194 cf. *Valley*: 214, see quote in chapter 2.4 of this thesis.

Only at the top of the mountain nature is still intact and the daffodils<sup>195</sup> Huw wants to collect beckon to him from above. He compares them to gold, the most valuable metal. Daffodils are also the national flower of Wales, and the daffodils in *Valley* can be interpreted as symbols of Welshness. On top of the mountain, where they are free and unhindered and where nature is untouched they can flourish, but when Huw tries to plant some bulbs in the family gardens they die, suppressed by the dust from the slag. Like the daffodils Welshmen need to be free to thrive, but working in the mines destroys them like the slag destroys nature. Nature is too weak to fight back and when Huw leaves the Valley the slag heap already starts to bury his house.

The burying of the house mirrors Gwilym Morgan's death – crushed by a rock in the mine. The Morgan family has either died or emigrated and Huw is the last of the Morgans to leave the valley. The novel ends with the sentence “How green was my Valley, then, and the Valley of them that have gone” (447). The old times have come to an end and so have the people who were substantial for the community. Nature in *Valley* parallels the lives of these people, which change for the worse, bringing death and calamity. They are all tied to the coal mines and the miners' community in one way or another and those who cannot escape go down with it.

The attraction of the mountains is not exclusively found in *Valley*. Similar to Huw in *Valley*, Will in *Border Country* also finds stability and consistency in the mountains. Harry Price and his friend Morgan, an entrepreneur, discuss changes in the village and Will ventures that the mountains never change.

“Mountains! What do mountains matter? And have some faith in the future, Will. If they're in the way, we'll move them.” [said Morgan].

[...] 'Morgan's right,' Harry said [...]. 'The mountains don't much matter, except to look at. I wasn't thinking of that.'

'You've lived under these mountains all your life and you can say they don't matter,' Will protested.

'It's a feeling about things, that's all. The mountains are just there, that's all about them.'

'You wouldn't talk like that if you went up there more often. [...] If you went up there and looked, really looked, you'd see it.'

'See what, Will?' Morgan asked.

'Well, a different view of things, that's all. Something more than keeping your nose to the ground.’” (BC 303f.)

The importance of the mountains for the village and the consistency of the lives of its inhabitants are viewed differently. Will's father and his friend Morgan would move

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195 cf. *Valley*: 99f.

them at any time, if they were considered an impediment. For Will and his friend Eira the mountains are eternal and belong to the village. They are ancient and more durable than humans and, therefore, ought not be touched. One of them, the Kestrel, is even part of a legend, in which he guards the surrounding valleys<sup>196</sup>, which wins him some magical powers. From the Kestrel as his vantage point, Matthew casts a look in all directions and, thus, also into the history of Wales: he sees coal pits in distant valleys and Norman castles to defend the borders on the other side. “The mountain had this power, to abstract and to clarify, but in the end he could not stay here; he must go back down where he lived” (365).

Spots of untouched nature, especially if a legend or an old story is attached to them, serve as places for contemplation and inspire awe and devotion towards nature. When Will leaves Glynmawr to continue his education in England, he takes in the beauty of the landscape properly for the first time. The similarity to Huw is striking, the whole picture reveals itself to both of them only when they leave. Both think back to their childhood and the unchanged mountain ridges help them do so; time is slowed down there and reflection can take place: “That was the sense of it: to watch, to interpret, to try to get clear. Only the wind narrowing your eyes, and so much living in you, deciding what you will see and how you will see it. Never above, watching. You'll find what you're watching is yourself” (BC 365). Will finds himself thinking about his nation and about himself at the same time, inspired by his elevated position. The view comprises the surroundings of his childhood that helped shape him and create his identity. A connection between the place and the person is established and can be seen clearly from the static mountain, abstracted from the actual, petty dynamics of everyday life that Will is bound to return to<sup>197</sup>.

Like the protagonists *Valley* and *Border Country*, so do some of the characters in *Tower* use nature to get in touch with their inner selves: Reverend Morris in “Of Rocks and Stones” takes long strolls to ponder on what to write to his brother in America. He compares himself to the unchanging parts of nature:

“[I] grazed my hand on a very ancient looking limpet, which was itself encrusted with barnacles, as though it had been there for so long that it had become mistaken for the rock it clung to. [...] I know it might sound odd, but afterwards I felt a certain affinity with this old limpet, clinging for a whole lifetime to one small piece of rock, in one small pool, on one small beach. Because haven't I, in a way, been doing exactly the same thing?” (Tower 120)

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196 cf. BC: 363

197 See quote above.

The priest sees himself almost as a piece of nature: He cannot be removed from his allocated place. This is the reason he cannot forgive his brother in America, because in his opinion people are tied to a place, just like the place itself never changes.

Throughout the story he reflects on his life and uses natural phenomena as similia. His loneliness is mirrored in the rock pools, which stand forlorn at low tide, after the ocean retreats. He compares himself to an encrusted limpet in one of the pools. The limpet has not left the pool, as he has not left the island in a long time. At first he is convinced that people belong to a certain place, but when his foot catches<sup>198</sup> on a root and he falls, his opinion slowly starts to change. He had believed he knew every rock and tree, but nature seems to be changing too and he is amazed to have tripped. The accident shakes him out of his reverie and coerces him to return to the present. Morrison starts looking around instead of inside himself. His opinion slowly starts to change and his contentment turns to into slow realisation of the repetitive and unchanging nature of his life. He starts to acknowledge a certain feeling of loneliness. The fact that he lives on an island makes his isolation even more tangible: the sea and mountains that enclose the priest's home are sometimes perceived as tightening and constraining, rather than liberating. The feeling of isolation and the related "island" pervade the whole book: all characters live and operate on limited ground; limited by the sea.

Mountains, likewise, can present a constraint: when seen from below they constrict the view. A complete view is only obtained by those who take the pains to climb the mountain. Still, they serve as links as well as borders. 'The valleys' with their respective villages are separated from other valleys (and thus other villages) by mountain ridges and hilly landscape. In the days of limited mobility, obstructing topographical elements like mountains meant boundaries and society was shaped with the landscape. People tended to stay in "their" valley, where they felt at home and where they were part of a fairly fixed and unchanging community<sup>199</sup>. This sentiment is particularly strong in *Valley*, where another village or town meant a completely different set of people with different values and opinions. On leaving their home town, villagers might become outsiders in the place they move to. When in *Valley* Huw's sister Angharad marries a mine owner's son and moves to town, she is looked at suspiciously by townspeople. Also Mr. Gruffydd, who is not from the village,

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198 cf. *Tower* 123

199 cf. the title *How Green Was My Valley*



is finally treated like an unwanted stranger. Bron, Huw's sister in law, travels over the mountains on foot to call on her future husband's family. The mountain is described as a tedious passage, but can be conquered when need arises.

To Morgan Rosser in *Border Country* the mountains only present a restrictive feature that hems people in and limits their opportunities. The entrepreneur wants to expand his small retailer's business and urges Harry to break out of his small world that is contained by the – seemingly purposeless – mountains<sup>200</sup>. Morgan accuses the Welsh of being backward, ignorant of capital and potential: “Land they value, but not anything else” (BC 223). He contrasts them with the English, who were the ones to exploit the natural resources of coal and iron in Wales and make money from the mountains. Morgan tries to engage Harry in his business and when he meets disinterest because Harry prefers to stick with the occupations he knows, Morgan tries to expand Harry's view:

“There's no limit, none, so long as we see the real situation. Here, I'm saying, you can't. Your eyes are down all the time, on the muck or the dust. If you look up, what is it you see? Mountains. Miles and miles of barren, bloody mountains. You got to break out of it, Harry, before it's too late.” (BC 224).

Morgan has a broader, more global mindset than the other villagers. His profession as a dealer takes him to different towns in his van. His lifestyle is reflected by nature: the mountains do not hem him in, but he can see beyond. Harry, however, refuses to do so. He chooses the mountains as borders for his reality, within which he lives his life and defines himself.

Height and diverse features of land also play a role in *Tower*. The mill tower is built on a hill and can be seen from all sides<sup>201</sup>. Its exposed and superior position forces people to look up to it. It commands attention and is also the central link of the seven stories. That this “high seat” is occupied by a rich in-migrant, who looks down on the islanders is metaphorical, just like the island reflects the isolation and loneliness of the individual islanders. They live next to each other, but seem worlds apart, as each person is occupied in reflections rather than interactions with other villagers. Even Bachie in “The Importance of being elsewhere”, who spends the afternoon with his friends, is locked into his own private bubble of drugs, alcohol and thoughts. He is alienated from his girlfriend and a cocktail of magic mushrooms

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200 cf. *Valley*: 224

201 i.e. the tower features in the stories

separates him mentally, if not physically, from his friends and the customers in the pub.

The concept of a person as an island is mentioned explicitly in “Ynys” (Welsh: island), where the protagonist compares himself and his half-Cuban girlfriend to islands:

“I liked the fact that part of her was from an island. I liked to think that detachment ran mutually through our blood, that we were somehow adrift together. [... Islands] were just dots in the sea, parts of the puzzle that had brought us here, points of transit on a map of chance and coincidence.”  
(*Tower*: 146)

An island is a special place, because it is detached from the mainland and other islands. Similar to life in a valley, life on an island is mainly restricted to the island itself, even if a bridge allows people to commute to the mainland. The majority of time is spent on the island, in the company of the same people. Anglesey boasts only few towns that are centres of life – the majority of people live in small villages with barely even a supermarket. The island shapes people and their mindsets. In *Tower* the characters appear isolated, joyless and resigned. Those who have not accepted the unchanging repetitiveness of their lives, are concerned with looking for opportunities to escape. The predominance of nature in all stories serves to emphasize the feeling of emptiness and a missing communal and individual activity.

It is this isolation, which is sought by Englishman Skinner in “Ley Lines”. His interest is centred on the powers of nature, which he believes to reside in every tree and river. With Anglesey's druidic past and numerous sites of worship, the island is the perfect place for him to settle and explore these powers. Skinner constructs his identity as an esoteric with the aid of Anglesey's past and sees himself as the “custodian of the island's ancient legacy, its oldest, most potent, secrets” (*Tower* 39) and regards every violation of nature as sacrilege. Skinner acknowledges the importance of nature, even though his view is forced into a narrow mindset by his desperately clinging to the past.

Nature and the significance of a certain place have a different meaning for Derrick Giles, who purchased the old mill. His motivation was inspired by the quiet remoteness, rural setting, the historical places, defined by “old stones” and the vicinity of castles<sup>202</sup>, which to him meant “class” that he could show off to his English friends. The “authentic rural surroundings” (61) of this special place, which he is

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202 cf. *Tower*: 60. Giles owns a piece of “the castled coasts of Gwynedd and Anglesey”

going to boast about, display an act of romanticizing of the Welsh countryside, which is typical of outsiders. In his eyes, his social advancement had been marked by increasing taste, when he progressed from one of the tacky cheap amusement places for mostly English people in Wales<sup>203</sup> further into the “real” country, where he can appreciate the view and the mostly untouched nature. Modernisation is mostly absent.

The general representation of the villages in all books, with the exception of *Valley*<sup>204</sup>, is an air of unagitated regularity: changes in community life are rare and take longer to come into effect than in bigger towns with more people moving in and out. The settings remain mainly undisturbed and the rurality of the place, a Welsh element, is emphasized:

“He tell you how to get there?”

‘Oh, yes.’

‘That’s all right then. Wherever you go down this place, it’s the same. Cross the grass, past the muckheap, over two mountains, and it’s the sixth chapel on the left.’” (BC 33)

Wales and its rural character are lovingly smiled at in this passage. An atmosphere of peacefulness and the picture of an unchanging world are created. This interpretation can be applied to all of the books.

*My People* presents the exception with regard to nature. The focus of the satire is on people and their relationships; landscape is disregarded. Fields are almost the exclusive natural feature of the story, but they mostly signify either toil and labour<sup>205</sup> or wealth<sup>206</sup>. The majority of the villagers are farmers and for them nature and lands form the base of their existence. The cultivation of crops and the utilization of nature for their purposes is the only way for them to look at their surroundings. Identity is created by their profession, which is the most basic way of sustaining themselves: by producing food. All their thoughts are centred on their existence, but they never take time to marvel at nature.

In “The Talent thou gavest” Evans claims that “the sense of the beautiful or the curious in Nature is slow to awake in the mind of the Welsh peasant” (*My People*: 74). The understanding and observation of nature’s marvels comes with wisdom and

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203 cf. *Tower* 59f.: Giles and his Liverpoolian friends go to Rhyl, which is described as decrepit amusement place, littered with chip papers and “toffee apples with rotted cores”.

204 The miners’ strikes add dynamics to a potentially calm village life.

205 In “The Way of the Earth” Simon’s and Beca’s fields have grown weedy with their advancing age and fading strength.

206 In “The Heifer without Blemish” a young woman is asked to marry a young man. The first information she receives about him is that his farm comprises 60 acres of well-kept, fertile land.

the capability to see clearly<sup>207</sup>. Eben spends many years tending a local farmer's sheep. This occupation leads him to beautiful, remote spots with clear views towards the sea. Eben, unlike the other farmers, is at leisure to sit back and admire his surroundings. His late revelation that the villagers were corrupted almost equals the abstracted picture the protagonists of *Valley*, *Border Country* and *Tower* obtain by observing their villages from a hilltop or by reflecting on nature. It is not of duration, however, as Eben falls into disgrace with the community by addressing their problems and, finally, returns to his old mindset in order to blend in with the community.

Nature, geography and topographical features shape and reflect the societies they provide the background for. There is the tight-knit valley community, created by the richness in natural resources like coal, framed and contained by the mountains and united in their laborious lives. Owen claims that “people living together in this intimate way in [...] a secluded valley shared the same interests and felt in a real sense that they belonged” (Owen 1959: 18). This is exactly the impression that is conveyed by Llewellyn. There is the farming village of Manteg, where people live from their lands and, therefore, try to enlarge them, mistrusting each other, though in need of a close community in order to survive. According to Owen, innovations in peasant communities are undermined by a complex network of mutual dependence on neighbours and relatives<sup>208</sup>. The closely knit society in Manteg comes with obligations towards the next person. Belonging is unquestioned, but at the same time personal freedom is very limited. A similar issue evolves in Glymawr, the quiet village at the border to England, protected and at the same time separated from Wales by the mountains, and from England by the invisible border. It is connected to the world primarily by a quiet train line. People are generally content and live relatively fulfilling lives with defined roles. Morgan Rosser's strive for innovations and his frequent trips to other places make him part of a larger world and at the same time alienate him from several people, but he nevertheless remains an insider, albeit with slightly loosened ties. Finally, there is Anglesey, the remote island, connected to the mainland only by two bridges and always a destination, never a transit place. It remains largely unmolested from the outside and unaffected by changes in the world. Its inhabitants appear resigned and lonely, without perspectives and goals. They live

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207 Eben, the protagonist of the story becomes a preacher and starts to reflect on the double-morality of the village community. When he preaches about their vices, he is rejected.

208 cf. Owen 1959: 19

in a fairly loose community, brought about by the growing momentum of personal freedom and decision making.

## **4.6. TRADITIONS AND RITES IN THE BOOKS**

### **4.6.1. CHURCH AND RELIGION**

The rise of nationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century vastly increased the popularity of Nonconformist churches and chapels and they became the centre around which social life evolved, especially in villages, where communal and leisure activities were scarce. According to Owen<sup>209</sup> “[b]elonging to a chapel came to be an important factor in people's lives; people came together more often as members of a local chapel than they did as members of the community.”

How this development affected the peasant community is criticised heavily by Caradoc Evans in *My People*. Glyn Jones proposes to interpret Evans' hostility in accord with his high degree of anglicisation and identification with the Londoners he is surrounded by: “Almost, one is tempted to say that the frequency and the ferocity of the Anglo-Welsh writer's attacks on the chapel are an index to the extent of his anglicization and his acceptance of English values” (Jones, *Dragon*: 51). The allusions to the Bible in Evans' narrative and language, the biblical names, the omnipresence of superstitious and misguided faith and the unquestioned superiority of the village priest Rev. Bryn-Bevan dominate the stories. Evans' characters are defined by either obedience to the chapel or disobedience and, inevitably connected to it, public scorn.

The importance of chapel membership and regular visits to the church is continuously stressed. In “The Way of the Earth” the couple Simon and Beca “stand without the gates of Capel Sion<sup>210</sup> – the living sin of the land” (*People* 64), because they only married after their daughter was born, by which they sinned against church. Excluded from chapel community, Simon and Beca lead a hard life, helping others but foregoing the support of the chapel and the good opinion of the villagers. In order to be redeemed they save all their money to buy their way back into chapel and to receive a dignified funeral in the chapel graveyard. Their virtues and merits and the fact that they are good, honest and kindhearted people seem irrelevant with regard to

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209 Owen 1959: 24

210 Sion is short for Capel Sion – the Chapel of Zion. The name appears to be common for methodist chapels: there are several all over Wales. *Valley* also features a Zion chapel (*Valley* 16).

the breach of chapel laws and they can only be redeemed by donating money to the chapel, or after their death.

Another character who truly is a thorn in the side of the *seiat* is Twm Tybach in “The Glory that was Sion’s”.

“He was as irreligious as an irreligious Welshman can be. He defied the Big Man openly; never except on market and fair days did he wear his best clothes; in passing the Respected Josiah Bryn-Bevan and Mistress Bryn-Bevan he kept his cap on his head and whistled, and once he made Mistress Bryn-Bevan sick by spitting loudly on the ground [...]” (*People* 81)

Twm's openly lived promiscuity despite his marriage, his impiety and irreligiosity and his social intercourse with disreputable characters evoke a feeling of despise for him in the whole village. Mere trifles, like not taking off his cap when talking to a woman, offend the members of the community. Twm is afflicted by a grave illness just at the moment when the capacity of the local graveyard reached its limits, leaving as the only place for his grave the grounds immediately surrounding the chapel, which reserved for the most pious people. The village is faced with a dilemma: they fear for Twm's soul, but also the defilement of the graveyard, so the whole community starts to pray for Twm and bring him little presents in order to prolong his life until a solution is found.

How far superstition goes is shown by Lloyd the Schoolin [*sic!*], who prays to God that he, the Almighty, be not “influenced either this way or that by their talk” but to think for himself, because the villagers “do not know what they do” (*People* 85). Lloyd fears the powers of the congregation might influence God's decision and feels the duty to antagonise their efforts.

God's name as the highest judge is frequently abused to suit an individual's own purposes. In “The Woman who sowed Iniquity” Betti Lancoch falls in love with a man from another village. Joshua, her brother, intended for her to stay unmarried, and when she marries and thus transfers her share of land to her new husband, he brings the whole matter into the house of God, where it is openly discussed. Joshua is afraid the village might turn against him because his sister takes her possessions “to a man who never goes to chapel” (96) and people might include him in their scorn. He affirms that “[t]he Lord [...] will administer the rod of correction on this slut who so shamelessly sows the seeds of iniquity” (97) in order to reestablish his own good standing with the community, so he finally has her killed, an act which he masks as accident. The family-bonds that link him to his sister are regarded less important

than the good opinion of the parish community.

In all 15 stories in *My People* Evans draws a similar picture of the more powerful and wealthy villagers' appropriation of faith, religion and God to their own purposes. Often, other, weaker members of community – especially women like Betti Lancoch – suffer the consequences of this self-righteousness.

Evans massively criticises the hypocrisy and lack of humanity and compassion in Welsh peasant communities and the unquestioned devotion to church and its officials. Reverend Bryn-Bevan (and before him, Reverend Bern-Davydd<sup>211</sup>) is the undoubted, hailed authority in Evans' portrayed village, “the Ruler of Capel Sion” (113). As a man of God the Reverend knows God's will and is in a position to speak judgement and administer punishment. He is the constant subject of awe with his flock; when he crosses a room, “the people remarked the dignity of his stride and marvelled” (*People* 125). He himself is believed to be almost holy: “They looked at one another and marvelled at the familiarity between Bern-Davydd and the Big Man<sup>212</sup>. 'Sure,' they said, 'he is as important as God’” (*People* 143). With that high an authority, it is no surprise that whenever a sheep strays from the flock, people turn to the priest for guidance.

Even in his own family matters Bern-Davydd interferes or orders people to interfere in order to keep every villager on the rightful path. When his own son<sup>213</sup> courts a girl from the poorhouse and gets her pregnant, Bern-Davydd interprets the situation as punishment from God: “I have searched my soul for some sin that [...] I might have committed. Did I find any? No, indeed [...] I didn't. Yet the Big Man's hand is hard on the innocent. My clean heart is bowed with shame” (117). Bern-Davydd presents himself as a clean slate, the most innocent person in town. This hypocrisy culminates when after failed attempts to talk the girl into accusing someone else of fatherhood to avert shame from the idolised family and the priest, Bern-Davydd's daughter in law dresses up as a ghost and scares the girl so that she miscarries out of shock.

Evans makes it the point of his stories to show the power of nonconformist officials over their congregation. Chapel, religion and God are tools used to manipulate and reign a whole community by setting social rules and laws that are vaguely based on the Bible but ultimately controlled and interpreted by a small group

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211 cf. *People* 113

212 i.e. God

213 cf. “The Redeemer”, *People* 113-119

of powerful people. Fit for the genre of satire, positive aspects of a chapel-centred and vibrant community life are left out, whereas the negative ones are exaggerated until they create a sensation of revulsion in the reader.

The antagonism between Anglican church and Methodist chapel is hinted at in several passages: Simon and Beca, the protagonists of “The Way of the Earth” are excluded from the chapel, but Capel Sion, “jealous that not even his errant sheep shall lie in the parish graveyard and swell in appearance those who have worshipped the fripperies of the heathen Church, will embrace them in Death” (*People* 65). Similar sentiments are displayed in the discussion of Twm Tybach's prospective burial in “The Glory that was Sion's”: The chapel graveyard is full and one of the members of the *seiat* suggests appealing to the church to transfer the body their graveyard. The reaction is one of outrage: “Very mad is Abel Shones, males bach,' said Old Shemmi. 'When Twm's sins are forgotten, the Church will claim him as her own'” (*People* 83-4). The Anglican Church is seen as a rival that must not be permitted the satisfaction to attain “ownership” over a chapel member or their body, especially in a world where chapel-membership is the main factor that denotes identity. Despite all the differences between villagers and the number of intrigues and plots, chapel members stick together in protecting their congregation against the alien powers of the “heathen” church that was brought to them from England.

The portrait of the congregation in *Valley* is more wholesome and meanders between the merits and deficits of a community that seeks guidance in the chapel. The blissful, religious society, which stands united in faith and whose members join in song every Sunday, is marred by harsh judgement against a woman accused of adultery and the expulsion of a fair and devoted Minister, Mr. Gruffydd, who is wrongfully accused of courting Angharad Morgan after her marriage.

Chapel and the mines are the two places that village life centres around. Whereas the miners spend all week working in the mines, Sundays are reserved for Sunday school and visits to the chapel. How communal the chapel was is displayed in the opening chapter<sup>214</sup>: when the need for their own chapel is perceived by the community, every man helps in the building process and before a preacher is assigned to it laymen take turns in delivering sermons and praying. Difficulties in finding a preacher are hinted at and an English priest is employed as an interim solution, even though the villagers cannot fully follow service in the other tongue, but

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214 cf. *Valley* 16f.



this flaw seems negligible, as they can all join in song. Huw remarks that “[t]he preacher gave a fine sermon. He used some big English words I had never heard before because our meetings were taken by grown-ups in our language” (16). This instance shows both the problem of the lack of nonconformist priests and the fact that chapels were quintessentially Welsh. Things change for the better after the appointment of energetic Mr. Gruffydd. He is an active member of community, at everybody's service and a source of wisdom and strength.

He makes the chapel in *Valley* a place of worship, a place for meetings, and a source of inspiration in any facet of life. A visit to chapel is seen as a festive event, for which people dress in sombre black clothes and white linen, a picture often described by Dylan Thomas and other poets<sup>215</sup>. Women wear iconically Welsh top hats and stop to chat with friends and acquaintances after chapel. The community is held together by these weekly gatherings, and “[come] from Chapel every Sunday re-armed and re-armoured against the world, re-strengthened, and full of fight” (154).

Similarities with the judging and condemning *seiat* of *People* appear when after a Sunday service one of the deacons stands up to accuse a girl of adultery<sup>216</sup>. She is humiliated in front of the whole congregation, when the accusations are laid bare. Huw, who is still a little boy and has not grasped the hierarchy and construction of power yet, stands up to the accuser by quoting the Bible and calling the deacon a hypocrite who is in no position to decide who has fallen from the grace of God and who has not. This kind of behaviour is unacceptable and Huw is taken home, where he surprisingly finds his mother in full support of his actions.

Contrary to the community in *People*, some characters of *Valley* have started to question the full authority of the chapel and the *seiat*, which evolves more and more in the course of the book. Open criticism towards several preachers is first voiced by Ianto Morgan, who had unsuccessfully been trying to find employment in London, at a common dinner: “I am going to have credit for not squatting on my bottom like you, talking a lot of rubbish three times every Sunday, and mouthfuls in the week. Thank God I am not a limpet on society” (121). He questions the necessity of religion and the importance of the function of the village priest, which leads to a discussion between Ianto and Mr. Gruffydd. Another priest deigns it beneath

215 Thomas generally associates the colour black with church in allusion to the priests' and church visitors' apparel: “the black spit of the chapel fold” (cf. Thomas, Dylan. *Do not go gentle into that good night*.), “the mourners in their Sabbath black” (Thomas, Dylan. *Six*.). Other poets make similar allusions, e.g. Glyn Jones in *Merthyr*: “Be my '*Daeth yr awr*'; gather the black / Flocks for bleachers”. cf. also *Valley*: “crowded black clothes and white linen” (154).

216 cf. *Valley* 104f.

Gruffydd's dignity to discuss such matters with a coal miner, but the readiness of the preacher to address the matter and the openness to other views at this point marks a change in religious views: Mr. Gruffydd is a novelty figure, a reformer.

The result of the (undisclosed) discussion is that Ianto joins the chapel as a minister, which leads to disharmony in the family, as Davy accuses Mr. Gruffydd and the chapel of not helping the coalminers who go hungry. "For shame, David Morgan,' my mother said. 'Mr. Gruffydd has collected more for them than a dozen of you'" (126). The charitable character of chapels and their function as advocates of the poor<sup>217</sup> is alluded to in the scene. Davy and Mr. Gruffydd are both characters of a new generation.

Gwilym Morgan adheres to traditions, honours the chapel, does not stand up to the authorities in the *seiat* to defend the accused adulteress, or to the owners of the coal mines in order to fight for a raise of the wages. He believes, in nonconformist tradition, that whatever happens to man is the will of God. At the hilltop assembly he admonishes the congregation for not trusting in God, who will help them<sup>218</sup>. Later he explains to Huw that "[a]ll things come from God [...]. All things are given by God, and to God you must look for what you will have" (47).

His son, Davy, on the other hand, fights actively for more rights for the miners and openly questions church, its function and authority. He marks a change towards more conscious thinking and liberation from the old patterns of obedience and acceptance. Mr. Gruffydd presents the modern man of the word, who does not insist on his being looked up to with admiration and blind obedience, but who sees himself as a man of the people and for the people, whom he aids with all his might and finally even joins the Morgan boys in the fight for better conditions<sup>219</sup>.

Unlike the preachers in *People*, Mr. Gruffydd understands people's motivation of going to church very well, without abusing them, but in the end loses the fight to help them to a better understanding of the world and has to leave the village because of the heavy accusation of courting Huw's married sister. The dialogue that evolves between Huw and Mr. Gruffydd lays open the simple mechanics of village community:

"I thought when I was a young man that I would conquer the world with truth. I thought I would lead an army greater than Alexander ever

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217 Extensive information of the involvement of church and clergy in the well-being of the poor can be found in Lee 2006

218 cf. *Valley* 45 f.

219 cf. *Valley* 369

dreamed of, not to conquer nations, but to liberate mankind. With truth. [...] Only a few understood. The rest of them put on black and sat in the Chapel.'

'Is it wrong to do that, then, Mr. Gruffydd?' I asked him [...].

'Why do you go to Chapel, Huw?' he asked me [...].

'Because,' I said, and then I stopped. Why, indeed.

'Yes,' he said, and smiling. 'Because you want to? Because you like coming? Because your mother and father come? [...] Because you like the singing? To hear me preach? Or because you would fear a visitation of fire during the week if you stayed away? Are you brought by fear or by love? [...] Would you fear a bolt of fire on your head, or some other dire punishment if you stayed away from Chapel without permission?'

'I would a bit, sir, I think' I said.

'So would most of them,' Mr. Gruffydd said. [...T]hey are brought to dress in black and flock to the chapel through fear." (335f.)

A similar light is finally cast onto the village community of *Valley* that provides the tenor in *People*. Both authors, Evans straightforward and satirical, and Llewellyn by means of slowly opening his protagonist's eyes, criticise the old-fashioned traditions of nonconformity that, after flourishing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, became immobile and unchanging and served as breeding-ground for a superstitious and hypocritical community. Towards the end of *Valley*<sup>220</sup>, when Mr. Gruffydd has to leave the village, even Gwilym Morgan breaks with the chapel. He rents a stable and fashions it into a new chapel for the people who split from the old chapel, loyal to Mr. Gruffydd.

Similar to Huw and Mr. Gruffydd, Will in *Border Country* finds a mentor and good friend in the vicar Arthur Pugh. Contrary to the preacher in *Valley*, Pugh preaches in an Anglican church, where Will was also baptised. This difference already renders Will more anglicised than the other villagers. Will's school master, of the grammar school in a nearby town, suggests Pugh talk to Will about his possible future at university, as he sees the small village school unfit to prepare a pupil for the wider world. Pugh, due to his church connection is deemed the perfect person for the task. He is an outsider in Glynmawr, "a man isolated from them, sad and indifferent, with few of their interests" (BC 276). The church in which he preaches, he describes as an "outpost" and goes on to outline the differences between church and chapel<sup>221</sup>: the chapels being social organisations, the people's religion being based on looking out for each other and gathering to sing as opposed to the more rigid church, which offers religion on a higher, more inspired and theological level.

"[...]It really is a very rare thing to know God. Can we expect it to be

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220 cf. *Valley* 390 f.

221 cf. BC 277-281

otherwise? But it's an easy thing to go with your parents to chapel, and to grow up in that. Knowing the things you say when you are there learning, there and elsewhere, your duties as a person. With that as religion, they are of course religious. But to know God, to know what we mean when we say we know God: that on the whole is almost incredible." (BC 279)

As Will is a church goer, and church is regarded an outpost of the wider world, Pugh opens the gate to him through astrological observations and philosophical discussions about universities possibly being like chapels, only on a larger scale and invites Will to go and see for himself. When Will returns to Glynmawr after his father's second stroke, he meets his mentor again and finds about his retirement, "Giving up. [...] Having failed" (BC 419). The vicar was not able to bring his understanding of God and a real interest in God, as he understands it, to the villagers, who are loyal to the chapel.

Religion and chapel life are of less influence and importance than in *My People* and *Valley*, but still strongly present. The chapel is still depicted as a place for friendly gathering, which teaches people their roles in the village and ways of living, against which the church cannot compete. There is, however, a small number of villagers who defy the chapel and chapel preachers in their own way. Will, as a child, is seized by a sudden hatred against Chapel, flings a book that was given to him by a chapel representative into the river and declares "I'm church, Mam, not chapel. [...] I'm never going in the chapel again. [...] And I don't want their old book" (BC 146). The small child's act of rebellion is unexpected and also casts a negative light on the family before the other chapel-goers who witness the incident. This act can already be read as Will's declaring himself different and thinking independently of the values of the society he is part of.

A similar sentiment and noncompliance can be found in his father, when a Baptist preacher, who moved into the neighbourhood, finds it beneath himself to empty his lavatory bucket<sup>222</sup> and asks Harry Price to attend to the task. Harry offers to show the preacher the spot where the bucket is emptied, but when it becomes clear that the priest wants Harry to do the work for him, assuming that his dignified position would spare him the task, Harry simply walks away. Refusing obedience to a chapel preacher can be interpreted as an act of defiance against the old Welsh traditional hierarchy, where the preacher stands at the top – as he does in *My People*. Harry is further annoyed at the fact that this same preacher practises his sermons in Welsh,

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222 BC 218f.

even though they are to be delivered in English<sup>223</sup>. The preacher obviously tries to reestablish older and more traditional methods which have been outdated at the border to England and finds quiet opposition in Harry Price.

In *The Tower* the topic of church and religion are only touched upon in “Of Rocks and Stones”, where the protagonist is Mr. Morris, Reverend of the local church. Church and chapel are mentioned only briefly to outline the decline of religion in both cases: Morris passes an old chapel that was rebuilt into holiday apartments and “[l]ooking at it he wasn't sure whether he shouldn't feel a certain glimmer of satisfaction to see this evidence of the decline in Nonconformist fortunes; but considering the paltry level of attendance in his church, he thought it best not to” (*Tower* 124f.). Religion and the attendance of services on Sundays are not natural elements for the villagers anymore. Only old people attend church and ask the Reverend for help and consolation and mostly in petty affairs, “to stamp their prejudices and grievances and fears with the imprimatur of holy authority, to assure them that the errant BT repairman would face the very highest justice, to make it plain that God himself looked extremely poorly upon the recent defacement of the bus shelter” (*Tower* 126). Religion-related are mainly the swearwords in the book. *Duw* (=God) and *Esgob mawr* (=big bishop) can be found in most stories of *The Tower*, in order to express dismay or surprised anger. They appear to be the only remnants of the old omnipresence of religion in everyday life.

From *My People* to *The Tower* the importance of religion for the individual, the influence of chapel and church officials on the village community and the respect for both decreased tangibly. Whereas the village community in *My People* was governed by the Reverend and the chapel *seiat*, people in *Valley* already dared to question the preacher's authority, even though their lives still revolved around the chapel. In *Border Country* the church is still less popular than nonconformist chapels, but in both attendance has become less regular<sup>224</sup>. Harry Price refuses to empty the bucket for the new preacher, a situation that would doubtlessly have developed differently in *My People*. The emptiness of church and chapel in *The Tower* shows how life has developed away from religion: only old people still attend church and their matters have the flavour of gossip rather than earnest prayers.

Religion and life have become separated from each other during the past century

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223 Ibid.

224 Will already does not visit church regularly. cf. *BC* 274

and all four books bear witness to this development. If, as Bowie<sup>225</sup> claims, chapel attendance can be seen as clear signifier of a person's Welshness, then the characters in *My People*, *Valley* and *Border Country* are all absolutely Welsh. Matthew/Will, by this definition, is more British than Welsh, because he attends church, but even that only at irregular intervals. *The Tower*, however, cannot be subjected to this kind of interpretation, as the temporal gap to *Border Country* is vast and since the 1960s church and chapel attendance has been steadily decreasing to a widespread sentiment of indifference in the western world over the past decades. Thus, chapel membership as a marker of Welsh identity is strongly present in the first three books, where it helps the characters identify themselves as Welsh, but can no longer be taken into account in *The Tower*, where it has become a phenomenon of the past.

#### 4.6.2. SONG AND POETRY IN THE BOOKS

“[S]inging is the opium of the Welsh” (*BC* 259)

Wales is famed for being a musical nation, with its traditional eisteddfodau, internationally acclaimed miners' choirs, a large number of poets and a natural sense for poetry in the average citizen. Christian hymns, too, contribute to the truth of the claim of the citation above. Song and music serve to express people's feelings, to move an audience and to establish bonds within a community. The books analysed serve as witnesses for the importance of a musical and poetic tradition in the celtic nation.

The allusions to a predilection for music in *My People* are limited to chapel-related song and preaching. The talent of delivering perfect sermons equals a musical talent and, thus, Eben in “The Talent thou gavest” is lauded for his singing. “Eben bach the singer” (*People* 77), whose supplications were “beautiful and songlike” (76), moves the whole congregation, and his talent does not go unnoticed even outside of the village. His fame lasts, until his sermons acquire a more critical tone and start resembling moral dialogues with the audience. This falls into accord with Williams' report that hymn-singing and psalm singing have been “a vehicle of genuine musical expression to the people of Wales” (Williams, in Crossley-Holland 1948: 57) and were hugely popular, even outside church services.

Throughout the book, singing and praying are often related, e.g. prayers are often

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225 cf. Bowie 1993: 185

“sung”<sup>226</sup>. Abram Bowen, a character in “A Bundle of Life” is “chief singing man in Capel Sion” (129). He leads a singing class that is devoted to providing hymns “for the Sabbath-services” (131), but also aspires to show off their skills and compete at an eisteddfod<sup>227</sup>. Singing has a vital function in the community, but also obtains the status of art, when used in competitions. The brief mention of the eisteddfod is one of the few passages that indicate an element of fun, detached from the hard work and toil in life.

Whereas *My People* mentions singing only marginally, the pastime is given special space in *Valley*. Singing is presented as a standard ritual, keeping up the spirits of the miners and moving the souls of the villagers. On Saturdays, when the week's wages are paid, the miners march down the hill in a line, all singing and laughing<sup>228</sup>. This is in accord with Owen's claim that “if [people] come together for a particular purpose, they will tend to build up their social life over and above that required by the original purpose” (Owen 1959: 20). As an example he names farmers who come together on a shearing day and let work be accompanied by “bantering, joking discussion, story-telling, and, formerly, ballad-singing” (ibid.), just like the united group of miners do on their way home.

Singing used to be an inseparable part of the community's everyday life and added festivity and joy. One random evening<sup>229</sup>, Gwilym suggests the family get together and sing, so a harp and a piano are brought into the kitchen and the whole family starts making music. Every person appears to be musically gifted and either able to play an instrument or blessed with a strong voice. The sound of the voices draws neighbours and friends to the Morgans' house and soon the party is moved to the street and swells to incredible size:

“A fine night it was, with the moon pulling silver skirts behind her to brush the top of the mountain, and the wind humble to have our voices and saying only a little bit himself to show he had one still, and the Valley waiting quietly for us to fill it with song.

Fill it we did, for hours, sitting in the street, with all the windows open and people leaning out to sing, and Ivor conducting from the top of a chair in the middle of the Hill.” (*Valley* 278)

Exaggerated though this scene may be, it again demonstrates the strong bonds of the valley community: every soul is joined in song, worries are temporarily forgotten and

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226 cf. “Be this her Memorial”: *People* 110: “Then the seller of Bibles sang a prayer; and he departed.”

227 cf. *People*: 129

228 cf. *Valley*: 9

229 cf. *Valley*: 278 f.

the central focus is on the communal activity and joy. Huw illustrates the richness of the voices, the tenors, the “silversmiths of heaven”, baritones that “pour gold” and basso profundo with its “mighty back to carry all wherever melody shall take them” (279).

Song and music are ascribed an almost heavenly quality with God as the ultimate audience: “Sing then, Son of Man, and know that in your voice Almighty God may find His dearest pleasure” (279). A great sense of belonging is established: belonging to each other, to the valley, and, ultimately, belonging to God. The voice as a divine instrument and song as a means of finding God and establishing a link between God and the community is a key theme in *Valley* and also in *My People*. Song and religion are inseparably linked: After Bron's and Ivor's wedding a small eisteddfod is organised and the guests gather to sing “hymns and songs” (9). The link of singing and chapel is strong, also even in *Border Country*, where the set task at the eisteddfod is the recital of the 28<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book Iob<sup>230</sup>.

How deeply ingrained singing is in the individual and how natural it comes to the Welsh miner, is expressed by Huw's remark that “singing was in [his] father as sight is in the eye” (19). He considers a good voice a trademark feature of the miners: In a singing lesson at the National (i.e. English) school, attended mainly by pupils from educated families, he comments on the quality of their voices: “Ah', sang the boys and girls, with mouths like button-holes, no tone, no depth, and no heart” (*Valley*: 171). This might be a hint that pupils who are not from the coal mining milieu are not used to singing and their voices are less trained.

Quality of voice equals a God-given, prodigious talent. It is his voice that makes Eben a fine preacher, admired by all, in “The Talent thou gavest”, whose situation that is comparable to Owen's in *Valley*, who “had the voice of [his] mother, deep and from the chest, and to hear him read in chapel was a shock, so good it sounded, echoing up in the gallery and under the rafters” (*Valley* 37). His rich voice leads his father to consider a preacher's career for Owen. Again, the link between a strong voice and a clerical profession is established.

Owen's brother Ivor is the conductor of a large choir and invited to go and sing before the queen<sup>231</sup>, a high honour that equals an act of expressing identity: the choir of Welsh miners travels to the capital to give a presentation of the Welsh's biggest artistic talent. Llewellyn makes heavy use of this cliché as a marker of Welsh identity

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230 cf. *BC*: 259

231 cf. *Valley*: ch. 25



and exploits the magical powers and properties of voice and the effects on the participants in scrupulous detail.

Singing also plays a role in *Border Country*, albeit reduced to a single scene: The village organises an eisteddfod, where Will's friend Eira competes. Between Will and Alun Davies, a young man who left Glynmawr to pursue a football career in Cardiff, an argument develops about the essence of the eisteddfod. Alun asks Eira if she is planning to win a prize, when Will steps in and stresses the communal, entertaining function of the eisteddfod: "It isn't the winning, it's the taking part. [...] Playing is for music, not for prizes. The Eisteddfod's more than a tinpot competition" (BC 248). Will sees the eisteddfod not primarily as a competition, but rather as a tradition with the ultimate purpose to uphold an expression of folklore, than crowning a winner.

Williams produces a detailed description of the event. The opening act is the children's recital, song and play of instruments in a relaxed atmosphere. Nevertheless, the seriousness of the event is emphasized by hinting at the intense and repetitive training and practice sessions that precede the festival and add some stiffness to the air<sup>232</sup>. At the same time Will criticises the artificially added drama and "conscious emotional attack which would later be so fully and so devastatingly mounted" (249). He observes Eira's performance with her deliberate pauses and studied gestures with a certain degree of embarrassment and his general attitude towards the eisteddfod is a rather critical, disapproving one. Still, in the end, when the choirs start singing he

"felt himself caught up in that movement and pressure of the audience by which, in response, they became virtually part of the choir: the united voices quickening them to a common awareness which had little to do with their physical presence in the drab, watching rows. Sound was master."  
(249)

The captivating and uniting powers of music are at work in a manner that is comparable to the depictions in *Valley*. It rules over people and obtains almost a divine quality.

Williams does not omit the important fact that all the dignified members and organisers of the eisteddfod have normal, civil lives, outside of the one festive day. The watch repairer Illtud Morgan, for instance, is doing the honours as conductor. For this purpose he uses his bardic name: Illtud Morgan y Darren. These traditions

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<sup>232</sup> Trosset reports a certain degree of professionalism and training even in young children. cf. Trosset 1993: 46f.

ring of the restoration of the old bardic past<sup>233</sup>. When Illtud Morgan introduces the competing children individually, he produces full respective background stories and facts about their ancestors. Williams here hints at the pride the Welsh take in their genealogies, in remembrance of the deeds of heroic ancestors, traditionally celebrated by poets<sup>234</sup>. “Proverbs, patronyms, bardic lore, a stable language, are ‘the old friends’ by whose aid it is possible to maintain a genuinely Welsh connection with the genuine past of Wales” (Schwyzer 2004: 95). Schwyzer’s observation rings true for Welsh *eisteddfodau*, which are celebrated in old styles and traditions, including bardic names of the organisers and competitors, and the *gorsedd* of bards at the national *eisteddfod*. Pittock, likewise, speaks of the devotion of Welshmen to their pedigrees and claims that every Welshman “was ready to rattle off his pedigree to the ninth generation or even back to Brutus or Adam” (Pittock 1999: 30).

In *Border Country* the recital of the past and the “ceremony of identification and memory” (BC: 251) to the listeners equals “the meaning of life” (ibid.). To be identified and given a fixed place in the community, deeply rooted by a sturdy chain of ancestors that dates back several decades or even centuries is the ultimate reassurance of belonging, of life as it should be. A similar problem surfaces in the mind of Alun, the disrooted protagonist of “Ynys” in *Tower*, when he comments on Wales bardic past: “Once upon a time we were overweeningly proud of our genealogies. We paid poets to recite them. We listened attentively, pleased to have venerable pasts, and then that’s all we had” (*Tower* 145). He recites the story of his life, starting with his great-great-grandfather, supposedly a pirate, who married a red-haired local witch. In their memory and to make up for the lack of his fixed place in society, he plans to have at least his full name inscribed on his gravestone: “Alun ap Alun ap Alun ap Dafydd ap Tudur ap Tudur” (144). The structure of the name is a phenomenon of the past that was abolished by the English in Tudor times<sup>235</sup>: regular surnames were introduced instead of the long stringy genealogies. In the reawakened

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233 cf. Pittock 1999: 41

234 cf. Schwyzer 2004: 87

235 Wales is known for a lacking variety in surnames. The ancient method of adding “ap” (Welsh: son of) plus the name of the father to identify a person began to be abolished by the English on decree of English bishop Rowland Lee in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. The anglicisation of names started to spread in Wales, with large numbers choosing their fathers’ Christian names as their surnames (cf. Williams 1985: 118). This development led to a scarcity in surnames and similarity of names and surnames. Amongst the most common surnames are and have been Jones, Evans, Davies, Llewellyn, Gryffiths, Morgan and Williams. These names naturally occur in most Anglo-Welsh novels, and even the majority of the authors analysed in this thesis make no exception to the statistics. Manifold examples for the lack of surnames can be found in Welsh telephone books or graveyards. In *Border Country* a visitor to Glynmawr mocks a villager by addressing him as “Mr. Davies”, based on the nearby cemetery, where most gravestones are engraved with the name (cf. BC: 247). see also Jones, G.E. *Modern Wales: A concise History*. Cambridge: CUP, 1994: 4f. And Jones, *Dragon*: 58

eisteddfodau, several relics of the past derivation of names can be found.

Williams' account of the eisteddfod also presents the important fact that most Welsh poets are farmers and people of ordinary profession, just as Trosset<sup>236</sup> reported. He describes their transformation: "Many of the farmers, ordinarily slow inarticulate men, recited regularly. On the little platform, under the single oil lamp, they became intent and strange in the practised, formal eloquence, which was warmer, more pressing on the heart, than even the singing" (BC 257). Will struggles with the presentation. To him the villagers appear to be putting on a show, but when the choirs make an entrance again, he knows "that it [is] no use at all even trying to stay separate" from the mass of people and unaffected by the "extraordinary power" (BC 257) of song.

The expression of national feeling is also not omitted at the local eisteddfod: villagers join in song for the English anthem: "Everyone stood to sing the English national anthem, put at the beginning so that at the end, when they were really involved, they could sing the Welsh." (ibid.). The English anthem is sung, as per requirement, but the full power of the villagers' voices is retained until the end: "When all the choirs had sung, everyone stood and sang the [Welsh] anthem. It was now no longer simply hearing, but a direct effect on the body: on the skin, on the hair, on the hands" (BC 259). The description of the effects of song and the power of music is strongly reminiscent of *Valley*, with the exception of Will trying to stay separated and to detach himself from the events around him, whereas Huw observes in wonder and immediately becomes a part of the proceedings without any struggle.

*The Tower* presents the exception to the books in this category. Singing has no part in the book, which might be ascribed to the loose community: people do not gather to sing anymore. A picture of an eisteddfod in a newspaper<sup>237</sup> is the only brief mention of the event. It is an eisteddfod at a school, though, which is more of an institutionalised custom than an event that enwraps the whole community.

Singing and the eisteddfod are neglected, but storytelling and the bardic past of Wales and especially the mysteries of Anglesey are given more room than in the other books. Alun in "Ynys", for example, comments on Wales' pride in connection with bards and genealogies<sup>238</sup>. The statement is a reference to the Welsh culture being one firmly rooted in the past<sup>239</sup>.

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236 cf. Trosset 1993: 20f. and 35f.

237 cf. *Tower*: 93

238 cf. quote above (previous page)

239 cf. Schwyzer 2004: 94 "their identity as memorious people". Furthermore, Matthew Arnold claimed that

*The Tower* features memories of old traditions rather than traditions itself. The book is rich in stories, which the island abounds in. The story of the mill tower and the miller who killed himself, the story of a cottage near a cliff, which is said to have been inhabited by witches etc. stand in the Welsh tradition of linking places and events. “The hill was an entire world, with secret places and strange populations, with histories and mythologies all of its own. There were fairies and goblins [...]“ (99). The protagonist of “God's Breath” calls Anglesey “a country where there are bwgans<sup>240</sup> abounding” and adds celtic colour to the stories.

Stories and storytelling have always been a part of Wales and find a place in the eisteddfod as well as at a gwynnos (=wake)<sup>241</sup>. When Harry Price in *Border Country* dies, family and friends flock to the house to keep wake and tell stories about the deceased<sup>242</sup>. How important stories are for Wales can also be seen in several place names, like Holyhead – where a spring is said to have sprung from a monk's severed head, or Beddgelert<sup>243</sup>. Similar to these places, manifold stories are linked to the locations in *The Tower*.

#### **4.7. VILLAGE COMMUNITY AND THE PROTAGONIST: WHERE DO I BELONG?**

In the chronological succession of the books historical changes in economy and society are easily detectible, as the books reflect the times in which they were written and represent societies and communities and their reactions to and motivations at certain events. Progress, two world wars, the decrease of an important, sustaining industry and increasing mobility and a widening of individual horizons to a more global view, the Europe-wide decline of the role of religions and chapel in people's everyday lives and, most of all, an increasing living quality all shape communities and the individual.

From *My People* to *The Tower* a growing awareness of the individual's own position and, first and foremost, their own choice over their lives in congruence with rising opportunities can be observed. The villagers of Manteg in *My People* are not in a position to weigh their options: they are born into a life with a fixed role. If they are women, they have even fewer rights and opportunities than their male relatives. Life

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“Wales is a place where the past still lives, where every place has its tradition [...] and lives with it, and clings to it.” (qtd. In Pittock 1999: 64)

240 Bwgans = ghosts

241 cf. Owen 1959: 172 ff.

242 cf. *BC*: 418-428

243 “Grave of Gelert”, where the faithful dog Gelert was supposedly unrightfully slain and buried.

is not carefree and food can only be obtained by hard labour, which renders everybody dependent on vegetation and livestock. None of the farmers are wealthy and secure enough to risk giving up their farm in order to seek fortunes elsewhere. Personal freedom of choice is a fairly unknown concept, as the will of the individual is bent to the community and the *seiat*, otherwise the individual is scorned<sup>244</sup>.

*Valley* was written 24 years later and community structures are portrayed differently than in *People*: chapel is still strongly present, but has lost – and is losing – its influence somewhat. Villagers are presented as individuals who are entitled to choices, albeit within a narrow spectrum.

Loyalty and solidarity are two leitmotifs of the book, represented by the miners' union and, ultimately, by the Morgan family. Huw himself is faced with a forked path at several points in the book: the choice between the national school and better education or a Welsh school, with a lower level, is the first one he takes. He chooses education, despite the difficulties of his origins and the low compatibility with the group, based on background. At a later point in the book<sup>245</sup>, Huw is expelled from school for his behaviour. He rejects his father's suggestion to pursue a career at a different school, followed by university, and opts for becoming a coal miner. Instead of devoting his intelligence and a comprehensive education to escape from the dire conditions of his life, Huw decides to support his family and to stay by their sides. He refuses to see the position of a coal miner as low and despicable – his decision is a statement of loyalty and belonging.

Huw chooses his family and his roots over his promising opportunities. He likewise consciously rejects the sentiment that education necessitates anglicisation, which he is subjected to at school. His defiance cumulates in a scene where he finds a young girl humiliated by the schoolmaster for speaking Welsh, his patriotic mindset surfaces and he hears “trumpets sounding for battle, and drums beat, and the men were shouting, chariots raced and dragon banners streamed, and bowmen plucked strings while steel spoke in the ranks and lance heads glittered in the sun” (*Valley* 320) and proceeds to physically assault Mr. Jonas in defence of his nation and the little girl's national pride and honour.

Pride and national passion are strong characteristics in the protagonist's disposition and keep reappearing throughout the book: in the miner's strikes, at

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244 cf. Twm Tybach in *The Glory that was Sion's*, who lives his life without regard to commonly acknowledged decency and piety.

245 *Valley* 322-324

school, in contemplating the changes in the valley. The nostalgic tone is embittered by a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the change the valley is subjected to and when Huw leaves the valley he takes a conscious step into detachment.

*Border Country*, which was written 21 years later, portrays a changed society. Several parallels to *Valley* can be found at close inspection and Will resembles Huw in character and his path of life, with the exception that he takes opposite choices. Where Huw blends perfectly into society, Will is critical and sometimes deliberately distances himself: part of him rejects the eisteddfod, he is an advocate of English literature and accepts English as the language he speaks, he declines an offer of work from friend of family Morgan Rosser and chooses to follow his father's wishes to leave the village for better education instead, which results in permanent e-migration to England. By choice his ties to Glynmawr are weaker than Huw's are to his community.

The fact that Will has two names - the officially registered name, Matthew, and the nickname given to him by his mother, Will - reflects his split identity: the question of belonging is one he struggles with throughout the book, as he is forced to face his past again, which he had already left behind. Will tries to make sense of his hybridity and notices changes in himself when he revisits Wales: his voice starts to change and so does his appearance adjust to the setting<sup>246</sup>. The villagers are overjoyed to see Will back in Glynmawr and would like him to stay. Morgan formulates the common sentiments:

“I'm not dragging you back, Will. Only I've known you so long, I half know what you're thinking. You went away from us, you had to. And we accepted that, though in fact it meant losing you. It's just that it hurts, now, when you come back as a stranger.”

‘Not as a stranger.’

‘Yes, to yourself even [...].’ (BC 341)

The short visit to Glynmawr to take care of his father equals a process or reacquainting himself with his old life and slowly starting to settle again. Will had been alienated from his hometown and his nation and assimilated himself to the English folk and customs and tried to blend in.

Simultaneously, he defined himself as Welsh by claiming that he “came from a wild place; that [he] was very superstitious; had thick Celtic blood” (353). In order to distinguish himself from the English surrounding him, Will draws upon Welsh

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246 cf. BC 177: “He took off his coat, and brushed his hair at the mirror above the sink, suddenly conscious of his appearance in a different way. Here was another adjustment, yet another way of speaking.”

stereotypes, which in Wales he might have rejected, in order to define himself. Furthermore, Wales became the object of his studies to which his friend Eira remarks “He's studying Wales [...] and he goes to London to do it” (337).

Will/Matthew tries to construct and re-construct his identity in two different settings, but cannot declare himself fully affiliated with either. Reluctance to belong<sup>247</sup> and a growing sense of familiarity and warmth with the place and people of his childhood and adolescence antagonize each other.

What all four authors have in common is a certain element of disconnection from Wales: Caradoc Evans left Wales to make his living in London, where he also started a writing career, which was, again, partly based on his impressions of and sentiments towards Wales. That he drew a satirical, mischievous sketch of the village can be read as a lacking feeling of integration into his home community and a desire to be part of a different society, which he found in London.

Richard Llewellyn is of Welsh descent, but was born in London and knew Wales only from frequent visits. As to the degree to which Llewellyn considered himself Welsh rather than British or English certainty cannot be obtained, even though Trosset<sup>248</sup> observed the Welsh's inclination to claim their loyalties with the town they were born in rather than with the place where they actually lived. In how far this was true for Llewellyn cannot be said, but it is certainly possible that he considered himself quintessentially Welsh due to his descent. His claiming to be born in a Welsh town supports this idea. His novels' tint of nostalgia gives the impression of a desire to belong to a Welsh village community, a yearning to get into touch with his roots, with the knowledge that this is unachievable. The high density in Welsh stereotypes serves to underline his position as an outsider who is possibly more aware of these special traits than the community members themselves.

Raymond Williams' motivation for writing *Border Country* and the subsequent novels<sup>249</sup> is closely linked to his own life and experiences and his personal search for identity. The highly autobiographical character of *Border Country* leads to the assumption that feelings similar to Matthew's/Will's were harboured by Williams himself; that culture, society, language and literature are the key issues of his academic works and also his interest and involvement in the Welsh national party Plaid Cymru can be seen in the light of a search for identity.

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247 cf. the eisteddfod-scene, where Will feels embarrassed.

248 cf. Trosset 1993, 73f. People's origins and town of birth will always remain more emotionally important to them than a place they moved to.

249 *Second Generation* (1964) and *Fight for Manod* (1979)

Tristan Hughes was born in Canada, but moved to Wales at the age of two. He is an immigrant with one Welsh parent and, therefore, holds the position of an insider and an outsider at the same time. His stories are flavoured by the village he grew up in and its inhabitants. His protagonists are adrift in a postmodern haze: trying to find purpose in their lives in the age of mobility and information, but in a place that appears to be frozen to a standstill and where memories and ghosts of the past appear more alive than the villagers themselves. The individuals' feelings of affiliation are weak, especially as far as a community is concerned. Place appears to be the primarily important factor in terms of belonging, especially in "Ynys", which ends in the protagonist's realisation that "one patch of ground, one piece of sky, one hill, one tower, mean everything" (*Tower* 149). Ties of community are weak as the villagers seem to live next to each other rather than with one another. The absence of communal activities and deeper than superficial interest for the neighbours with progressing time<sup>250</sup> underlines this claim. Emptiness, resignation and the wish to be elsewhere, induced by the hope that a better life might be waiting, dominate some the villagers. A longing for the more perfect past and the desire to bring it back haunt the others.

Throughout the books identity and the feeling of belonging that are iron-cast and unquestioned in *My People* begin to blur and begin to become a growing issue of personal choice, which renders the protagonists, especially in *The Tower*, confused and detached.

## 5. Conclusion

Several Questions stood at the beginning of this thesis: What is Welshness and in which way is it presented in Anglo-Welsh village literature? How is national identity constructed and to which degree do these factors render a person Welsh? Where do the protagonists belong and to which extent is the authors' personal quest of identity reflected by them? This thesis set out to find answers to these questions by applying theoreticians' postulations to four selected Anglo-Welsh novels.

Identity is a compound of various factors that bind a community together and distinguish it from other communities. Elements like language, past wars and

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250 The memories of the past speak of a tighter, more caring community: e.g. Jack Cucu's father, the actual Cucu was affected by madness after he returned from the war, but several villagers took interest and tried to render life easier. (cf. *Tower*: 105ff.). Other stories set in the past differ from the one set in the present, by conveying more warmth and liveliness.



economical crises, power structures installed by a colonising nation, topography and natural resources of a region as well as established traditions and a common religion as a moral guide all structure and influence a society. If the wish for a distinct identity is perceived, measures promoting a certain variant of identity can be reinforced by influential people. This happened in Wales by the fostering and partial reintroduction of the Welsh language, or an exploitation of the Celtic past via tourism and arts and crafts. Wales started to define itself and to work out cultural differences in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and Welsh identity has continuously been redefined, mostly attempting to draw on the precolonial past, on the oldest traditions and customs that were not introduced by the colonisers. The gift of song and poetry is one of these traditions, the Welsh language is another.

This thesis has drawn attention to the construction of identity and a Welsh nation in Anglo-Welsh novels. The presence of a celtic language is omitted in none of the books, being the most powerful marker of identity. Bending the English language to reflect Welsh is a method both used to satirically mimick a folk and to establish a group identity with a fondness of this and other particularities. Welsh colouring and expressions mark the speech of certain characters and place them in an individual, specifically Welsh group. The regard for people of their own kind as compared to outsiders (especially Englishmen) strengthens the feeling of a group identity that is not easily accessible to non-members.

Next, the omnipresence of the past and a shared history has been highlighted, including the ambivalent exploitation of natural resources which brought toil to some and wealth to others. A shared past and shared sentiments and efforts (e.g. strikes) unite people and set them apart from those whose background is different. Furthermore, they serves as a basis on which identity is constructed, which in the case of Wales always entails struggling to fight the power of England and their attempts to intervene. The past is of importance especially in *Valley*, *Border Country* and *The Tower*: without references to the past and nostalgic regrets on looking back, the stories would lose some of their special flavour. This thesis exposed different ways of portraying and integrating the past into the stories and the meaning it has for identity.

In addition, attention has been paid to the influence and significance of topographical features. Especially the fact that mountains serve as vantage points for

the mind to reflect on oneself and one's place is a recurring topos which this thesis examined and explained. Other features such as the sea, islands and rivers have likewise been taken into account. Nature and geography might be less obvious factors for the shaping of identity, but in a rural country like Wales their influence cannot be disregarded; a fact that is reflected in all four novels and, therefore, fleshed out in this thesis.

Another marker of identity that is also linked to the past is also established by rich traditions, most of which are, in the case of Wales, linked to religion. This thesis explored how a certain religious tendency (i.e. nonconformity) can become the figurehead of a nation's identity. Nonconformist chapels were established to counterbalance the influence of the Anglican Church and to equip Wales with its own religion. How effective a marker of identity nonconformity was is explored in this thesis, showing also the waning of religion's influence on people's lives with the proceeding 20<sup>th</sup> century. Linked to religion is the importance of song for the Welsh, an importance that surpasses the boundaries of being a mere cliché, being featured in all four novels. Within this thesis the significance of song and poetry for expressing identity and eisteddfodau as celebrations thereof were explored, with the result that the position of song as an ingrained part of Welsh life is still strong, even though its decline in importance throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> is perceptible from the space it occupies in the individual novels.

Finally, even though it is difficult and merely speculative, the authors' biographies and backgrounds have not been left disregarded. All four authors appear to be searching for their own place. Caradoc Evans gladly left Wales and produced a satire about the community he grew up in, Richard Llewellyn was born in England, but seems to try to re-establish ties to the land of his parents, Raymond Williams pursued a career in England, but saw himself conflicted between his old and his new, assumed identity and half-Canadian, half-Welsh Tristan Hughes immigrated to Anglesey and holds a position of an insider and outsider simultaneously. That the authors' backgrounds are reflected by their writing becomes obvious when reading their books, as is their own quest of identity with regard to Wales, be it to detach themselves from or to find a place within the Celtic nation.

All authors analysed prove that they succeeded in rendering their books unmistakably Welsh, using a variety of identity markers, from stereotypes of the

proud, fighting Welsh (*Valley*) to effects of the coal mining industry and the influence of the chapels. All these factors are weaved into stories of village communities of different kinds. With a slackening of the ties of community with the progressing 20<sup>th</sup> century, the characters' longing for a place where they belong becomes gradually stronger, as they are granted the freedom of personal choice of how to live their lives. Whereas the novels are clearly Welsh, the characters featured in the novels are not always Welsh, or have yet to discover the degree and character of their individual Welshness; some leave Wales for brighter prospects elsewhere, but in the end the protagonists all pledge their loyalties to their home country, i.e. the country of their origin: Wales.

## 6. Bibliography

For the sake of legibility abbreviations are used throughout the thesis for the novels analysed, as well as for *The Dragon has two Tongues*, as there are several authors called Jones and Glyn Jones' book is one of the most important works on Anglo-Welsh literature and, therefore, quoted frequently. These abbreviations are given in square brackets after each book.

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## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die Identitätsfrage war und ist für die Einwohner von Wales, das von England 1536 annektiert wurde, von großer Bedeutung. Sie lehnen es vehement ab, mit den benachbarten Engländern in einen Topf geworfen zu werden und versuchen, ihre eigene, spezielle Identität nach außen zu tragen. Dieses zur Schau stellen von Identität findet auf verschiedenen Ebenen statt, unter anderem auch durch patriotisch gefärbte Literatur.

Die vorliegende Arbeit setzt sich besonders mit der Problematik anglo-walisischer Literatur auseinander, d.h. einer postkolonialen Literatur, die in der Sprache des Eroberers, also Englisch, verfasst wurde. Behandelt werden die schwierige, zwiespältige Rolle des anglo-walisischen Autors als Repräsentant für sein Heimatland und die Frage, warum und zu welchem Zweck walisische Autoren Englisch als die Sprache wählen, in der sie ihre Werke verfassen. Weiters wird erläutert, wie englisch schreibende Autoren versuchen, sich in Wales zu positionieren und wie sie selbst versuchen, eine Antwort auf die Frage nach ihrer Identität zu finden.

Um dem Konzept von Identität näher zu kommen, untersucht die Arbeit fünf Faktoren, die für die Definition und Bildung von Identität – sei es von Individuen oder von Gruppen – von Bedeutung sind: Sprache, Geschichte und Wirtschaft, Topographie, Kirche und Religion, sowie die Traditionen von Musik und Dichtung. Aufgezeigt wird der Einfluss dieser Faktoren auf Identität im Allgemeinen und im spezifisch walisischen Kontext.

Der zweite Teil der Arbeit befasst sich mit der Analyse von vier anglowalisischen Werken im Dorfmilieu. Da Wales eine vorwiegend ländliche Gegend ist und die Durchmischung in Dörfern zeitverzögert und langsamer vonstatten geht, eignet sich Dorfliteratur besonders gut, um die Ausdrucksformen typisch walisischer Identität zu analysieren. Die Bücher *My People* (C. Evans, 1915), *How Green Was My Valley* (R. Llewellyn, 1939), *Border Country* (R. Williams, 1960) und *The Tower* (T. Hughes, 2003) werden nach den eingangs erläuterten Kriterien beleuchtet und die Darstellung walisischer Identität in den einzelnen Werken wird erörtert. Veränderungen in der Darstellung mit fortschreitendem zwanzigsten Jahrhundert und sich verändernden sozialen Strukturen werden werksübergreifend festgehalten. Weiters wird besonderes Augenmerk auf den Hintergrund der einzelnen Autoren gelenkt und dessen Einfluss auf das jeweilige Werk.

## **LEBENS LAUF**

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Geboren am 25.09.1987

1993 - 1996 Besuch der Volksschule in Jedenspeigen

1996 - 2005 Besuch des Konrad Lorenz Realgymnasiums in Gänserndorf und  
Abschluss mit Matura.

ab Okt. 2005 Latein- und Chemie- Lehramtsstudium an der Universität Wien

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Jan. 2007 Umstieg vom Lehramtsfach Chemie auf Englisch

#### **Bezug zu Englisch**

2002 und 2004 mehrere kurze Sprachaufenthalte im englischsprachigen Ausland

Juni 2004 Absolvierung des „First Certificate in English“

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Jan.-Juni 2010 Auslandssemester in Bangor, Wales, mit Spezialisierung auf Anglo-  
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#### **Berufliches im Bezug zum Studium**

ab 2005 Nachhilfe im Fach Latein, später auch Englisch

2007-2009 freier Dienstvertrag als Besucherbetreuerin im Archäologischen Park  
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2008-2010 Freier Werkvertrag an der Universität Wien zur Übersetzung von  
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Jänner 2011 Übersetzung von Fachtexten für „Boden und Wasser – Büro für  
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