The place of Wales: Staging place in contemporary Welsh drama in English.

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Summary

This thesis discusses discursive constructions of place, which are seen to largely replace essentialist constructions of place, in contemporary Welsh drama in English (1979-2003). Place is seen as a particularly important structural element both of constructing reality in Wales and of replicating that reality in the theatre. The relatively new critical shift towards an interest in place in Western cultural criticism contributes, it is argued, to a new 'structure of feeling' (Raymond Williams) in the writing of new Welsh plays in the English language. The first chapter deals with the way in which the literary realistic paradigm, which had dominated Welsh playwriting in English from the beginning of the twentieth century, is slowly being superseded by other, often non-realistic, forms of representation. The second chapter deals with selected plays of Dic Edwards. It interrogates the innovative ways this playwright constructs place and uses language to represent his highly politicised reading of Welsh reality. The third chapter focuses on selected plays written on historical themes and place. The chapter interrogates motivations to write history drama and the different forms history plays have taken in recent Welsh drama in English. The fourth chapter deals with gendered readings of place. Selected plays and two performances are discussed on the basis of a reading of Luce Irigaray's theory of 'woman as place.' The final chapter approaches place from a theoretical angle that unites the postcolonial paradigm and the new concept of sustainability. It is argued that, despite the shortcomings of the central tenets of postcolonial theory when applied to Wales, the framework of postcolonial theory offers valuable new ways of reading place in Welsh drama in English. A bibliography is attached.

Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed ..... (candidate)

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Statement 1:

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except were otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by notes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for interlibrary loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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- "Devolution: A Project for a New Welsh National and Cultural Identity". *(Re)Mapping the Centres: Membership and State.* Ed. Trevor Harris. GRAAT Nr. 22. Publications de l'Université François-Rabelais, Tours, 2000. 205-211.
- "Growing Up Between Two Cultures? The Next Generation". *Reading Multiculturalism: Contemporary Postcolonial Literatures.* Eds. Ana Bringas López and Belén Martín Lucas. Vigo: Tórculo Edicións, Nov 2000
- "A Welsh National Theatre? Welsh Drama in English before the Second World War". *Crossing Borders: Intercultural Drama and Theatre at the Turn of the Millennium.* Eds. Bernhard Reitz and Alyce von Rothkirch. Wvt – Wissenschaftlicher Verlag: Trier, 2001. 141-150.

No part of this thesis has been previously published.

Dedication

Meiner Mutter gewidmet

Introduction

The Politics of Place

> "Drama, like every other art, has never yet settled any social or moral issue but – it is a glorious medium for asking awkward questions."
> (D.T. Davies, "Drama" 333)

Raymond Williams has coined the term 'structure of feeling' to describe the "continuity of experience from a particular work, through its particular form, to its recognition as a general form, and then the relation of this general form to a period" (*Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* 9). In the context of drama it is the interrelationship between form and content of a play on the one hand and the social environment to which it responds on the other hand that is described by this term. It is, notes Williams, both a conscious and an unconscious process; it is "as firm and definite as 'structure' suggests, yet it is based in the deepest and often least tangible elements of our experience" (10). Thus, Williams argues that theatre – like other art forms – cannot be understood when divorced from the social environment in which it is conceived and performed. Furthermore, the way that playwrights do or do not conform to the accepted conventions of their time might indicate shifts in perception and in thought more generally. An artist who writes or speaks against "what is felt to be the grain of the time" might well be initiating a new 'structure of feeling':

> Established formations will criticize or reject him [*sic*], but to an increasing number of people he will seem to be speaking for them, for their own deepest sense of life, just because he was speaking for himself. A new structure of feeling is then becoming articulate. (11)

In other words, when the conventions and structures of plays seem inadequate to playwrights, actors and audiences because they are no longer able to articulate a particular set of experiences or a pervasive spirit (or 'feeling') of a time, the way out of artistic stagnation and cultural insignificance for drama is a paradigm shift in which new forms and new contents create a newly challenging theatre. That new theatre might be difficult and even offensive to some, but for an ever increasing audience it will be meaningful and expressive of their way of seeing the world.

Not every highly individualistic writer or artist does, however, initiate a new structure of feeling – for Williams the term is useful because "it directs our attention . . . to a kind of analysis which is at once concerned with particular forms and the elements of general forms" (11). Only if changes in form and content are, indeed, indicative of a greater trend, does the term 'structure of feeling' apply,

although Williams does point out that there might be several such structures at work at any given time (13).

I would argue that the plays under discussion in this thesis, plays which were written between 1980 and 2002, show signs of such a shift in the 'structure of feeling'. These plays, written after the great theatrical stasis of the 1970s (see Dedwydd Jones 39-48), are evidence of a much greater paradigm shift in Welsh self-perception and self-representation in post-1979 Wales. In the political realm, this paradigm shift meant that the decisive 'No'-vote for devolution in 1979 could turn into a (not quite as decisive) 'Yes'-vote when the devolution referendum was repeated in 1997.[1] A further (if rather fleeting) sign of a different cultural self-perception was the 'Cool Cymru' phenomenon in show-business and pop music: for some brief few years Welsh bands like Catatonia, the Stereophonics and the Manic Street Preachers found themselves catapulted to the top of the charts not despite but, to a degree, because of their Welshness. Welsh expatriates like John Cale and Shirley Bassey rediscovered their long-lost pride in Wales and actors like Catherine Zeta Jones found that a Swansea background did not limit but enhance her portfolio. One must not overemphasise these signs of a new self-confidence in Welshness. What they do show, however, is that in anglophone Wales Welsh identity and issues like self-confidence and self-perception have now entered public (and popular as opposed to academic) discourse to a hitherto unprecedented degree. Furthermore, the parameters for this discussion seem to have changed. The analysis of the 'Yes'-vote for devolution shows that questions of nation and of place are becoming increasingly important to the anglophone part of the population, whereas only two generations ago the discourse of the nation tended to be identified with *Y Fro Gymraeg*,[2] the Welsh-speaking part of the population. Interest in place has virtually come to replace interest in class in anglophone working-class communities, especially in South Wales. In his research on "Welsh Identity in a Former Mining Valley," focused on the former mining villages Blaina and Nantyglo, Brian Roberts notes the shift in emphasis of a class-based identity to a place-based identity:

> The strength of a 'feeling of Welshness' was a surprise in the research on the valley, given the traditional portrait of the south Wales Valleys as having dominant mining and class identities. . . . Writers have noted for some time that

[1] Although the difference between 'Yes' and 'No' was a mere 6,721 votes, the swing towards the 'Yes'-vote was larger than in Scotland, where more people voted for devolution in both referenda (see Osmond 1999). Although the mood for more self-determination did not translate into an overwhelming majority, the swing towards devolution is a sign of a greater change in self-perception than that experienced in Scotland.

[2] For a discussion of the term *Y Fro Gymraeg* and the Three-Wales-model, see Balsom. For a reinterpretation of the model after the devolution referendum in 1997, see Osmond 10-16.

> the social outlook of the Valleys has been shifting, even prior to the strike [in1984/1985] and recent economic restructuring. Adamson argues that a 'new working class' is emerging which expresses a new Welsh identity separate from traditional political practices. . . . In our research, class was not used frequently as a reference point for identity. The 'full class conflict' view was usually expressed only by a number of retired miners, who, typically, had been active in the union. Much more often people spoke in terms of the valley and the Valleys in relation to the south Wales coastal belt and, especially, south-east England. (115-6)

The socio-economic change in the now de-industrialised centres in Wales of the last 20 years seems to have had a great influence on the self-perception of Roberts's respondents. Younger people no longer find traditional images of a class-based identity attractive and are less willing to analyse their world in terms of class. As a result, the referendum results show that in traditionally anglophone areas younger voters were much more likely to vote for devolution than older voters, who, apart from shared class-loyalties, still saw their main loyalty with the British state (Osmond 17). Furthermore, the language issue, which had bedevilled the 1979 referendum, ceased to be an issue of overwhelming importance, as questions of identity were now more likely to be connected to place rather than to language (see Alys Thomas, Osmond 7). Another point of reference for the slow shift in perceptions is the prodigious output of historical writing in the 1980s. While it is true that historical books about Wales have been written before and throughout the 20th century, there is a marked shift in the popularity and in the discourse of history in the 1980s. I discuss this shift in depth in chapter 3 – suffice to say here that a newly popular idiom in the work of Gwyn A. Williams and Dai Smith and the fact that these two historians became popular TV presenters of historical programmes on Wales helped create a new interest in Welsh history and Welshness in a nation with very little indigenous media provision (see Osmond 4, Mackay and Powell).

From this evidence I would draw the following conclusions: firstly, public and popular discourse in Wales betrays a shift from preoccupations of class or language to one of place from the early 1980s onwards. Secondly, a shift from essentialist notions of identity to more inclusive, discursive constructions of identity is noticeable. These issues are far from clear-cut. However, I would argue that the very level of public discourse on identity and place is a sign for the hidden, tectonic changes in social 'structures of feeling', to apply Williams's term in another context, that took place and are taking place in Wales today. This shift must be seen within the context of an ever increasing frustration with a home counties-dominated, Conservative

politics 'by remote control'[3] in London, which addressed Welsh issues only inadequately, and with the lack of a meaningful voice in political and cultural discourses. I would further argue that the plays written and produced from 1980 mirror these discussions and engage in similar debates. Furthermore, playwrights and theatre companies seem to find traditional theatrical conventions inadequate to express themselves and they start exploring new methods of writing and performing, new forms and conventions. This process is far from complete and the period under discussion is characterised by a proliferation of mixtures of old and new conventions. In this thesis, I attempt to sketch some developments in post-1980s Welsh drama in English but cannot hope to give an overview of all theatrical activity in the past 20 years. Thus, this study is in many senses a beginning of a process of analysing trends in contemporary text-based Welsh drama in English.

In order to situate contemporary Welsh drama in English within a wider context of Welsh drama, and in order to evaluate the shift in the 'structure of feeling', it is useful to look briefly at the beginning of drama and theatre in the English language in Wales. Although there was much dramatic activity before the 20th century (see Price, *The Professional Theatre*), the call for a National Theatre for Wales, which went hand in hand with the desire to establish an indigenous dramatic tradition, only came in the years immediately preceding the First World War. The writer and critic D.T. Davies writes that "[r]ound about 1913 . . . a totally different kind of Welsh play . . . made its appearance, different in theme, different in technique and very different in the authors' attitude towards life" – and one of these plays was, of course, Davies's own *Ble Ma Fa?* [*Where is he?*], which appeared in the same year (330). Moreover, as M. Wynn Thomas has argued, the new Welsh drama, especially the drama in English by authors like J.O. Francis, can be seen as initiating not only a new Welsh theatre but also a new literature, which later became known as Anglo-Welsh literature and then as Welsh writing in English (M. Wynn Thomas 1 *et passim*). I would argue that the timing of this small theatrical revolution, as well as the difference in 'theme', 'technique' and in 'the authors' attitude towards life,' set the scene for a Welsh drama in English that would remain relatively unchanged through to the 1970s. Only the theatre of the late 1970s and early 1980s would challenge the implicit assumptions about form, contents and audiences. These changes will analysed in the course of this thesis.

[3] Posters of the 'Yes'-campaign of the devolution referendum featured the slogan 'Time to take over the remote control' or 'Amser ni reoli'r newid'. See Andrews, 96-7.

According to Dedwydd Jones, author of the polemical *Black Book on the Welsh Theatre*, Welsh theatre begins with "the writers Caradoc Evans and Richard Hughes, the playwright J[.]O[.] Francis, and, in radio drama, the poet Dylan Thomas" (9). What he, of course, speaks about is a literary Welsh theatre, for, as Cecil Price has shown in *The Professional Theatre in Wales*, numerous Welsh theatre companies and theatres existed prior to the 20th century, but the plays performed were either not written by Welsh authors or did not have the same high literary standard enjoyed by other literary art forms. According to Price, some plays were set in specific localities or included references to local personalities or places but

> [t]hese were, really, perfunctory attempts to please an audience by 'localising' the entertainment in the old way. They did not express a spirit or a way of life peculiar to this country. It was unlikely that they would ever do so while most Welshmen [*sic*] were actively opposed to the playhouse as the resort of the Devil, the home of lies, the centre of English and French wickedness. (Price, "Towards" 12)

A truly Welsh drama, which fulfilled high expectations as to its literary quality, emerged at the beginning of the 20th century after the hostility of nonconformism to the theatre had waned.[4] I would not mention these particular four writers together without qualification, however. Jones seems to be concerned to rehabilitate Caradoc Evans by grouping him together with the less controversial Richard Hughes and J.O. Francis, thus granting him an importance for Welsh theatre that he, who was not part of the national drama movement and who only wrote one play (*Taffy* 1923), might not otherwise have had. Furthermore, I regard the inclusion of Dylan Thomas as a 'founding father' of Welsh drama as problematic since Dylan Thomas wrote his radio plays a full generation later and, one may argue, did not actually contribute to Welsh drama directly.[5] Thirdly, Jones omits to mention playwrights, who chose to write in

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[4] According to one observer, W.C. Elvet Thomas, who published his "Thoughts on Welsh Drama" in *Welsh Outlook* in 1930, however, the detrimental influence of nonconformity on the development of Welsh drama has been overstated: "It is generally the practice to-day to ascribe the backward condition of Welsh drama to the repressing influence of this Puritan prejudice. No one can deny that the impeccable propriety of Victorian Wales was hardly conducive to artistic expression, but as a deterrent to our histrionic propensities it has been over-estimated" (306). He names other inhibiting factors such as the lack of a capital city, the overemphasis on amateur theatre and the lack of a culture of professionalism in theatre and the lack of a funding structure (W.C. Elvet Thomas 305-307) – factors to be discussed below. See also Peter Thomas's assessment that "as usual, it is too simple to blame everything on Nonconformity" (91), and his attention to the marked difference of affirmative, celebratory folk-drama and the new, potentially divisive realist drama: "The role of folk-drama is celebratory, a confirmation, not a criticism, of communal identity. The Portmadoc Players were rattling the teeth of that identity" (92).

[5] Thomas's radio plays, especially *Under Milk Wood* (1953), were later adapted for the stage, however. The varied stage history of *Under Milk Wood* and the plays and performances inspired by it (e.g. Dic Edwards's *Over Milk Wood* (1999) and Volcano Theatre's performance *The Town That Went Mad* (1997) shows the enduring popularity of this 'play

Welsh like D.T. Davies, James Kitchener Davies and Saunders Lewis, despite their importance for Welsh theatre. Indeed, I agree with M. Wynn Thomas when he states that one of the most interesting aspects of the Welsh drama movement at the beginning of the 20th century was the 'internal dialogue' between Welsh-language and English-language plays and playwrights (see M. Wynn Thomas, "All Change" 1 *et passim*).[6] What is striking about the group of writers and performers, among them J.O. Francis, Richard Hughes and D.T. Davies, which the theatre enthusiast Lord Howard de Walden and the music hall comedian Ted Hopkins assembled in order to form the first Welsh national drama movement from 1911 onwards, was its cohesion. According to Olive Ely Hart, J.O. Francis and D.T. Davies, among others, were graduates from the University College of Wales at Aberystwyth (23-38, see also Price *The Professional Theatre* 39-40). This suggests that most of the playwrights were men of similar age, education and outlook, if not background. This, in turn, has repercussions for the evaluation of the drama movement as a whole. The movement did not happen as a spontaneous meeting of congenial minds – it was consciously created with what I would argue were decidedly political aims. As the title of Peter Thomas's article "In the Abbey Shadow" implies, the Portmadoc Players, the amateur theatre company which famously performed Richard Hughes's *The Man Born to be Hanged*, A.O. Roberts's only play *Cloudbreak* and Francis's *The Poacher* at the Lyric Theatre on 26 February 1924 for an audience which included Lloyd George (Peter Thomas 89), was created with the Irish Abbey Theatre in mind – the theatre Yeats had made the centre of his Irish cultural nationalism several decades earlier. The Welsh drama movement was to help support and, in part, create an atmosphere in which the discussion of Welsh affairs could take centre stage in the performing arts. Read in this light, D.T. Davies's comments show that the new realist theatre was meant to engender critical debate about Welsh issues:

> These plays were very definitely a criticism of the life they presented. The authors were enthusiastic, and whatever their shortcomings, they could not be charged with insincerity. And they dealt with Welsh life not merely by the fact that the scene of their action was laid in Wales, but in that they seized upon some phase of Welsh life which was the outcome of a traditional way of being, doing and thinking, or else they dealt with the clash between tradition and more recent circumstances and forces. (330)

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for voices' as well as its not unproblematic status as the best known Welsh play of the 20th century, despite its not having being written for the stage originally.

[6] As I am exclusively concerned with Welsh drama in English in this thesis, I will only occasionally refer to Welsh-language plays. I do find it important, however, to emphasise the non-confrontational nature of Welsh-language and English-language playwriting in the Welsh national drama movement of the early 20th century.

It is no surprise that plays like Francis's *Change*, which chronicles the change of Welsh life by focusing on two generations of a family, should have been conceived at a time of unprecedented social change which was also the time of the great intellectual debates about home rule in Wales, culminating in the campaign for the disestablishment of the Church of Wales in 1920, which petered out before home rule was achieved (Kenneth O. Morgan 40-41 *et passim*, M. Wynn Thomas, "All Change", Coyne 1-8). Indeed, an explicit connection between the home rule-discussion and the new drama can be made as none other than David Lloyd George spoke for the need of "a school of Welsh drama" at the Bangor National Eisteddfod in 1902 (Price, "Towards" 16, see also J. Ellis Williams, "The Drama in Wales" 35-6).

The new drama, far from providing light relief and entertainment as the earlier theatre had done (see Price *The Professional Theatre* 16), confronted audiences with sometimes uncomfortable issues in a socially conscious Ibsenite realist form,[7] which, at the time, was in itself radically modern, connected to issues of social criticism, social change and nationalism.[8] In the 1992 edition of *Modern British Drama: 1890-1990*, Christopher Innes remarks on the connection between realism[9] and politics thus:

> [Realist plays] deal directly with political issues, typically addressing questions of justice and calling for revolutionary change. Their aims differ in degree, but

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[7] As Raymond Williams has shown, one does Ibsen a disservice when one reads his plays solely in the context of the naturalist paradigm. According to Williams this reductive reading stems from "a mistake in emphasis" which began with the performance of *A Doll's House* in London in 1889 (*Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* 17) and which continued with Shaw's influential interpretation of Ibsen in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1890, see Innes *Modern British Drama: The Twentieth Century* 14-15). Readings which stressed the social criticism of plays like *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler* were influential in early 20th century British drama, however, and the kind of drama that was written in Wales at that time did stress the connection between realism and social critique, which also influenced Galsworthy in England.

[8] It is no coincidence that, e.g. Francis's or, to a lesser extent, Naunton Davies's drama, was based on the realist form of playwriting then associated with Ibsen, since Ibsen's drama was associated with the question of the nation in Norway. See Gilman, who comments that Ibsen had been engaged in the creation of an indigenous Norwegian theatre. Innes suggests that the realist form and the naturalist theoretical framework are intimately connected with nationalism in Europe and thus became, somewhat paradoxically, an international form with which to discuss nationalism (*Modern British Drama: The Twentieth Century* 4).

[9] Realism as pertaining to a style of drama is notoriously difficult to define. Innes attempts to define 'realism' and differentiate it from 'naturalism' in his introduction to the *Sourcebook of Naturalist Theatre*: he defines 'naturalism' as the theoretical framework, which underlies actual theatrical practice, which is called 'realist' (6). This definition also underlies the rewritten *Modern British Drama*, although here Innes does not make the distinction clear. Even though this distinction is different from the one made in other literary genres, I believe it works well in the context of drama because the political impetus behind realist drama is a similarly progressive one, even though different realist plays may come out of different backgrounds and outlooks. See also Raymond Williams's definitions of 'naturalism' in "Social Environment and Theatrical Environment".

> are comparable in range: from presenting ethical challenges to the audience to raising ideological consciousness, or from working to correct abuses within the system to inciting violent action against it. (5)

The broad definition of realism, which underlies Innes's remarks, means that not all realist theatre – i.e. the theatre which makes use of realist theatrical methods of expression – is necessarily alike. Innes's definition of realist theatre comprises the Shavian 'theatre of ideas' as well as the more directly political agit-prop theatre of the early David Edgar or the 'utopian realism' of Arnold Wesker (see Innes *Modern British Drama: The Twentieth Century*). In the context of the first Welsh drama in English, an intellectual, literary realism is the most prominent version of realism within a naturalist framework – a theatre similar to Galsworthy's in England (see Hart 25). One should not make the mistake, however, and consider the early Welsh drama conservative from the outset. Indeed, the very radicalism of the early Welsh drama in English was to entice a middle-class audience into the theatre in the first place. Here Welsh theatrical history diverges sharply from English and from Irish stage histories: the Welsh nonconformist establishment had tended to regard the professional theatre with horror throughout the 19th century and especially the middle classes refused to consider such entertainment as good and proper to their station. Price notes that following Queen Victoria's decision not to patronise theatres any longer after the death of Albert in 1861,

> [t]he gentry [in Wales] were willing to follow the royal lead and patronise or shun the theatre as propriety dictated. The middle classes were often hostile. Working men and women, when not moved by religious fervour, wanted a theatre that gave them melodrama and farce at low prices, and a sense of being at one with a jovial crowd. (*The Professional Theatre* 16-17)

Thus, the bourgeois middle classes did not go to the theatre until the advent of the new realistic theatre. And, considering that voices like Abel J. Jones's, who protested vociferously against what he considered the moral degeneracy of the professional theatre, were still heard in 1914 (although Jones's views did not remain uncontested), it is to be considered radical, indeed, to aim an intellectual, realist theatre at the Welsh middle classes.

The Welsh national drama movement of the early 20th century was a political, socially committed movement of university-educated intellectuals. It is therefore no surprise that it was the essentially middle-class, intellectual version of realism, the Ibsenite and Shavian drama, that appealed to them. Ibsen's and Shaw's plays were performed in Wales, for example in the New Theatre in Cardiff, which was opened in 1906. Price notes that Harvey Granville-Barker, another exponent of a literary realist drama, showed much interest in the new Welsh drama and played the male leads in

two of Shaw's plays in Cardiff in 1908. Granville-Barker thought that the theatre contributed significantly to "the moral and intellectual life of the day", thus emphasising a high-minded, educational role for the theatre (Price, *The Professional Theatre* 34). These were sentiments echoed by the writers of the Welsh national drama movement. Shaw himself wrote an enthusiastic article on the opportunities of Welsh drama which was published in the *South Wales Daily Post* on 13 June 1914 and in which he advocated a radically critical theatre in favour of a theatre that merely entertains.[10] Shaw was quite explicit that he regarded Welsh theatre as a national theatre – a Welsh theatre in which Welsh issues were debated (see Dedwydd Jones 19-20). And that is how the authors of the Welsh national drama movement saw themselves. In the foreword to his most explicitly political play *Cross-currents* (1921), Francis commented on his choice to portray the conflict between a socialist politics and nationalist politics in a remote corner of North Wales in the following terms: "Wales is much more completely a microcosm of the modern world [than England]. The aspirations born of an industrial epoch mingle with the memories of a small nation that fought long and hard to preserve its independence" (6). Although the author feels the need to account for the fact that he situates his drama in Wales, he does claim a central position for Welsh political struggles, especially the struggle between socialism and nationalism, within Great Britain.[11] National Welsh politics are elevated from the level of the parochial to a position of consequence, and Welsh issues become 'worthy' of a serious and literary drama.

Despite the social consciousness of much of the new realist drama and the authors' often frank discussion of socialism, the new drama did not come out of the working classes nor was it very sympathetic to working class radicalism. Again, quite possibly taking its cue from Ibsen's and Chekhov's drama, Welsh drama remains firmly rooted in a liberal concept of society: the drama does criticise stale traditions and unproductive ideologies but it does not advocate overthrowing the framework governing that society. If anything, it is cautious and even pessimistic in the face of the social changes of the early 20th century in Wales – especially those gripping South Wales industrial South Wales. D.T. Davies laments the rise of popular culture

[10] See the acknowledgement of Shaw's interest in the editorial of *Welsh Outlook* in the issue published in July 1914.

[11] Ned Thomas has named this attitude, which drove Francis to try and 'legitimise' specifically Welsh contents in the context of Welsh drama in English, somewhat disparagingly "contributism". Francis does, indeed, argue in terms of the 'contribution' that Welsh drama had to make towards British drama as a whole. However, I believe that Francis's words show a considerable confidence for a playwright who had – within a small circle of authors

in the form of "the cinema, with its neurotic, frivolous standards in taste and culture, jazz-band competitions, dog-racing, fox trot and tango by the hour on the wireless" etc. (331). Welsh drama, he feels, should come out of and work towards stability rather than change (331-333). Francis expresses understanding and scepticism in equal measure when discussing socialism in his plays, and his central character in *Cross-Currents*, when pressed from the nationalist and the socialist sides, remains undecided which cause to make his own. Naunton Davies's well-crafted but less socially engaged plays remain firmly on the side of a Liberal paternalistic tradition and cast working-class socialists in the role of thoughtless troublemakers (see *The Human Factor*, 1920?).[12] I would argue that the first Welsh drama in English is thus associated with a liberal (if not Liberal) intellectual realism[13] which remained a powerful influence even after the movement itself collapsed in the first years of the First World War. Despite de Walden's efforts to revive it after the war, the movement never again achieved the momentum of its early years although many plays continued to be written throughout the 1930s before the Second World War put another stop to drama production. The early Welsh drama in English of the 1910s and 20s and even the drama of the 1930s thus has little in common with the kind of socialist realism that informed the writing of novels, especially the 'industrial novel' of the 1930s, a model which became a hugely influential literary form in Welsh writing in English. Although novelists who identified themselves as working-class, like Jack Jones, contributed plays (e.g. the adaptation of his novel *Rhondda Roundabout*, 1934, which was performed on London's West End stage or *Land of My Fathers*, 1937, see Dai Smith, *Wales: A Question for History* 174), playwrights were generally not working-class themselves. Playwrights like E. Eynon Evans might have expressed considerable sympathy with the plight of the poor (*Cold Coal*, 1939) or they might have escaped a working-class life through education like Emlyn Williams (*The Corn is Green*, 1938), but one never loses the impression of the great distance between the world of the playwright and the world he (seldom she) describes, an impression reinforced by the plays' realism.

– invented a new Welsh drama without an indigenous drama tradition to speak of (Ned Thomas 307-310). See my discussion about the lack of a drama tradition in Wales below.

[12] A further indication of the political leanings of the authors of the Welsh national drama movement can be gleaned from the fact that most of them were published by The Educational Publishing Company, a publisher connected to the Liberal *Welsh Outlook* monthly magazine.

[13] Among the reasons Peter Thomas lists for the failure of the Portmadoc Players, who performed the plays written by the members of the national drama movement, is the problematic "relationship of an English-trained elitist talent to the folk" (95).

While it is possible to overstate the influence of the early drama on contemporary theatre, it seems important to note that Welsh drama in English remained disassociated from working-class industrial literature and engaged in a literary realism which, in the realm of prose fiction, compares better with the psychological and symbolist realism of Rhys Davies than with, for example, the socialist realism of Lewis Jones. Even highly individualistic writers have failed to create an alternative form to the well-made realism first employed by Francis. Gwyn Thomas, for example, did experiment with songs and other music hall elements in *Loud Organs* (1962) and *Sap* (1974), but these plays failed to replicate the popularity of his first play *The Keep* (1960), which conformed much more to traditional stage realism. Only in the early 1980s did writers seriously challenge the model of stage realism and, with it, assumptions about contents, conflict resolution and the staging of place. However, a considerable number of writers, among them Alan Osborne, Dic Edwards, Ian Rowlands and Ed Thomas, have something important in common with the very early playwrights, namely the desire to discuss political issues of national importance on the stage and to use the theatre as a tool that educates as much as it entertains (see Edwards).

This connection between some recent plays and the theatre of the early 20th century tends not to be made by the playwrights themselves, however. The drama that was written after 1940 looked back on a very short and abortive history of Welsh drama in English in which the professional theatre never really established itself despite an exponential growth of amateur theatre. Various critics from the 1930s onwards have therefore lamented the lack of a dramatic tradition in Wales. In 1930 W.C. Elvet Thomas, for example, writes that the lack of a tradition of professional drama in Wales leads to

> the chastening thought that almost the only hope of the drama of Wales lies in a general all-round development of the numerous small societies, and it follows naturally, that however absurd and puerile their efforts, they demand serious and immediate attention. The amateur movement is thus of far greater consequence in Wales than in England. It is not without significance even in England, but English drama, having a fine stage tradition, can afford to disregard the absurdities of an amateur company. It is otherwise in Wales. Welsh drama has no tradition save that acquired in recent years. (306)

In 1939, J. Ellis Williams laments in the first of a two-part article on the state of drama in Wales: "[W]hen at last Welsh Drama was born, it had (as Lord Howard de Walden says) no past to fall back upon, no parents to nourish it, and not even a cradle to receive it" (34). He goes on to argue that, despite having "at least five hundred drama societies, and well over four hundred published Welsh plays" (34), Welsh theatre is

virtually non-existent because of the lack of professional companies in Wales "who treat drama seriously" (36) rather than as a good means to raise funds for charity. In 1953, R.O.F. Wynne, commenting on the establishment of the amateur 'Little Theatres' around the country,[14] writes that the survival of Welsh theatre "depends on whether Wales can build up a tradition of the drama as Ireland has done within the last half-century" (7). Indeed, one can almost speak of a 'tradition' of criticism which bemoans a lack of tradition in Welsh drama which continues to this day. Anna-Marie Taylor writes in the introduction to the seminal study *Staging Wales* (1997):

> Oddly out of step with other artistic and literary forms in Wales, for example music and poetry, that draw inspiration from and often valorize connections with the past, Welsh theatrical practice and dramatic writing frequently seem to inhabit an eternal artistic present. Unlike other cultural forms that share a sense of continuity and have been seen to occupy an often privileged place in Wales's heritage, the drama of the contemporary period has frequently been cut adrift from earlier work. (1)

Simon Baker, in his article on "Welsh Drama in English in the 1960s and 1970s" agrees: "The tradition, such as it is, can be dispensed with fairly quickly" (9):

> The collective efforts of J.O. Francis (*Change*, 1913; *The Poacher*, 1914; *Cross Currents*, 1923), Caradoc Evans (*Taffy*, 1923) and Richard Hughes (*The Sisters' Tragedy*, 1922; *A Comedy of Good and Evil*, 1924) might have established a platform for further writing, but this never materialized. Of the five writers mentioned, only Francis and Hughes displayed any real dramatic talent, but even they tend to reproduce characteristics rather than interpret characters, and both quit the stage early. (9-10)

Looking at the almost non-existent theatre of the 1960s and 1970s (Baker only looks at Gwyn Thomas and Dannie Abse, neither of whom was a full-time playwright), Baker adds that "[i]t is the misfortune of Welsh drama in English that so little cross-pollination has been achieved with its Welsh-language counterpart" (10). Evidently, the spirit of co-operation, which had characterised the first Welsh drama, had not survived the internal division between Welsh-language and English-language writing in the second part of the 20th century.[15] It is difficult to account for this failure to create

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[14] The strategy to establish independent 'Little Theatres' for amateur groups failed in the long term because of insufficient funding. However, the Arts Council policy of establishing a network of theatre-cum-community centres in the 1970s and 80s might be said to replicate the model. The idea of a network of theatres (in opposition to or concomitant with the establishment of a national theatre) has continued to be influential (see David Adams's contribution to the 'National Theatre Debate' in *Stage Welsh*).

[15] Mike Pearson seems to the only critic and theatre practitioner who sees the relative lack of theatrical tradition in Wales in a positive light: "With no mainstream tradition defining what theatre ought to look like, with no national theatre prescribing an orthodoxy of theatrical convention, with no great wealth of playwriting, then theatre in Wales still has options. It has the chance to address different subject-matters, using different means, in spaces other than the silent and darkened halls of theatre auditoria". He, specifically, sees a chance that an experimental, non-text based theatre "need not be marginalized or 'on the fringe'" ("Special Worlds, Secret Maps" 85).

a theatrical culture in Wales which is able to not only respond to but shape public discourse. Anna-Marie Taylor's description of the theatre provision for Wales in "Surviving on the Edge" at least partly explain the lack of a mainstream theatrical culture. She describes how "Wales is unusual in Britain for not having an established system of repertory theatres" (35). One reason for this is undoubtedly the historical reluctance of the nonconformist intelligentsia to endorse the theatre in the 19th and in the early 20th century. Another reason is that state support of the theatre in the 20th century lacked a systematic approach. Thus existing repertory theatres are not automatically situated in locations with a great population density:

> This demographically eccentric arrangement, with Theatr Clwyd [in Mold, which had a population of 8,180 in 1990,] the only true 'rep' . . ., has left Swansea (1990 population 171,520) with a beautifully refurbished Grand Theatre but no permanent repertory company, and centres of population such as Wrexham and Bridgend with no theatrical provision. Cardiff must be the only European capital city without any established 'art' theatre. (Anna-Marie Taylor, "Surviving on the Edge" 36-37)

As a consequence of the lack of a repertory system most theatre companies in Wales are small-scale touring companies. A considerable number of these companies are dedicated to some form of community development, for example in Theatre in Education, and are very often rooted within particular communities. A tendency to work in either Welsh or English and funding problems mean, however, that these groups do not seem to communicate with each other and that their survival has been and is precariously dependent on funding decisions made by the Arts Council of Wales (Taylor "Surviving on the Edge" 38-41). Since the 1980s, several 'writer's companies' have emerged. These are companies which commission plays and often form close links with playwrights. In the period under discussion, *Made in Wales* was founded in 1981 to promote new writing in English, while *Cwmni Hwyl a Fflag* (North Wales) and *Dalier Sylw* (founded in 1988, Cardiff) looked after the concerns of Welsh-language drama. Again, however, cuts in funding meant that *Cymni Hwyl a Fflag* lost its funding while *Dalier Sylw* and *Made in Wales* 'merged' to form the new commissioning company *Sgript Cymru* in 2000 (Cardiff). Despite the exciting work commissioned and produced by *Sgript Cymru* it remains to be seen if one bilingual company based in South Wales can make up for the loss of the previous companies, all of whom have been successful in their own way (Taylor "Surviving on the Edge" 41-45). The story of theatre in Wales seems to be dogged by a lack of long-term vision and underfunding. This state of affairs might be responsible for the continued perception that Wales has got no theatrical tradition.

Despite the many plays that have been published (some of them in the *Anglo-Welsh Review* and similar publications) since the 1940s and despite the major figures of Welsh drama that have emerged over the last 6 decades (Emlyn Williams, Gwyn Thomas, Alun Richards; and Alan Osborne, Laurence Allan, Dic Edwards etc. more recently) – few though they might be when compared to English theatre – contemporary playwrights continue to see themselves as being without a dramatic tradition in which to ground themselves. Greg Cullen closes his article "The Graveyard of Ambition?" about his work with Theatr Powys and Mid Powys Youth Theatre with the frustrated remark that

> [w]e currently have a situation in Wales where its most experienced writers are not recognized within our own borders, where media criticism of the work is rare and largely of pathetic quality, where the main stages are foreign fields, where writers drink themselves to death or, worse, give up and write soaps for television, where Welsh-produced work cannot be seen beyond our borders with[out] funding from the Arts Council of Wales. Young writers do not have a career to follow. We are barely off square one. Yet there is a body of work which exists, is excellent, but has been seen only by small audiences in specific parts of Wales. (151-152)

It seems that many writers are prepared to endorse this rather pessimistic view of the current state of affairs in Welsh theatre. If anything, Welsh dramatists feel that they are working in isolation. Simon Baker quotes Carl Tighe's three 'effects', which he regards as being responsible for the lack of tradition in the theatre: "the margin effect (extremity of), audience effect (apathy of) and experience effect (lack of)" (Baker 11). Especially the last of these 'effects' makes for a conspicuous lack of 'models' on which contemporary playwrights can rely on. Ian Rowlands, in an interview given in 1999, speaks about his anger at this situation:

> I've . . . felt a great deal of anger and bitterness because, for ten years I've been working in an extremely stagnant environment. There has never been a firm ladder for me, a clear pathway as a dramatist, towards proficiency and improvement. . . . But now I can use that anger and bitterness in a positive sense. I see myself as a citizen in the birth of a nation. (75)

By emphasising what he regards as the "stagnant environment" of theatre in Wales in the 1990s, Rowlands seems to replicate J. Ellis Williams's 60-year-old argument almost verbatim ("The Drama in Wales" 33). I do not believe that Rowlands is unaware of earlier Welsh dramatists, although it is questionable whether they were part of his curriculum at school or at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, where he trained as an actor. It is more likely that he refers to the relative lack of a theatre, which continually challenges the relationship between form and meaning. This argument is connected to the lack of a theatrical culture which is centrally meaningful to Welsh culture and which has a working mainstream out of which the

more challenging theatre can grow. Tradition means much more than writers: it refers to a working theatrical infrastructure, a sound funding policy and an audience that can be counted upon. Simon Harris, a Welsh director, playwright and artistic director of *Thin Language* company, who is now Associate Director of the funding/commissioning company *Sgript Cymru*, has phrased it thus: "The thing is, I've no recourse to go to Wales whatsoever. That's terribly unfortunate because that's where my imaginative head is, but there's no requirement or necessity for me to do that" (77). He, too, blames the problem of the promotion of new writing on a lack of a dramatic tradition in Wales:

> The Arts Council is in a cleft stick. In order to justify its own existence, it's got to have a distinctive policy and that has to be the creation of an [*sic*] distinctive, indigenous theatre. *That means new work because there's no dramatic tradition in Wales.* Yet the venues, in order to deliver to their audience, want [a] product that is high profile, accessible and obvious – the Ayckbourns and Noel Cowards – whereas they feel the companies engaged in producing new Welsh drama have very little to offer Joe Public in the street in Narberth or wherever. (77, italics added)

For Harris, Welsh drama in English automatically means new writing because he does not see a dramatic tradition in Wales. While it is true that Wales probably has no Alan Ayckbourns or Noel Cowards, although Frank Vickery probably comes close to the former in terms of popularity in south Wales,[16] I do not think it is entirely fair to ignore the history of Welsh drama in English in such a blithe fashion. Again, I do not think that Harris does so because he is not aware of Welsh drama, however, but probably because his main critique is that there is no established mainstream theatre culture in Wales out of which a non-mainstream theatre culture can emerge. At the same time, one can perceive that he sees himself and other young writers in isolation from older generations of writers: when Harris speaks about one's ability to "invent who [one is] and tell stories about that", the interviewer interjects "[s]o it wasn't a question of going back to something, but adding on something new?" and Simon Harris replies "That's right" (77). Ed Thomas, too, believes that "[drama] hasn't got a rooted tradition in Wales; it's not central to the cultural life" ("Wanted" 57). He, however, means a separate, independent theatre tradition like the Irish theatre tradition, saying

> [w]hen dramatists started writing for the theatre in Wales what they did was *'efelychu yn slafaidd'*, that is they 'slavishly imitated' English and European styles and traditions. Welsh theatre is a theatre of adoption. The result is that

[16] His latest comedy, *Tonto Evans* was widely advertised in the South Wales Valleys at the time of writing. Playing in small theatres (like the Phoenix Theatre in Ton Pentre) across the Valleys, this play seems to be guaranteed to draw in audiences, as Vickery's talent lies mainly in good one-liners and in the creation of instantly recognisable characters.

> we haven't got a style that characterises our theatre, and I very much doubt whether such a style is possible in this post-modernist age. But theatre in Wales could be a powerful forum for language and ideas, as well as a place for spectacle and the physical. ("Wanted" 57)

With regard to the theatre of J.O. Francis and Naunton Davies, his criticism holds some truth, although the playwrights did attempt to create a specifically Welsh idiom for the stage.[17] A particularly successful example for bringing the well-made realist structure of the drawing-room comedy to a setting in Wales is Emlyn Williams's very funny *The Druid's Rest* (1944), which is set in a North Walian pub. The ambience of the play is clearly Welsh: the play is populated by *gwerin*-like characters, people to whom education and eisteddfodau are more important than class-difference, and a good part of the comedy is derived from the use of Welsh – especially as some of the characters refuse to speak English for political reasons, which causes mild exasperation in the other characters in this determinedly upbeat play. This theatre is only a 'theatre of adoption' as far as its form is concerned: its contents and use of language make it clearly Welsh in a way which goes beyond a merely touristic, 'local-colour'-interest. Furthermore, the European model, which shaped the early Welsh theatre, also shaped Irish theatre. Yeats's and Synge's innovations did not necessarily lie in form but in bringing Irish themes, images, stories and – most importantly – an Irish idiom to the stage. Thomas himself attempts to forge a new form, in which theatre becomes a "forum for language and ideas", constructing "his own Wales in order to convince [himself] that [he] and the culture and the city in which [he lives] have any value" (58) – an almost identical argument to the one Francis employed, but using very different means in order to achieve it. Thus, one cannot say that contemporary Welsh drama in English is without a tradition even though a centre for Welsh drama – be it in the capital of Wales or elsewhere – is still missing. But Arts Council funding strategies continue to be regarded as problematic, especially after the failure of the drama strategy in 1998. In a conscious difference to W.C. Elvet Thomas's arguments, however, amateur and community theatre are now viewed much more positively, with the Amateur Dramatics Society looking after its interests. Because of the perceived lack of a dramatic tradition, the playwrights, whose work will be discussed in detail in the next chapters, have made a break with the no-longer-productive conventions of stage realism that had dominated the Welsh stage for the better part of the 20th century. In seeking to create a new drama that

[17] This is especially true for Welsh-language drama, of course. However, since I focus on English drama in Wales, others are better placed to trace the developments in Welsh language drama. Another interesting project would be to compare Welsh-language drama and English-language drama.

would better express their view of Wales and the place Welsh society finds itself in, they have thus prepared the way for a new 'structure of feeling' to emerge.

The marked shift in form and content of contemporary Welsh drama in English from the early 1980s onwards is characterised by experimentation with form in drama and theatre. This went hand in hand with a new centrality of place, which became more than merely the 'backdrop' for a play. The relationship between location and the metaphorical relationship between characters and place – for example, the sense of confinement experienced by the Morton family in Gwyn Thomas's *The Keep* – now spills over into form. Moreover, the detail of the realist stage now makes way for more symbolic, evocative and, finally, anti-realist settings. I would argue that post-1980s drama responds to a new experience of place in the wider cultural discussion, which, in Wales, was accompanied by a process of political reclamation of place, which culminated in the 1997 yes-vote for devolution.

In the broader cultural context of an increasing awareness of globalisation and its effects on smaller scale localities since the late 1970s, place and community – both in academic contexts and in the popular imagination – have gained in importance. In his recent discussion of community, Zygmunt Bauman put forward a seeming paradox which is characteristic of many recent explorations of the concepts of space and place: "[a] bizarre adventure happened to space on the road to globalization: it lost its importance while gaining in significance" (Bauman 110). In other words, while the importance of national borders and national politics are being dismantled by an increasingly global economy, there is a new interest in the power of place to confer identity. Una Chaudhuri notes that in contemporary cultural theory "space is increasingly replacing time as the significant category of analysis" and she places her analysis of place in contemporary theatre in that field of cultural enquiry (Chaudhuri xi). Why should this be so? It seems to me that the new interest in place is, as indicated by Bauman, in the first instance born out of the primarily economic phenomenon we call globalisation, the economic and social reverberations within nation states and the deep unease it inspires. The geographer David Harvey has called the ever-shrinking (real and virtual) global distances 'time-space compression', as great distances can be traversed at such great speed that traditional notions of the relationship between space and time have become obsolete. Harvey also stresses the keen interest in the local that 'time-space compression' has awakened: "the elaboration of place-bound identities has become more rather than less important in a world of diminishing spatial barriers to exchange, movement and communication"

(Harvey 4). He goes on to explain the return to an increased interest in the question of community thus:

> it is in the face of a fierce bout of time-space compression, and of all the restructurings to which we have been exposed these last few years, that the security of place has been threatened and the map of the world rejigged as part of a desperate speculative gamble to keep the accumulation of capital on track. Such a loss of security promotes a search for alternatives, one of which lies in the creation of both imagined and tangible communities in place. (27)

Zygmunt Bauman also believes that the yearning for community (and, consequently, for the place which community is situated in) in the post-national age reflects the inability of globalisation to provide a feeling of security. The description of feelings of fear, which accompany social changes and the resulting changes in the pace of life, is in itself nothing new. It seems to me, however, that the political move towards deregulation and the globalisation of trade and the corresponding ideology of "an individualisation of social risks" (Beck 158, my translation) correlate with an increasing academic and popular interest in place and the local as a reaction (or even opposition) to these developments in ways not experienced before. The loss of security in community and place, and the feeling of powerlessness as political and economical decision-making move further and further away from the communities on which these decisions impact, which both Harvey and Bauman mention, are certainly factors that contribute to the new interrogation of community and place in new Welsh theatre in English.

The increased awareness of place has led to questioning traditional perceptions of place. Place ('bro'), has, of course, always been an integral part of a Welsh national identity. Indeed, the ideology of the *gwerin*[18] cannot be thought of without placing it firmly into its environment of rural Wales (see Gruffudd). Gwyn A. Williams points out that the word *gwerin* can "be used to describe both a place and the people who live in it" (237). Even when the rural people identified with the *gwerin* moved to the industrial centres, they kept alive the connection of place ('bro') and people – to some extent transferring their loyalties to the new workplace, but keeping the memory of an idealised country landscape etched in their memory. The other great ideology of the Welsh industrial centres, namely that of the Welsh working class (see Gwyn A. Williams 239ff), is just as identified with an industrial landscape, usually that of the South Wales coalfield. The interrelationship of place and identity has often been described as so close that economic depression and the suggestion that the inhabitants of the increasingly de-industrialised towns and villages would need to

[18] For a lucid discussion of this productive ideology see Prys Morgan, "The *Gwerin* of Wales – Myth and Reality."

leave the valleys in order to get out of poverty provoked a prolonged identity crisis, which was connected as much to the loss of an identity as to the powerlessness of people to decide their own fate.[19] Thus, one can conclude with Pyrs Gruffudd that "[t]he whole notion of landscape is one that has . . . been politicized in Wales" (151) as "Welshness was understood in profoundly geographical terms" (161).

This is not to claim that other nations do not politicise the relationship between person and place, especially of rural areas. Heidegger's famous image of the Black Forest farmhouse situated in an idealised German landscape is as politicised an image as the Welsh mountains were to become from the late 18th century onwards.[20] The close connection between community, place and language, which Dorian Llywelyn described in terms of spirituality in *Sacred Place, Chosen People*, acquired a special political meaning in the 19th century, however. According to Gruffudd, "the Welsh . . . constructed moralized discourses of landscape and rural life by echoing the aesthetics and the narratives of English antiquarians to create a subtly different geographical imagination" (151) in the wake of the Romantic interest in Wales – an interest largely sparked by travellers coming to Wales – and a sense of outrage following the 'treason of the Blue Books', the disparaging and highly unsympathetic Government report into Welsh education that was published in 1847 (see Bohata 10). Thus, the rural landscape became a symbol of the purity and moral incorruptibility of the Welsh people, and, in the face of increasing industrialisation in the second half of the 19th century, the rural life came to stand for the 'real' Welsh life, a discourse, for example, employed in Plaid Cymru's 'Back to the Land' campaign in the 1930s (see Gruffudd 162-166). More importantly, the connection between the rural landscape and the Welsh people became a repository of strength in the fight for cultural survival. It can be no coincidence that militant nationalists in the late 1970s and 1980s tended to concentrate their actions on the symbols of English cultural domination on the land – i.e. holiday homes of non-Welsh tourists and English-language road signs – which threatened to loosen the established community's hold on place materially, culturally and linguistically. The flooding of the village of Capel Celyn in the Tryweryn valley

[19] A literary treatment of the strong identification with the industrialised landscape can be found in Gwyn Thomas's novel *Sorrow for Thy Sons*. The unemployed miner Alf equates his life and prospects with that of the valley in which he lives: "Alf felt no curiosity about what lay beyond the hills. He'd have traded all the seas in the world for just a yard of the valley's green slopes. His life was there, in those slopes. Beneath them, he had worked since his fourteenth birthday, getting coal for other men to use, and other men to profit by" (14). This might be a somewhat romanticised view. However, the character's identification with the valley is so strong that he is physically unable to leave it even after several years of unemployment.

became a powerful symbol of English domination over Wales because it demonstrated the central government's power over Welsh land and resources (see chapter 5, see also Bohata's analysis of the policy of afforestation and its treatment in Welsh writing in English, 46-55, 56-74).[21] Thus, there can be no doubt as to the importance of the discourse of the Welsh landscape as part of an oppositional politics.[22]

The form of this discourse has, of course, changed over time. The early school of human geography, which emerged from the teaching of H.G. Fleure[23] at University College of Wales Aberystwyth in the beginning of the 20th century and which was continued by Iorwerth Peate (the founder of the Museum of Welsh Life in St. Fagans) and, in the 1960s, by E.G. Bowen, tended to emphasise the symbiotic connection between the land and its people. In Ioan Bowen Rees's words, the land now became "something far more than background to events or ideologies" (18) – it became part of the discourse of nationhood and identity more generally. E.G. Bowen, for example, wrote an article called "The Geography of Wales as a Background to its History", which first appeared in print in 1976 after it had been broadcast on the radio in 1964, in which he traces back the developments in Welsh history to the peculiar topography of Wales, which prevented the country from ever establishing a functioning capital. He thus constructs an essentialist connection between people and place. The marked return of place as a theoretical concept of discussion in the 1980s, informed as it was by postmodernist theory and social constructionism, also stressed

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[20] For a discussion of Heidegger and the role of place in his philosophy see Casey 130-132 *et passim*.

[21] See Rhys Davies's deceptively nonchalant comment on the flooding of the Tryweryn valley in *Ram with Red Horns*: "[T]he rain was so familiar that nobody complained or found it depressing . . . . That England kept wanting more of this bounty in gigantic reservoirs, drowning a whole sacred vale, was not suprising" (60). In a novel, in which a parochial nationalism is satirised none too gently, this comment acquires added meaning and puts this colonial action into perspective.

[22] The political use of the connection between land and people has tended to be more prominent in Welsh-language discourses of identity and the nation. This imbalance has many reasons, among them the ongoing dispute between the two main linguistic groups to claims for authenticity as 'Welsh' and the traditional preoccupation with an international class-struggle in English-language discourses of Welsh identity. According to Rees, however, a sense of place is becoming increasingly important to the English-speaking working-class as they are much less mobile than the middle-class property owner. He then quotes Raymond Williams, who argued that "'a new theory of socialism must now centrally involve place'" (21). The preoccupation with place in post-1980 Welsh drama in English testifies to this shift in the evaluation of place – be it concerned with working-class life or not.

[23] Evidence that Fleure himself took an interest in the debate on whether Wales 'needs' drama, a question which was brought up and denied by J. Abel Jones and which led to a wave of protest letters by defenders of the new drama movement, exists in the form of

the close connection of place and people. However, in the discussion of human geographers like David Harvey and Doreen Massey, place is theorised as constructed through language. That means that the emphasis has shifted from the 'natural' interdependence of place and people to a discursive relationship between them. Space only becomes place by being named and, thus, constructed by a community through language. It is not place that has qualities – it is human beings who attribute these qualities to their environment in their desire to connect with it:

> How then does space become place? By being named: as the flow of power and negotiations of social relations are rendered in the concrete form of architecture; and also, of course, by embodying the symbolic and imaginary investments of a population. Place is space to which meaning has been ascribed. (Carter, Donald and Squires xii)

These theorists formulate a connection between land, language and community which might be described as an extension of Sapir's notion of "language's interpenetration with culture" (Beeman) – a notion that has been expressed by the Welsh philosopher J.R. Jones.[24] Carter, Donald and Squires, however, describe this relationship as discursive. A primacy of language and the creative impulse is thus asserted and, even though the world is engaged in 'time-space compression', there is an increased awareness of localised identity. Rees comments that "[p]aradoxically, there is a sense in which an emphasis on the local, on one's own Wales, is the best evidence of a Welsh identity" (Rees 22). This comment also illustrates another shift in perception: the non-essentialist discourse of place is not and cannot be concerned with 'the right' construction of place: 'authenticity' is a largely meaningless category in this discourse and is increasingly being replaced by notions of diversity. Thus, the emphasis lies on 'one's own Wales' and political leverage is gained not from a single 'correct' image but from the very multitude of current imaginings of Wales. As usual, actual imaginings of place differ from theoretical discourse and so it is very likely that a person will hold essentialist views on 'authenticity' of Welshness along with ideas about diversity at the same time. In official discourse, however, – for example in the publications of political parties or politicians – a social constructionist view of identity has supplanted an essentialist discourse. For example, the 'Yes'-campaign for devolution in Wales (see Andrews *passim*) did, and most official publicity of Plaid Cymru/The Party of Wales does, emphasise diversity. In the arts, too, personal responses to the Wales have become prominent (see Iwan Bala's preoccupation with

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such a 'protest' letter to the editor which was published in *Welsh Outlook* in July 1914 (331).

the shape of Wales in various paintings). In particular, developments in the theatre are testimony to this discursive shift of emphasis in favour of diversity.

A further shift in emphasis can be made out in recent discussions of place. Devolution has restored a measure of political self-determination to Wales and a new focus on local accountability has been established. At the same time the term 'sustainability' has begun to gain currency in ecological and political debates – an answer, no doubt, to the ravages of an uncontrolled capitalist globalisation, but an answer, too, to the long-absent opportunity of Welsh people for political decision-making. Consequently, the term 'sustainability' has started to emerge in contexts other than the ecological: in, for instance, education and the arts sustainability is the new watchword. Rees writes in this context that

> in Wales, this implies not only a new emphasis on the land and the environment, on community and place, in an effort "to turn a past into an instrument with which a present can build a future" to invoke Gwyn A. Williams again, but on making our collective voice count directly in Europe and beyond. (Rees 25)

Especially in the context of situating Wales as a region within Europe in a vision that goes beyond Britain, sustainability may prove the keyword for development. I would argue that some of the new Welsh plays in English respond to the complex of ideas connected to the term 'sustainability' – i.e. self-determination, creative thinking about the future, unity in diversity (see chapter 5). Another political term to mention in this context is that of a new 'civil society' (or 'civic society'), which started to emerge in the context of devolution. Because there were so few independent Welsh institutions (among them the Church in Wales), actual government having been devolved to largely unaccountable quangos during the years of Conservative governments in London, and because a sizeable number of Welsh people depend on non-Welsh media, a civil society is still "a fragile plant" (Paterson and Wyn Jones 176). Through providing new discussions of place in Wales, the plays under discussion also take part in a new interpretation and evaluation of Welsh identities and, thus, in the discussions around a Welsh 'civil society'.

To look at the number of authoritative academic studies on Welsh drama in English, one feels inclined to join in the chorus of those who bemoan a 'lack of tradition'. While especially in recent years much has been published on theatre, astonishingly little work has been done in this exciting field in the 20th century as a

[24] See Dorian Llywelyn's discussion of Jones's notion of an interpenetration of language, community and place in *Sacred Place, Chosen People: Land and National Identity in Welsh Spirituality*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999.

whole. The first monograph on Welsh drama in English appears fairly early: Olive Ely Hart's PhD thesis *The Drama in Modern Wales: A Brief History of Welsh Playwriting from 1900 to the Present Day* was published in 1928. Doubtless the victim of a bout of 'contributionism' in Ned Thomas's sense, Hart is adamant about the place of Welsh drama in English in the greater canon of English Literature:

> This study is made . . . with the distinct conviction that the drama in Wales, in English, is not only a vital and necessary part of the literature and life of the Welsh, but that it can be, and should be appraised in its relationship to that greater body of English literature of which it seems destined to be a significant part. (10)

Despite the need to establish this new drama within an existing canon, Hart is concerned with describing, if not establishing, a (short) history of Welsh drama. Most playwrights she includes are forgotten today, their plays long out of print. Besides including studies of J.O. Francis, D.T. Davies, Richard Hughes, Caradoc Evans and Emlyn Williams, it is intriguing to note that Hart's study includes mention of at least one female dramatist, the now forgotten Shirland Quin. Furthermore, the study includes chapters on amateur theatre companies, on Welsh audiences and on Welsh acting.

Following Hart's initial study, one finds a great number of articles written about Welsh drama in English, about the situation of the theatre in Wales and about various theatre companies, in magazines like *Welsh Outlook*, *Anglo-Welsh Review*, *Dock Leaves* etc. Academic articles and books on theatre are rare, however, until Cecil Price writes various articles in the 1950s and in 1984 publishes *The Professional Theatre in Wales*, an ambitious book, which recounts the history of the theatre in Wales from the Restoration onwards. Following Price's work, a number of interesting articles were written, such as Carl Tighe's "Theatre (or Not) in Wales" in 1986 in which the author invokes the now familiar refrain that "apart from the last fifteen years, Wales has almost no theatre history to speak of" (242) before giving a useful survey of recent theatre from the 1970s to the mid 1980s. Furthermore, he analyses why Welsh theatre is so very much on the margins of British theatre (248ff). Roland Mathias devotes a short chapter on Welsh drama in English in his volume on *Anglo-Welsh Literature* in 1986.

Considering the relative silence on the subject in previous decades, there has been a veritable surge of writing on Welsh drama and Welsh drama in English since the 1990s. Anna-Marie Taylor edits the influential collection *Staging Wales* (1997). Hazel Walford Davies edits *State of Play: Four Playwrights of Wales* in 1998, the first collection of essays which offers in-depth studies of Dic Edwards, Greg Cullen, Ed

Thomas and Charles Way. Moreover, articles on Welsh drama now are included not only in books on Welsh culture and published by Welsh publishers, but some articles, like David Hughes's "The Welsh National Theatre: The Avant-Garde in the Diaspora" (1994/1996) and Margaret Llewellyn-Jones's "On the Margins: Women Dramatists in Wales" (1993), find their way into more general surveys of British theatre. David Adams publishes his contribution to the 'National Theatre for Wales'-debate *Stage Welsh* in 1996. The year 2003 will see the publication of Ruth Shade's *Communication Breakdowns: Theatre, Performance, Rock Music and Some Other Welsh Assemblies*, an assessment of community theatre, performance practices and the politics behind theatre strategies.

This brief sketch of the spectrum of work done on Welsh theatre in English – a list with no claim to completeness – is the context in which I situate my research. The bulk of the work has been done on text-based, professional theatre, and it is text-based, professional theatre which forms the body of my research. I recognise the enormous contribution theatre companies like *Brith Gof* (who tended to work in Welsh), *Moving Being* etc. have made to the extension of the spectrum of forms of expression in Welsh theatre. Non-text-based theatre often blurs the boundaries between acting and dance, and modern dance companies like *Diversions*, *Earthfall* or *India Dance Wales* have played an important part in extending the language of movement through dance.[25] My thesis will, however, concentrate on sketching out the change of 'structures of feeling' in text-based theatre by looking at representations of place in texts and how these play out in new performance strategies. The plays chosen are very clearly situated in Wales or comment on place in Wales. Since place in drama is never accidental, the imaginings of place I analyse are invariably political, since they mirror and contribute to political discussions about Wales, Welsh identity and place in Wales at the time of their first performance. Again I would like to stress that my thesis is not a survey of all – or even of most – contemporary Welsh writings for theatre in the past 20 years. Instead, I am attempting to undertake a detailed study in order to indicate broader trends in the development of contemporary Welsh drama in English. Thus, I focus on selected works by playwrights, whom I regard as having had a significant impact on the 'canon' – if it exists – of Welsh drama in English as a whole. Invariably, some important figures are missing from the list – I have mentioned Charles Way and Frank

[25] See the following articles on physical and experimental, non-text based theatre: Mike Pearson, "Special Worlds, Secret Maps", Charmian Savill, "Brith Gof", Anna-Marie Taylor, "Land of Dance", Geoff Moore, "The Space Between" and Paul Davies, "Physical Theatre and its Discontents".

Vickery here, but there are many more. Indeed, it must be acknowledged that the popular Welsh theatre in English (as opposed to the literary Welsh theatre in English) is not represented in this thesis. It is always difficult to make choices of focus, but I do believe that the focus and the plays chosen for this thesis can serve as an index for the interpretation of contemporary Welsh drama in English at large. I have also consciously excluded community and amateur drama from this thesis because I feel that an analysis that discusses community/amateur theatre in the same way as professional theatre does a disservice to both, since the methods and goals of community/amateur theatre must be different from those of professional theatre.[26] Furthermore, issues of community theatre practice have already been extensively researched by Ruth Shade in *Communication Breakdowns*. The chronology of chapters follows thematic considerations and does not attempt to sketch a line of development from realist theatre to non-realist, postcolonial theatre. As is usual in the development of competing 'structures of feeling', both these forms, and several others, are present at the same time – thus the most recent theatre makes use of an almost apolitical, personal realism which would seem to go back to the theatre of the early 1970s or earlier in spirit, were not its form and idiom contemporary. The following five chapters sketch out various responses to the question of place in Welsh drama and theatre in English. Thus they contribute to the ever growing body of work on place and on the representation of place in the arts in Wales.

[26] See the following articles on community theatre, amateur theatre and Theatre in Education: Gill Ogden, "A History of Theatre in Education in Wales", Dafydd Arthur Jones, "A Vision Undimmed", Ewart Alexander, "A Community Drama".

Chapter 1

'Living behind a Veil': Marginal Spaces and Social Exclusion

"Do you ever get that feeling
that you're living behind a veil thing.
Like a piece of fluff floating in the air?"
Vee in *In Sunshine and In Shadow*

> Wales is a land of many 'causes.' As a result, we Welsh people are tinged with the mood that makes art the handmaid of doctrine, and, at the mention of the word 'politics,' we are apt to become a little wild of eye. I shall be pardoned, therefore, if I take this opportunity of pointing out to those of my countrymen who read or perform this play that it is not meant to be propaganda for or against any political creed. It is an attempt to render, with the greater concentration and clarity which drama adds to the data of experience, a conflict of forces in our Welsh life. (Francis, "Foreword" 10)

In this brief extract from the foreword to J.O. Francis's most political play, *Cross-Currents*, lies the kernel of a whole poetics of the first Welsh drama in English, which was to influence the drama decisively until new forms of expression started to emerge from the early 1980s. Francis, one of the first protagonists on the stage of Welsh drama in English, describes a theatre which is fundamentally different from the 'folk-drama' written for (and frequently by) amateur players (Peter Thomas 92). The kind of drama Francis describes does not attempt to please an audience, nor is it a vehicle for local interests. Instead it wants to educate the audience by presenting an intellectual argument of national interest on stage. It also differs markedly from the socialist realism propounded by a good part of the writers whose fiction came to be described as 'industrial fiction'. Stephen Knight has pointed out that not all industrial fiction wears its political heart so openly on its sleeve (49, 53ff.) However, the industrial fiction of writers like Lewis Jones, which came out of a working-class, socialist tradition, was generally unequivocal in its use of fiction as a political tool. By contrast, Francis carefully avoids any 'doctrine' because he seeks to present the intellectual case for two conflicting political views. By argument and by some expression of feeling, the two political creeds of nationalism, which is identified with a sense of belonging and with the Welsh language, and socialism, which is identified by an international, working-class solidarity, meet in the play in the form of the retired Reverend Trefnant Jones and Gomer Davies, who comes from a family of poverty-stricken labourers. Like realist landscape painting, which does not represent reality but a manipulated, harmonious version of reality – the play is designed not to represent life faithfully, but to create a creditable representation of reality which has

been 'concentrated', i.e. meaningful situations are grouped together for maximum effect.

The early theatre is thus closely identified with a theatrical realism which shares many characteristics with a psychologically insightful realism without, however, being as introspective. Furthermore, when it appeared in the early years of the 20th century it was as radical in form and contents as the socialist realist fiction of industrial fiction was to be half a generation later. The realist form developed by playwrights like Ibsen, Chekhov, Strindberg had come to Britain in the late 1890s and was enthusiastically taken up by writers like Bernard Shaw, who developed his own brand of realism according to his highly individualistic interpretation of Ibsen, Harvey Granville-Barker and John Galsworthy. These playwrights developed a form which was in many ways still very similar to Eugène Scribe's 'well-made play', the dominant form of 19th-century theatre. They, too, wrote plays with "interlinked dramatic situations, with a denouement that leads into the next situation, until all strands of the plot are neatly resolved in the conclusion" (Innes, "Introduction" 7) but for the often morally vacuous plots they substituted plots in which characters were allowed to develop and in which, quite frequently, society was sharply criticised. The most crucial element of the realist theatre that emerged from the Naturalist theoretical framework is described by Innes thus:[1]

> There is general agreement that the crucial factors inspiring Naturalism were the perceptions that all life, human as well as animal, is in a process of continual evolution, and that human behaviour can be explained through scientific analysis. These new ideas led to the assumption that peoples' characters and personality are formed by a combination of heredity and their social environment, plus the value placed on the individual. This meant that ordinary citizens, including workers and the poor (who had traditionally played at best supporting or comic roles in literature, particularly drama) became the protagonists, and attention focussed on the family. (Innes, "Introduction" 6)

Settings, previously reserved for the palatial drawing rooms of the gentry, now showed house interiors of the middle and the lower classes. Scenery became more than a 'backdrop' to the action: the house interiors (and, occasionally, views of the outside environment) became expressions of characters' circumstances, and characters, in turn, were influenced by their surroundings – both metaphorically and literally. Raymond Williams describes the new role of 'environment' in naturalist drama thus:

> The novelty of the naturalist emphasis was its demonstration of the *production* of character or action by a powerful natural or social environment. This is radically distinct from exemplifications of 'permanent' human characteristics in

[1] For a definition of realism and naturalism see my introduction, footnote 9.

> an accurately reproduced natural or social 'setting'. ("The Case of English Naturalism" 204-5, italics in original)

It is doubtless his Marxist perspective which leads Williams to emphasise the 'production' of characters through their environment. Even if this 'production' can be overemphasised, it is still remarkable how the representation of place changed in these plays. Now a realistic setting housed characters, who also started to behave quite 'naturally' in ways the audience could understand and identify with. Not only the representation of place but also acting styles and audience reception changed. Gone were the days when actors employed an unnatural, declamatory style, which left no doubt that the theatrical entertainment was artificial. Now, supported by the refinement of the proscenium arch stage, a 'fourth-wall' theatre was developed, which created the illusion that the audience was 'eavesdropping' on the characters' private lives and which aided the audience's identification with the characters – an identification which the non-realist theatre had never demanded in quite the same way (Wandor 76). Francis saw the potential for identification in his characters in *Cross-Currents*. He describes his central character in the following terms:

> As for Gareth Parry, about whom the conflict is here made to turn, I have to say that, although he has attracted small attention, he is a man whose mental attitude is very common amongst us. I have frequently met it in the generation that went through the Welsh University some twenty years ago, and I have good reasons to believe that it is shared by many men of later time. ("Foreword" 10)

Francis speaks of the fact that the audience would find it easy enough to identify with his central character Gareth Parry because so many men were like him and, thus, emphasises the democratic character of the new drama, which showed characters 'like you and me'. Even though the influence of the English and the Irish theatre of Granville-Barker, Galsworthy, Shaw and Yeats probably contributed to the kind of realism the new Welsh drama in English was to adopt, it seems particularly apt that a Welsh theatre should embraced a form of expression which was, at least initially, radically democratic. Welsh society had, after all, portrayed itself as a basically class-less society for centuries.[2] It must be pointed out, however, that this democratisation of the stage meant mostly that the stage was opened up to middle-class concerns and that, even though working-class characters might be portrayed,

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[2] This does not mean that a de facto division into different classes did not exist. Gwyn A. Williams describes the Nonconformist 'revolution' in the 19th century in terms of class as the Methodist Hugh Owen "and the people who gathered around him set out virtually to create a middle class which was specifically Welsh" (197). It follows that after the waves of in-migration in the early 20th century, when a working-class established itself in the industrial centres, society was, in fact, divided into classes, even though the ideology of the 'classless society' (and later that of the 'working-class society') still persisted.

the vantage point of writers like Galsworthy was, nevertheless, middle-class. That is true for the first Welsh drama in English, too. Who, exactly, is meant to identify with Gareth Parry? Francis himself refers to ' the generation that went through the Welsh University', in other words, to himself and his circle. Thus, he does not address a working-class audience, even though he presents his working-class character Gomer Davies with considerable sympathy. Most playwrights of the time set their plays in the traditionally reduced circumstances of the *gwerin*, sometimes in their incarnation as the working-class in South Wales. Yet, there were playwrights who preferred a more traditional approach – traditional as far as the cast of characters in drama is concerned: Naunton Davies, for example, in whose plays an old-style Lib-Lab paternalism from the days of William Abraham 'Mabon' survived victoriously in the face of unruly socialist 'troublemakers', sets his play *The Human Factor* (1920?) in the home of the colliery manager John Williams and in that of the Rector and Lord of the Manor, the Reverend Gordon Morgan.

It can thus be argued that the early Welsh drama in English presents an environment on stage, in which middle-class and lower middle-class concerns are voiced through a cast of characters which includes the working classes and in which working-class characters are generally treated with sympathy. The emphasis is on conflict resolution rather than on protracted social strife – an attitude which situates authors like Francis squarely in the camp of middle-class liberals (if not Liberals). M. Wynn Thomas has convincingly argued that Gwilym, the character who most clearly represents the values of compromise and conciliation in Francis's *Change*, becomes the play's "sacrificial victim in a scene of regrettable social violence" (20). Thus, I do not agree with Martin Rhys's criticism of Thomas's reading. Comparing Galworthy's *Strife* and Francis's *Change*, he comments that the visible conflict resolution in the former play is not enacted in the same way in the latter (156-57). I would argue, instead, that the failure of reconciliation between the characters in the Price family and between the political and class camps more generally constitutes the sense of tragedy and of impending doom in the play. Thus, Francis clearly belonged to those who would have preferred a climate of conciliation but who feared that this time had irrevocably gone.

Few working-class writers wrote for the theatre, if one discounts writers who come from a working-class background but whose professions make them technically middle-class (e.g. Emlyn Williams or Gwyn Thomas).Those who did, like Jack Jones, failed to develop a distinctively working-class idiom or a form that transcended the middle-class, intellectual realism of the early writers. Thus, Alun

Owen, for example, who sets his play of working-class life in Liverpool, where a group of Irish, Welsh and English characters argue about their respective nations, employs an idiom in which (at least on the page) the characters sound much like each other and the play's form consists of a straightforward realist plot.

The early theatre involved a representation of a specific kind of politics: it situated political conflict within the family and not within a wider realm of 'community' or 'class'. It generally staged that conflict inside a house, making the house itself meaningful both as linguistic and spatial metaphor. Indeed, the prevailing metaphor of 'confinement' versus 'escape' was closely connected to the house interiors on stage and was characteristic of a theatre in which realistically cluttered stages stamped their mark on the characters and confined them within the trappings of the world they signify (Pfister 347-48). In Welsh writing in English the dynamics of 'confinement' versus 'escape' is often played out in favour of escape, although different writers evaluate 'escape' in different ways. In J.O. Francis's *Change* (1913), John Henry and Lewis both flee the family house after their favourite brother Gwilym is killed by accident. Their escape is marked by the breakdown of the family, which exemplifies the breakdown of tradition in the industrial communities of the South Wales coalfield, and by their mother's anguished cry "Dim un! Dim un!" ('Not one! Not one',133) which closes the play. Emlyn Williams, on the other hand, sees escape through education as a way out of poverty. In his autobiographical play *The Corn is Green* (1939), the gifted schoolboy Morgan Evans is saved from a life of drudgery in the mines by his inspirational teacher Miss Moffat. He subsequently earns a scholarship to go to Oxford – and, as for Emlyn Williams himself, the road to Oxford is the road to freedom. This assessment is far from unusual. Gwyn Thomas comments, for example, that "[t]he Grammar Schools were seen as escape shafts out of the tunnel of the proletariat, and high literacy was the North Star that was to guide us finally out of the night" (quoted by Rhys 171). Nevertheless, 'escape' remains an ambivalent concept for Gwyn Thomas. In his novel *Sorrow for thy Sons*, escape is the last chance open to Hugh, the youngest of three brothers, and he leaves the valley without relish. The same writer is able, however, to see an escape from the old ways as necessary for survival. In his play *The Keep* (1960), a family stagnates behind the walls of their self-created 'prison'. As Martin Rhys notes,

> [t]he very title of *The Keep* is reminiscent of the home as a castle. Within the medieval castle, the keep had two functions: it was the safest place in which to insulate oneself from attacks from outside, but it could also be used for keeping prisoners. Gwyn Thomas exploits this dual role to perfection as the Morton family not only retreat to their house from any perceived outside

> hostility but are also the captives inside that same house in a prison of their own making. (153)

It is not difficult to read the prison of the house as the image of what Raymond Williams calls 'Fortress Wales', the proud enclave which has miraculously survived all onslaughts but has also become a prison of the mind, resisting change out of a fear of what that change might bring (Williams, "Welsh Culture", 103).

A chronological leap is now inevitable, necessitated by the fact that the writing and publishing of new plays about Wales slowed down to a trickle in the 1970s. Theatrical forms of expression do not change greatly in the meantime, despite changes to the theatrical infrastructure in Wales and innovations in English drama. Simon Baker noted that

> The 1970s saw changes in the theatrical landscape, which were themselves part of a wider social and cultural transformation. A number of legislative reforms affecting abortion, homosexuality, divorce and equal pay came into being, and whilst many of these themes found voice in an increasingly disparate English theatre, the response in Wales was largely one of silence. (15)

Thus Welsh drama in English – with a few notable exceptions mostly in community theatre and Theatre in Education – did become almost meaningless as far as cultural production was concerned in the 1970s. Theatre in the 1980s was to bring a marked change in the production of drama and in the creation and the staging of place. Beginning with Dic Edwards and Alan Osborne, a new generation of playwrights started to write. With regard to place, suddenly characters populate the stage for whom leaving is no real option anymore. Deprived of that safety valve, the characters themselves and their relationship with their environment is increasingly portrayed in pathological terms. Unlike Con and his brothers in *The Keep* they are not kept 'at home' by hubris or inertia (Rhys 170). Instead, social conditions force them to stay literally within the confines of their house, for example in Alan Osborne's *In Sunshine and in Shadow* (1985). The metaphor of enforced mobility in Laurence Allan's *On The Road Again* (1994) expresses a similar idea: lacking control over their movements and, thus, over 'their' space, the characters are forced to move on from place to place. Where before, 'home' was staged as the unquestionable locus of belonging, even though the flip side of belonging had always meant confinement and a stifling of individuality, the issue of (a lack of) ownership of place and the marginal location of that place becomes important now. And, crucially, where before the characters' environment might have curtailed their agency – a well-known theme in naturalist theatre as well as Welsh writing in

English – the characters in 1980s plays are characterised by a total lack of agency. This means that they are metaphorically and literally pushed to the margins of society. Thus, politically conscious authors like Alan Osborne came to focus on social exclusion and, consequently, set their plays in the marginal places associated with social exclusion in order to give a voice to the powerless. The resulting shift of focus onto a new underclass and the change of idiom in the new drama soon led to a hybridisation of the realist genre.

Currently, 'social exclusion' is a political buzzword,[3] but it is worth reflecting on how social exclusion could become the focus of attention of the theatre in a nation that had traditionally prided itself on its collectivism (Gwyn A. Williams 229 and Griffiths 33). Griffiths describes how Welsh political distinctiveness in the 20th century, based as it was on traditions of Labour-socialism, trade unions and a distinctive employment structure, was progressively eroded in the 1980s and 90s. He describes how Thatcherism tried to concentrate power at the centre while, simultaneously, devolving "low politics", for example local government, to "compliant local elites" (71), unelected QUANGOs (quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations) and NGOs (non-governmental organisations). By this method of latter-day 'divide-and-rule', the majority of the Welsh people (who had not voted for the Conservative Party) was disenfranchised in national, international and local politics. Further, the specifically Welsh government bodies were usually unelected and their members – starting with the Secretary of State for Wales – were not required to have connections with Wales (Griffiths 55). Thirdly, although Thatcherite economic politics were those of a market-driven economy and laissez-faire, Griffiths finds a rather more interventionist politics in Wales – but, again, one controlled by the centre of power in London and not locally (20 *et passim*). And lastly, although some economic diversification was achieved by that intervention, inward investment seems to have produced primarily low-paid and low-skilled jobs, often part-time and often directed at women (who tended to earn less than men), which did not fundamentally change the structural economic problems of Wales (88 et passim). Griffiths concludes that

> it is difficult to define Welsh political culture precisely. Support for the Labour Party need not indicate support for collectivism; it may simply be the product of inertia (. . .) or result from a sense of Welsh identity with little specific ideological baggage attached to it (. . .). Elite opinion might be different in any case, and . . . [a]t least some people (in the self-appointed) Welsh elite are

[3] One of the many articles discussing social exclusion in Wales at the moment is Norma Baker's "Ten Years to Tackle Social Exclusion".

> prepared to accommodate themselves or enthusiastically endorse the ideological assumptions of Thatcherism. (161-162)

Thus he describes a Wales whose political reality does not tally with the self-image that had become traditional at least in the former industrial centres of South Wales: an image of a co-operative, socialist, Labour-supporting, one-class, homogeneous society. Indeed, in the period between the 1960s and the 1990s, a substantial section of the Welsh population seems to have disassociated itself completely from any kind of tradition. Commenting on *House of America*, Rhys notes the complete lack of tradition or cultural context for the characters in the following terms:

> [Compared to the characters in *The Keep*, which are still anchored in the security of a functional culture, w]e are [now] a long way from the chapels and the male voice choirs and the eisteddfodau and the fine voices. Welsh culture now consists of 'One hundred and eighty pints a night'. (174)

The disassociation from a homogenising cultural tradition, comforting and stifling in equal measure, goes hand in hand with an unprecedented new complexity of class and (un)employment structures: plays written in the 1980s comment on a situation in which economic depression goes hand in hand with the growth of selected sectors like agriculture, IT, services, retail, electronics and steel, "creating a situation where increasingly there is a contrasting standard of living between places geographically quite near to each other" (Rhys 172). The political spectrum fans out accordingly: a small section of the population – the local 'elite' – seems to have profited from Thatcherite politics. Further, a certain part of the population seems to have accepted the ideology of the 'individualisation of social risks' (Beck 158), which means a refusal to accept responsibility for the 'community' (or even the 'nation') as a whole and for looking after the weaker links in that community. Thus, in the 1980s, playwrights like Alan Osborne write plays in protest against the easy giving up of communal and, by implication, socialist ideals in Wales. The weaker links of the community, the chronically unemployed and deprived, become the focus of a political theatre, which argues against the erosion of Welsh distinctiveness, thought of in terms of Welsh class politics, through the social changes implied by the osmosis of Thatcherite values in Wales.[4]

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[4] Gareth Williams notes that political forces in recent days have been more sympathetic to the special needs of regenerating former Welsh industrial centres: "Both UK and Welsh Government have recently shown signs of taking seriously the need to treat regeneration and economic development as interdependent processes that cannot be left entirely to market forces. During the 1980s the expectation was created by the ideology of possessive individualism that people would make rational economic choices – and rational educational, health and cultural choices – and if they didn't, they had no-one to blame but themselves" (67-68). It is precisely the ideology of "possessive individualism" that Osborne and other authors write against.

It is interesting to note that this analysis of society, on which most Welsh drama in English of the 1980s and 90s is based, is one that is confined to South Wales and, thus, fails to be representative of Wales as a whole. Maybe these plays are set in the south because the contradictions between Welsh life in the past and the present, between small town and city, between rich and poor and between an industrial and a post-industrial society are most striking in South Wales. Most probably though, it is the English-language literary tradition out of which the English-language theatre emerged, as well as performance and publishing opportunities in the south, which accounts for the prevalence of South Wales as a setting. Moreover, in a time of little translation between Welsh and English, it is to be expected that the Welsh-speaking heartland does not feature very much as a setting for Welsh drama in English. More astonishing is maybe the total lack of rural or semi-rural settings in English-speaking areas of Pembrokeshire or the areas along the Welsh-English border. Again, this probably means that South Wales – the Valleys and the towns and cities along the coast – has a better theatrical infrastructure and that this area, in which much the greatest part of the population lives, also tends to be the home of the playwrights. The setting is certainly a reflection of the traditional self-image of Welshness epitomised by the "*Welsh working class*, normally English-speaking and normally referring only to south Wales (and to a 'south Wales' which ha[d] become an ideological rather than a strictly geographical definition . . . .)" (Gwyn A. Williams 239).

Welsh drama in English in the 1980s is thus a highly politicised drama which emerges from a literary, often intellectual, realist theatre. It looks at contemporary social issues by means of the metaphor of social exclusion and spatial marginalisation. Place is the setting of social struggle and, thus, is determined by and, in turn, determines the social setting of the characters. A case in point is *The Merthyr Trilogy*, a collection of plays by Alan Osborne. Although the collection was published in 1998, the plays were first written and produced in the 1980s. Two of the three plays will be considered here: *Bull, Rock, and Nut*, which won the 'Play for Wales' competition in 1981 and was premiered in Merthyr Tydfil in 1983, and *In Sunshine and In Shadow*, which was premiered in the Sherman Theatre in Cardiff at *Made in Wales's* first 'Write On!' festival in 1985.[5] Considering the dearth both of

[5] Gilly Adams recalls that she "had had difficulty in finding a play for the last night of the festival and the publicity brochure pragmatically promised 'Mystery Guest Time'. Somewhere along the line Alan came to the rescue with *In Sunshine and In Shadow* and it was this play which became both the culmination and the hit of that Write On!" (Adams 11).

playwriting and theatre criticism in the 1970s,[6] the highly political, passionate voice of Alan Osborne can be seen as heralding a new age of playwriting in Wales. Gilly Adams, the former artistic director of *Made in Wales* stage company, which produced all of Osborne's plays, describes the arrival of Osborne on the playwriting 'scene' thus:

> The Play for Wales competition, thanks to comparatively large prizes and the promise of (some kind of) performance for the winning play, occasioned a mass turning out of drawers and an influx of dusty plays. They divided roughly into the following categories: historical plays where the history substituted for any dramatic impulse; reworkings of *Under Milk Wood*; arson plays written by people who did not know the difference between Cymdeithas yr Iaith, Plaid Cymru and Adfer; 'returning home' plays in which a Son of Wales comes back to the old country, usually to attend a parental funeral, and confronts left-over family issues in the process (. . .); and mining plays in which the solidarity of the working class and its ability to sing hymns at the drop of a disaster were paramount. Among a lacklustre selection, Alan Osborne's fragment of *Bull, Rock and Nut* shone like a mysterious beacon. ("Speaking to the Nation"167-168)

Bull, Rock, and Nut deals with Rock and Bull, two ex-boxers who never made it in the world of sports, and Nut, their manager. The play is set in Luigi's Italian café in Merthyr Tydfil in which the characters regularly spend their mornings before going to the pub in the afternoon. It is the day of the boxing legend Johnny Owen's funeral and in the beginning of the play "*crowds are gathering outside the café window. Voices are heard. They wait for the hero's funeral cortege*" (18). The characters pointedly do not attend the funeral procession, whose progress can be seen indistinctly through the café window. Thus, the play's central message is underlined: the play accuses the community and, indeed, Wales, at large for being both morbid and defeatist in its adulation of dead heroes while its living population is marginalised and ignored.

Although the play is somewhat deficient in plotting and lacks action[7] it is very powerful and its impact has to be seen in the context of Welsh theatre of the early 1980s. Gilly Adams writes:

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[6] Alan Osborne describes the lack of Welsh drama in English before 1980s in terms of a "cultural desert" before he and Dic Edwards started writing and producing plays. Conversation with the author, 31.8.2002.

[7] For a long while literally nothing happens, two new characters are introduced relatively late in the play, but they do not change the direction of the play except to bring the emptiness of the characters' lives into sharper relief, and the play does not so much end as simply stop. See also the unfavourable review by Jon Holliday in the *South Wales Echo* on 5 October 1983 which refers to the play's "lack of development" as its main problem. Even the more favourable review by Brian Jarman in the *South Wales Argus* on 4 October 1983 criticises the play for turning "out to be rather stronger in its conception than its development – there are times when it lacks pace and loses direction".

> There is no doubt in my mind that *Bull, Rock and Nut* was a bench mark. It moved theatre in Wales forward because it dealt with contemporary issues in language which was transformative. . . . There was a kind of savage humour in the exchanges between the men, with a lot of word play and rhyming slang of a particular Valleys' idiom, allied with a wild physicality, which simply had not been put on stage before. (10-11)

Indeed, there is a stark difference between, for example, Gwyn Thomas's play *Loud Organs* (first performed 1962), which is set in a similar milieu, and *Bull, Rock, and Nut*. *Loud Organs* is a satirical play, punctured by songs in which the characters speak in what is meant to be an approximation of a Cardiff dialect, but which – on the page at least – seems to be very close to standard English.[8] Compared to Osborne's characters, they sound almost genteel. The play is, as a consequence, very nearly a comedy of manners and its borrowings from music hall only underline that point.[9] Rock, Bull and Nut, however, speak a recognisable dialect – not a general 'South Walian' dialect but "a particular Valleys' idiom", namely that of Merthyr Tydfil. It seems that for Gilly Adams the play came alive through its language. Remembering the first draft of the play, she comments: "Bursting with energy, incoherent, unfinished, it was nevertheless a theatre piece about real people written by someone who understood what made his characters tick and with a gift of language" (10). With this almost documentary approach to linguistic realism, Osborne follows a path mapped out by English playwrights of the left like Arnold Wesker or Edward Bond, or by the brutal documentary realism of writers like Franz Xaver Kroetz in Germany. Yet, whereas Wesker, Bond and Kroetz are more concerned with creating paradigmatic working class characters, whose language clearly serves as an indicator of their class, Osborne seeks to localise the action in a specific community and to highlight the social marginalisation of certain individuals within that community. In that sense, Wesker's use of dialect in *Roots* (1959) is both realistic and symbolic because his characters are emblems of their class (Innes, *Modern British Drama* 118). Osborne's use of dialect, however, serves to stress the specificity of a certain community in order to draw attention to their very specific

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[8] However, expectations change over time. Graham Jones, who reviewed another play by Gwyn Thomas, *The Breakers* in 1976, emphasises, amongst other things, the need for "heightened, stylised language" as "perhaps the most essentially theatrical element of a stage play" (216). Even though he regards *The Breakers* as a failure dramatically, it is Thomas's use of language, his wit and the "intellect of his characters", which redeem the play in Jones's view. By the early 1980s the mood had clearly changed and now the very rawness of Alan Osborne's dialogue appeals because it seems to be taken straight from life.

[9] Furthermore, the "wild physicality" Adams mentions certainly differentiates this new theatre from earlier plays, which had an air of drawing-room theatre in which verbal expression is

plight. The special importance of the play for the community was emphasised when Bethesda Arts Centre in Merthyr was chosen for its premiere.[10] By thus bringing the play to its intended audience, Alan Osborne escapes John McGrath's criticism, who had written three years prior to the production of *Bull, Rock, and Nut*:

> Its [post-John-Osborne theatre's] greatest claim to social significance is that it produced a new 'working-class' art, that it somehow stormed the Winter Palace of bourgeois culture and threw out the old regime and turned the place into a temple of workers' art. Of course it did nothing of the kind. What [John] Osborne and his clever director Tony Richardson had achieved was a method of translating some areas of non-middle-class life in Britain into a form of entertainment that could be sold to the middle classes. (262)

For McGrath, the only viable way for a truly working-class theatre is the one leading out of London's West End and into the communities themselves – which is exactly the path that Alan Osborne and *Made in Wales* were taking. In this way, a theatre which is relevant for the South Wales valleys communities can be identified with McGrath's ideas of a working-class theatre, showing that those communities are thought of as primarily working class in the beginning of the 1980s.

Such localisation is in itself nothing new, of course. Welsh theatre has traditionally been oriented towards community theatre and, for a long time, amateur theatre was regarded as more valuable than professional theatre precisely because it was able to articulate a certain community spirit – and because Welsh Nonconformity regarded professional theatre as harmful to an actor's integrity and moral health (Jones, "Does Wales Need the Drama?" and Price, *The Professional Theatre*). In the 1970s it became official Welsh Arts Council policy to fund theatre companies whose remit was to serve local communities. *Bull, Rock, and Nut* started out as a play for a specific community. *Made in Wales* clearly saw the play as meaningful for Wales as a whole: the play subsequently toured and was revived along with the two other plays in *The Merthyr Trilogy* in the Sherman Theatre in Cardiff in 1993. The play thus acquired a symbolic meaning beyond the specific community it was originally written for.

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more important than action. Thus, physical theatre companies like Brith Gof or Volcano, might be said to have taken their cue from this new awareness of the body.

[10] David Adams' review in the *Guardian* underlines the importance of the community aspect of the play: "Once again it's a notable achievement from Made in Wales, with a brave decision to tour the play in community centres as well as theatres. It's a play that says a lot and deserves to be heard by those for whom it will have meaning – and they aren't the habitues of the South Wales theatre scene" ("Bull, Rock and Not"). Osborne's political impetus becomes clear a year later, when he and the film-maker Karl Francis launched a campaign against what they called a "cultural apartheid". The lack of cultural production in the valleys had led, in their view, to stark cultural deprivation there. Francis is quoted as saying that "[b]lack actors working in Cardiff's dockland and people living in the Welsh

The set of the play originally showed the interior of the Italian café in realistic detail and it was serendipity that led to an astonishing discovery: the entire set was stolen one night and the company had to tour with a makeshift set comprising a few curtains, tables and chairs and borrowed cups and saucers (Gilly Adams 11). Osborne recalls that, against all expectations, the play was freed up by the lack of a concrete setting (conversation with the author, 31.8.2002). Thus, even though the play-text allows for a quasi-documentary staging in agit-prop style, Osborne favoured a more open interpretation of the play which stands in an interesting contrast to the documentary realism of its dialogue.

The play is largely constructed through spatial metaphors. Firstly, the absence of the three characters (and, of course, of Luigi, the café owner) from the funeral is significant. By locating the action away from the natural centre of attention, namely the spectacle of Johnny Owen's funeral procession, Osborne shifts the gaze to characters whom life has passed by. Although South Wales in particular prides itself on its collectivist spirit, the play voices a sharp criticism of a community which is all too ready to celebrate someone who is famous, but which is not willing to give the support necessary for a person to become famous in the first place. Rock and Bull are essentially inarticulate characters, but Nut is able to put their frustration into words:

> **Nut** . . . Effing funeral. . . . We're alive man, alive and kicking. Give us the flowers now, Luigi. . . .You didn't give that boy, *points to the window* that boy, you didn't give that boy time of day! Not when he was trying, not when he was alive and trying! No flowers then.
> **Luigi** Whad you mean, Nud?
> **Nut** You used to say, look at that skinny kid. He got no chance. Nice boy, wears a bobble hat, nice boy, nice boy. He don't stand a chance, he's only a valleys' boy. You give him nothing Luigi. Look at you now. Great hero this, fat hero that. When he's dead! Typical of this town. Looking for heroes when they die! . . . I was called snake eyes. What chance have I got eh? Give me nothing and I'll be nothing. This whole town, right? This whole valley, right? Shapes you up, gives you piss! This whole cowing country. Stink Wales! Death spell, man death spell! You killed us all, Luigi! Looking for heroes! (45-46)

For all its ferociousness, Nut's anger is, like Jimmy Porter's in John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, purely verbal, a verbosity that masks his impotence (Innes *Modern British Drama* 100). "Give us the flowers now" is the frustrated cry of someone whose potential has remained untapped. The defeatist spirit of the town becomes a symbol of the whole country – a reflection of the attitude of helpless frustration that

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mining villages are being actively discriminated against by bodies meant to support the arts, like the Welsh Arts Council." See Chrystal.

paralysed Wales after 1979.[11] To be "only a valleys' boy" was a sentence to life-long low self-confidence and underachievement. This defeatism may well have been the result of political decision-making within Wales, which favoured the urban centres of South Wales and left the impoverished post-industrial valleys behind. But it also criticise the fact that the valleys' communities were so dependent on approbation of the centre that they did not try to foster their own talent – a theme to be taken up later by Ed Thomas in *House of America*.

A further spatial metaphor of the play is the dichotomy of 'confinement' versus 'escape' which is so central to Welsh theatre: in order to succeed in life, the central character leaves and thus supersedes the confines of her/his community (Emlyn Williams's *The Corn is Green*, 1938). Instead of focusing on the character who managed to leave, the boxer Johnny Owen, Osborne shows characters who are forced to stay and his criticism is levelled against the mental confinement that makes success within the community impossible. Thus, Osborne describes the mindset of the subaltern subject, who can only exist on the margin and yearn for the recognition of the centre which is forever denied her/him.[12]

Bull, Rock, and Nut stays within the conventions of realist theatre. The Merthyr audience, who saw the play in 1985, would have seen characters seemingly plucked from their midst and put on stage. And since the spirit of despair and hopelessness was experienced in other parts of Wales, too, even an audience not from Merthyr, would have found plenty of issues and characteristics to identify with. However, the more symbolic set, which had to be used after the realistic set had been stolen, opened up the possibility of a less realistic approach.

In Sunshine and In Shadow takes up many of the points made in *Bull, Rock, and Nut*, but its political analysis is both more generalised and more strongly expressed in terms of social exclusion and spatial marginalisation. Whereas Rock, Bull and Nut did, to a certain degree, exclude themselves from their community, the characters in *In Sunshine and in Shadow* have no choice in the matter: they are both literally and mentally cut off from mainstream society while living an absurd parody of mainstream values, which are identified as Thatcherite values in the play.

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[11] For a (slightly biased) analysis of the political climate just after 1979, see Leighton Andrews, *Wales says Yes*, especially the second chapter "An Idea of Wales 1979-1987".

[12] Shurmer-Smith and Hannan, following Gramsci's original definition closely, describe the condition of the subaltern thus: "The condition of the subaltern is that of experiencing and living with the world as constructed by a dominant group, an experience which constructs one's identity as an 'Other' to the dominant – one becomes by virtue of what one *is not*" (125).

The action is set on the Gurnos Estate in Merthyr Tydfil, a profoundly depressed area in an already depressed town. In this setting, Osborne describes a new underclass (Gareth Williams 66), namely the chronically unemployed, deprived poor. That social isolation was and still is a very real problem is shown by Williams, who, writing about other former industrial centres, notes:

> The towns of Blaenau Gwent are bereft of the very industries that brought them into being and sustained them. Some have become stranded, marooned communities, with access to limited shops and public services. In addition they have lost much of the internal social solidarity that in the past acted to buffer people from the effects of hardship. (64)

Thus, an economic isolation and poverty can be connected to social isolation, which, in turn, erodes social supportive structures – themes found in *In Sunshine and In Shadow*. The play's central metaphor of isolation determines content, structure and performance.

The isolation of the main characters is symbolised structurally through the division into frame narrative and main narrative. In other words, the frame narrative, set in the present, effectively 'draws the curtains' on the action of the main narrative, in which the events leading up to the present are told – told but, it needs to be stressed, not resolved. In the frame narrative, a house on the estate is hastily gutted and renovated to make room for new tenants after a tragedy has occurred within. A woman (Vee) and a man (Day)[13] have died in mysterious circumstances and their daughter Babes has been placed with foster parents. Their son Gareth, called Ga-ga by his family, an artist with a hearing disability, is forced to work for the contractor who is renovating the house – in effect, he is asked to demolish his own past and that of his family. This act of demolition as well as the increased importance of the setting mark how Osborne's dramaturgy has moved on from a docu-drama style to a more symbolic realism. This play is more directly political in the tradition mapped out by John Osborne, Edward Bond and Arnold Wesker, in that his characters have become symbols of their class. The intended audience is not the community itself (the play was premiered at the Sherman Theatre in Cardiff in 1985) and thus the intended effect must have been empathy rather than identification. And, according to Gilly Adams, he succeeded in this aim: "[The play's] impact on the audience was gut-wrenching and there were tears amidst the laughter" (12).

[13] Put together, their names read 'V-Day'. This naming is clearly ironic, although their continuing survival from day to day (until their deaths, which might have been accidental but which can also be interpreted as suicide) probably constitutes a small victory.

The central narrative is set in Vee's bedroom. The stage directions describe a room which is, in Pfister's terms, highly 'concretised' and 'specified'.[14] The details of the room convey a faded and ultimately fake respectability. The carpet is faded and threadbare, the bed's headboard "*is white plastic reproduction of ornate filigree*" and the "*white bed has faded white accessories with added bows and frills – genteel, but almost with doll's house associations*" (*In Sunshine* 70). This doll's house is as stifling and confining as was Ibsen's in the play of the same name. The performance history of the play, however, suggests a move away from the realistic depiction of detail on stage (in the original production of 1985) to a more bare, symbolical stage (in subsequent productions, especially the production of the Sherman theatre in 1993). Osborne himself prefers the more open set design in which the power of the language is not subservient to the power of place. He remembers that

> [t]he first designs for the rehearsed reading of "In Sunshine" were simple and effective – the actors merely pointed skywards in all directions. It was a theatre of the imagination – 'as you would see in your dreams' (Chekhov). Then came the inhouse (Sherman) performance and a Welsh tour – designed as a Council house with a Gallery of paintings on the walls. It did not work. By moving it into socio-documentary space it lost its cosmic appeal . . . . When it toured again, I designed the space and forms. Three massive Renaissance canvases and a bed. It worked – it allowed the language to operate. (Osborne, personal notes)

I suspect part of the reason why Osborne prefers the more symbolic stage is that Vee is imagined as a latter-day, larger-than-life queen, whose throne is her bed and whose bizarre entourage constitutes her court (Osborne, personal notes). While the squalor and the deprivation in which she and the other characters live is probably not that unrealistic, the characters transcend a realistic depiction in the vein of *Bull, Rock, and Nut*. While the characters still are products of their environment, they are also symbols of that environment. Also, the act of identification with the characters

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[14] Diese Raumkonzeption kann . . . der Nachahmung der Kontingenz der Wirklichkeit dienen. Diese . . . Funktion dominiert im naturalistischen Drama, wobei darüber hinaus der stofflichen Dingfülle, mit der die Figuren umstellt werden, die weitere Funktion zukommt, die Bedingtheit der Figuren durch die äußeren Umstände zu verdeutlichen. Die Vergegenständlichung der äußeren Umstände, denen eine Figur unterliegt, deckt deren Anhängigkeit von Bedingungen des Milieus, der Atmosphäre, der psychisch-physischen Disposition auf: sie agiert nicht mehr aus der Autonomie eines transzendentalen Bewußtseins heraus, sondern unter dem Druck der äußeren Umstände." (Pfister 348) [This spatial conception can serve to reproduce of the contingency of reality. This function dominates in naturalist drama, while, furthermore, the abundance of material things that surround the characters has the function of illustrating the determining influence of external circumstances on them. The concretisation of external influences, to which a character is subject, reveals their dependence on their milieu, the atmosphere, the psychic-bodily disposition: they do not act through the autonomy of a transcendental conscience any more but because of the pressure of external influences. My translation]

which is so characteristic of the realist theatre disappears in favour of a more general empathy with the main characters and a more intellectual political argument, that takes the characters as their main symbols.

I would argue that the way in which the stage directions, which clearly follow the realist paradigm, and the more symbolic performances on stage, which the author preferred, seem to contradict each other are characteristic of the slow and complex shifts which constitute a change in the 'structure of feeling'. Even as the confining detail of the realistic depiction is abandoned in favour of a more symbolical stage, the spatial metaphors of the realist theatre, i.e. 'centre' versus 'margin', 'confinement' versus 'escape', continue to be significant for the play. The play's central concern is the pathological relationship Vee, Day and the other characters on the council estate have with the place they occupy. The house and the estate the characters live on is constructed as having invisible but almost insurmountable boundaries around them: Day only leaves the estate to claim his benefit money, which he then spends on drink and useless gifts (111). Vee forbids Babes to go to school and the girl only leaves the house to run errands. It is doubtful whether Gareth leaves the house often, and it is equally doubtful whether Vee ever leaves her bed for long (Gilly Adams 12). Along with an unseen neighbour, it is their friends Cissie, a gay man, and Dai Death, a confused old man, who constitute their immediate community, people who are too isolated themselves to be truly supportive. Thus, not being able to leave their circumscribed world for long – a world, which, furthermore, does not really belong to them as the houses on the estate are rented from the council – the characters seek their (mental) escape elsewhere: Vee is dependent on prescription drugs, Day drinks, Cissie cultivates a camper-than-thou personality, which he, however, has to keep hidden from unsympathetic neighbours and Dai Death has turned his inner eye to the past while keeping his real eyes firmly shut. Their refusal to deal with a social environment for which they do not exist and with a place over which they have no power is thus expressed in terms of thwarted 'escape': with nowhere to turn, the characters escape into themselves. This image is, of course, symbolical of the feeling of hopelessness and powerlessness experienced by numerous communities in the Wales of Thatcherist Britain. On a symbolic level, identification with the characters is clearly possible, while the very grotesque nature of their lives precludes a direct identification.

The characters of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Osborne's *In Sunshine and in Shadow* are, thus, similarly confined even though they inhabit radically different

worlds. However, there is a crucial difference between the two plays. *A Doll's House* fulfils the criteria of the realist theatre because "the world of the stage is continuous with the world of the audience" (Wallis and Shepherd 106). In other words, Ibsen's 'fourth wall'-theatre suggested a world that was so like the reality of the audience that its world seemed to merge seamlessly with reality, which made the famous off-stage door-slam in this play all the more convincing. Indeed, realist theatre would not have been as politically effective if it had not consciously distanced itself from the studied artificiality of the well-made play. Osborne, however, presents a world of almost exotic poverty and deprivation with which the audience can empathise but not identify. The realistic production of 1985 follows the stage directions faithfully, but it does not realise the full symbolic potential of the play. Indeed, the subsequent symbolic stagings of the play are illustrative of a theatre in which identification is not a prerequisite sentiment. Identification precludes an intellectual response; instead, the audience is meant to decode the symbolism and to engage intellectually and emotionally with the play without seeing the stage environment as an extension of its own world. There is a gap between the two worlds, a gap which becomes wider and is fruitfully explored by playwrights taking their cue from playwrights like Osborne.

The spatial metaphors of an enclosed space which has run wild stays within the forms of realist expression, as they stand for social markers of difference. Not only are the characters excluded from the market place and, thus, prevented from taking their place within society, society does not enter the marginal space of the estate. In the play's frame action, the contractor Stack, whose job it is to renovate the house, speaks of the inhabitants of the estate in terms of savages who have to be contained ("Put those boards, nails pointing up, around. Stop the natives charging the gangplank." 73). In a sense, he is the personification of those who take advantage of the new political situation, which casts the poor as evil (132). Entering the space of the socially excluded means that the laws of decency and humanity no longer apply: the marginalised space of the estate becomes the realm of "Stack's law" in which he can literally rape and kill at will "to right the wrongs", arguing that "[o]therwise . . . we'll be up to our necks in a swamp of nutters, perverts, cranks" (130-135). Bernie, who works for Stack as part of his community service sentence, is afraid of and feels haunted by the poverty-stricken 'other' (128). Stack and Bernie, although not very different from Day or Vee, set themselves up as judges over the inhabitants of the estate, thus revealing the fissures in a society which had once thought of itself as homogeneous and supportive. Tellingly, it is clearly not moral

goodness that divides Stack and Bernie from the inhabitants of the estate, but the sheer luck of living on the right side of the (invisible) boundary.[15] They can be read as proponents of a Thatcherite politics, whose ambivalent attitude towards the responsibilities of the state regarding the poor is here shown to consist of both a fear of and active violence against a demonised but helpless 'other'.

The power that Stack has over the inhabitants of the estate is illustrative of the power of mainstream society over the marginalised poor. In a country where home ownership constitutes a mark of respectability and self-respect,[16] the hold that the poor have over 'their' property is all too weak and transitory. All too easily all traces of the former occupants of the house are erased as the house is painted white and all furniture and fittings are burnt outside (130-134). As in Frisch's image of white-washing in *Andorra*, the past is erased and a bland, anonymous environment is created for new people to move into and continue the cycle of poverty. Maybe even Babes herself, who is pregnant in the second part of the play, will move into her former home (130, chapter 3).

As mentioned above, the fragility of this marginal place is echoed by the tenuous hold its inhabitants have on reality. However, the real sadness of the characters lies in their inability to conceive of another way of living. As the description of Vee's bedroom in the stage directions shows, she does not resist a culture in which she has no part – she apes it.[17] Cissie, who as a gay man in the valleys is drawn as the articulate victim of a violent society,[18] dreams up a 'get-rich-quick'-scheme of exhibiting Dai Death and his grandiloquent memories of industrial South Wales to a paying audience and thus can only replicate the social forces of oppression that marginalise him and his friends in the first place (101-103, see

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[15] In his review in London's *City Limits*, Sean Taylor emphasizes "Stack's fascistic power" which masks his own emptiness: "Stack's fascistic power and certainty is the very violence that has trapped the other characters in their separte [sic] corners of normality, where their songs, their stories and their smiles perish. Yet Stack is the emptiest space of all. No winners, no answers, just a freshly plastered white flat on the biggest housing estate in the world (somewhere in Wales)".

[16] It is no coincidence that a major Thatcherist policy of downsizing the state's responsibility for its subjects was the selling of council houses. It was argued that only a home-owner would really appreciate the value of property, be a self-sufficient citizen and thus stop being a drain on the state's resources. By the end of the 1980s, a great number of council houses had been sold and not owning a home came to be a sign of failure. By thus getting rid of often badly built houses, the state was able to shift the responsibility and the risk attached to buying a property to the individual.

[17] Interestingly, the reviewers noted Vee's difference from the accepted norm and tended to interpret the play as a plea for difference in an estate where conformity rules (see the review in the *Cardiff Post* (7 November 1985). I believe, though, that it is her failure to be different – because of the overwhelming demands for conformity – which reinforces the play's central meaning.

chapter 3). Thus, these characters are constructed as society's subalterns in the original sense of the word. In a society that has accepted social inequalities as the norm the subaltern subject can only play at normality and is set to stay forever shut off from the reality of the mainstream, 'locked away' in estates, until a tragedy like Vee's and Day's double deaths momentarily interrupts the status quo. By placing marginalised characters at the centre, who live in a place that is virtually out of bounds for mainstream society, Osborne can be said to write explicitly against the social and economic policies which made such marginalisation a reality in Wales. The play describes the disintegration of Welsh community culture: mainstream culture stays clear of the ghettoised poor and the poor themselves live by a grotesque extension of mainstream values instead of creating an empowering, distinctive counter-culture. The very grotesqueness of the lives depicted prevents a direct identification with the characters. Instead the characters and their predicament acquire a symbolic meaning, which goes beyond the setting in Merthyr Tydfil and which becomes a criticism of Thatcherist politics in Wales more generally.

As the playtext itself and the production history of the play show, Osborne wrote *In Sunshine and In Shadow* as a realist play in naturalist detail but then preferred productions in a style that Ed Thomas later called "heightened realism"; in other words, a realism that incorporates symbolic elements ("Wanted" 55). Indeed, in the final scenes the play becomes almost expressionist: the final moment acquires an infernal quality as Stack, who has just raped Cissie, "*towers behind Dai Death, his arm raised holding a crowbar. The fire roars*" (135). Here, the brutally repressive present is about to kill the memory of a romanticised past – the audience does not see a contractor doing away with someone he regards as a mad tramp. Thus, the work deviates from the social realism of *Bull, Rock, and Nut* and the political commitment which had connected social realism to the politics of the working-class left since the heyday of Welsh industrial fiction in the 1930s. Indeed, Osborne cites as influences the "passionate realism" (Wandor 70) of Tennessee Williams and the writer of Welsh grotesques, Caradoc Evans, which suggests that he does not see himself as writing in the tradition of Welsh industrial fiction, although he, to an extent, replicates its politics. Nor does he trace his theatrical roots to the writers of the English political theatre of the late 1960s and 70s, although, again, his politics as well as the realist form of the playtexts would suggest as much. I would argue that the mixture of realist and symbolist elements mark out a slow change away from realist stage practice. The discrepancy between the world of the

[18] The brutish Stack rapes him in the second part of the play, 133-4.

audience and the world of the characters in Osborne's theatre, is replicated in the plays discussed below, led to a different understanding of mainstream theatre: instead of finding an extension of their world on stage, audiences were gradually required to take part in and to think along with experimental creations of different worlds, which did not necessarily correspond to their own.[19] Of course, realist theatre is not docu-drama, and Ibsen, the 'father' of realist theatre himself, had always stressed the paradigmatic qualities of the social struggles he portrayed in his plays (Gilman 63, et passim). However, the professional theatre in Wales has always attracted a middle-class audience because it has aimed its drama at this audience, as I have shown above – and as Ruth Shade is arguing in *Communication Breakdowns*. Working-class characters on stage have tended to be placed in an environment and have used an idiom not very far removed from those of the audience, which was thus able to identify with what happened on stage. The stage reality of *In Sunshine and In Shadow* and plays like *House of America*, while retaining some potential for identification, progressively moves away from the immediate experience of the audience. Thus, the idea of 'eavesdropping' so typical of the 'fourth-wall' theatre changed from sympathetic understanding to an exercise in voyeurism potentially deeply uncomfortable for the audience. The world on stage is thus no continuation of the world of the audience any more. I am not arguing that *In Sunshine and In Shadow* itself constitutes a radical break with realism. But, the curious mixture of realism and symbolic elements, and the different modes of performances of the play, point to a slow change in the way place is staged and language is used in Welsh drama in English of the 1980s.

Other playwrights of the 1980s and 90s take up the realist form suggested through their political commitments and messages but very often create similarly hybrid forms. Like Osborne, they depict the lives of the poor – a poverty that is more often than not a mental poverty as well as a lack of resources – through the spatial metaphors of marginalisation and exclusion. Ed Thomas's *House of America* (1985), Peter Lloyd's *The Scam* (1988), Laurence Allan's *On the Road Again* (1994) and the in many ways epigonous *Everything Must Go* by Patrick Jones (2001) situate their characters in marginal spaces. Thus, by signposting their environment as 'marginal', the characters are signified as marginalised. 'Marginal' is, again, defined by the

[19] The widening of the gap between the world of the audience and the world of the stage is criticised by Ruth Shade in *Communication Breakdowns* as a sign of the elitism of a lot of theatre practice and she argues for a theatre practice that comes from within "indigenous, working-class performance traditions" She holds the policies of the Welsh Arts Council

relative lack of social relationships: the characters find themselves in an isolated space, cut off from the market place. The playwrights therefore define place in the same way as the human geographer Doreen Massey, who has argued that places "can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings" (66). In other words, places are not primarily defined by their topography, but by the relationships of the people inhabiting them. By theatrical means, the playwrights create a theatre in which marginality is defined by exclusion and isolation from places in which the nodes of the "networks of social relations" are situated.

Lloyd's *The Scam* is one of the few plays in English set in North Wales. Yet, this is not the Welsh-speaking heartland but the largely anglicised Deeside and the surrounding countryside and, as in the other plays, 'Welshness' is identified with an anglophone culture.[20] In this simple, realist play, Al has persuaded Dar to leave their council estate in pursuit of work in an apple orchard. Al has evidently made the Thatcherite 'get on your bike' ideology his own, for his sense of self-worth depends on the job he does and the power it entails and he seems unconcerned by the necessity to leave his home to find work (42-45). In contrast, Dar has no such aspirations and he feels uprooted in the countryside where he does not know anybody (45). Away from home they are isolated and lost – a marginalisation is signified by their staying in that most insubstantial of dwelling places, a tent (34f.), far away from home. As in *On the Road Again* (discussed below) theirs is an enforced mobility brought about by circumstances rather than choice. At first, the audience is led to admire Al's resourcefulness and evident willingness to escape his background. As the play progresses, though, he is revealed as ruthless when dealing with the seemingly simpler Dar and surprisingly deferential and naïve when it comes to people whom he regards as his superiors. As Al's plan for big business goes wrong because he trusts the con man Finn, it becomes clear that his brand of Thatcherite values leads him into ruin because, as a working-class man, he has neither the knowledge nor the resources to succeed in business.[21] In the end, it is Dar's political indifference which makes him immune to Thatcherite ideology – an

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responsible for a homogenisation of theatrical practice and a subsequent disenfranchisement of "large sectors of the general public" (manuscript 317).

[20] Or, at least, there is a conspicuous silence on the topic of Wales's bi-culturalism and bi-lingualism.

[21] Thatcherism's praise of small businesses as the backbone of society, and the Conservative politics of encouraging people who started their own business facilitated by easily available loans in the beginning of the 1980s both were strongly criticised by the

ideology which cannot benefit boys from the estate like them ("But you ... 'Al,' they'll say, 'what a joke. For years he tried to play the game. But whatever he did, he always ended up the game played him'." 86). At the end of the play, Dar wants to return to the estate and it is likely that Al will follow. Their escape from the bounded place of social exclusion is but short-lived – as in *In Sunshine and In Shadow* escape is impossible. This play, too, is critical of the adoption of Thatcherite politics in Wales and, like *In Sunshine and In Shadow*, it has no alternative vision to offer.

In Allan's *On the Road Again*, another mainly realist play about two Vladimir and Estragon-like tramps, the characters Beefy and Rich live in a caravan in a derelict site on the edge of Splott, a traditional working-class area in Cardiff. Their haphazard collection of belongings and the arrangement of the sparse furniture indicate "*a thin life*" (9). Allan indicates a physical remoteness of his characters from mainstream society by the marginality and temporality of their dwelling place. Their isolation is so acute that Rich leaves the radio on when he leaves the caravan, in order to come "home to the sounds of life" (11). However, instead of focusing on the characters' isolation as Osborne had done, Allan seeks to describe a new departure for his characters. A letter from the council, which threatens eviction, underlines their lack of agency but also forces the two characters to take control of their lives. Central to the characters' decisions is their different perception of place. Where Beefy only sees "a splot on the landscape" (19-20) – a pun on "blot" and "Splott" ("It's not a place, it's a splot. And I don't belong in no splot." 21), Rich gazes out of the caravan window and sees "Splow" (19), imagining a much more genteel-sounding place, in which the caravan becomes a "[w]indow on the world", a "port in a storm, this happy haven, this sceptred isle" (10). At first, the reference to Gaunt's famous speech in Shakespeare's *Richard II* seems to be ironic, since nothing seems further removed from Gaunt's description of England as "this other eden, demi-paradise" (2.1.42) than the derelict site. And yet, the play's didactic message develops precisely from Rich's perception of place: he sees its "potential":

> **Beefy** Rich, tell me, what exactly do you see out there?
> **Rich** The view.
> **Beefy** Yeah?
> **Rich** Well, I can see the houses, chimneys and smudges of smoke, the river, the road, the place where the road meets the trees, where the trees meet the sand, where the sand meets the sky. Window on the world.
> **Beefy** Rich, there is no sand out there, it's mud. Mud as far as the eye can see. Flat mud, mud flats. No little chimneys and smudges of smoke. It's a bomb site, a shithole, an open toilet as far as the eye can see.

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end of the 1980s. The thus artificially enhanced economy went down, taking many of the small businesses with it. The play can be read as a comment on the failure of this policy.

Rich No, no, you're not seeing it right. . . . You don't know how to look and dream. (40-41)

Down-to-earth Beefy's nihilism with regard to place is thus contrasted with Rich's dreams, and it follows that he will eventually, like so many other characters in Welsh drama in English, leave and seek his dream elsewhere. Rich, on the other hand, favours a new approach: he decides to stay and fight the eviction order. Implied in this seemingly quixotic venture is the slow change in the political climate in Wales in the 1990s. When the play was produced in 1994, John Redwood, the Secretary of State for Wales who gained notoriety for his heavy-handed approach to Welsh sentiments, had been in power for a year. The British electoral system had ignored the political voice of the people of Wales yet again in the general election of 1992,[22] which led Ron Davies, the then Shadow Secretary of State for Wales, to describe the political status quo in terms of a "democratic deficit" (Davies 5).[23] Attitudes regarding devolution began to change in Wales and in the Labour Party (Davies 5). The earlier climate of despair and indifference, chronicled in *In Sunshine and In Shadow* and in *The Scam* respectively, makes way for a diffident hope in *On the Road Again*: the play concludes with Rich painting protest signs (47). Rich's protest is directly connected to fighting for his home, for his ownership of place and thus constitutes a direct contrast to the easy eviction of the characters in *In Sunshine and In Shadow*. No longer willing to be disenfranchised, he at least wants to voice his protest – a telling shift in self-perception which doubtless echoes contemporary attitudes in South Wales, if not the whole of Wales. By his insistence on closure and an up-beat ending, Allan forces a solution on the play which does not entirely follow from the action itself but which is, maybe, indicative of a new cultural climate of hope in Wales.[24]

Both *The Scam* and *On the Road Again* are expressions of a left-wing, Labour-socialist oppositional politics against the Conservative central government

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[22] Although the Labour Party secured their best result since 1970 and the Conservatives had their worst result since 1966 in Wales, the Conservatives still won the general election. (May 34-36)

[23] "At the first session of Welsh questions after the 1992 election I vividly remember sitting on the opposition backbench and staring at David Hunt, the then Secretary of State for Wales, as the notion of a 'democratic deficit' became crystallised in my mind. Wales had rejected this man and his party and all that they stood for and yet here he was still in power" (5).

[24] Another explanation for the ending of the play is the context in which it was written. The play had been specially written for the company *Hijinx Theatre*, which produces plays for mixed audiences, partly composed of people with learning disabilities. Thus, the black-and-white characterisation as well as the overly optimistic ending can be explained by the requirements of the audience it was written for. Indeed, 'empowerment' and the 'possibilities of dreams' are recurring themes in Hijinx-productions. Cf., for example, their production of Sharon Morgan's *Dreaming Amelia* (Cardiff, Chapter 2002).

and their brand of realism, in which an authentic-sounding idiom is mixed with more traditionally realist notions of plotting, can be seen as an expression of these politics. Yet, as in *In Sunshine and In Shadow*, the continuity of stage reality and audience reality is gone. It seems to make much more sense to read both plays as (political) parables in which the characters take on a symbolic quality: their lack of ownership of place and consequent lack of voice is equated with the lack of a political voice for Wales – a voice which is still largely heard as concomitant with the voice of the Labour Party. The characters' exclusion from the central space of society as well as their lack of ownership of place and their lack of mobility (or their enforced mobility) come to mean a lack of voice and of agency, reflecting an overall sense of powerlessness in the 1980s and 90s in Wales. This is understood as the lack of power of the working classes, though, and Wales is seen as a one-class working-class nation. And yet, although Welsh society up to the 1970s may have been approximately like its self-image, by the late 1980s society had become much more fragmented. Thus, the continuity between stage reality and audience reality has become doubtful.

Indeed, a prescient play like Ed Thomas's *House of America* (1988) shows the limits of the realist framework acutely. The play is less concerned with a political analysis of society – something new in itself – than with capturing a cultural climate of defeat much like *Bull, Rock, and Nut*. Ed Thomas insists on the importance of a positive self-image (or, in Thomas's terms, a "new mythology") for Wales (Thomas, "Wanted"). The play begins as a traditional realist play in which the family and the family house of the title are the focus of social change. The central conflict of the play is discussed in terms of 'staying' versus 'leaving' – although the notion of leaving is shown to be illusory. *House of America* is about the lack of cultural self-confidence which makes Sid, Gwenny and Boyo rely on second-hand American mythologies instead of taking charge of their own lives. The play quite deliberately becomes the cornerstone of a new mythology: ignoring the rules of realist theatre of 'total visibility' (Chaudhuri 27 *et passim*) the play turns into tragedy: the characters commit incest and fratricide and, thus, become purely symbolic in a way that is very much at odds with the play's realist framework. This confusion regarding the play's realist form and 'mythological' content spilled over into the audience: one reviewer of *House of America* was very much baffled by the play when he wrote:

> Thomas avoids creating a state-of-the-nation piece by taking the extremest course available. As his South Wales family disintegrates beneath the hammer blows of incest, fratricide and open-cast mining, it ceases to be representative of any likely community. (Kingston, quoted in *State of Play* 197)

The reviewer obviously equates a realist mode of expression with a believable representation of a Welsh community, showing how ingrained is the expectation that theatre should portray 'life as it is'. Thomas himself describes *House of America*'s 'heightened realism' as problematic and has subsequently distanced himself from theatrical realism altogether (Thomas, "Wanted" 55).[25]

As a consequence of these developments, Patrick Jones's *Everything Must Go* (produced by *Made in Wales* in 2000), a critique of the broken promises of New Labour, is essentially anachronistic, as his political analysis remains largely connected to the older social analysis of the 1970s and 1980s. *Everything Must Go* shows a group of teenagers in Blackwood in the South Wales Valleys. Presenting different snapshots of their essentially empty lives, Jones emphasises the story of A, whose politics may be called old Labour as he contrasts the politics of an idealised Aneurin Bevan with reality under New Labour. Firmly on the side of the image of a benevolent Bevan he has created in his mind, A (and, presumably, the author) argues that New Labour disappointingly continues in the footsteps of the previous Conservative governments. Moreover, the play can be read as an implicit critique of devolution, which does not seem to have had any impact on the lives of the characters at all.

Everything Must Go is a hybrid play, whose realist base is overlaid by a symbolism reminiscent of the expressionist station play. The play is divided into scenes, each of exemplifying one of the principles of the Beveridge report on "Social Insurance and Allied Services" (attributed to Aneurin Bevan in the play).[26] The audience progressively learns that Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness are still to be found in the Welsh valleys nearly 60 years after the report was published. As in a station play, the audience follows the characters from place to place through scenes, which are each illustrative of one of the principles. The characters meet in a playground, a park, a closed shop, the Aneurin Bevan Standing Stones near Tredegar, the factory (in which A assaults the personnel manager Worthington), an intensive care unit at the hospital, and the graveyard. These settings are meant to be read realistically and symbolically: these are the places the characters appropriate because they are excluded from socially relevant places – the workspace, the economic space (for example, shops) and the home. A further

[25] For a more detailed discussion of Ed Thomas's work, see chapter 5.

[26] "Social insurance fully developed may provide income security; it is an attack upon Want. But Want is one only of five giants on the road of reconstruction and in some ways the easiest to attack. The others are Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness." (http://www.weasel.cwc.net/beveridge.htm)

indication of the alienation experienced by the characters is that the action usually takes place outside and in a dark atmosphere whose heavy mood does not lift throughout the play. For example, the setting for Unit 4 is a "[*b*]*roken down playground".* In the air is the "[*d*]*ark lonely hum of the valleys.*" There is the "*sound of a factory hooter in the distance*" (142). The symbolic quality of the setting was underscored by the dark stage and the loud, jagged sounds in the Swansea production of the play (1999). These characterisations signify that the characters live in a world apart from that of the working population and the extent to which they are abandoned by it. Meeting in an old playground they are shown to be excluded and they, to a degree, exclude themselves from the grown-up world of the workspace.

Crucially, the characters are unable to create an alternative world-view for themselves. Pip and Jim, especially, espouse a consumerist lifestyle that is not so much what Sloterdijk would term a Cynical[27] parody but a grotesque extension of it. They collect worthless 'ALDI clubcards' and steal cars whenever they want one (142-146). They are described as "the don't care know nothing have everything generation" (140-41). The emptiness of their lives is proof of the fact that merely consuming does not make for a fulfilling life. Jones's political message is clear: New Labour, which gained power in a surge of optimism, has failed to make a difference. *Everything Must Go* suggests that, contrary to old Labour, which is shown to have had a considerable influence in shaping people's identities especially in South Wales, New Labour ignores marginal communities just as the Conservatives had done without, however, analysing this suggestion in any detail.

In order to broaden the scope of his play beyond his five characters and to make it symbolic beyond Blackwood, Jones includes several scenes in mime, which are meant to be of greater significance. The first of these is in Unit 2 which serves to place the major characters in the company of their peers (140). In Unit 5 we see

> the interior of a factory, cold[,] clinical and neat. 14 machines worked mostly by young men and women dressed in white uniforms except one man of about 55. They are robotically inserting something metal into videos and putting them on a conveyor belt. (152)

This is an image of the classic Marxist understanding of the alienating effects of (mass) production. The characters' decision not to participate in this world of work is thus vindicated as their desire to stay 'human'. In Unit 7 "*7 miners climb out of the ground and sit in lecture chairs . . . and are presented with computer screens. After*

[27] See Sloterdijk for the original meaning of the word 'Cynical', which Sloterdijk contrasts with the modern meaning of 'cynical'. Diogenes's brand of Cynicism is meant as an attitude of parody which subverts tradition and order, whereas the modern meaning of 'cynicism' is concerned with a merely derisive and destructive attitude.

failing to work out how to use them, each miner picks up his screen and throws it down the pit" (154). This ambiguous and ideologically loaded scene most probably means that the former miners resist a workplace which treats them as dehumanised work-machines. The mimed scenes thus underscore the central message of the play in an agit-prop style. And yet, beyond this rather simplistic act of blaming the 'other' (the employer, foreign investors, state power), which is substituted for a deeper interpretation of social forces, what this 'real' self consists of is not explored in any detail. The play accusingly shows how Blackwood youth waste their lives in an atmosphere of hopelessness and alienation much as *Bull, Rock, and Nut* had done and it is thus to be considered essentially epigonous. The characters celebrate "the ability to resist" (197), although this is a resistance without substance against a vague and largely unnamed 'other'; a resistance without goals and without a vision of an alternative lifestyle to the one resisted. The play acquires its power through its attempt to give a poetic voice to the powerless, but the broad brushstrokes by which it depicts society create too simplistic an image to be a viable critique of society. Moreover, the structure of the play, although superficially experimental, relies on the assumptions of the 'fourth-wall-theatre'. In other words, Jones assumes that his political beliefs, which are voiced through the character A, are shared by the audience. Furthermore, the play relies on the by now anachronistic methods of agit-prop as A tries to convert the other characters to his politics.

It follows that *Everything Must Go* is most successful in an environment in which the audience reality is similar to the reality on stage: in other words, it works best as a piece for young people. Moreover, its impact seems to be largely due to its style which is characterised by the gritty realism of what might be termed a poetics of the street. The current trend of a similar style in drama, for example in Gary Owen's *Crazy Gary's Mobile Disco* (2001), or in fiction, for example in Rachel Trezise's novel *In and Out of the Goldfishbowl* (2001), Niall Griffith's *Sheepshagger* (2001) or Lloyd Robson's extended poem *Cardiff Cut* (2001), can probably be traced back to Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*, which itself continues a literary trend set by novels like Hubert Selby's *Last Exit to Brooklyn* or even Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange. Everything Must Go*, through making extensive use of the music of Welsh bands like the Manic Street Preachers,[28] Catatonia and the Stereophonics, probably attempts to be a Welsh *Trainspotting*. Its relative failure on the mainstream stage can be attributed to the fact that stage reality and audience reality are not

[28] The author is the brother of one of the band members and both brothers are influenced by each other's creative input.

continuous, which prevents the play's central message from hitting 'home' – a problem which had led Alan Osborne, for example, to create a symbolic stage for *In Sunshine and In Shadow* and thus to re-locate its essentially realist playtext in the more symbolic realm of 'heightened realism' that Ed Thomas had mentioned.

The realist plays of the 1980s and 90s are expressive of a particular sensibility and their struggle with form mirrors the ways in which Welsh self-perception changes during that time. Their aim is to present reality in art and to, maybe, change reality through art. In this sense, the reality of marginalisation and social exclusion is used metaphorically to give a voice to the powerless and to point out the wider social implications of the political developments of the early 1980s on Welsh communities. The realism of the plays is in itself a political statement. The political impetus of the early realist theatre was to expose the bourgeois well-made play as an escapist lie which did nothing to illuminate and interrogate important social questions but preserved a conservative status quo. Realism became the mode of expression for progressive movements and thus came to be the only viable voice for a literature that subsequently moved away from Ibsen's and Chekhov's middle class concerns to express a working class consciousness – a movement which was never quite followed up by a similar movement towards a working-class theatre in Wales. Welsh drama in English retained a critical but essentially middle-class stance through to the 1970s. The plays of the 1980s and 90s come out of a theatrical tradition of intellectual realism and many playwrights retain the desire to present an intellectual argument on stage instead of entertainment only. However, they also take their cue from the politics which informed Anglo-Welsh industrial writing as well as from the left-wing English theatre of the late 1950s, 60s and 70s.

The problems of realism, which had been noted by the political playwright David Hare,[29] came to the surface in the 1980s.[30] For realist theatre to be effective, the audience watching the action through the 'fourth wall' must be able to identify with the characters. Indeed, the plays of, for example, J.O. Francis or Gwyn Thomas probably allowed for such identification. By the 1980s, however, Welsh society had

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[29] Hare spoke about the failure of political (agit-prop) theatre at a conference on political theatre in 1978 in the following terms: "[C]onsciousness has been raised in this country for a good many years now and we seem further from radical political change than at any time in my life. . . . We have looked. We have seen. We have known. And we have not changed" (quoted in Innes, *Modern British Drama* 191). It is this realisation which makes *Everything Must Go* seem so anachronistic.

[30] Further critics of realist theatre include Antonin Artaud and Augusto Boal. The latter's rejection of traditional performance spaces and re-assessment of the role of the actors in his 'theatre of the oppressed' is one influential answer to the question of how a political

become considerably more complex than its traditional self-image had hitherto suggested, as a result of economic restructuring, migration and the introduction of Thatcherite policies. Politically conscious playwrights felt that a theatre which is relevant to the community must portray the life of the new underclass that had emerged by the 1980s. Thus, the goal was not identification but empathy, political action through a hefty dose of agit-prop. Yet, here the realist frame and the political message slowly twist out of joint. The deprived poor cannot stand for Welsh society, because society has become more complex. South Wales cannot, as before in the ideology of the Welsh working class as the national stereotype, stand for the whole of Wales. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that all audience members share the implicit socialist agenda of most of the playwrights, as Welsh 'old' Labour policies prove to be powerless to prevent the social upheavals in Wales. Therefore, instead of a continuity between the world on stage and the world of the audience, one must assume an essential disconnection between the world of the audience and the stage reality. The 'fourth wall' turns into a window for the audience as empathetic on-lookers, whose personal lives are only marginally touched by what they see. The peculiarly complex and sometimes flawed form of the realistic Welsh play of the 1980s and 90s is an interesting product of a point in time when, after the old certainties crumbled in Wales and when cultural self-perception had just reached a low after the lost devolution referendum of 1979, cultural self-perception started to change. The changes of the realist theatre of the 1980s and 90s are an indication of the different modes of expression and a different set of expectations of the role of theatre in society more recent theatre was to develop.

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theatre can be effective. See Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*. London: Pluto, 1979.

Chapter 2

Dic Edwards and the 'Theatre for the Evicted'

"Art is not a mirror to reflect reality
but a hammer
with which to shape it."
Bertold Brecht

There is a very real sense in which contemporary, mainstream, text-based, post-1979 Welsh drama in English begins with Alan Osborne and Dic Edwards and with the association of both writers with the *Made in Wales* stage company. Dic Edwards remembers:

> Before my first play, a one act piece called *Late City Echo*, the only new work of real significance that had been commissioned and produced for maybe more than ten, maybe a hundred years (!) was Alan Osborne's *Terraces* and that was more of a multi-media piece. The actors who produced *Late City Echo* formed Made In Wales and their first commission was my first full length play *At the End of the Bay.* That company was an actors/writers company and was vital to the following twenty years. (personal communication)

Terraces was premiered at Chapter Arts Centre in Cardiff in 1979 and Osborne's other multi-media piece, the 'jazz opera' *Johnnie Darkie*, was performed in the Sherman Theatre and in the Chapter Arts Centre in Cardiff in 1981 – in the same year as Edwards's first play *Late City Echo.* Looking at *Bull, Rock, and Nut* and *At the End of the Bay* (1982) – the first full-length plays by Osborne and Edwards respectively, one detects a certain similarity of idiom and of characterisation. Furthermore, the two authors clearly start out from a similar political position: they dramatise working-class life in a manner which was new for Welsh drama in English and which comes out of an anglophone, urban Welsh working-class culture steeped in the values of a traditional Labour socialism, which had once provided an identity for a whole community. Alan Osborne soon returned to music theatre and to community theatre projects: recently he was involved in the immensely successful community opera project *Katerina* (2001), in which Merthyr school-children wrote and staged an opera with the help of Osborne and members of the Welsh National Opera. Dic Edwards, on the other hand, stayed with text-based theatre and has, over the years, developed a remarkable theatrical voice and a continually evolving, always political theatre. In common with other political playwrights like Ed Thomas, whose first plays Edwards had read in his capacity as advisor to *Made in Wales*, Edwards has developed a theoretical framework for his plays. This framework is rooted in a South Walian working-class culture and, thus, his plays can be read as

having been written out of a specific context even though his plays are generally not set in Wales or very obviously about Wales. Dic Edwards has termed his drama 'theatre for the evicted', and the development and change in Edwards's evaluation of the term 'evicted' and the relationship between political meaning, theatrical form and the importance of place as setting and metaphor will be the focus of this chapter.

I believe that, in the Welsh context, it is always too easy to regard language, i.e. whether a person grows up speaking Welsh or English as a first language, as the be-all and end-all of identity. Nevertheless, language and the linguistic community in which an individual grows up, are often an interesting starting point for discussion. I would suggest that one of the factors responsible for the very different politics which inform Dic Edwards's and Ed Thomas's drama is the difference in linguistic and cultural community in which they grew up.[1] Of course, the difference in age of the two writers also accounts for their different responses to Welsh politics in the 1980s and 1990s: Ed Thomas is nearly ten years younger than Dic Edwards, which means that the politically exciting years of the 1960s and 1970s were Edwards's formative years, whereas Ed Thomas grew up in the depressing climate of the late 1970s and 1980s. Without going into the details of historical causes and effects here, I would like to note briefly that the 1960s and early 1970s saw a return of a progressive nationalism, which was, however, primarily linked to the Welsh language. An expression of this spirit is the publication of Ned Thomas's *The Welsh Extremist* in 1973, a complex discussion of the political necessity for Welsh speakers to foreground a linguistic nationalism, whose reception was not always of a similarly complex nature. Thus, the 1970s also saw the formation of the *Free Wales Army*, a loose collection of activists, whose erstwhile leader Julian Cayo Evans became the model for Dic Edwards's 2002 play *Franco's Bastard.* Welsh language nationalism, which, despite the *Free Wales Army*'s rhetoric, was largely a cultural nationalism aimed at a recognition of the right to be different within the UK, saw a revival, but so did a primarily anglophone, working-class identity based on trade union activity usually situated in the urban areas of South Wales. The trade unions, which Margaret Thatcher vowed to smash to pieces once she was elected – an election promise she kept in the mid 1980s – were still in a strong position in the 1970s. Also, a socialist politics, which can be identified with the Labour Party, rejected a nationalism which was seen as parochial and counter-productive and preferred to align itself with other industrial centres in Britain and Europe: it roundly rejected the offer of limited self-determination in the form of devolution in 1979. By

contrast, the 1980s saw the retreat of Welsh language nationalism, a progressive erosion of a positive identity based on working-class values, and a deepening of already existing cracks within Welsh communities as some people managed to profit from Conservative economic policies, while others did not only lose their jobs but their sense of self (see the introduction and chapter 1). Growing up in these very different decades, it is no surprise that Dic Edwards's and Ed Thomas's politics should have such very different emphases. Furthermore, as already indicated, the fact that Ed Thomas grew up as a Welsh speaker in the Swansea Valley, while Dic Edwards was born into an anglophone, working-class community in Cardiff may be said to have shaped the different outlooks and political convictions of each writer to a significant degree. Even while surrounded by a predominantly anglophone culture, Ed Thomas would always have been aware of the Welsh-language arguments for a cultural nationalism, the desire to retain and protect the Welsh-language cultural heritage in the face of extinction, as well as the narratives that make up Welsh-language images of the nation, as he wrote plays about the need for a 'new mythology' for Wales. Even though he writes in English, his politics are thus closely connected to the Welsh nation and place. Dic Edwards, on the other hand, distrusts national (or nationalist) narratives and is not interested in contributing to a 'new mythology' for Wales. His theory of 'eviction' is based on a complex feeling of rejection – a rejection of the anglophone majority in Wales by a Welsh national ideology based on the Welsh language and a homogeneous view of culture as well as the British state's rejection of the working-classes and a working-class sensibility more generally from the 1980s onwards, and Welsh mainstream theatre's rejection of a highly intellectual, argument-based and argumentative theatre like his own. This description can, however, only be regarded as a shorthand for a very complex response to Welsh politics, British politics and the Welsh arts scene – an argument which is not always easy to disentangle. Furthermore, Edwards sometimes downplays the complexity of the position he argues against and thus lays himself open to criticism.

He explains his understanding of the term 'eviction' thus:

> Everything whole and good is a reconciliation of the opposites within it. This is the basic human, social, dramatic paradigm. It is the dialectical paradigm. (. . .) The failure of this reconciliation in people produces schizophrenia. Its failure in societal terms produces revolution. Its failure culturally produces what I call *the evicted.* ("Theatre for the Evicted" 3)

[1] For a more detailed discussion of Ed Thomas's politics and his plays, cf. chapter 6.

Thus, he uses the term 'eviction' to describe the failure of society to provide a fixed and stable identity for a subject. The 'evicted' are not merely marginalised – they are situated both inside and outside a given cultural system: while they might feel as if they belong, they are denied acceptance by the main cultural ideology. Like Anthony Cohen, Edwards describes the power of a community to draw and redraw its boundaries to exclude those who do not match up to the chosen criteria of 'belonging'. The 'evicted' occupy the same space as other subjects but, contrary to them, they have no access to the cultural images and stories that make up a person's identity. Thus subjects become culturally exiled in their own country, or, as Edwards puts it, 'evicted'. One of the boundaries by which people can be excluded in Wales is, according to Edwards, the Welsh language. He regards the monoglot English-speaker, who has grown up in an anglophone, urban environment, as culturally 'evicted' within the context of Wales: "The literary cultural establishment of Wales is Welsh language. So if you're not part of that it's as if you don't exist" ("Dic Edwards in Conversation with Torben Betts", see also "Theatre for the Evicted" 3, "A Dereliction of Duty" 85-86). While this remark is obviously intended as a criticism of the Welsh cultural establishment, Edwards goes further and negates any feeling for 'Wales' or any identification as 'Welsh':

> I cannot be a Welshman. This is because, for me, there is nothing I can identify this notion with. In other words, I don't believe in *Wales*. On the other hand, though I do not belong there, either, I can believe in *Cymru* because it is a place that has a unity and an identity around a language. ("Theatre for the Evicted" 3)

Edwards differentiates between 'Wales', a place named by the English for its 'otherness', and 'Cymru', the name the Welsh-speaking Welsh chose to give their place. It follows that anglophone Welsh-speakers like him are 'othered' by both discourses of place and cannot call any place their home. It is here that the argument runs into trouble, however, unless it is meant to be regarded as polemic. While it is certainly true that there have been discourses in Welsh-speaking circles which have claimed that a Welsh identity must be based on the Welsh language – discourses which, for example, underpinned the founding of Plaid Cymru in1925 (cf. McAllister 37-52) – it must be remembered that Welsh-language activists in the 20th century have tended to speak from a consciousness of the inexorable decline in the numbers of Welsh-speakers and in opposition to a numerically far stronger anglophone majority.[2] Secondly, the argument assumes that there is only one

[2] Again the argument is not clear-cut, however. To be in the numerical majority does not automatically confer a secure sense of identity on the anglophone majority, especially as Welsh-language activists often invoked a semi-mythical connection between Wales's

prevalent discourse that is 'Cymru' and another that is 'Wales', which, if I read his remarks correctly, assumes a curiously essentialist interrelationship between place and language. Moreover, the argument does not take into account that Welsh speakers might not like to be identified with 'Cymru': anecdotal evidence suggests that there are first-language Welsh speakers who choose not to communicate in Welsh and who do not identify with Wales as a national entity. And finally, the argument does not take into account the 'self-exclusion' of many anglophone Welsh people, who identify with Britain rather than with Wales or, indeed, the many who choose to identify themselves as Welsh. Jane Aaron and M. Wynn Thomas have commented that

> Edwards's 'evicted' appear to represent the non-Welsh-speaking Welsh, whom he sees as refugees with no country or culture they can call their own. The two linguistic cultures cannot, according to this analysis, exist side by side: one of them has to annul the other, and Edwards here chooses to represent the English-language culture as the most vulnerable, though the statistical evidence would appear to suggest that, if no rapprochement ensues, it is the minority Welsh culture which is far more likely to be terminally 'evicted' and silenced. Yet where is the evidence that 'without a unity there is no culture'? It could more convincingly be claimed that no truly unified or strictly homogeneous culture has ever existed. (306)

I assume that the slightly heated tone of this extract is connected to the fact that both authors of this article are Welsh-speakers, who are all too conscious of the possibility that Welsh language culture might be "terminally 'evicted' and silenced" and who both are engaged in a project to create and maintain a discourse in which both Welsh-language and English-language cultures in Wales are analysed in the same context. However, I do agree with their main point: Edwards seems to construct both Welsh-language Welsh culture and English culture as existing side by side, each out to annul the other, and constructed as ideologically monological. Even while describing the anglophone Welsh person as hybrid in Homi Bhabha's sense,[3] he falls into a terminological trap by underestimating the diversity of Welsh-language Welsh culture and English culture respectively (Moore-Gilbert 129f.). The difficulty with Edwards's argument seems to be that his words sometimes veer between an essentialist and a constructionist argument that is often difficult (if not

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'true' language, its community and place – an argument which cannot be 'countered' by sheer numbers alone.

[3] Homi Bhabha has defined the term hybridity as referring to the fact that the identity of the colonised subject is always in flux: "It is not the Colonial Self or the Colonised Other, but the disturbing distance in between that constitutes the figure of the colonial otherness – the White man's artifice inscribed on the Black man's body. It is in relationship to this impossible object that emerges the liminal problem of colonial identity and its vicissitudes" (Bhabha quoted in Loomba 177).

impossible) to disentangle.[4] However, I would suggest that Edwards's argument is more complex than my discussion hitherto suggests: there are various sides to Edwards's 'theory of eviction', which might not be all that easy to reconcile.

Firstly, I believe that there is an immediate political argument with a decidedly polemical edge to it. Edwards feels alienated from the Welsh cultural establishment, which, he believes, ignores both his work – he has been published by a London publisher and his plays are rarely performed in Wales – and his contribution to Welsh cultural discourses. He is unhappy about the way funding decisions are made and disappointed about which kind of theatre receives the bulk of the funding available in Wales. Furthermore, he feels that English-language cultural production is not 'sold' effectively enough:

> Welsh language culture is content to speak to itself – and it gets huge subsidies, rightly or wrongly, to do so – so there's nothing here pushing the English language work out . . . . I compare this experience for English-language Welsh writers to being left to sleep outside your own home. ("Dic Edwards in Conversation with Torben Betts")

I read these comments as largely polemical, although there are a number of critics, Dai Smith among them, who would doubtless agree.

Secondly, there is less polemical class-based argument which underwrites the 'theory of eviction' which, I would argue, has its roots in the traditional Labour socialism, which was still able to confer a meaningful and productive identity on Welsh working-class people in the 1960s and 1970s but which ceased to be productive after the failure of the miners' strike in 1984/85 and after the Conservatives were re-elected in 1987. In a sense, a new preoccupation with place can be said to have effectively silenced the discourse of class in South Wales – at least as far as identity is concerned (cf. chapter 1). Edwards seems to deplore this shift of focus, especially as, to his mind, class issues have not been resolved and the powerless still have no power. I would suggest that the negative connotations he ascribes to nationalism, which are explored in *Franco's Bastard*, are based on his dissatisfaction with this shift in public political consciousness (cf. my discussion of *Franco's Bastard* below).

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[4] For example, in "A Dereliction of Duty" he develops his argument in the following way: "I was once Welsh, and now am British, because I can't with justification call myself Welsh. I don't speak the language. I suppose I'm a bit of a purist. There's this anomaly that's taken place in Welsh culture. So much, by definition, of what is truly Welsh is predicated now on the language" (85-86). Thus, he negates his Welshness because of the "anomaly" that foregrounds the Welsh language in Welsh culture, not because he does belong to the place called Wales. He, therefore, calls it a cultural, "intellectual" argument, not an ethnic, "emotional" one (86). If one takes him at his word, though, his argument

Edwards has always identified the 'evicted' with the working-classes and now – after the arrival of New Labour – he feels that they are 'evicted' by their own party (cf. "Dic Edwards in Conversation with Torben Betts"). Edwards identifies as a working-class writer (despite having trained as a teacher) and puts class-analysis at the heart of his plays. In this terminology, the 'evicted' are those without power in a given state system. Thus, he is concerned with the power relationships that govern cultural placing and displacing and with the language of power and powerlessness. To come back to his comments about the Welsh cultural elite: it seems to me that Edwards voices his objection mainly against those who use of Welsh in a way that signals a cultural superiority and thus a power over those who have no access to the language. Read thus, the essentialist argument of two language cultures pitted against each other is changed into a discursive argument about power structures, an argument which is still fairly polemical, but which has left the dangerous ground of cultural essentialism.

This analysis is by its nature international and not limited to Wales. But, after all, international class-consciousness was very much specific to the urban, working-class community in which Edwards grew up, as Dai Smith shows in various essays in *Wales: A Question for History.* This tradition goes back to, for example, *The Miner's Next Step*, a pamphlet published in 1919 and subsequently serialised in *Welsh Outlook*. Part of the problem seems me to be that an argument about cultural politics in Wales is indistinguishably entangled with a class-argument based on Marxism and a Gramscian and Althusserian analysis of ideology and power structures . These issues cannot be disentangled, since both 'class' (and issues of power/powerlessness in society) and 'the nation' have endured as political categories. However, the way that these traditionally mutually exclusive categories are combined in the 'theory of the evicted' means that the theoretical waters are muddied to some extent – a fact not helped by Edwards's tendency to be polemical. Thus, he comments on his background and politics in the following way:

> My background is urban working-class and so I have a natural cultural identity with working-class people in other nations, but within my own 'nation' (this thing called *Wales*) that identity is with the working-class people of Cardiff. . . . It may be the case that members of the working-class of many nations are in some sense evicted but then they would have their own culture. Even this is denied the people of *Wales*. It is, quite simply, because there is a supposed all-inclusive Welsh Culture! ("Theatre for the Evicted" 3-4)

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could be regarded as an essentialist construction because of the very emphasis on the unity of language and place he deplores in others.

This extract suggests that Edwards's anger is directed at a "supposed all-inclusive Welsh Culture" and thus at an ideology rather than at the multi-lingual, multi-cultural reality of Wales itself.[5] Doubtless this ideology existed/exists in the minds of people like Cayo Evans, by whom Edwards "was attacked one night [along with] a henchman with a bottle and a hammer. Between them they broke my jaw and put me in hospital for a week" ("Dic Edwards in Conversation with Torben Betts"), or even in people, who were/are less violent. Critics like Charlotte Williams, Isabel Adonis and Mario Basini have suggested that the supposedly inclusive nature of 'Welshness' does not always extend to 'incomers', especially if they look and sound different from the local people (Charlotte Williams, "'I Going Away, I Going Home'", "Passport to Wales?"; Mario Basini, "Incomers"; Isabel Adonis, "Black Welsh Identity"). Thus, Edwards's anger at the supposition that there is an 'all-inclusive Welsh Culture', which is propagated by powerful segments of the Welsh population, is understandable. However, once again the waters are muddied slightly by the fact that Edwards constructs the very thing he is protesting against in his formulation. However, the following discussion of Edwards's plays will show that his treatment of 'eviction' on stage has shifted to include postmodern notions of shifting identities and multiplicity of identities.

For the purposes of this chapter, Edward's theory of eviction will be taken to refer to a class-based analysis of power structures which underpin society – an analysis which came out of the Welsh anglophone, urban working-class culture Edwards grew up in. Power structures are primarily expressed through language in Edwards's plays – through questions of who has the power to speak, who has the power to choose or create language and who is subjected to a language over which they have no ownership. A further expression of power structures is cultural placement and displacement – 'exile' or 'eviction' from a cultural system and the question of whether that exile is chosen or enforced, and how much individuals are defined by that exclusion. I would now like to turn to three plays to discuss Edwards's theory of eviction, namely *At the End of the Bay* (1982), *Utah Blue* (1995)

[5] It would be difficult to argue for a 'natural' unity of place and language when one regards the linguistic diversity of the South Wales Valleys or of Welsh-speakers in predominantly anglophone areas – not to mention the many languages that are neither English or Welsh which have found a home in Wales. I do not want to suggest that this multiplicity of languages exists side by side without problems, however. In 2001 South Wales Police have, for example, been forced to create compulsory 'diversity training' courses for all police staff to combat racism, sexism, homophobia etc. in the police force and to equip the officers with an understanding of diversity issues in the general population, which they seem to have lacked hitherto. I myself am currently being trained to co-teach diversity courses for South Wales Police.

and *Franco's Bastard* (2002). Edwards has written numerous plays and these three were chosen with regard to their relative importance for Wales. Furthermore, they show how Edward's 'theory of eviction' undergoes a tell-tale shift as he develops his term. In *At the End of the Bay*, his characters are literally evicted from a place they have no power over. In *Utah Blue*, the main character Gary Gilmore suffers a similar fate, but his brother Mikal is allowed to rewrite his brother's life and to escape living the same life. Finally, in *Franco's Bastard*, Ben and Serena understand that Carlo's monological nationalist ideology is greatly removed from reality, which means that the state of being 'evicted' is actually preferable to living an escapist dream. 'Eviction' thus comes to mean a degree of sanity in a world dominated by ideological constructions; it comes to refer to 'hybridity' as the normal way of being.

At the End of the Bay employs a tone of voice, a style and a characterisation similar to the realism of Alan Osborne's *Bull, Rock and Nut*, although it is better structured and plotted. The play narrates the story of two men, Arthur Fuse and Frankie Spargo, whose friendship is based on an unequal power relationship. Spargo, a sailor returned from the Caribbean, seems to have made it: he has just bought the Saturn night-club and he also 'owns' the slightly too-old stripper Miriam and Fuse, who has been unemployed half his life. And yet, his control proves to be fragile: because he cannot master his racism, he cannot come to an arrangement with the black mafia that controls the bay and his club is taken over by the "hard looking Guyanan" (19) Santos in the third act. And again, although Santos exudes confidence and an air of dominance, his control is short-lived. At the end of the third act it becomes clear that the whole bay area is going to be redeveloped and that all the clubs on the street are scheduled for demolition, a fact that a spiteful Spargo had kept from Santos as he had received relevant information from the council in the beginning of the second act. Thus, the power of the city's bureaucracy is greater than either Spargo's or Santos's, who in their uneasy relationship personify the working-class, multi-cultural lifestyle of the bay. The last act shows the demolished club where Spargo and Fuse meet for a weary last meeting before Spargo goes back to his former life as a sailor and Fuse – literally left on the scrap-heap of his former life – dies.

Alan Osborne's *Bull, Rock, and Nut* and Edwards's *At the End of the Bay* share a similar point of departure. Both want to create a new theatre, which reflects and speaks directly to the working-class communities out of which they themselves have come. In order to do this, both playwrights employ a raw, even brutal idiom,

which signifies the brutalised state of its speakers and which is closer to the English left-wing theatre of the 1960s and 1970s (John Arden, *Live like Pigs* (1958); Edward Bond, *Saved* (1965); David Hare, *Plenty* (1978) etc.) than it is to the Welsh drama in English of the 1960s and 1970s.[6] There is a telling difference between these English plays and *Bull, Rock, and Nut*, however. Bond, for example, situates his characters in a recognisable environment, but seeks to generalise "his attack on the forces of social injustice and oppression in an anti-Shakespearean model of power structures and their corrupting effect" (Innes, *Modern British Drama: The Twentieth Century* 153). In other words, his characters are meant to be paradigmatic of the struggles of the 'British' working classes as a whole.[7] The characters of *Rock, Bull, and Nut*, however, are clearly situated within a very specific community and have very little relevance when divorced from that background. Edwards tries to do both: the characters of *At the End of the Bay* are very clearly representatives of the old, multi-ethnic working-class community of the Cardiff docklands in which the play is set. And yet, he also presents the specific circumstances of his characters as part of a wider framework of power and oppression. His characters and the place in which the play is set are, thus, both specific and paradigmatic. In order to achieve this, he mixes a realistic plot with a far less realistic structure. The stage directions prescribe a set of realistic detail: for example, the club is described as "a worn out club which has been made up with cheap décor in an attempt to make it look vibrant and modern" (4). Thus, the set indicates how the famous 'economic miracle' of the first years of the Conservative government has passed areas like the Cardiff docklands by and thus reinforces the play's point that Cardiff's half-hearted attempt at emulating the spirit of the economic buzz in London is only a cheap imitation (cf. the set of Vee's bedroom in *In Sunshine and In Shadow*). Furthermore, all characters

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[6] Cf. David Hare's description of the alternative political theatre of the left in England in the 1960s and 1970s in a recent article in the *Guardian*: "As we careered along the British motorways, going from school to prison to university to army camp, presenting short, sharp, nasty illustrations of what we believed to be the endemic crisis in western capitalism, none of us doubted that we had stumbled on an aesthetic that somehow matched the aggression of what we had to say. Our approach was deliberately brutal, artless, direct." (19) Hare then goes on to dismiss agit-prop as a viable aesthetic for theatre on 'a larger scale', however. Cf. also John McGrath's discussion of the form of a working-class theatre, in which he takes a decidedly different view and accuses writers like Hare of giving up too easily in *A Good Night Out*.

[7] One might add, rather polemically maybe, that English writers do not tend to situate their characters in specific places. There is a universalising tendency, which tends to assume that English working-class characters, for example, really are 'British' working-class characters and that they, therefore, share the same problems as Scottish or Welsh working-class characters. Conversely, it is interesting that Welsh dramatists generally situate their plays in specific communities and, if they do not, like Dic Edwards, for example, this is regarded as a political statement in itself.

speak with a heavy Cardiff accent and the demolition of the Cardiff bay area to make room for new developments, which mirrors the ill-fated redevelopment of London's docklands, refers to a real incident. Indeed, the redevelopment of the bay did change the face of Cardiff enormously and had a great impact on the social structure of the inhabitants of that area. The title itself can be read as referring to the "end" of the particular working-class, multi-ethnic culture of the bay which ended with the demolition of its infrastructure (cf. Peter Finch's review of John Briggs's photographs of Cardiff's dockland communities in the 1970s, "Before the Deluge").

Dic Edwards does not only want to give a voice to Cardiff's dispossessed, though. His argument goes beyond the specific: he wants to create a paradigm for what he perceives to be wrong in Welsh – if not in British – society in general. His writing has, therefore, a lot in common with the early Edward Bond, whom he regards as a mentor, the early Howard Barker, whose attitudes to theatre audiences he shares (cf. "Theatre for the Evicted" 5 and Barker, "Honouring the Audience") and Arnold Wesker. In order to go beyond the specific and to give his characters an importance beyond their situation, he employs a structure which undermines the familiarity of plot, place and characters. Similar to Ed Thomas's *House of America*, the play is a hybrid form made up from elements of tragedy and realism with, however, a very different political emphasis. Instead of a decline through cultural meaninglessness, which is charted in *House of America*, *At the End of the Bay* shows the slow downward spiral of the working-classes in the Cardiff docklands through the characters, who are caught up in the violence of an unequal power-relationship. It is striking how much the play's structure is reminiscent of ancient Greek tragedy or the tragedy of the Middle Ages (cf. Taplin 28).[8] As in Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*, the development of the plot is a linear movement from order into chaos. At the beginning of the play Spargo has just opened his club, Miriam has a steady job (albeit as a stripper) and even Fuse has found a niche for himself. The following acts unsettle the characters as Santos takes over the club and as all characters are finally evicted by the council and the club is razed to the ground at the beginning of Act Four. The set description for the fourth act reads: "[t]he place

[8] It is important to differentiate Classical tragedy and mediaeval tragedy from the closed form of tragedy, which was, for example used by Shakespeare or Schiller and which is often taken to be the traditional form of tragedy. The closed form assumes a relatively fixed five-act-structure with exposition, rising action, peripeteia (reversal of fortune), falling action and catastophe associated with each act. By contrast, Edwards emulates the structure of many Classical or mediaeval tragedies, which are merely concerned with the fall of a noble person from a secure position into chaos (cf. Cuddon and Aristotle, *Poetik* 33-39).

where the Saturn Club used to be. There is only rubble and bleakness. There is a 'no trespassing' sign" (61). Thus the set shows a literal descent from order and hope into chaos, bleakness and literal eviction. The characters start from a position of relative security which is successively proven to be illusory as fate intervenes in the form of the city council. Indeed, the council has a power akin to the Greek pantheon and is about as removed from the lives of the characters. This is, of course, a device to underscore the political message of the play: unseen but all-powerful, the unsympathetic authorities exercise their power to subdue and evict the characters, whose ownership of their place, the bay, is disregarded.

Another stylised element is the character 18 Months, a blind newspaper salesman, who appears like grotesque Hermes towards the end of every act to bring messages of doom. He never has any newspapers with him and appears more like a Cassandra, making wild predictions and revealing hitherto buried truths. In fact, his messages are the main triggers of plot development, which underlines the essential powerlessness of the characters who cannot, despite the bluster of Spargo and Santos, shape their own existences. This means, moreover, that, contrary to the heroes of ancient or mediaeval tragedy, the characters do not have the power of agency to commit the tragic error that triggers the tragic plot-action in the first place. They are controlled by powers from without. This powerlessness links them with the equally powerless characters of Beckettian modernism. Edwards points out the modernist influence on the play when he writes that "Spargo and Fuse play a pointless *endgame* (Fuse and Spark), while their world falls apart about them" ("Theatre for the Evicted" 5, italics added), a reference both to Beckett's play of the same title and the general bleakness of his play. By implying that the characters are caught up in a power struggle akin to that of human beings against the gods, the action is sufficiently stylised to suggest the paradigmatic nature of their struggle. Furthermore, it characterises the imbalance of power between them and their foe without actually personalising the forces of power, thus indicating that the power imbalance is systemic rather than personal – a traditional Marxist view. The news of their eviction comes from a newspaper. The paper quotes a councillor, who remains unseen and whose name Poplowski indicates his politics (as a populist) but does not give him individual features (59-60). Thus, I am inclined to interpret Edwards's definition of power which underlines his plays as Foucauldian and his conception of place as concerned with power-relationships. Power, in the form of the unseen council, has no agent, pervades all aspects of society and is only visible in the structures of oppression and control of the prison, the madhouse etc. The

councillors in the play do not control power, they are merely the tools by which power is enforced.

Edwards himself does not acquit his characters fully of responsibility for their tragic powerlessness. Contrary to Foucault's theory of power, which states that nobody has any real agency, Edwards ascribes a certain amount of agency to his characters. However, 'stupidity' prevents them from taking action:

> Tragedy strictly speaking, I suppose, is the fall of great people (peripeteia), a fall conceived by the gods and aided by their own tragic flaws. I suppose we can have some sympathy with them because what happens to them is not entirely of their own making. It's inconceivable to me that today we wouldn't expect our main characters to be responsible for their own wickedness etc. So I have replaced the tragic flaw with stupidity and it's the common man [sic] who's tragic and his tragedy is self-induced, brought on by stupidity. ("Dic Edwards in Conversation with Torben Betts")

Thus, Edwards's conception of tragedy acquires a political edge that classic tragedy did not have to this extent: his working-class characters in *At the End of the Bay* are caught up in the doomed fate of the Cardiff docklands – a fate over which they ultimately have no control, but they exacerbate their fate by their inability to see beyond their petty quarrels and to understand the real power relationships within society around them.

The characters of *At the End of the Bay*, thus, collude in their fate through their inability to understand how the power mechanisms of society work. In a sense, their alienation, their 'eviction' from society, which had begun long before the club was demolished is, to an extent, a self-exclusion. And the rules that govern the working-class world are not presented as (morally) better than those that govern council decision-making. What the characters call "the natural law of the bay" (22), which is a mixture of violence and almost tribal loyalities,[9] is certainly not presented as the positive alternative to the indirect violence of the council, which evicts the characters from their homes and robs them of their livelihoods, however dubiously gained. Instead, the rules of their alternative world are governed by a mixture of stupidity and a pointless violence that is the outcome of their powerlessness. Spargo's and Santos's violence against women is a case in point. In Spargo, racism

[9] I use this term advisedly. A close reading of the play suggests that the bay and the outside world operate along different rules. Fuse is loyal to Spargo because Spargo saved his life from drowning when they were young (cf. a parallel accident in Ed Thomas's *Gas Station Angel*, which results in a similarly destructive dependency of saved and saviour). Santos explains how he and his gang rule the bay: "The law says we own the bay. If we didn't own the bay, there wouldn't be any law. But there is, which means we own the bay. And the law says you got to pay taxes" (22). That the bay exists almost in a parallel universe is further emphasised by the fact that none of the characters knew that there were local elections in progress – elections, moreover, whose outcome changes all their lives (60).

and misogyny are certainly interlinked – an interpretation underlined by the fact that he rapes Santos's teenage niece and treats Miriam like his personal property (12-13 *et passim*, 16 *et passim*). Yet, when Santos takes over the club, he, too, subjects Miriam to a humiliating show of power.[10] The rape and the more casual violence against Miriam can be read as symbolic of an imitation of the violent power-structures that oppress them and of the self-destruction of a group of people who themselves are subjected to a power they cannot assess or fight against. Edwards's discussion of Gary Gilmore's life in what he calls 'a culture of violence' in *Utah Blue* is thus foreshadowed in *At the End of the Bay.*

Fuse's death at the end of the play hardly qualifies as a tragic death, although his fall from pseudo-security to chaos imitates that of a tragic hero, despite the fact that his betrayal of Spargo's confidence in the second act might be construed as his 'tragic flaw'. The anticlimax of his life and death mark him out as the best example of the "evicted": he does not occupy any place he can call his own and, consequently, has no real agency. He is also a coward who bows to people he believes to be in authority, can never quite summon the courage to declare his feelings for Miriam (but instead ends up inadvertently 'selling' her to Santos), and in the end is abandoned by all.[11] He is a less intelligent Ben,[12] a similarly cowardly character, who is attracted to the charisma of authority of Carlo and his nationalism in *Franco's Bastard.* Interestingly, Ben manages to somehow escape and return to Cardiff, which indicates a shift in Edwards's theorisation of 'eviction' as wholly negative. Instead, in *Franco's Bastard* he has moved on to theorise 'eviction' as the hybrid identity which is sometimes painful but 'normal' and which is contrasted with the 'unnatural' purity of the nationalist ideology of identity. In *At the End of the Bay*, though, the evictees are clearly the victims of the power structures that make the Cardiff working-class powerless in their own place.

I should like to pause for a minute and point out that although *At the End of the Bay* is a play about (the lack of) place, it does not construct an essentialist link

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[10] Violence against women is identified with ownership of place in the play. In Act II, Santos approaches Miriam with a flick-knife and cuts off her bra before pinning it to the door of the club. This gesture is not primarily intended to intimidate Miriam, although it does, but to attack Spargo by damaging and partly laying claim to his 'property' (45). In this context, Luce Irigaray's reading of woman as not only 'placed' but as 'place' is pertinent, a reading which will be discussed in the context of chapter 5.

[11] Interestingly, the moment of his death, which could have been used for a more obviously agit-prop call for a solidarity amongst working-class people, is not staged as such. It seems that the audience are supposed to draw their own inferences.

between people and place. The characters are not 'rooted' in place in a way that goes beyond the material reality of living. The issue is not loss of place, but the loss of power over place – and place is clearly interpreted as a 'network of relationships' between people (cf. Massey 66, cf. chapter 1). The characters are not shown to be attached to the docklands in any way: Spargo, Santos and Miriam leave when they have to and Fuse only stays in order to die – because he has nowhere to go. It seems that sentiment with regard to place has no room in this world-view and is likely to be regarded as sentimentality. Issues of belonging, which have been expressed by writers like Gwyn Thomas, for example (cf. Introduction), tend not to figure largely in Edwards's drama. Instead, he gives voice to a discourse of ownership of place and of dislocation through the loss of that ownership of place. However, I would suggest that the importance of place must not be underestimated in this play. The play is clearly a response to the disappearance of heavy industry and the working-class culture that went with it in South Wales of the 1970s and the slow encroachment of Conservative politics into Wales after the Conservative Party had won the general election in 1979. However, as already noted, it can also be read in the tradition of political playwriting that takes its cue from the early Bond, Barker and Wesker and which is taken up by that most versatile of writers, Caryl Churchill, in the late 1970s and early 80s. A comparison with Churchill's *Top Girls*, which was also first produced in 1982 (Royal Court Theatre, London), is interesting as Churchill's play, although dealing with similar issues, is strikingly different. Churchill presents the conflict between a British socialism and Thatcherite conservatism through an exploration of contemporary, historical and fictional women's lives in a mixture of realism and non-realism that questions conventional expectations of linearity of plot in drama.[13] By contrast, Edwards refuses to personalise the power struggle, and neither is he interested in feminism as an analytical method for questioning the political status quo.[14] But where Churchill, like so many English writers, presents her characters as somehow universal, Edwards locates his exploration of the social dislocation of the working-classes in a specific environment. *At the End of the Bay* has more in common with Bond's *Saved* (1965) in the way it analyses the violence of a powerless group of people (even though

[12] Both characters are seen as typical 'Cardiffians'. In Edwards's terminology, 'Cardiffians' are identified with the 'evicted' and vice versa (cf. "Theatre for the Evicted" 4-5).

[13] For a good interpretation of *Top Girls* cf. Innes, *Modern British Drama: The Twentieth Century* 517-520.

[14] I expect this is because in traditional Marxist analysis, feminism and other struggles for equality are subsumed under the struggle for class equality. Cf. Gayatri C. Spivak's influential article "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

Bond does not localise his play in a specific environment either) and thus expresses a sentiment that surely must have come from a culture of defeatism that took over South Wales and especially its working-class culture at the end of the 1970s. Together with the refusal to make common cause with the Welsh Nationalists,[15] this contributed to the defeat of the devolution referendum of 1979.

As my preceding discussion of *At the End of the Bay* shows, Dic Edwards's main aim is to present a political argument on stage. He regards the theatre as a 'forum for debate' and, indeed as

> the only place where you can tell the necessary story of our social lives in a way which actively and creatively and morally engages the audience and their intelligence and in a way that satisfies democracy's desire for opposition to the lawyers and other constrainers of truth. ("Dic Edwards in Conversation with Torben Betts")

That does not mean, however, that he presents contradictory ideas and viewpoints which are pitted against each other in the play: much like Brecht or Shaw he presents an argument that is fully formed and with which the audience can agree or disagree. As arguments and ideas become more important, Edwards's highly intellectual drama becomes less realistic and his characters, the vehicles for Edwards's ideas, less rounded. A good example is *Utah Blue* (1996), whose subtitle *Scenes in a Culture of Murder* summarises the central argument of the play: a society which is inherently violent will produce citizens who are violent (cf. Jeni Williams, "More Than a Splash of Colour" 61-62) and thus takes one of the central themes of *At the End of the Bay* to a new level.

As in *At the End of the Bay*, Edwards writes about a real incident in *Utah Blue* – only this time all his characters have their real-life equivalents, too. The first part of the play deals with the events leading up to the execution of Gary Gilmore. The real-life case of Gary Gilmore gained notoriety because of Gilmore's apparently meaningless murder of two men and his subsequent insistence on an execution by firing squad in 1977 (cf. "The Execution of Gary Gilmore"). The case gained further publicity by the publication of two books: Gary's brother Mikal wrote the auto/biography *Shot in the Heart* and Norman Mailer based his *Executioner's Song* on the Gilmore case.[16] The play is structured as a loose collection of scenes. In the

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[15] The reason given in footnote 14 probably applies in this context, too.

[16] The Gilmore case is curiously echoed in the recent case of Eric Rudolph, who is currently accused of heinous hate crimes, such as leaving a nail bomb at the Olympic Games in Atlanta (1996), leaving two bombs outside an abortion clinic in Atlanta (1996) and bombing a gay nightclub also in Atlanta (1997). Rudolph is reported as being a member of the 'Christian Identity' movement, which the journalist Andrew Stephen describes as "a

first part events in the past and events immediately prior to the execution are shown. The second part deals with the aftermath of the execution. Now, Gary's brother Mikal is at the centre of the action, although he is closely observed by Gary's body, a gruesome, ghostly apparition. Almost replicating the murderer's life, Mikal's futile search for Gary's motivation nearly drives him into despair until he learns to rid himself of his older brother's shadow.

In order to make his points most forcefully and to prevent his audience from sliding into the passive role of consumers of fiction, Edwards employs Brechtian techniques in this play as well as a non-linear time-sequence. These are 'alienation effects' which are employed to make the audience step back and reflect; methods to which audiences are meant to respond with an active and critical attitude. Thus, each scene is preceded by a title, a method the author develops further in plays like *lola brecht* (cf. Savill 65-66). Titles like "Nicole bringing it all back home" (an intertextual reference to a Bob Dylan song) for Scene 1 (Part One) slyly sum up the plot and thus rob the scene of suspense and titles like "We live in a culture of murder" for Scene 3 (Part One) or "Gary is a blank sheet on which society writes its horror story" for Scene 5 (Part One) furnish the audience with an interpretative angle. Moreover, the characters in *Utah Blue* are no psychologically rounded characters. Although the subject matter suggests a documentary approach (cf. Taylor 79), the characters' function is limited to their role in the development of Edwards's argument. Nicole, for example, Gary's and then Mikal's lover, is clearly not a character with importance in her own right. Her role is to provide a catalyst (cf. Nisbet), comfort and (sexual) fulfilment for Gary and Mikal; her presence allows both men to find out the truth about themselves. Furthermore, she illustrates the power imbalance between the state and the underprivileged individual (Act II, Scene 3). Gary's act of revolution against the state by insisting on his death is mirrored by Nicole's own act of defiance: she strips in front of the church and challenges: "Tell

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profoundly un-Christian movement that derives from Victorian Britain, believes that Anglo-Saxons today are offshoots of one of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel. Sheltering under that Christian Identity label, members are anti-gay, anti-Semitic and anti-foreigner (hence the antipathy towards the Olympic Games); they are basically anarchical, believing that all government is bad. Such is the white supremacism involved that they are opposed to abortion because they believe that too many white foetuses are being aborted, and that whites will soon be overrun by blacks and Latinos" (9).This case seems to supports the interpretation that random terrorist violence is the logical outcome of a repressive and violent society. The case is complicated by the fact that, technically, Rudolph seems to be a fundamentalist Christian anarchist, who, apparently, enjoys the status of a folk hero in North Carolina. Thus, the Gilmore case probably was more complex than Edwards's theatrical parable suggests – which does not invalidate the project in any way, however (cf. Stephen, "America").

me church! Tell me God! Tell my soul: why do we kill people who kill people to show that killing people is wrong? Fucks!" (39, cf. Savill 66). Gary's mother Bessie's function is similarly limited to providing explanations for the men's background and for illustrating a position of resigned acceptance, where Gary and Nicole choose rebellion. In the last instance, even Mikal and Gary themselves are not characters who can be understood by employing a conventional psychological interpretation. The contradictions within the characters and especially Gary's refusal to explain his actions run counter to any kind of cause-and-effect interpretation (Savill 67). Interestingly, the use of 'real' characters like Gary Gilmore, or Ludwig Wittgenstein in *Wittgenstein's Daughter*, as well as characters who bear well-known names but are otherwise invented, like Beckett and Celine again in *Wittgenstein's Daughter*, paradoxically underscores their artificiality, which again draws attention to their functionality within the argument.[17] Another method of distancing is the way the characters often interrupt the action to address the audience directly – a playful method to indicate the artificiality of the play itself, which Brecht employed to great effect. Finally, the plot has no linear structure and, in fact, seems to go around in circles as the characters (and the audience) try to grasp the enormity of Gary's crime and try to find reasons to explain his behaviour. Thus, in Part 1 the first scene charts a beginning as Nicole and Gary meet. Scene 2 fast-forwards to a moment shortly after Gary's death when Bessie comes to view the body. Scene 3 takes the audience back in time again, this time to Gary's and Mikal's childhood home in the 1960s. Thus, the plot takes the audience back and forth in time in the search for a plausible explanation for Gary's behaviour – an explanation which, in the end, cannot be found. The loose structure of the play is complemented by its non-realistic setting. Its multi-functional set suggests rather than describes place, thus allowing for swift changes of place and time (14). Brecht wrote a number of his plays as openly didactic *Lehrstücke* and even in later plays constructed paradigmatic characters and situations in plays, which an active audience was supposed to engage with. The employment of Brechtian techniques suggests that Edwards chose the Gilmore case as an equally paradigmatic case to illustrate his theory of

[17] To make clear that his characters are fictional, Edwards often pairs a well-known surname with an invented first name. For example, Celine is not called Louis but Arnold and Beckett's first name is Terry, not Samuel. The references to the historical Céline and Beckett conjure up expectations which the author then usually dashes: Celine is a fascist like the writer Céline but lacks his intellectual power, Beckett is a boxer and one-time lover of Wittgenstein. Yet, the subjects of fascism and the crisis of meaning which had been the central preoccupation of Modernism are invoked by the last names of the characters and underline *Wittgenstein's Daughter*'s key arguments.

'eviction' by creating a character who is 'evicted' and, to a degree, excludes himself from society. The play does not look for psychological explanations for Gilmore's behaviour. Instead, it sees his irrational violence as a logical outcome of a society based on violent inclusion/exclusion mechanisms.

The structure of the play and the non-realistic functionality of the characters serve to focus the audience's attention on the main arguments. These arguments are interlinked: firstly, Edwards argues that meaning is always personal and can change according to one's situation. That means that categories of meaning prescribed by church and state are questionable and evidence for an oppressive regime. This tallies with Althusser's description of the "ideological state apparatus" (Althusser 300-303).[18] The oppressive power of the state – the "repressive state apparatus" in Althusser's terminology – subdues any challenges to the power of deciding meaning by excluding and incarcerating those individuals whose perception of these categories is different. Thus, Gary Gilmore is 'evicted' – just like the English-speaking Welsh of Edwards's description, who have no part in deciding what "an overarching Welsh Culture" is.[19] The structure of the play as well as the fruitlessness of the characters' search for the meaning of Gary's crime underline that interpretation. Edwards consequently presents an argument against the power of the 'repressive state apparatuses' of church – Utah's Mormonism in the play – and of a legal system, which is only interested in punishment and not in redemption.[20]

Secondly, the play argues that even in the USA in whose state ideology individualism plays such an important role (an ideology exported so successfully to most western countries), true individualism is impossible because the individual is indelibly marked by the social structures in which she or he lives. Indeed, the price for wanting to be truly individualistic is eviction or incarceration. Gary experiences both. Furthermore, even though he tries as hard as he can to step outside the structures which decide on what is 'right' or 'wrong' by committing two murders that are, to all intents and purposes, meaningless, he cannot shake off the structures that have moulded him. Thus, his crime is both an answer to and the logical

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[18] Althusser describes religious organisations as part of the "ideological state apparatuses". By contrast, Edwards thinks of state power and church power as separate entities.

[19] I do not think that this interpretation is far-fetched. Edwards himself described himself as 'writing out of Wales' when writing *Utah Blue* ("Introduction" 8, cf. also Allen).

[20] Cf. another Marxist scholar's definition of ideology. Hansjörg Bay describes ideology in terms of 'narrative shells' (frozen cultural narratives), which fix meaning in a certain way and have long stopped being a meaningful expression of the real experiences of people. In a sense, Edwards's understanding of repressive state and church ideologies mirrors this definition in *Utah Blue* (cf. Bay). The narrative of heroic individualism of the USA turns out to be a by now meaningless narrative shell.

outcome of a culture in which both his religion and the state legitimately command violence as a weapon against the aberrant (28). His essential powerlessness is demonstrated by his wearing "the executioner's 'mark' on his chest" throughout the first part of the play (14). In other words, his death is almost a foregone conclusion, he is a 'marked man' from the start.[21] As an example of the church's repressive power, Mormonism's inherent violence is dealt with in the play. Its representatives are called 'Dead Makers' by Bessie (26). She says: "Mormons had been so persecuted that they came to BELIEVE in violence. They used violence for protection but it got that they also used violence for vengeance and punishment" (26). The emphasis on violence as punishment brings church power close to the powers of repression exercised by the state, which is represented by the police who harass Nicole (51-53) and by that ultimate power to take away the life of its citizens. This does not mean that Gary's actions are excused. In Nicole's narrative of his childhood, he emerges as unloved but equally unloving and as increasingly obsessed with getting his own way (47-48). Nevertheless, his violence and insistence on having things the way he wants them can be linked back to the American culture of lonely and violent heroism (Taylor 79). Paradoxically, Gary's only triumph over the system is when he submits to the cruel 'eye-for-an-eye'-logic of capital punishment – the ultimate weapon of society against its 'evicted'. By insisting on his own death he asserts his 'free' will.

Thirdly, the location of the play is interesting in the light of Edwards's claim that "Utah is Wales displaced" (Edwards, "Introduction" 8). He continues: "America is a stopping off point for my drama" (8); it is not the place where a Welsh utopia is imagined, as for example in *House of America*, in which America functions as an unreal, but potent myth against which Welsh culture is measured. Edwards 'displaces' his play for the following reasons. Firstly, he wants to escape what he calls "the intolerable pressure of apparently owed acknowledgments [sic] demanded by those who impose duties on expression" (8).[22] In other words, writing in the

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[21] Cf. Bessie's words "Gary was alive in SPITE of himself! He was dead before he was born! He's only gone back!" (40) and Gary's self-assessment "I walk with death" in Scene 3 of Part I, which is set in Gary's childhood (25).

[22] This comment seems fair when read in conjunction with Graham Allen's review of *Utah Blue.* He writes: "The connection with Wales? Edwards himself *offers no excuses for writing of these American characters*, but he does see in the events a warning of social breakdown that has its relevance in the neglect – amounting even to abandonment – of Wales in its post-industrial decline" (italics added). Apparently, Allen's concern is that Edwards has been commissioned by the Welsh Arts Council (through *Made in Wales*) and has not actually produced a play about Wales, and is consequently reading into it a meaning that would have been more appropriate for *At the End of the Bay*. The question here is, of course: why should Edwards 'offer excuses' for not setting his play in Wales?

context of Welsh culture, he perceives certain preconceptions about his plays and wants to counteract them by setting his play on the other side of the Atlantic. Moreover, I would regard this as a measure to once again draw attention to the argument which transcends the specific. Indeed, the play might be described as a dialogue between Wales and Utah.[23] Edwards himself draws the comparison between Utah's Mormonism and Welsh Nonconformism (7-8), both of which he regards as limiting cultural expression: "[i]n the end, both these religions closeted within their respective cultures, kill art" (8). Further, Edwards's central argument, namely the unequal power-relationships between state and individual, comes out more clearly because it is not placed within a context of Welsh culture. It is a kind of 'alienation effect', in which the audience can leave their own cultural baggage at the door of the theatre, in order to see the idea behind the play all the more clearly. *Utah Blue*, along with *Wittgenstein's Daughter* (1993), a play about the power of language to tell the truth or to deceive, and *Casanova Undone* (1992), which is about the gap between appearance and reality – if one can summarise the plays in such sweeping statements – constitute the most ambitious of Edwards's plays in which plot-action is subsumed under a few key ideas. Therefore, their settings and their structure are deliberately non-realistic. His political convictions have remained similar to those expressed in *At the End of the Bay*, however.

Before turning to *Franco's Bastard*, one needs to address the difficult question of audience reception. Without going into any great detail about audience reception theory, which has been sensitively charted by Susan Bennett in *Theatre Audiences* and by Baz Kershaw in his study of non-mainstream theatre practices, *The Politics of Performance*, it is worth briefly pondering to whom Edwards's highly intellectual theatre is actually addressed. He writes for an alert, active audiences willing to exercise their intelligence to engage with an extended argument on stage for a considerable length of time. Indeed, he is very much opposed to a theatre that 'merely entertains'. This leads to an interesting conclusion: Edwards seems to be more in tune with the authors of the early Welsh drama in English in this regard than with playwrights of the left like John McGrath – who, contrary to writers like J.O. Francis, holds a political position similar to that of Edwards. McGrath developed a distinctive theatrical form for working-class audiences, which was realised in his own

[23] Utah functions as Wales's other in many ways, but there are also culturally specific elements, like the death penalty, and the American ideology of individualism, which form the cultural background to this play and which cannot easily be transposed to Wales. Therefore, Wales is not to be identified with Utah, but the latter is in dialogue with Wales.

theatre company *7:84*.[24] In 1979, Raymond Williams invited McGrath to give a series of lectures on popular, political theatre and form at Cambridge University and this series of talks has been collected in *A Good Night Out*. In these lectures McGrath argues for a radically changed theatre, in which theatrical form is adapted to include several popular forms in order to appeal to a working-class audience. Among the 'ingredients' for a working-class theatre, he mentions 'directness' (arguing that ambiguity would not appeal to a working-class audience), 'comedy', 'music', 'emotion', 'variety' (understood by McGrath in the sense of music hall variety or in the tradition of the Scottish *ceilidh* or the Welsh *noson lawen*), 'effect', 'immediacy' (that is, a 'subject matter close to the audience's lives'), and 'localism' (of subject matter and performers[25]) (cf. McGrath 54-58). In a word, McGrath argues against what he considers to be an elitist, bourgeois theatrical form, which he identifies with what he terms 'Post-Osborne Drama'. He concludes

> that this framed New Era/Dawn/Direction of British theatre [following Osborne and including writers like Harold Pinter, Edward Bond, Arnold Wesker, Alun Owen etc.] was no more than the elaboration of a theatrical technique for turning authentic working-class experience into satisfying thrills for the bourgeoisie. (11)

In this polemical piece McGrath disputes the fact that writers like Edward Bond write meaningful drama for the working-classes as they, in his view, do not attempt to write for real working-class audiences. He also does not shy away from accusing Bertold Brecht and Erwin Piscator of hostility towards their middle-class audiences, arguing that they worked within traditional theatrical structures by choice and not because they had to (cf. 42).

The counter-argument to McGrath's argument for an anti-Royal Court, popular theatre is to be found in Howard Barker's approach. Barker, whose work is, paradoxically maybe, not performed by the Royal Court Theatre either, started his long play-writing career from a political commitment to left-wing politics similar to that of Bond or Hare, but he quickly found that the (docu)realism of the politically committed left-wing play did not suit him:

> Like most fallen souls, I never meant it. I intended to be cruel, and witty, and in the old-fashioned sense, realistic ... So I described what I knew, and after one short play, I had no more to add. I had achieved a promising debut, but I sensed in the vaguest way I had not employed my imagination at all, I had merely reported on conditions. ("Radical Elitism in the Theatre" 32)

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[24] The numbers refer to the percentage of people (7%) who own most (84%) of Britain's wealth.

[25] McGrath quotes the popularity of Billy Connolly in Scotland and of Max Boyce in South Wales.

Barker argues against clarity and for ambiguities in his theatre, which is "about dislocation and not unification" (34). According to Barker, the audience does not necessarily want popular entertainment and he accuses mainstream companies of 'distrusting the audience', thinking of them as "a semi-educated mass in need of protection, and protection in particular from complexity, ambiguity, and the potential disorder which lurks behind the imagination" (34). Thus, he speaks for an elitist theatre, a theatre in which the imagination is allowed to be subversive, and in his view this means 'taking the audience seriously':[26]

> To take the audience seriously means making demands on it of a strenuous nature. There are people who wish to be stretched, challenged, even depressed by a work of art, and who will make considerable efforts to experience those things. . . . Where imagination is stimulated, and the emotions engaged, concentration is possible for many hours. (36)

It is perhaps surprising that both authors argue from a similar political position for and against elitism in the theatre, for and against an intellectually demanding theatre, for and against a theatre of the word. Furthermore, both are in clear opposition to the kind of 'post-Osborne' realist theatre they accuse the Royal Court Theatre of producing. Both authors have been quoted at length in order to be able to put Edwards's views into perspective and to try and answer the question I raised above: Edwards clearly writes a working-class theatre in the sense that he interrogates class relationships in terms of power imbalances in his plays – but for which audience does he write? I would argue that the uncompromising nature of those plays of his that transcend realism, are clearly based on intellectual arguments, and are thus works in which words are often more important than action, puts him into alignment with Howard Barker's views about the role of theatre and the role of the audience in his theatre.[27] This is not to suggest that Edwards's drama is necessarily comparable to Barker's drama, indeed Barker's 'theatre of catastrophe', despite some points of contact with *Utah Blue*, seems far removed from Edwards's much more obviously political plays. Nevertheless, Edwards's views of his audience seem to tally with Barker's. Edwards notes:

> The severe reality is that the vast majority of people who go to the theatre are middle-class people, because theatre is too expensive for the working-class to

[26] 'Élite' is not understood in class-terms here, but in terms of intelligence and of a willingness to be challenged. A critique of this supposed non-class-based argument is, of course, that aesthetic taste, the expectation that the theatre is an arena in which audiences must expect to be challenged, and the ability to engage in highly intellectual debates are conditioned by an education system, that has traditionally favoured middle and upper class students.

[27] I would like to except his work for Spectacle Theatre, a Theatre in Education company. There, of course, he writes for a very different audience, namely for young people (cf. Edwards, "Theatre for the Evicted" 15).

> afford. Culturally of course it's more complex than that. My audience is a middle-class audience, and if I were to write a play for them about a working-class situation in an analytical way it would come over as something of a complaint, a harangue or just anger. It would be dismissible in dramatic terms. . . . The kitchen sink, slice-of-life stuff is, in my opinion, just sentimental nonsense. What I'm interested in is looking at the condition of the working-class in all its complexity, and trying to analyse the complexity. The lives of the working-class are largely shaped by the middle-classes. . . . If the middle-classes shape the lives of the working class, I want to know how responsible they are. I'm very critical of the people who govern us, namely the middle-classes, and that's why I write plays about them. ("A Dereliction of Duty" 82)

Edwards does not seem to be under any illusion that his theatre is more likely to appeal to middle-class audiences and he is not prepared to 'show' this middle-class audience 'a slice of working-class life'. Instead, he constructs an often non-realist narrative framework to discuss issues of power, of language and of class designed to make his audience think. It is nevertheless interesting that he seems to be prepared to subscribe to a theatre which is closer to Barker's consciously 'élitist' theatre than to McGrath's 'popular' working-class theatre. Edwards does see himself as one of "the guardians of intelligence", who are responsible for exercising "vigilance in the monitoring of social structures". They "include (ought to include) philosophers, writers, artists and, perhaps, teachers" ("Dic Edwards in Conversation with Torben Betts"). This view seems to go back to the classic Marxist model of base and superstructure, which ascribes the role of a cultural élite to writers, philosophers etc. What seems to be problematic about Barker's approach is that it 'evicts' the majority of prospective theatre goers because his theatre is famously difficult – and the question must be asked if Edwards's kind of theatre does not do the same. At the same time the issue should not be simplified for it cannot be argued that Edwards's success or failure is determined by box office sales alone.

The final play under discussion did engage Edwards's audience to a great degree – maybe to a greater degree than the author anticipated, for one of the performances of the play in the Chapter Arts Centre in Cardiff was disrupted by an angry follower of the late Julian Cayo Evans, leader of the *Free Wales Army* which was briefly active in the 1970s. Some members in the audience obviously felt that their idol had been besmirched by Edward's character Carlo, the romantic nationalist at the centre of the play *Franco's Bastard* (2002). According to Keith Morris, stink bombs were let off in the auditorium in another performance and the disturbance was carried over into the discussion forum of the *Theatre in Wales*-website:

> The range of views and opinions expressed in the forum both during and after the run of the play was considerable – and particularly interesting in that it

> included not just those of the audience in the play but also those who were involved in its writing, direction, staging and performing. For weeks there was debate on the merits of the play itself, notably whether Dic Edwards was right to base his central character on the late Julian Cayo Evans, and on the issues of nationalism and racism that it explored. . . . After days of increasingly acrimonious exchange of postings, the intensity of the debate managed to come to the attention of *The Western Mail* and *Golwg*. . . . The reaction that Dic's work received was even used by a member of parliament to illustrate their [*sic*] arguments during a debate on racism in Welsh politics in the House of Commons in May [2002]. ("Franco's Bastard: The Digital Dialogues", 82-83)

Judging from the reaction to the play, Edwards did achieve what he had always set out to do: to engender political debate by means of the theatre. *Franco's Bastard* is not only interesting because of the reaction it received. In the play, Edwards's theory of eviction changes decisively from a status of essential victimhood to a new and more favourable position, as will be shown below.

Franco's Bastard is situated in Wales, the first play to use a Welsh setting since *At the End of the Bay*. The subtitle *A Welsh Pastoral* clearly locates the action in the rural Welsh countryside but it also makes clear that the play is not realistic.[28] Dic Edwards has commented on the subtitle thus:

> [T]he use of 'pastoral' is intended to draw attention to [the dichotomy between city and country], but also I'm using it ironically in the sense that one thinks of something pastoral as something peaceful – while in the play the pastoral harbours violence and hatred. ("Dic Edwards in Conversation with Torben Betts")

The use of the term 'pastoral' is thus clearly ironic, since pastorals, in the original definition, are to be concerned with the lives of shepherds and the main character Carlo in *Franco's Bastard* is a shepherd of sorts in his role as leader of a small nationalist group in a rural environment. Despite having been extensively used and parodied in other fictional genres, the 'pastoral' has not yet received much attention in Welsh drama in English. The play may, perhaps, be more accurately described as a political parable, however, since it deals with the dangers of nationalism, the violence and irrationality lurking behind a superficially attractive exterior and its language which only serves to obfuscate reality, not describe it. The play suggests a moral outrage against any form of nationalism, which can never be regarded as

[28] It seems that much of the controversy around the play was caused by audiences not realising or accepting that the play was not primarily a satire on Julian Cayo Evans on whom the main character Carlo is loosely based. The play certainly plays with the similarities of Carlo and Cayo Evans, but I believe that a realistic reading of the play underestimates its argument. For a scathing critique of the play, which does interpret the play as realistic, cf. Adams, "Dic Kicks Against the Pricks". That the issue is debatable is shown by another review, in which the reviewer did interpret the play as an attack on "ideology in general and nationalist/ nativist/cultural separatist ideologies in particular" (Nesvet) rather than as an attack limited to the Welsh nationalism of the Free Wales Army. Cf. also Morris, "Franco's Bastard: The Digital Dialogues".

benign. Thus, Edwards's views were bound to clash with those members of the audience who conceived of nationalism as a necessary ingredient to their Welshness, necessary, in fact, for Wales to survive and stay on the map of Britain.

In *Franco's Bastard*, two young Cardiffians, Ben and the mixed-race woman Serena, bored with their lives in Cardiff, travel separately to West Wales. They are soon caught up in Carlo Francisco Franco Lloyd Hughes's world, which seems to promise them "a life of peace, of wisdom", a "life of culture and heroism" (21). Both are initially fascinated by Carlo's charisma but neither takes his nationalist 'project' seriously – although Serena wants to believe in Carlo himself. Indeed, they easily see through the linguistic smokescreen that masks the brutal reality of his fascism – their mistake is that they underestimate the "stupidity [inherent in nationalism] and the self-obsession and myopia that cause it" (Edwards, "Theatre for the Evicted" 5) as well as its underlying violence. Carlo's rather stupid, bigoted strongman Sion eventually revolts against Carlo when he realises that the army of Welsh nationalists Sion was supposedly part of only exists in Carlo's mind. The play ends on a note of cautious optimism as both Ben and Serena escape back to Cardiff – but it is unclear how Sion will exploit the knowledge that Carlo is now afraid of him.

The play is successful in portraying a whole spectrum of nationalisms and motivations for nationalism in its four characters. Carlo's nationalism is essentially romantic: he manages to create a persona for himself as the mind behind his great 'project' with great flamboyance and not a little seductiveness.[29] He constructs a great, heroic past for Wales and intimates that he could be the saviour of Wales's future. His romantic nationalism wins Sion over to the 'project', a bigoted, small-minded, violent young man, who ascribes all his personal, petty failures to the presence of 'foreigners', especially the hated English (22-23 *et passim*). Ben and Serena have more complex reasons for being entranced by Carlo's personality and rhetoric: after having had a row with his boss, Ben feels powerless and aggrieved and leaves Cardiff to find new certainties and bolster his ego in West Wales. It is soon clear, however, that he does not believe Carlo's nationalist rhetoric but only uses it when it suits him. Ben is clearly out to enjoy himself at Carlo's and Sion's expense, but Serena is genuinely looking for a sense of meaning in her life because in Cardiff "[i]t . . . seems that between Friday and Friday there's this ... emptiness" (18) and she hopes that Carlo with his easy assurance and seductive flair can

[29] This seductiveness is not accidental: Edwards created Carlo as a character with whom the audience could sympathise in order "to make them wonder about where they stand politically" ("Dic Edwards in Conversation with Torben Betts").

provide that meaning for her. Ultimately, the characters, with the possible exception of Ben, are on a search for meaning and nationalism is the creed that is supposed to give them the meaning they lack. Ultimately, however, the kind of romantic nationalism propagated by Carlo is ineffectual and Carlo is incapable of providing meaning. It is perhaps characteristic for Edwards's own political position and background that nationalism is only thought of as a spectrum of negative forces, which ultimately deceive all who are involved in it. None of the characters embodies a positive sense of nationalism; indeed, nationalism in all its guises is rejected.

In this play, Dic Edwards revisits topics he has dealt with in earlier plays and his characterisation as well as his theorisation of the concept of eviction has, as Nesvet mentioned, "reached a new level" (Nesvet). It is also a play with recognisably working-class characters, whose position is described in more complex terms than in earlier plays. The central theme of the play is, of course, the nationalism that Edwards equates with fascism. Thus, he returns to a theme explored in *Looking for the World* (1986), in which the conflict is located in junta-ruled Greece, although two Cardiffians arrive just in time to make things worse, and *Longing to Rain Over Us* (1987), a play located in a Second-World-War prisoner-of-war camp, in which German, Italian and especially British nationalisms are satirised. In *Franco's Bastard*, the discussion of nationalism comes 'home', so to speak. It seems that Edwards wanted to write about Cayo Evans ever since writing *At the End of the Bay*, but only now regarded the time as right: Jeni Williams comments that "[n]ow . . . with the establishment of the National Assembly and the growth of nationalism, it seems a very timely play – especially considering the possibility of Cayo becoming a kind of martyr with a *Cardiff* pub being named after him. . . . "(Jeni Williams 61). This statement reveals that Edwards's reservations about nationalism which informed *Looking for the World* and *Long to Rain Over Us* are still the same. The surge of pride after the establishment of the Assembly seems to him to go together with a far more dubious nationalism, which is backward-looking and harking back to the days of Cayo Evans's *Free Wales Army*. In a way, *Franco's Bastard* is an attempt at debunking the myth surrounding Evans. Considering Edwards's considerable antipathy towards nationalism, Carlo is drawn surprisingly sympathetically. Perhaps it is his personal knowledge of Evans, whom he regards as a "Gilmore with a silver spoon" (Jeni Williams 61), and of the contradictions within the man who espoused a rural nationalism about 80 years too late,[30] that made him

[30] This is not to deny that a rural nationalism was powerful in the 20th century, especially when aligned with Welsh-language-politics. Yet, if Evans had been born in the time of the

create a complex, flawed character. Carlo's biggest mistake is that he believes his own flowery fascist rhetoric which he creates to ensnare his followers. Indeed, he requires prodigious verbal bombast before he can act at all and the division between speaking about something, believing something and doing something is blurred.[31] More importantly, Carlo's follower Sion, an essentially inarticulate man who replicates Carlo's ideas "all twisted up and magnified" (56) cannot distinguish between verbiage and reality, and contributes to the overall confusion by magnifying the lies Ben told Sion to impress him at the beginning of the play. In contrast, Ben and Serena know exactly what is rhetoric and what is truth and try to trip up Carlo and Sion in arguments about national identity and race (cf. 44). Ben deliberately points out that he is a less than ideal candidate for the position of "boldest and most successful Welshman alive" (43) that Carlo constructs for him. He does not realise, though, that Carlo's belief in what Edwards has termed "apparent language", the language that veils reality, is absolute because there is, quite literally, no substance to his fascism ("Theatre for the Evicted" 11-12). Carlo's gaze is forever turned to the vision, to a glorious Welsh past and thus he is incapable of seeing what is in front of him. He tells Sion:

> Where is your inner eye, man? The one that searches out what's possible not just what's seen? That same eye, in fact, that leads us on with our project to know that there is a nation here beyond the disorder of mediocrity. A nation of ideals; of vision. (24)

This exaggerated trust in the vision of the Welsh nation of his imagination does not stop him from despising actual Welsh people ("The Welsh don't need democracy. They need strong leadership and a few hardy myths" 44). The discrepancy between 'reality' and 'vision', which he cannot reconcile, constitutes Carlo's 'tragic flaw'.[32]

Furthermore, Carlo's inner contradictions and the contrast between his appearance and the dark reality beneath the façade are explored in his relationships

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Cymru Fydd movement in the late 19th century, his background and his kind of nationalism would maybe have been more successful and may even have gained him a place in mainstream politics.

[31] Cf. his soliloquy, in which he describes Casanova as proto-fascist and then compares himself to Casanova, prior to having sex with Serena – a seemingly daunting prospect which, in the Cardiff production of the play (Chapter Arts Centre, 10 April 2002), required copious amounts of alcohol as well. The contrast between what he says ("The politician is always self-obsessive while the lover must always be selfless and giving. Which is what I will be like tonight with Serena" 52) and what he does (he very probably rapes Serena) is telling. Exemplifying Edwards's point that true humanity requires a reconciliation of internal opposites, Carlo's failure to reconcile the discrepancy between self-image and reality make him a deeply disturbed man.

[32] A visual reminder of Carlo's inability to reconcile 'fact' and 'fiction' is the ill-fitting uniform tunic he wears. Carlo claims that the tunic once belonged to Franco (20) and the way that

with women. He has an ambivalent attitude towards Serena due to her dark skin and his fraught relationship with women in general. Carlo calls her Jeanne, "[a]fter Jeanne Duval, Baudelaire's young Creole woman. A sometimes actress and a sometimes whore" (29). He idolises her and despises her in equal measure – dressing her up in an "exquisitely overdone" "blood-red and black lace Flamenco dress, in which Carlo believes his mother dolled herself up for Franco" (Nesvet on the Cardiff production). He puts her on a pedestal and simultaneously, maybe inwardly despising himself for his unspoken oedipal desires, regards her as a whore, speaking of her as his piece of "black arse" (24) to Sion – although in this complex web of fabrications and lies, it is possible that he merely wants to assuage Sion's doubts ("To be honest, Carlo, she looks like a wog!" 24) that he is not fascist enough. The violence beneath the genteel façade finally comes to the fore when he rapes Serena, an action that duplicates the rape of Serena's mother in the past (Scenes 2-3 and 5).[33] Carlo thus is unable to distinguish the sexual act from a violent 'taking' of the woman he desires.[34]

In Carlo, Edwards thus interrogates fascism and fascist language and comes to the conclusion that they serve only to create a fabric of lies behind which a dull-witted, violent Sion and a flawed, essentially weak Carlo can hide. As foils for these deluded characters, he creates Ben and Serena as two resolutely down-to-earth characters, who stumble momentarily because they are out of their depth in rural West Wales. In them, we meet the "evicted" again: they are working-class

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the actor James Coombes wore it in the performance suggested that the role of Franco was a size too big to 'fit' Carlo.

[33] The play indicates that Serena might be Carlo's daughter – the result of his raping Ruby, a Guyanese woman, in Cardiff 20 years before. The fact that here history repeats itself is emphasised through double-casting: the same actress, who plays Serena, also plays Ruby.

[34] While he is unable to have a 'normal' relationship with a woman, Carlo has no problems in dealing with men. Indeed, the Cardiff production of the play emphasised a certain element of homoeroticism in Carlo's dealings with Sion and Ben. When Sion enters the stage in Scene 2, Carlos gives him a long, appraising stare and he gives Ben a prolonged hug on welcoming him to the 'project' – a hug to which Ben does not know how to respond. This could be read as the homoeroticism implied in (proto-)military and fascist movements. George L. Mosse mentions the "community of men, a *Männerbund* that symbolized strength and devotion, within which men could test and prove their manliness" that united the veterans of the First World War and which was behind much fascist rhetoric in Nazi Germany. The 'danger' that this homoeroticism would spill over into actual homosexuality – particularly when some Nazi leaders like the S.A. chief of staff Ernst Röhm were known to be homosexual – was not lost on people like Himmler and led to the explicitly homophobic policies of the National Socialists (Mosse 154ff, cf. also his analysis of homoeroticism in the circle around the poet Stefan George [58-61]). Reading Carlo as receptive to homoeroticism and maybe even as a closet homosexual would partly explain his difficulties with women.

characters from Cardiff.[35] Ben's anger at the unfairness of his boss (delivered as an imaginary prologue-soliloquy in Scene 1) leads him to employ a spurious nationalist rhetoric in which he – needing someone to blame – probably believes in his moment of anger. But in reality neither he nor Serena take Welsh nationalism seriously. He finally confesses to Carlo: "The thing is ... where we come from, Cardiff ... none of this Welsh stuff matters. It's a joke! It's like ... What's Wales? Wales is a made-up pop group trying to make it big on the Eurovision song contest" (70). This comment can be read as a criticism of the 'Cool Cymru'-phenomenon as nothing but a cultural soap bubble but the criticism goes further and links back to Edwards's earlier criticism of the term 'Wales'. Controversially, Edwards seems to support the view that 'this Welsh stuff' is meaningless and even superfluous in a city like Cardiff. The relative unimportance of Carlo's brand of nationalism for Ben's and Serena's real lives also means that, contrary to the 'evicted' in earlier plays like *At the End of the Bay* or *Utah Blue*, Ben and Serena are not drawn as victims. They stand their ground against the bluster of Carlo and the violence of Ben. More importantly, they recognise that they are culturally displaced in West Wales and move back to Cardiff, which, by default, becomes a haven of sanity when contrasted to Carlo's home. Accordingly, the characterisation of the 'evicted' has become more complex and the term itself has shifted in value: it now quite clearly denotes what Homi Bhabha has referred to as hybridity.[36] From a position of exile and loss, it has turned into a position of normality against which the ideological position of nationalism seems artificial and fake.[37] Moreover, the unequal distribution of power in the state which

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[35] Ben refers to himself as 'evicted' when speaking to Sion in Scene 3. In the context of the scene, where Ben tries to convince Sion that he is "a bad godless fucker" (28), this description involves an element of exaggeration: "Is [Carlo] a man who would recognise the gut anger and loneliness of one who feels abandoned, evicted within his own country?" (28). Ben feels sour because he thinks he is being unfairly treated by his English boss. In the context of the fabricated story about himself that he tells to impress Sion, this feeling of disgruntlement is magnified into nationalist sentiment. Since Ben is actually on holiday (64) his reference to 'eviction' is mere rhetoric with which he wants to impress Sion. In contrast, Serena, who's been told by her mother Ruby that 'the West owes her' (33), feels that she does not belong in Cardiff (56). She badly wants to belong to Carlo and his home and only his violence to her makes her change her mind (64).

[36] Cf. Jeni Williams, who has described Dic Edwards's own dramatic voice as "the vertigious hybrid voice of the periphery – what Edwards would call the place of the evicted" – a place from which Ben and Serena come from as well.

[37] Salman Rushdie employs a similar understanding of hybridity in his novels. For him the dangers of nationalism and religious fundamentalism lie in an unrealistic concern with (racial) purity against whose standard a great number of people fall short. His own understanding is that the dynamism of hybridity can be creative, while concern with purity on the other hand lets a culture stagnate. Edwards's own term 'eviction' covers nearly the same theoretical territory, although Rushdie is less concerned with class and more with religion. Cf. Rushdie's novels *Midnight's Children* (1981) and its 'sequel' *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1996).

had turned the original 'evicted' of *At the End of the Bay* into victims without agency, is now only one factor among many which determine Ben's and Serena's lives. The situation of urban working class characters has become more complex than in earlier plays. While Ben portrays himself as a victim of exploitation in Scene 1, there is at least some doubt as to the veracity of his words spoken in anger. If they are victims of anything it is boredom: the lack of magic in their lives makes them turn to Carlo's romantic nationalism in the first place.[38] Despite their wish to believe in something greater than themselves, Ben and Serena are not fooled, though. This fact constitutes the difference between Edwards's and Dannie Abse's treatment of a similar theme in his play *House of Cowards*.[39] Where Edwards chooses to stage a debate between fascists and 'evictees', Abse writes "about men's private and public illusions and their need for a messianic figure" (Boada 139). In *House of Cowards*, the members of a small community wait for 'the Speaker' who, in speaking to them, is supposed to rid them of all their troubles. But the Speaker does not come. Instead, a man called Nott appears and tries to tell them to stop pinning their hope on an outside force to right the wrongs of their own lives:

> [A]ll of you – have no courage. No more than I have, or had. If you had, then everything would be so good – well, at least, better. You wouldn't have to search for any public orthodoxy, or build a cocoon of dreams or any false structure to feel safe in, to lie in – there'd be just the green, cruel, ordinary world that indisputably is, and you'd praise that difficult simplicity. (62)

For a while, the other characters believe that he is the long-awaited Speaker, but, by disillusioning them, Nott manages to make them face up to their real problems. Abse does not construct the 'Speaker' as a fraud who seeks to cheat the community – instead, the community seeks to cheat itself because then they do not need to look to closely at their own relationships and illusions. In effect, they construct a 'Speaker' in a way that is analogous to the reason why, according to Feuerbach, people invent gods: they need to believe in the Speaker because they have not got the courage to face "the green, cruel, ordinary world". Abse asks why people are so ready to follow a leader. His position is almost apolitical – he looks at the need for self-delusion from a broadly humanist perspective and, thus, does not present a

[38] A prosaic working-class life characterised by boredom and unemployment is also responsible for Sion's flight into Carlo's fascism. He needs scapegoats to blame for his own shortcomings and an ideology in which to believe that makes him more important than he really is. In an interesting juxtaposition, Edwards creates Ben and Sion as characters with a similar class background – one urban, the other rural. Thus, class alone does not control all life choices. Conversely, Carlo, despite his large house and money, does not really have the power to subdue Ben and Serena or even Sion.

dialectical argument on stage as Edwards does. It is interesting to note that Edwards does not interrogate Serena's initial and Sion's desperate need to believe in Carlo in more detail. Maybe Edwards's focus on the argument, in other words on the ability of language to mask reality, makes a more psychological interpretation of the individual motivation of his characters impossible. It is essentially an argument against nationalism, not an argument which interrogates the spectrum of meanings of 'nationalism'. In the introduction to *The Welsh Dilemma*, W.J. Morgan tries to differentiate between a more benign and an ultimately destructive nationalism:

> Racial theories of the Hitlerian type, for instance, are not necessarily connected with nationalism. They may be seen rather as a perversion of the original ideal. This ideal, quite briefly, is that humanity is naturally divided into nations, that nations may be distinguished by the possession of certain characteristics and that the only legitimate type of government is natural self-government. The true nationalist, it might be argued, must believe in the equality of nations and preach, as Mazzini did, the right of every people to form a self governing nation and the duty of no nation to oppress one another. This view leaves little room for the notions of territorial expansion that characterized the politics of that other Italian nationalist, Benito Mussolini. (Morgan 8-9)

W.J. Morgan's view certainly can be contested, for his view that 'Hitlerian' excess can somehow be differentiated from 'nationalism' and his essentialist assumptions concerning the 'natural' division of humanity into nations, but his is a valid effort to disentangle a more positive from a wholly negative view of a community's strong feelings for 'their own' and their place. Dic Edwards's exclusively negative attitude towards nationalism expressed in *Franco's Bastard* draws attention to the fact that his drama is meant to stimulate debate, but is content to stage only one side of that debate. Much of the play is spent in discussing nationalism, fascism and the language of fascism – but none of the characters represents a believable positive nationalist viewpoint.

The main juxtaposition is not between classes but between an urban and a rural environment. Neither environment is depicted realistically on stage since the play is set almost exclusively in Carlo's home,[40] nor does the play give a strong sense of place in its playtext. Instead, place is to be read emblematically: rural West Wales stands for a rural, Welsh-language culture which feels threatened by outside influences, whereas the urban environment is identified with a more open, multi-ethnic, English-language culture, which may not be glamorous but is more down-to-

[39] The play was first produced at the Questor's Festival of New Plays 1960 and received its first professional production at Cardiff's Prince of Wales Theatre, 1963, cf. James A. Davies 8.

earth and less bigoted than the rural context. In that sense they are examples of two radically different sides to an argument. In this Edwards does, of course, stand in a long line of 'Anglo-Welsh' writers beginning with Caradoc Evans. Indeed, the relative grotesqueness of Carlo and of Sion – when compared to the confused but eminently sane Ben and Serena – are reminiscent of the kind of characters which appear in the stories of Caradoc Evans's *My People* (1925). The figures can be seen as suggestively overdrawn in order to make a point, but the temptation to read them as realistic characters and the place they occupy as the real Cardiff and West Wales is great. Furthermore, Edwards invites criticism as the countryside does not have a single redeeming feature in the play. Although his characters are more complex than the play's detractors give him credit for, place and its culture seems to be created in monochrome.[41] Edwards's stark juxtaposition of countryside and city simplifies the real complexity of the whole scale of views within Wales for the sake of the dialectic of his argument. The last words in the play are given over to Sion as the (possible) violent future of nationalism. He has taken Carlo's subdivision of Wales into zones[42] to heart and, thus, presents the viewpoint of extreme parochialism, which regards the next county as a foreign country:

> You can cross Wales in a day. On a bus. Across the zones. The language and people zones. (*Pause.*) The people in the North, we hate them. Arrogant fuckers. Can't stand them. You come south and you hit Machynlleth and then you hit the real zone. Ours. Real people. . . . Then you get to Carmarthen and that's the end. Then you get into that whole South Wales Valleys shit whatever zone. I wouldn't want to go on that bus. (75)

The real threat behind Sion's brand of nationalism is apparent in his final words ("The metaphor is dead!" 75) and his subdivision of Wales into zones is indicative of his particularly narrow mindset. Sion's views are satirised none too gently in the play. I read his views and the representation of rural West Wales as part of a dialectical argument, which puts forward the view that a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic

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[40] The exceptions are Scene 1, which is set in a fishmonger's yard in Cardiff and Scene 3, which is set in Newquay Harbour.

[41] Edwards does ignore, for example, that a great deal of probably justified rural bitterness against Cardiff is due to an increased centralisation of resources in Cardiff. (cf. the argument for centralisation in the Welsh capital in Geraint Talfan Davies' Eisteddfod lecture *The Capital, Culture and the Nation*). The one-sidedness of his depiction of West Wales is surprising when one considers that Edwards lives in Aberaeron on the Ceredigion coast.

[42] It is not clear if Carlo's zones serve a pseudo-military purpose or if they are, as Sion reads them, divisions of mentality and culture. As Ben is about to be initiated into the 'project' he is shown the 'project map' described at the beginning of Scene 2 (Part Two). This would indicate (military) strategy. At the same time, Carlo has obviously instilled his own parochial views into Sion, who repeats them.

space with no obvious self-identification as 'Welsh'[43] may not always be positive but that, compared to the nationalist cocoon, which is the representation of rural culture, it at least has the virtue of being less susceptible to ideology. There is a problem with this depiction – and the audience reaction to the play shows that they picked up on that problem: It is tempting to read Edwards's representation of West Wales and Cardiff as realistic depictions, which would lay the author open to the criticism that he privileges an urban culture over a rural culture, which is only represented in distorted and clichéd images. Even when read as non-realistic, these representations are still rather one-sided.

In *Franco's Bastard*, Edwards seems to have abandoned his formal experiments through a more traditional approach for symbolic realism. The set for the staged performance suggested as much: in contrast to the deliberately sparse and multi-functional set of *Utah Blue*, the hall interior of Carlo's mansion was set out realistically, while the harbour of Scene 3 was indicated through a fishing net, sound and lighting effects. Does a return to a more realistic narrative mean a return to a specific setting? In other words, does the importance of specific places (Cardiff and West Wales) become more pronounced and are characters interpreted through their associations with place? I do not think so. While the play is certainly an answer to a new national optimism after 1999 and quite deliberately connects the nationalism of Cayo Evans and the Free Wales Party to the new sense of Welsh self-worth after devolution, this political parable is still timeless.[44] The play includes references from the Welsh Prince Caradog to Garibaldi, Mussolini, Nasser, Casanova and Nietzsche to create a discourse of fascism in which Carlo envelops himself. The play's scope is broad and its meaning transcends any specificity of character and place. Place is identified with a certain mindset, which is then contrasted with the other place: Sion is the representative of West Wales, while Cardiff is represented through Ben and Serena – and both personify two sides of an argument. Place remains a 'network of human relationships' and is not thematised for its own sake. There are no references, for example, to the power of landscape in Carlo's nationalist imagination. For him, the identification with Franco is more important.[45] Sion's parochialism mainly consists of disliking anybody who lives in another 'zone'.

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[43] Cardiff voted 'No' in the referendum elections in 1997.

[44] This could be an answer to David Adams's bewilderment as to chronology in the *Franco's Bastard* (cf. Adams "Dic Kicks Against the Pricks").

[45] This identification with a largely fictitious heritage is typical of most romantic nationalist discourses but it seems to occur most often in nations without a state like Wales. The history of 'Macsen Wledig', which gives Wales (supposedly) bona fide credentials as a

In Edwards's original definition of 'eviction', it is the cultural failure to reconcile opposites which produces eviction. On the face of it, it would seem that Carlo is an 'evictee', since he is patently unable to reconcile the opposites within himself. The Cardiffians Serena and Ben are only momentarily dislocated – but this is no permanent cultural displacement due to class and cultural preconceptions. Thus, it is those who believe themselves to be securely 'rooted' in place and in the stories they spin out for themselves who are shown to be 'dislocated' from reality. If 'eviction' still is identified with 'Cardiffians', the term has changed its value. It becomes an almost desirable state of being, contrasted as it is with the stupidity, misogyny and unhappiness of people like Carlo and Sion.

From a cultural 'eviction' that had left the characters stranded and victimised, it is now a term that implies sanity and a quality of groundedness. Although they sometimes dream up alternative lives for themselves, they never actually succumb to those dreams. In Edwards's terminological dichotomy, which still holds for *Franco's Bastard*, the 'evicted' may still be outside an "overarching Welsh Culture", but they are securely positioned in 'reality', the only place that Edwards cares about.

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nation, is a case in point (cf. Gwyn A. Williams *passim*). Edwards can be seen to poke fun at this 'invention of tradition'.

Chapter 3

Past and Present

In his book *In Geschichten Verstrickt* ("Entangled in Stories"), the philosopher Wilhelm Schapp argues that whatever a human being can know about herself/himself, about other human beings and about the world in general is mediated through stories. The individual does not only tell her/his own story, s/he also appears in other people's stories and has, thus, limited control over the stories themselves: s/he is 'entangled' in a whole web of stories by which people make sense of their lives. Consequently, Schapp argues, there is nothing outside the web of stories. In other words, the signifier refers to a signified-as-story, not to a signified that is 'real'. Indeed, the question of the 'real' does not make sense to Schapp. Echoing de Saussure's famous example in the *Cours de linguistique générale*, he writes: "Nach traditioneller Sprechweise würde man nun fragen, ob unserer Vorstellung von 'Baum' eine Wirklichkeit entspricht. Für uns hat diese Frage keinen Sinn" (132).[1] Even more radically, he argues:

> Der einzige Zugang zu uns selbst erfolgt über die Geschichten, in die wir verstrickt sind. Der Zugang zu den anderen Menschen über die Geschichten, in die diese verstrickt sind, der Zugang zu den Tieren über deren Geschichten, und der Zugang zu den Pflanzen entsprechend über deren Geschichten. Den Ausdruck "Zugang" dürfen wir dabei nicht von außen her nehmen, dewegen setzen wir statt Zugang besser den Ausdruck Mitverstricktsein, indem wir davon ausgehen, daß jede Fremdverstrickung . . . nur als Mittverstrickung . . . auftaucht. (136)[2]

Schapp writes about what has become a commonplace in postmodernist thought, namely that the idea that language mediates between individual and reality should be replaced by the notion that there is no reality outside language. What is remarkable, perhaps, is that Schapp wrote *In Geschichten Verstrickt* already in 1953, the same year in which Wittgenstein's *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, in which the relationship of language and reality is discussed, was published posthumously.

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[1] "In traditional diction, one would ask now if a reality corresponds to our image of a 'tree'. To us the question does not make sense." (own translation)

[2] "We ourselves are only accessible through the stories in which we are entangled. Other human beings [are accessible] through the stories in which they are entangled, animals through their stories and plants, correspondingly, through their stories. At the same time, we should not use the term 'access' from the outside, which is why we do better to use the term co-entanglement than access, by starting from the assumption that all outside entanglement only comes up as co-entanglement." (own translation)

What interests me for the purpose of this chapter is Schapp's argument that the stories in which human beings are entangled have no beginning (and, obviously, no end). In other words, not only is the past connected to the present through a series of stories (told from the vantage point of the present), but stories continue indefinitely as, even when a person dies, s/he will stay alive in the stories told about him/her. Theoretically, of course, this is true, although it is equally obvious that in reality some stories merge with other stories and become indistinguishable, as in the case of many men and especially women whose stories are lost over time and whose lives are only remembered collectively as that of 'the common people', or, in Melvyn Bragg's phrase, 'the powerless'.[3]

Hayden White has shown that history consists of stories told about the past, arguing that, for example, in order to make a story coherent, the historiographer constructs a story around the facts s/he has collected ("Fictions of Factual Representation" 122, 125). Historical representation means interpretation (127-8) and historiography follow narrative roles of emplotment and style (124, 128). Interestingly, White makes use of dramatic vocabulary to describe the process of writing history, arguing that writing history means a process of what he calls *diataxis* which consists of both *mimesis* (description of data) and *diegesis* (the argument of the narrative) ("Introduction" 4). It seems that historiography has much in common with fictional narration – if not with theatre – and it follows that the history of place is a set of stories told about it – in which, to stay with Schapp's terminology, human beings are entangled.

Hayden White has placed historiography into the realm of discourse ("Fictions of Factual Representation" 125) and, thus, recognises that competing histories are the norm rather than the exception. Historical narratives are thus often contentious and the historian/narrator's agenda needs to be taken into account. For example, the history of 20th century South Wales is often constructed as coterminous with an anglophone working-class history and culture, although, as Julie Light has shown, the homogeneity of that culture has often been exaggerated (22). At least part of the strategy behind that construction most probably was a two-fold endeavour: firstly, a history for the anglophone Welsh was being reclaimed that was different from but considered 'as good as' a history of the rural, predominantly Welsh-speaking Welsh – an industrial history which was, furthermore, just as rooted in place as a rural history was. Secondly, following E.P. Thompson's *The Making of*

[3] "Voices of the Powerless", a series of six radio programmes broadcast in July and August 2002 on BBC Radio 4.

the English Working Class (1963), a working-class history was claimed for South Wales. An example of the writing of a (mostly) anglophone working-class history in South Wales is *Merthyr Politics: The Making of a Working-Class Tradition*, edited by Glanmor Williams in 1966.[4] I believe that the construction of a working-class history for (mostly) anglophone South Wales was a strategy to claim an identity through history for a South Walian population that had hitherto felt itself to be without history. Outside Welsh-language history, outside English history, outside a traditional 'grand narrative'-view of history as concerning only 'great individuals', ethnically diverse through large-scale immigration, a great part of the people of South Wales did not find a reflection of themselves in 'history'. Through the work of historians, through the canonisation of Anglo-Welsh literature and through the increasing recognition of popular culture, an image of South Wales was created that provided a historical narrative to industrial South Wales, through which people could draw strength but which also homogenised actual differences, creating an ideology of a 'working-class South Wales' in the process. It is thus imperative to take into account the different strategies behind the construction of historical narratives and to analyse the meaning and the emotional attachment they represent. An understanding of history in terms of discourse was promoted by historians like Gwyn A. Williams in Wales. For example, he drew attention to the two rival contenders for a Welsh identity: the discourse of the 'gwerin' (the rural, Welsh-speaking 'folk') and that of the 'Welsh working class', which, he argues, eventually superseded the discourse of the 'gwerin' (238-39). Indeed, Williams's project in *When Was Wales?*, namely the search for a historical narrative for the nation is indicative of the shift towards an analysis of historical narratives as discourse. Even though Williams never goes as far as to proclaim that historiography is a matter of discourse only, his assertion of the necessity to keep 'producing' "the artefact" that is Wales (304), at least implicitly supports the shift towards discourse analysis indicated by Hayden White.

Doubtless a source for Gwyn A. Williams, Raymond Williams has commented on Wales's problematic relationship with its own past in his essay "Welsh Culture". It is worth quoting the passage in full, for I believe that his

[4] That historical narratives are biased and steeped in the ideas and prejudices of their time becomes clear when reading J.W. England's essay on Merthyr Tydfil in the 20th century in that volume, in which he praises the then relatively new housing estates in Swansea Road and Gurnos as successful initiatives to combat the bad housing situation in Merthyr (99-100). Less than twenty years later, Alan Osborne was to write his play *In Sunshine and in Shadow*, in which the Gurnos estate comes to symbolise the social exclusion of his characters. Today housing estates are generally thought of as a great mistake, not least architecturally.

description is characteristic of the different attitudes towards history in contemporary Welsh plays in English and of the development in the treatment of history that can be demonstrated. Williams first diagnoses Wales as a postcolonial nation and then describes its relationship with its past in the following way:

> Real independence is a time of new and active creation: people sure enough of themselves to discard their baggage; knowing the past as past, as a shaping history, but with a new confident sense of the present and the future, where the decisive meanings and values will be made. But at an earlier stage, wanting that but not yet able to get it, there is another spirit: a fixation on the past, part real, part mythicized, because the past, in either form, is one thing they can't take away from us, that might even interest them, get a nod of recognition.
>
> Each of these tendencies is now active in Wales. The complexity is that they are so difficult to separate, because they live, often, in the same bodies, the same minds. There is the proud and dignified withdrawal to Fortress Wales: the old times, the old culture; the still living enclave. There is the moving out from the enclave; the new work, the new teaching, the sense and in places the reality of a modern Welsh culture. But there is also the accommodation, in its different forms. There is the costume past, as a tourist attraction: things never distinctly Welsh, the tall hats and the dressers, presented as local pieties, things invented in the bad scholarship or the romantic fancies of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – versions of bardism and druidism. (103-104)

The whole spectrum of reactions to the nation's past and its different discursive creations – from a mythicised past to the past as heritage – which Williams mentions are present in the plays dealing with history: there is the retreat into "Fortress Wales" – only in these South Walian plays, this invariably means the Welsh industrial past, not the ancient past implied by Williams. This past is viewed with a nostalgic eye in these plays, especially as they show no confidence in Wales's present or future. The plays which view the past nostalgically often define history and relate to history in an uncomplicated, even naïve way: the past appears as a monological narrative of 'our past' whose veracity is not questioned and whose constructedness in place and time is not interrogated. This understanding of history underlies most pre-1980s plays, for example Dylan Thomas's *Return Journey* (radio play, 1950s) or Gwyn Thomas's funny one-act play *Gazooka* (1960s), which is set in the summer of the General Strike of 1926. A very recent example is Patrick Jones's *Everything Must Go*, a play, which is not set in the past, but whose nostalgic view of the past forms the subtext to its presentation of present-day reality in Blackwood. Alan Osborne's *In Sunshine and In Shadow* is interesting because it presents a proud past, but locates it in the ineffectual and unintentionally funny character Dai Death. Thus the image of a heroic South Walian past is subtly challenged.

A second group of plays seeks to separate what they regard as 'constructed' history – history which fails to be representative – from 'real' history. They are thus critical of 'official' history or of 'heritage' as a substitute for history, but they do not go as far as deconstructing the mechanism of what they regard as 'real' history. These plays present an interrogation of history, which exposes the creation of a unified past as myth-making. *In Sunshine and In Shadow* partly criticises the 'mythology' (in Barthes's sense) of industrial South Wales, but it also acknowledges the strength that can be drawn from such a creation – especially if it is cynically dismantled by an alienated and unfeeling present. Further examples of a critical stance towards history, especially towards history as heritage, are Laurence Allan's *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1989), which juxtaposes a 'real' and meaningful but unrecorded history with the 'official' history which is reduced to heritage out of economic considerations, and Tim Rhys's one-act play *The Old Petrol Station* (1994).

A third group of plays, which appear either at the same time or after the second group of plays, can be described as historiographic metadrama (following Linda Hutcheon's term "historiographic metafiction", cf. also Kramer). It is drama that questions and interrogates the process by which history is made and which (often) offers counter-narrative/s to what is perceived to be an ideologically biased, monological historical narrative. This drama generally allows for several contending historical narratives, and it brings personal history and memory into history. In the Welsh context this usually very recent drama seems to suggest a new way of understanding identity through a history of place. In other words, this drama goes beyond the strategic forging of a homogeneous history/identity and emphasises the multiplicity of voices that make up a diverse history/identity. The political necessity of forging a coherent history seems to some extent to be a thing of the past. Indeed, some very recent plays seem willing to "discard [the] baggage" of a certain construction of history (Raymond Williams 103). Instead, they discuss the past strictly in terms of personal memory, which is not always connected to place or a distinctly Welsh past. It is probably too early to answer the question whether this is a new trend expressive, as Williams indicated in 1975, of a newly self-confident Welshness as mediated through drama, or simply the result of the much-discussed and -lamented post-1980s atomisation of society. Examples of plays in this category are Greg Cullen's *Mary Morgan* (1987), Laurence Allan's *Angel's Don't Need Wings* (2002), Sharon Morgan's short *Magic Threads* (1997) and Tracy Harris's *Past Away* (2002).

This challenge of a homogeneous 'communal' historical narrative through personal history is not necessarily overt. Yet, I believe that the very absence of discussion of traditional Welsh historical discourses might constitute an act of subversion in itself. The important question, which needs to be raised but cannot as yet be answered, is: does the absence of an interaction with traditional Welsh historical discourses – partly anachronistic, ideological though they might be – signal a loss of interest in the "production" of Wales or a new sophistication and self-confidence, which has left the preoccupation with introspection and identity politics behind? What can be suggested, though, is that the reception of a historiography that is increasingly perceived in terms of a multiplicity of contending narratives made for a great variety of historiographic metadrama, which challenges perceived notions of South Wales and Welsh identity.

Drama is in many ways ideally placed to interrogate history, place and the role of the individual/community and the links between all three. It allows the exploration of past events simply by enacting them or by enacting the impact of the past on the present. Characters have different points of view, remember the past idiosyncratically and can thus stand for the multiple voices that make up 'history'. Nevertheless, much drama seeks to reinforce rather than challenge the monological, ideologically implicated nature of much historiography. The nostalgic view of history is still a powerful subtext against which a present, which is found unsatisfactory, can be measured. That such drama is still written, performed and produced to acclaim supports my view that Welsh interpretations of self are as heterogeneous as they have ever been and that the claims of a new Welsh self-confidence are at least partly a construction which have not reached all parts of the population. A good example is Patrick Jones's play *Everything Must Go* (1999). The play's focus is on the present-day predicament of the youth of the South Wales valleys, especially of Blackwood, where the play is set. However, underlying Jones's presentation of present-day life is a deeply nostalgic view of the past, which is the subtext to all surface action of the play. The uncomplicated image of 'the past' is used to show how the present has failed to live up to the promises of the past. The play opens with a lyrical evocation of Welsh landscape and its community whose first verse alludes to the Welsh national anthem ("Oh land of my fathers so dear to me" 139). The verses proclaim that the harmonious relationship between land and people cannot be broken in spite of intruders who have enslaved place and community alike ("foremen [who] have trampled in triumph thy vales / yet fail they to silence the old tongue of wales", 139). The stage is still dark when these words of pride and

defiance are spoken and they come through a loudspeaker, distorted and disembodied, and are thus seen as far removed from present-day Welsh reality. The aural image created speaks of a Wales that was, a Wales of memory and myth, an image that is, crucially, not an expression of Wales 'as it is' today. The last sentence of Unit 1 ("there aint no commitments round yer ...." 139) abruptly ends this poetic vision and draws attention to the fact that the nation's disaffected youth have been entirely uncoupled from the country's past and present. In Unit 3 the narrator (who was played by the same actor as the character A in the 2000 Swansea production and who can be regarded as Jones's mouthpiece) juxtaposes the stereotypically romantic images of Wales (from *How Green was my Valley* to leeks, daffodils, green hills and choirs, 140-141) with the bleak reality of the "generation with no name the x y z e generation" (joyriders, new deal employers, factories and karaoke queens, 140-141). Thus the 'reality' of life in South Wales is presented in stark contrast to the pastoral image of the landscape and community of the semi-mythical past evoked in Unit 1. Although these first Units seem to critically debunk all romantic nostalgia concocted by "the welsh tourist board's translation clinic", whose images are replaced with a symbolism that suggests that contemporary South Wales resembles hell or at least "the psychiatric hospital we we all live in" (141), it is that very nostalgia which forms the subtext to the representation of reality in the play against which that reality is measured.

For the teenage characters, the present has nothing to offer. Marginalised and ignored by society in general, they while away the time without any promise of change (cf. my discussion of the play in chapter 1). Jeremy Hooker has written perceptively about the creation of a 'safe' past into which an individual can retreat when the present does not hold any promise for her/him:

> But for any individual in order to be creative this awareness [of the self as part of a community] depends upon his [sic] society and its culture having a future that he wants to live for; otherwise, his sense of the past will become essentially morbid, and he will retreat into it, as into childhood memories, because there is nowhere to carry its energies but back to the past. Now, perhaps more than at any other time, the economic and political powers are forcing individual growth downwards, twisting it back on itself, into the darkness where it should be fit for its ascend into the human world. This is why it is so dangerous to have an imaginative commitment that does not or cannot express itself socially. (Hooker 165)

The characters of *Everything Must Go* neither have a future nor a social commitment: consequently, A and Cindy retreat into an imagined past, Pip and Jim flee into cynicism and Curtis has retreated into himself and only communicates through song lyrics. Hooker's article was published in 1982, a time when the

memory of the lost referendum was still fresh, and he describes a phenomenon which would then find its way into the characterisation of Dai Death in Alan Osborne's *In Sunshine and in Shadow*. That a similar mechanism is still at work in Jones's *Everything Must Go* both speaks for the ongoing malaise of the South Wales valleys, whose fate (as portrayed in this mostly realistic play) does not seem to have changed significantly between 1982 and 1999. Secondly, Jones's political sympathies and the class-based analysis which underpin the play have more in common with that of an older generation of playwrights (for example, Alan Osborne) and he would very probably agree with Hooker's analysis of the need for the creative impulse to express itself socially. In contrast, the younger playwrights of Jones's age and younger display a noticeable lack of interest in class (cf. Owen, *Crazy Gary's Mobile Disco* or Tracy Harris's *Past Away*).[5]

That an 'old-Labour' socialist class analysis is at the bottom of Jones's play becomes clear when the dialogue of the present with the past is figured in A's (imaginary) dialogue with Aneurin Bevan. As indicated in the previous chapter, Bevan, who was born in Blackwood and has a memorial of standing stones near Tredegar where he seems to have delivered political speeches, embodies traditional socialist values and represents a past which looked to the future with optimism. Bevan is a representative of his time as well as a "friend" (167) to whom A (whose initial might well stand for 'Aneurin', an Aneurin, however, who is so powerless that not even his name remains) addresses his soliloquies. Furthermore, the play is structured around the words "want", "disease", "squalor", "ignorance" and "idleness". The programme of the 2001 production informs the audience of the significance of these words:

> Aneurin Bevan is regarded as one of Wales's greatest political figures. He was Health Secretary in the post-war Labour Government where he was instrumental in setting up the National Health Service to overcome what he saw as the five greatest evils in society – want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness. (*Everything Must Go* Programme, n.p.)

The play illustrates the plight of those who, after 55 years, still suffer from the same problems. In order to be able to create A's dialogue with the past as a dialogue with Bevan, Jones neglects to mention that these 'evils' are, in fact, the social problems identified in the independent Beveridge Report of 1942, whose recommendations led to the creation of the National Health Service in 1947 (see chapter 1). Beveridge

[5] Although socialist principles underpin the play, the characters – with the exception of A – display the same lack of interest in class and in politics in general as the authors mentioned. In the context of Jones's play, this lack of interest is deplored. See below for a discussion of the implications of this apolitical stance.

is erased and conflated with Aneurin Bevan, who acquires an almost saint-like persona.[6] A has no personal memory of Bevan, but he remembers his father talking to him about "fucking Aneurin Bevan uppona hill speaking to fucking thousands of people bout life an stuff" (146). He also recalls being mesmerised by Bevan's voice on a record: "i remember . . . how your voice just smashed through the air and sort of made me lissen like a good guitar chord can – then i started reading about you and sort of found a friend in you" (167). Bevan becomes a friend, a father figure and even a confessor. No real interrogation of Bevan, his politics or the times in which he lived disturbs the hagiography because Jones is not interested in the past except as a plane which forms a contrast to the present A and the other characters are experiencing. The past is thus reduced to one monological, ideologically charged narrative.

As in much theatre in which an imperfect present is juxtaposed with a nostalgic image of the past, the present is understood in terms of cynicism. I am referring here to Peter Sloterdijk's distinction between the life-affirming, anarchic humour of the original 'Cynicism' of Diogenes (Sloterdijk 196-319 *et passim*) and the 'cynicism', which he ascribes to the present, which can, in turn, be differentiated into *Herrenzynismus* (the cynicism of those in power), which serves to consolidate the status quo of power imbalance, and the bleak, defeatist cynicism of the powerless (241 *et passim*), who are kept 'in their place' by accepting the same status quo for themselves. Thus, Sloterdijk tries to update classic Marxist dialectical theory by incorporating Foucault's theory of power: neither the powerful nor the powerless escape the power of cynicism. Both subscribe to the same cynical world-view expressed in a 'realistic' attitude towards life and 'seeing things as they are' (222). The difference lies in the use the powerful and the powerless make of cynicism: the powerful offer cynical explanations for the continued oppression of the powerless and the powerless invoke a cynical attitude, self-pitying or aggressively brash, to account for their continued powerlessness. Importantly, the powerless and the powerful do not occupy two completely separate spheres as classic Marxist dialectics would have it. Instead, they share the same ideology and that makes the

[6] Indeed, as he appears in the play, he has nothing much in common with the more critical assessment of the novelist Ron Berry. Berry remarks on Bevan's luck to have a career that took him out of industrial Wales, a path that he seems to have followed with alacrity: "This black pasture of industrialised Wales. No wonder 'Nye Bevan careered himself out of it and into soft green Berkshire" (Berry 36). Kenneth O. Morgan also paints a picture of Bevan as a politician who, in the 1940s, became more interested in the "London world of journalists and politicians" and who apparently spurned the company of other Welsh MPs

possibility of revolution a remote one. The plays of the first and the second category tend to subscribe to this view, usually casting their protagonists in the role of the powerless and describing their impotent struggles, which are then contrasted with the past that is usually constructed as free from cynicism. Historiographic metadrama, however, does not subscribe to a cynical world-view. Indeed, by deconstructing the main narrative of history, a cynical defeatism is deconstructed as well.

In *Everything Must Go*, the characters associated with a cynical present are Jim and Pip, who clearly have bought into the ideology of consumerism even if they have not got the means to indulge in this life-style (146-47 *et passim*). Cindy is, in effect, made ill by the cynicism of the present – she commits acts of self-harm and takes drugs to escape it. A, too, regards the present as a cynical age in which he does not wish to have a part. He rants[7] about Bevan's "dream" having been "sold to the highest bidder" (167) and finds that the spirit of dutiful self-denial, which had characterised his father's life, is literally 'redundant' in the present which values human beings only in terms of their productivity (149). A puts Bevan firmly on 'our' side of the struggle against 'them', although it is never quite clear who 'they' are:

> **A** [T]hey ravaged all the valleys and gave us mines then they got rid of the mines and now they give us factories – they'll get rid of those and the mountains will still be fucking yer – they'll never take those, but they're winning Nye they're winning . . . . (168).

'They' seem to be the powerful middle classes who keep 'us', the working classes under their thumb – a reductive view which also homogenises the community into a working class community whose only solace in times of change is to be found in the solidity of the mountains. This is a perception of place whose expression in literature is generally to be found in the genre of the pastoral. Furthermore, the symbol of the mountains, that will remain as the people in the valleys come and go, is a deeply romanticised image which recurs in much Welsh writing in English, notably in Richard Llewellyn's *How Green Was My Valley* (1939), in the no less romantic writing of Alexander Cordell (e.g. *Rape of a Fair Country*, 1959) or, somewhat less romanticised, in Siân James's *A Small Country* (1979). The essentially romantic

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(Morgan 298). A's perception of Bevan, which seems to be an echo of the author's own appreciation of the politician, may thus be biased.

[7] The style of A's polemical rants against a status quo which is experienced as unbearable is mirrored by the tone, style and contents of Jones's poetry, some of which is collected in *Fuse*. Indeed, Phil Clark's article on Jones's work is entitled "A Ranter for the 21st Century", thus drawing (implicit) parallels with the Ranters of the 17th century, who were persecuted for what were then regarded 'heretical' views by the Church. I would argue that the power of A's anger and the 'heretical' challenge to society that he represents is perhaps more important in the context of the play than the overall logic of his argument.

image of the eternal mountains is perpetuated in a way which sits somewhat incongruously with the hard-hitting poetic realism of the dialogue. Furthermore, the real complexity of a South Walian past and present is reduced and the enemy is personified in the 'human resources manager' Worthington, the man who had sacked his father and thus been indirectly responsible for his death. A kills him in Unit 18, but his mood of triumph is short-lived, as he is caught almost immediately and realises that killing Worthington was a mistake (194). Poignantly, the policeman, who has come to arrest A, does not only speak like Worthington (203) but was played by the same actor in the Swansea production of the play in 2000, thus illustrating the total dominance of Worthington-like figures in the cynical present.

Whereas A seeks an external outlet for his frustration, Cindy's failure to deal with life in the present manifests itself in acts of self-harm. Her scarred body comes to signify the scarred landscape of Wales in Unit 13. It is St. David's Day and Cindy enters the stage dressed in the national costume, which is, however, dirty and torn. She has picked up a doll in national costume in Unit 12 and, believing in the life-giving and purifying power of her blood, has slashed her forearm to bring life to the doll (166). Already in Unit 8, her body is identified with the Welsh landscape (a *pars pro toto* for the nation) when she tells A:

> **Cindy** Do you know i really hate this place – our home – i really do – everything has changed everything is so fucking different now . . . Listen ... do you know i used to look out of my bedroom window and see this field, this beautiful field full of daffodils and every spring there'd be this massive glow and i just felt i belonged . . . but then one day – i woke up and heard the sound of diggers and bulldozers and wham – they'd wrecked my field ripped it up to build a fucking car park . . . it was then that i started cutting . . . . (154-157)

Cindy voices a deep, sentimental and ahistorical nostalgia for a past in which there were fields of daffodils instead of car parks. Cindy's claim to have witnessed radical change is – in the context of the realism of the play – unrealistic, since she, too, is meant to be a teenager. She becomes a proto-mythical figure, identified with the landscape and the nation, who seeks to fertilise the land and the nation (signified by the doll in national costume) with her own blood and who bears the scars of the landscape by inflicting scars on her own body. This oddly essentialist image of the female body as landscape/the nation has been widely used in literature, for example in the Irish context (cf. Yeats's *Cathleen ní Houlihan* of 1902). To come across it in the year 1999 speaks of the profound nostalgia of this play – not lastly in the problematic, biologically determined juxtaposition of A, a man who worries about the intellectual as well as the class-related problems of the present, and Cindy, a woman, whose response to present-day problems is entirely emotional and who is

equated with nature. The ideologically highly charged image of a field of daffodils, which had to make way for a car park, is just as ahistorical, providing a mytho-poetic image of a pre-industrial landscape untouched by human beings, which seems oddly conservative considering the socialist politics that form the subtext of the play and the (implicit) celebration of mining as a type of work through which the workers gained self-respect (see Unit 7). 'The past' remains unspecified, no attempt is being made to locate any specific incidents in the past or to look at the historical Aneurin Bevan (as opposed to the imagined figure) – the past is constructed as a non-cynical alternative to a cynical present.

Such nostalgia is shared by other, much older plays. Dylan Thomas's radio play *Return Journey* – written in 1947 before the more famous *Under Milk Wood* (first broadcast January 1954) – takes the narrator back to Swansea after a long absence. The narrator, Dylan Thomas's alter ego, goes in search of his own past and shares reminiscences with former acquaintances. The author thus creates a soundscape of home, which is both poetic and a little sentimental. Gwyn Thomas's one-act play *Gazooka*, written in the 1960s, is a no less nostalgic exploration of the past. Subtitled *A Rhondda Reminiscence*, it deals with the adventures of a Gazooka-band in the "long, idle, sunlit summer of 1926" (45), the year of the General Strike. Instead of stressing the fears of that year, Thomas creates a funny and heart-warming play in the spirit of the kind of paradoxical nostalgia which is so peculiarly attached to times of hardship, as Hewison has noted: " the times for which we feel nostalgia most keenly were often themselves periods of disturbance" (45). And finally, T.D. Williams's historical trilogy *The Last of the Cambrian Princes* (1960, 1964, 1967) can be described as an exercise in nostalgia as here the life of Llewellyn ap Griffith is re-created in epic form in blank verse. This is a conspicuous 'retreat to Fortress Wales', which is meant to re-tell and thereby reclaim a heroic past for the present.

In Jones's play, the nostalgia seems at first slightly out of tune with the gritty realism of its presentation. However, Hewison has also noted the therapeutic powers of nostalgia: "Nostalgia can be a denial of the future. Yet it is also a means of coping with change, with loss, with *anomie*, and with perceived social threat" (Hewison 46). Both Cindy and A certainly do feel threatened and do not see a future for themselves. I believe that the real sadness of A's and Cindy's nostalgia lies in the fact that it is a borrowed, second-hand nostalgia handed down by the generation of their parents, who already felt nostalgic about the same issues. The nostalgia of A's father, who plays his sons records of Bevan, is connected to the 1940s either

through personal experience or that of his parents. A, however, is so removed from Bevan that he can only imagine him in the most general and vague terms. Cindy and A literally have nothing: robbed of a future and denied a past, their respective suicides make all too much sense.

A's vision of the past is in many ways foreshadowed by a character in a much earlier play: Dai Death in Alan Osborne's *In Sunshine and In Shadow* (1985). What makes this play peculiarly interesting is that its construction of the past through Dai Death is both nostalgic and critical of nostalgia at the same time. Perhaps the central paradox in the character of Dai is that he and the kind of historical discourse he personifies are both dead and alive at the same time. In a sense, he is long-sighted with a vision that stretches back to the height of South Walian industrial history. What he cannot see is the present, including the people around him. He lives in a limbo of nostalgic recollections of a history that is already a conglomerate of stories informed by a certain ideology which makes it the discourse of 'the great industrial past' of Merthyr as a *pars pro toto* of South Wales.

> **Dai Death** *With rich, clear solemnity. His dark eyes address an imaginary audience. This man can see a mental audience at any given time.*
> The iron smelting metropolis was a dirty straggling town, sprawling up barren mountains like a bundle of filthy rags, spread out in the hope of them going white. Belching furnaces and black table-top hills of rubbish all around.
> A half stupefied sense of the mighty enterprise of man and fire combined, such as we might feel in the presence of some old monster. Some ...., how can I put it, some .... Some horrible form. A beast of great mystery belching forth fire and flame. Grim, sooty and strong of limb. (99)

Addressing his imaginary audience rather than his real one, Dai constructs an organic unity between heavy industry and the community. The environmental damage, the awful housing conditions and the ever-present danger are the sacrifices made to the "old monster" – a willing sacrifice, for Dai's words stress the fascination of the bygone world of heavy industry and have a sense of inevitability which confirm the organic bond between industry and community. This organic bond is interpreted as being peculiarly Welsh, for in the description of the monster may be glimpsed the form of the dragon, the "beast of great mystery belching forth fire and flame". The description of the way that human beings seem to be in thrall to the industrial working conditions they themselves have created – to the extent that these conditions seem to be an outside force – has a lot in common with similar descriptions of working conditions in early 20th century industrial fiction in Wales (see Dai Smith, "A Novel History"). And yet, this past has disappeared without trace – even the slum dwellings of the "dirty straggling town" were cleared in the 1960s

when the new housing estates were built, one of which forms the setting for the play (see England). What remains is the discourse of the past, which becomes ever more ideologically rigid as fewer and fewer people remember what life was really like. Dai provides an apt image not only for himself as a character but also for the discourse of the 'Welsh industrial past' when he describes a man who died while working: "There was one occasion in particular, rigor mortis set in and he passed gently away, performing his motions" (100). The sentence is strange in more ways than one as rigor mortis sets in *before* the man "passes gently away". This might be a way of saying that the man's life was so drearily monotonous that the difference between life and death and the passing from one stage to the other was nearly imperceptible even for the man himself. In this it is strangely at odds with the romantic narrative in which he ascribes a terrible beauty to the great industrial machinery which controlled South Wales. Instead, this could be a glimpse into the monotony of life and work in a heavy industry in decline – indeed, it is a sentiment which is similar to those described in Christopher Meredith's seminal novel *Shifts* (1988), in which Meredith describes a community in a declining steel town in the 1970s. It is clear, however, that 'going through the motions of life' without connecting with his environment is exactly what Dai is doing in the present. And, as an image for the historical discourse perpetuated by Dai, this nostalgic narrative, which knits together the same powerful symbols, similes and metaphors again and again in a powerful oratory, creates a historical discourse which suffers from an ideological rigor mortis before it becomes meaningless. The paradox of the view of the South Walian past in the play lies in the following: while it is accepted that Dai's version of history is an ideological construction, it also needs to be acknowledged that he draws strength from this construction and that Vee and her family, Cissie, Stack and Bernie have no alternative to offer, nothing which might redeem their sordid lives. Thus, Dai Death is ineffectual and inadvertently funny, but he also possesses an innate dignity which belies his tattered appearance.

A further paradox lies in the juxtaposition of Dai and the other characters. While he evidently does not have a future, the other characters do not have a past and lack any kind of understanding of Dai's narrative and of the mechanics of nostalgia which work in it (or the strength he draws from it). Having completely absorbed the Thatcherite culture of market forces, in which the value of something is defined solely by its price, they see the no intrinsic value in the past unless it can be sold as heritage. Thus, they concoct a plan to sell Dai's memories:

Cissie I got it, love! New life for old. Use it! Exploit it! The great industrial trail stretching back to the first furnaces. Fire right! Red back-drop, Dai emerges. We'll make a packet, Vee, a side show, moving from unemployed village to unemployed town. Why waste Dai's memories, give Dai a new life. Simple Vee, a simple idea. Listen, listen, listen! How many council houses here? Twenty five, thirty thousand? Repeat the same design, get it, Vee! . . . Whoever did the one design must have made millions! . . . We could escape this mess, get out mun! We could ride out on Dai's cancer of the past! (101)

Replicating a more general movement towards packaging industrial history as heritage, which, for example, prompted ex-miners to buy the 'Big Pit' in Gwent for a symbolical £1 and to open a museum at the site (Hewison 97), informs Cissie's ideas of selling 'history' as a 'tourist experience'. The paradox, the 'social schizophrenia' (Sloterdijk 238 *et passim*), that characterises Sloterdijk's definition of the cynicism of the powerless, namely that the powerless endorse the very ideology that keeps them powerless, is also characteristic of Cissie's scheme. Thinking of the designer of the council house as somebody to emulate is a telling example of this cynical schizophrenia: he readily admires the person who probably made a lot of money by forcing people like Cissie to live in the awful anonymity of council estates without noticing the incongruity of such a position. His will to exploit Dai and his memories dehumanises Dai, who is presented as an automaton who will spout 'history' at the flip of a switch, and reinforces the mechanism of an exploitation whose victims they themselves are. Furthermore, Cissie seems very willing to relieve the communities of "unemployed village[s]" and "unemployed town[s]" of their little cash, thus exploiting them by selling to them what he regards as worthless, even debilitating.

The distance between Dai on the one hand and Vee and Cissie on the other hand becomes obvious when they play a game of free association in which they 'test' Dai's ability to conjure up memories from a random selection of words (101-102). This game makes Dai glory in his memories and in the fact that his audience is attentive for once. Consequently, his tone becomes more expansive and his memories acquire a new sentimentality:

Dai Our steel is laced across continents. Every inch across America is made with our sweat, every foot made from blood and toil, every yard ... had a tool-shed and pigeon cot with a decent veg' patch.

Babes *Enters and imitates Dai Death.* O' the terrible ironing board! And the big dog is sucking the sweets! Look at the dirty chair! It's covered in coal! *Turns to Vee and Cissie smiling, they giggle.*

Vee Hey Babes, do it again.

Babes O' the sugar on the table! O' the radio is in the air! Ucher Vee he said to the duck! That's like you, Mr. Death. *Dai Death stares at Babes and exits with urgency.*

Vee You can always come, Dai, we run a rescue service in this house. (102-103)

The extent of the dissociation between the characters is powerfully expressed through Babes' imitation of Dai Death. Whereas his memory, although edited (he refuses to rise to Vee's and Cissie's provocations, as they try and get him to respond to "Sex!" and "Pornography!" in their game of free association, 102), is meaningful to him, Vee and Cissie see it as mere entertainment and Babes, finally, can only parody the tone, but cannot relate to the content of what Dai was saying at all. The skilfully cruel imitation penetrates even Dai's solipsistic mind and he leaves the stage quickly. The final irony of the situation is that Vee seems to believe that Dai is in need of rescuing and not she.

Vee's and the audience's attitude of amused horror at Dai's grandiloquence is all too understandable.[8] But is the present, which is occupied by characters who have lost their moorings completely, to be preferred? I would argue that the issue is at least debatable. If the audience were meant to dismiss Dai Death, Osborne would not have given him the truly grand moment with which the play closes. This scene is part of the frame narrative and Dai Death seems to have unwittingly stumbled into the shell that remains of Vee's and Day's former house. Vee and Day have become 'history' themselves and their house has been painted white in a gesture which recalls a similar activity in Max Frisch's *Andorra.*[9] In this 'white-washed' world, Dai seems even more incongruous. Seeing him through the thuggish and violent contractor Stack's eyes, Dai is quite clearly mad:

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[8] I would suggest that the grand rhetoric of past achievements Dai adopts, which is generally comically deflated by the incongruence between his surroundings and the past of his imagination, could be understood as a satirical reproduction of a certain type of Welsh oratory, which has often been described as emotional and grand and which found its expression in the *hwyl* (a powerfully emotional style of preaching) of the chapel. The way this rhetoric is employed in the play can mean several things: Dai's over-inflated style points to the fact that the past of South Wales is only grand in retrospect. However, as every observer of a steel works in operation knows, the steel making process does possess a strange beauty. The fact that this beauty as well as the problems connected to the heavy industry that once controlled South Wales are forgotten by Vee's generation and by that of her children means that they have no recourse to a past, which could have been a source of strength.

[9] *Andorra* is a play about the mechanisms of exclusion and victimisation in a small community as well as the insidiousness of that mechanism which induces the victim to believe in his own 'guilt'. In the last scene of *Andorra*, a crazed Barblin, the victim's sister, commences to 'white-wash' the whole town: "Ich weißle, ich weißle, auf daß wir ein weißes Andorra haben, ihr Mörder, ein schneeweißes Andorra, ich weißele euch alle – alle" (283). ["I'm white-washing, I'm white-washing, so that we might have a white Andorra, you murderers, a snow-white Andorra. I'm white-washing you all – all." Own translation.] At the beginning of the play, Barblin had been white-washing the walls of her father's house to get ready for a church holiday the next day. By the end of the play, the image has come to signify the community's refusal to come to terms with their guilt.

Dai enters talking to himself and gesticulating. Bernie and Gareth look. Dai addresses his imaginary audience.

Dai What we had see. What we had was power. Raging in the mouth of hell. Men dropping like rain. Children dying in rags. It was the first of the big heaves forward.

Stack appears in doorway and watches the performance. Raises his hand to bar Bernie from moving. He walks slowly to the back of Dai Death.

Dai The place was rich in minerals, and of course as you know, the South Wales coalfield was shaped in a 'w' like that. Those were great, great days.

Stack towers behind Dai Death, his arm holding a crowbar. The fire roars.(135)

Dai's words reinforce the organic relationship between industry and the South Walian community by making out that the coalfield was shaped like a 'w' for Wales, and he, again, speaks of the power gained by the symbiotic (if unequal) power relationship between industry and community, a power achieved through the daily struggle with a hazardous working environment. While the memory of the "great, great days" may reflect a truth for a certain part of the audience and is frequently invoked (but also qualified) by the historian Dai Smith, it nevertheless becomes more and more obvious how constructed this memory is. Dai 'performs' the story of an 'us' who had 'power' and who were part of the great struggle for progress. While this is certainly meant to be juxtaposed with the obvious powerlessness of all characters when confronted with the cynical brutality of Stack and Bernie and the Thatcherism they represent, the question begs to be asked as to what this 'power' consisted of. Was the industrial period really a brave march towards progress, and if so, to where has that progress led? And yet, even though Dai's rhetoric can easily be deconstructed and his mythologising account of South Welsh history debunked, he, nevertheless, remains the only character to stand between any kind of connection to the past and a cynical, nihilistic present. Dai Death's words "[t]hose were great, great days" are the last ones to be spoken before blackout, which gives them an added importance. As Dai is about to be struck down in an almost hellish scene, is this character vindicated through Stack's pointless violence? I would argue that the ambivalent treatment of Dai in the play can be read as the ambivalence of a play which is situated between a nostalgic view of the past and the criticism of such nostalgia. Seeing nothing in the present on which to build his identity, Dai has permanently retreated into the iron 'fortress' Wales, because the certainties of a nostalgic past must be better than nothing at all. The paradoxes contained within *In Sunshine and In Shadow* are thus, I believe, indicative of the paradoxes of its time.

Already a topic in *In Sunshine and In Shadow*, the heritage industry and its relationship with history comes under scrutiny in a number of plays. The discussion of heritage has become more important for South Wales in the 1980s and 90s

because more and more former industrial sites were designated areas of historical interest. Tourism seemed to promise the only way out of the slump as unemployment remained high in the former industrial centres even after the introduction of various manufacturing plants. Playwrights like Laurence Allan and Tim Rhys see the heritage industry in a critical light and agree with Robert Hewison's bitter criticism of it. In his argument, the heritage industry falsifies the actual past and goes hand in hand with an atmosphere of decline:

> At best, the heritage industry only draws a screen between ourselves and our true past. I criticise the heritage industry not simply because so many of its products are fantasies of a world that never was; not simply because at a deeper level it involves the preservation, indeed reassertion, of social values that the democratic progress of the twentieth century seemed to be doing away with, but because, far from ameliorating the climate of decline, it is actually worsening it. If the only thing we have to offer is an improved version of the past, then today can only be inferior to yesterday. Hypnotised by images of the past, we risk losing all capacity for creative change. (10)

This assessment has to be read within its context: Hewison published *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Deline* in 1987 and his critique was surely as much directed against the heritage industry itself as against the culture of conservatism of the late 1980s, in which the government's ideas of returning to 'Victorian values' seemed to critics to be a symptom of decline rather than social progress. Furthermore, there was a sense of uneasiness about the real economic decline after the boom-and-bust years of the early to mid-1980s. Although later critics have moved away from Hewison's analysis of Britain as being caught up in a climate of 'decline', the dangers of regarding heritage as a correct reflection of history are, nevertheless, apparent. Julie Light warns against the danger of essentialising 'community' both in history writing and especially in the heritage industry (19), but she also cautions that we should not demand too much of what is, after all, a business:

> It is easy to be critical of heritage sites for being too simplistic. Heritage sites claim to educate as well as entertain, but their very nature ensures that they must continually draw visitors. Representations are likely to be simple and direct, because they need to be inclusive. The language in the guide books is not 'academic', but it certainly does not treat the reader with the condescension that the heritage critics do. . . . The crux of the matter is surely the troublesome nature of our relationship with the past. (29)

Light is, of course, right in asserting that if critics and visitors alike expect a heritage centre to represent history 'as it really was', then there is something fundamentally wrong with our view of history. It should be equally clear, however, that the parties who have a vested interest in heritage sites as business will take care to present a

view of history which tends to present them in a good light – and that is especially true for former industrial sites, as Light has shown (28-30).

Difficulties arise when local history merges with 'heritage', in other words, when a version of the past (which might not necessarily be wrong in itself) is preferred above others and when this version then becomes 'the past' of a community – especially if it gains an importance beyond that specific locality. Bella Dicks and Joost van Loon have shown how the historical narrative of the Rhondda Heritage Park "represents a particular historical narrative that seeks to claim for the South Wales Valleys a collective identity which is labourist and transnational in character" (221). Dicks and Loon demonstrate that the emplotment of the narrative told by the site, namely the story from coal boom (1890-1920) to the years of depression (1920s-1940s) and back to recovery (1940s-1950s), describes a "trajectory [in which] the recovery coincides nicely with the post-war Labour government that set up the welfare state and nationalized the industry" (221-22). Secondly, they draw attention to the fact that the narrative stops quite suddenly in the 1950s, only mentions the strike of 1984-85 in passing, and does not account for the virtual disappearance of coal-mining in the Rhondda in the present (222-23). That means that the plot of the story of the Rhondda (as told in the Rhondda Heritage Park) ends on a positive note which, reinforced through the immediacy of the experience, as history is re-enacted in the heritage centre, allows visitors to conclude that the present-day Rhondda is essentially unchanged from the Rhondda of the past – and of a specific past at that. A second problem with heritage becomes obvious when the local economy becomes dependent on the revenues generated by the heritage site. The Rhondda Heritage Park, which opened as a venture to regenerate a severely depressed former coal-mining area has not been as successful as early predictions had suggested and the local economy was not revitalised to the extent hoped for. Bella Dicks has described the failure of the Rhondda Heritage Park to live up to expectations mostly in terms of the lack of vision by the various agencies involved, funding problems and disappointing visitor numbers (Dicks 69-72, also Dicks and Loon).

Both these separate but interlinked problems are discussed in Laurence Allan's play *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1989), a dystopia, in which the present-day reality of the Rhondda Heritage Park is discussed, and in Tim Rhys's funny one-act play *The Old Petrol Station* (1994), in which the lost travellers of a Welsh mythological past happen upon a deserted heritage museum in what can only be described as 'wild Wales'. In their different ways, these plays are critical of a

historical discourse which reduces South Walian history to heritage. Secondly, these plays are critical of the political pressures, which suggest that creating a South Walian heritage industry is the only road back to a measure of prosperity. Both plays propose instead, that the reduction of history to heritage leaves South Walians impoverished not only culturally but economically, too, as the 'attendants' (in *The Old Petrol Station*) and the future 'actors' in the heritage site (in *The Best Years of Our Lives*) are not seen to be reaping the profits of the heritage sites. Thus, Allan and Rhys are critical of history packaged as heritage, but they do not go so far as to analyse and interrogate the mechanisms of the creation of history itself, although Allan comes close when he juxtaposes his idea of 'lived history' with 'history as heritage'.

Laurence Allan's starting point in all his plays is the community in which he lives and works: his plays tend to focus on Pontypridd or the Rhondda Valley more generally. He can thus be described as writing community theatre, especially in his continued collaboration with Hijinx Theatre,[10] the company whose remit it is to bring theatre to small and deprived communities as well as to cater for mixed-ability audiences. *The Best Years of Our Lives* was, however, commissioned and produced by the national theatre company Made in Wales and was first performed at Theatre Clwyd in Mold. It is, thus, not surprising that the play was, so to speak, 'written out of' the Rhondda community: it is set in the Rhondda – presumably in Trehafod near Pontypridd, where, after the pit had closed the Rhondda Heritage Park opened – but its topic, namely the exchange of 'living history' for 'heritage', has wider repercussions for the Welsh nation as a whole as so many communities were encouraged to gather their 'history' in suitable sites as tourist attractions. *The Best Years of Our Lives* dramatises that conflict by narrating the stories of three ex-miners, Neil, Clem and Eddie, recently made redundant, and their part in the grand plan of the middle-class couple Rob and Fiona to turn their former workplace and the Workmen's Institute into a heritage site. The working-class characters, except the upwardly mobile Neil, want to demonstrate their resistance to Rob's plan by kidnapping the Secretary of State for Wales on the grand opening night of the Institute and to show a film made during the 'happier times' of the miners' strike in 1984/85. Their plan fails, as they confuse all these men in suits in the dark and kidnap Rob instead. Although Rob is made to feel their displeasure, their resistance eventually fails. Yet, the characters have made their point of criticism against an officially sanctioned version of history.

Like the plays by Alan Osborne, Dic Edwards and Patrick Jones, Laurence Allan's playtext is determined by a political subtext, which identifies a working-class community setting out to preserve their actual history against Rob and Fiona Bentley, whose rapacious salesmanship threatens to create a heritage centre which is about to drive out the last elements of a living local working-class culture. At the root of this play is, thus, a Marxist-influenced dialectical argument, which associates the working-class characters with a real, experienced past, while the middle-class characters think of history as a commodity. The importance of the argument means that the ambivalence and complexity of the issues involved are invariably reduced, as I shall show below.

Rob's plan to open a heritage centre on the site of the former pit is entirely determined by a cynical view of the marketability of the past. He is less sure of what this past actually consists of, but he knows that 'history' must consist of a neat package of all the popular stereotypes of South Wales, instantly recognisable to the appreciative paying tourist. When Fiona and he come to meet their new neighbours, Neil and Glen, he expounds his vision:

> **Rob** . . . I don't think we can turn our backs on our heritage. It's all important. Colliery, chapel –
> **Neil** Bookies. (*Nobody laughs.*) Joke.
> **Fiona** Don't tempt him. (59-60)

This short passage reveals that, despite Rob's repeated emphasis on "our" heritage (51 *et passim*), he does not really know the realities of Rhondda industrial life. Therefore, when Neil, who seems to find Rob's aseptic and stereotypical version of history both unrealistic and funny, attempts to insert an element of the past he knew, Rob does not see the joke, although Fiona, who has more sympathy for the community, does. Matters come to a head when Rob wants to close down the Workmen's Institute in order to include it as part of his heritage project. The most outspoken ex-miner, Clem, opposes Rob vehemently and thus furnishes the counter-argument to Rob's materialistic one:

> **Rob** [T]he Institute will be closed for renovation and rehabilitation.
> **Sal** As what?
> **Rob** As ... part of the Heritage Site. It will return to its original state. As a tourist attraction. Though there will be a lounge bar an the cinema will revert to a fully functional concert hall. Choirs, recitals and suchlike.
> **Clem** Choirs and recitals! That's the place where Zorro made his mark, Brian Poole and the Tremeloes flooded the place in sweat, Eden Kane got booed off before he opened his gob.
> **Rob** Yes, well I'm not sure what visitors will make of that version of history.
> **Clem** It's what we made of it, you jumped up little snotrag.

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[10] *On the Road Again* (1994), *Angels Don't Need Wings* (2002).

Glen Dad.
Sal Not what ponces like you invent for us. (93-94)

In this extract, the lines of the general argument become obvious. Rob's plan to close the Workmen's Institute, which, although dilapidated, is still in use, is a blatant display of *Herrenzynismus.* To further his own ends, he is willing to close a still functioning cultural centre in order to have it return to a possibly fictional, certainly romanticised past, which is meaningless to the working-class community that uses the Institute. Against this, the actual voice of the working-class, namely Clem's voice, is heard and it recalls some of the events of the Institute, which make it meaningful to the rock'n'roll aficionado. Immediately the issue is polarised into a fight of class against class, with the working classes refusing to accept "what ponces like you invent for us". Thus, the potentially complex discussion of heritage, its relationship with history and its likely function within the depressed economy of the Rhondda is reduced to a class-argument, which casts the middle-class characters in the roles of the villains of the piece. The working-class characters have at heart a wide range of the interests of the community – their community –, whereas Rob simply wants to make money by inventing a tradition of "choirs, recitals and suchlike", which is, if anything, only representative of a South Walian past of the 19th and the turn of the 20th century. Moreover, the 'heritage' that Rob has in mind is simply presented as a reductive, anachronistic harking back to the tourist value of "Romantic Wales" in a different age (Ned Thomas 310 ff., Prys Morgan 274 ff.). Whereas the 18th and 19th century travellers had braved the elements to travel through 'unspoilt' nature, visited 'romantic' ruins and largely ignored the reality of the 'picturesque rustics' in the background of this picture,[11] the modern 'time traveller' can view the romanticised past in a heritage centre – or so the play suggests. Yet, the example of extant heritage sites shows that the presentation of historical narratives might not be as simplistic as the play suggests. Bella Dicks has shown, for example that

> for Rhondda inhabitants the [Rhondda Heritage Park] is primarily a *memorial* to the past. They are not, on the whole, visitors to the Park (visitor figures indicate low attendance from local people). However, as local residents they nevertheless cannot help but 'consume' the park as a material signifier within the valley. Although there is some hostility towards the park which should not be ignored, my research indicates a high degree of appreciation that it is simply *there* – rather than having been obliterated. (57)

[11] Cf. the satiric painting of *The Artist Travelling Through Wales* (1799), after Thomas Rowlandson (depicted e.g. in Prys Morgan 275) and Matthew Arnold's views on Welsh literature and culture expressed in "On the Study of Celtic Literature".

Local support for the Heritage Park can also be gauged from the fact that people donated personal artefacts, although Dicks has shown that people have been disappointed with the marketing of the place as an 'experience' rather than a more traditional museum (71, cf also Light and Dicks and van Loon). Indeed, the play avoids any real discussion of the possible merits of the idea of heritage, focusing instead on the undoubted pitfalls of the heritage industry if a whole community becomes dependent on it financially and is reduced to it ideologically as far as identity-politics are concerned. For Allan, the heritage industry can only succeed in 'mummifying' ailing but, nevertheless, living communities.[12]

While the middle-class characters Rob and Fiona remain stereotypical – Rob seems to be cast in the archetypal role of stage villain – the working-class characters present more differentiated views when they are among themselves. The two ex-miners Neil and Clem represent different viewpoints on past and present which are supplemented by those of Sal and Neil's wife Glen. Neil is even prepared to turn against his former work-mates when they threaten to stand in the way of his social aspirations. He wants to 'better' himself and, consequently, the past for him is something to get away from (141). Clem, however, is convinced that the closure of the Institute is the last nail in the coffin of a genuine working-class tradition – a tradition which is viable because it is 'lived'. It seems that he conflates the closure of the Institute with another defeat, namely with the loss of the strike of 1984/85. With the prospect of another certain defeat, he takes a personal 'last stand' and begins a hunger strike with the words: "They can stick me up with the rest of the dummies in the museum. Clem Lewis, hunger striker, nineteen ninety-five " (105). For Clem, 'history' begins and ends with himself, with his own experience. A heritage centre cannot be anything but fake, because his real memories of rock'n'roll bands playing in the Institute are certain not to figure in the display. His example, however, illustrates the dangers of a concept of history as 'lived history': when he tries to come up with a history of his life and times, he gets stuck in a quagmire of details and only succeeds in writing down the dates of rock'n'roll dates at the Institute (64). When confronted by his war-damaged son Terry he can only mumble that "[t]here is more. The real bits. I haven't got to the real history yet" (80). But what is the 'real'

[12] **"Clem** There's more to us than bloody disasters, you know. This is the biggest bloody disaster. Nineteen ninety-five, the entire population of Wales was completely mummified" (105). Cf. also Ron Berry's tirade against the lack of a living culture in the Rhondda valleys and the rise of 'heritage tourism': "Voracious muse chasers in Rhondda, not a single bookshop or picture gallery for a population of 100,000 – down to 80,000 by 1989. . . . Rhondda's culture has the utile warrant of a deserted beaver's dam. And now it's the sickly pox of *heritage* (. . .). Incurable" (126).

history? And how does it continue when its voice has gone? Clem panics when he realises that his memory is losing details all the time,[13] but he bridles at the thought of having someone else tell his story for him and thus taking the last remnant of control away from him. Again, the issue is interpreted in terms of class in the play: the working-class characters have lost their work, and thus, as the example of Eddie demonstrates, a good part of their self-respect,[14] they are about to lose their Institute, where they can socialise, and – to add insult to injury – they are about to be deprived of their voices:

> **Fiona** Your memories are just as valid as any of this.
> **Clem** You can put the soft soap away now, 'cos I'm no soft socialist.
> **Fiona** No soft soap. I'm just saying that your story can still be told. Here in this place.
> **Clem** I'm here telling it. We all are. Every day. So why don't you go and tell your old man to clean his ears out and listen. (119-120)

If history can only be told by the people themselves, Clem's endeavour to save his own history from disappearing is doomed from the start. What is interesting about his rather extreme view is that the source of Clem's discomfort is that history needs a narrative – a list of rock'n'roll dates might constitute data, but it is not history yet (White 125). The play does not quite succeed in interrogating the mechanism of history – it remains moored in discussing the contrast between 'meaningful' (i.e. working-class popular culture) history and the falsifications it ascribes to heritage. Nor does it suggest that there might be several possible narratives about one set of data: the argument of the play forces Clem into the role of the provider of a true history – even if he is unable to provide a narrative – and Fiona (and especially Rob) can only falsify the historical truth. Implicit in this argument is the assumption that the Rhondda was a one-class working-class community, which makes Clem's truth 'the truth' by default.

However, there is another instance in the play where the question of the authenticity or a historical narrative is discussed. The historical narrative is a documentary film Sal had made during the strike of 1984/85. In the scene entitled "Homecoming"[15], Sal shows her film to Glen and Eddie, who is there to make the

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[13] In a rather touching detail, Clem is described as needing Oxo cubes as an olfactory stimulant to help him remember. He does not drink it, because he could not and cannot stand the actual soup (74-75 *et passim*). In a sense, he needs to recreate some of the actual details of his past to be able to remember them.

[14] Eddie is another former miner who was made redundant along with Clem and Neil. At first he thinks he might enjoy his 'life of leisure' but, instead, he lost his sense of purpose along with his job (66-67).

[15] Allan often makes use of Brechtian titles for his scenes. The titles do not impact on the performance, however, as they are not read out or otherwise shown to the audience. Instead, they remain for the appreciation of the reader of the play. Here the 'homecoming'

equipment work, and, at first unknowingly, to Clem. The contents of the film, which is shown in the performance, as well as the centrality of the medium during the scene, undermine any critical stance towards the 'past' shown. Nevertheless, the different layers of truth, memory and nostalgia are very well brought out in this scene: Sal believes she has caught a specific moment of 'real' history on film – real because it shows themselves, their community, at a specific moment in time. It is telling, though, that neither she nor Glen can remember the nickname the men had given the pit. They believe it must have been a pseudo-romantic name like "Hellhole", which conjures up images of danger and heat, until they are informed by a bitterly ironic Clem that he used to call it "The Big Sick. . . . 'Cos most of the buggers were on it" (73-74). The communities, like many miners' communities had obviously been gender-segregated, with the men going to work in the pit and the women staying at home (Gareth Williams 63). The women really have no part in "the community" shown in the film, despite the fact that it is Sal's gaze at the pit and the people through the camera lense. What she shows is the exception to the rule by focusing almost exclusively on the events of the miners' strike of 1984/85. The scenes showing the men going to work might well have been 'acted out' for the camera to show a 'before the strike'/'during the strike'-effect (75). Glen herself has nostalgic memories of the strike because she felt that the community for once had one unifying purpose. That is why she remembers the year as a happy one:

> **Glen** Why do we look so different? . . . Because we were laughing. You make it look as if we laughed for a year.
> **Clem** In spite of all that. All that up there.
> **Glen** Perhaps we did. Best year of my life.
> (*The film moves on to several shots of EDDIE, NEIL, CLEM, SAL and GLEN on picket duty.*)
> **Clem** Blot on my memory. (*He goes to walk out.*) (76)

For Glen the memory of the strike is tinged with nostalgia for a true working-class community spirit because her present is so undesirable because her husband Neil wants to make a middle-class woman of her to fit in with his class aspirations. When Clem joins them to watch the film, he only remembers the disappointments because he cannot see the film without connecting it to the loss of the strike. For him, it was a year of futile hope and he does not want to be reminded of it:

> **Clem** What's this then, miners' fortnight?
> **Glen** Strike.
> (*CLEM closes up almost physically for several moments.*)

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refers to Clem's son Terry, a young man clearly damaged from army life and the warlike situation in Northern Ireland, who returns home. His is a sceptical voice of someone who has become an outsider and who has become a law unto himself, but his voice does not carry enough weight in the play to make an impact.

Sal Clem? Anything?
Clem Nothing. Nothing to say. Nothing to remember.
Glen Everyting to remember. The longest year. And the shortest.
Clem A non year. Rubbed out.
Glen You can't.
Clem I can. We all have. Haven't you noticed? (76)

Interestingly, it is Clem whose attempt at writing 'lived history' is proven to be just as biased as any other kind of history. Unable to face the memory of the failed strike, he is seen as physically shutting out the intrusive memories as he refuses to be reminded of the year of the strike at all. He thus edits his memory like anyone else and his example is clearly meant to show how this selective 'forgetfulness' was shared by the community as a whole. I believe that this collective repression of memory of the potential of the Rhondda's working-class communities is meant to signify the run-down state of those communities and to represent the perceptible lack of pride and internal division of the working-class characters of the play, who are clearly meant to stand for the real Rhondda communities as a whole.

While the film thus triggers different memories, it itself is an obvious example of how the film maker's viewpoint and envisaged narrative determines the choice of plot and choice of scenes. A typical scene is described in the stage directions as

> *a whole sequence of images from the strike: food convoys arriving, women unloading vans, men working in kitchens, children buttering bread, a room full of cans of baked beans with two women laughing uproariously, a woman giving a man a haircut, a man attempts the same on a woman; simple scenes full of laughter.* (76)

The film stresses Sal's overwhelmingly positive attitude towards the strike: laughter, co-operation, and elevation of the mundane to the realm of positive action against a common enemy, and, perhaps most crucially for Sal and Glen, a camaraderie between the genders that borders on total equality. At the same time, the community is under siege and it brings out the best in the community: a community spirit is clearly felt by all. Watching the film, all characters are a little put out by the anticlimax of subsequent developments, but where Clem simply represses his memories of the strike year, the women glorify their memories, because they were able to get "[o]ut of the kitchen" (76) and contribute to the forging of a community focused on a shared goal.

What interests me is the role of the film excerpts play in the theatre and what impact the film must have had on the theatre audience attending the performances in 1989. Would they take Clem's or Sal's and Glen's side? The way the film scenes are described, I believe the audience is meant to join in the nostalgia. It does not seem to rain in the film, laughter dominates, there is no poverty, no hardship, no in-

fighting, no anger, only earnest political talk and, importantly, the failure of the strike is not shown (77). The playwright does give the audience a biased image of the strike from the start and the intimacy of the medium makes a critical stance more difficult. It requires a great deal of distance – which a Welsh audience in 1989 probably did not have – to take into account the full complexity of the situation.[16] Again, history is told with a bias, and the attempt at showing that bias through Clem's determined scepticism is undercut by the positive interpretation of the strike through the film, which, as it is signposted as 'documentary film', is easily taken to show 'the truth' and is, by virtue of its medium, in danger of dominating the scene.[17]

Although the play is generally critical of a 'grand narrative' version of history, by which 'grand' is understood not only as 'dominant' but also as a 'narrative of a few, elevated personages', it does not so much deconstruct that narrative (the source for Rob's heritage centre) as create an alternative, working-class version of it. This narrative stresses community life, it insists on the importance of an oral culture and of popular culture. This is the culture and the history which should be in Rob's heritage centre and which should be perpetuated and not killed off by Rob's introduction of an anachronistic and romanticised version of it.[18] The play closes, however, with another admission of defeat. The heritage centre is going to open as planned, Neil is not going to go back to the group of his friends and Glen is left to mourn the loss of "[o]ur history. Our dream" (142).

Where Laurence Allan focuses on a community's struggle against having an anachronistic tradition 'invented' for it, Tim Rhys's short play is a dystopia set in a time in which there really is nothing left of Wales except heritage centres. It is a deliberately polemical piece, which addresses issues like the depopulation of the

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[16] It is interesting to compare the use of film in *The Best Years of Our Lives* and Ewart Alexander's play *Atrocity*, which is about the filming of the film *The Silent Village* in Cwmgiedd in 1943. Alexander interrogates the impact of the filming – and especially of the 'outsiders' involved in the film – on the lives of the people of Cwmgiedd. The play also looks at issues of 'reality' versus 'fiction' as it analyses the filming process. Clips of the film are shown throughout the performance and form a meaningful unit with the action on stage. Thus the film itself is revealed as a complicated fiction – even if it was originally meant to be a 'documentary'. Allan, by contrast, does not interrogate the fiction created by Sally's film in detail.

[17] I would argue that a film shown in the theatre will automatically draw the attention of the audience away from the live action due to their every-day watching habits. I also believe that the realism of the play coupled with the announcement that the film is a 'documentary film' would influence the audience into believing the film showed 'the truth'.

[18] It seems that an oral, working class history forms the basis of the real Rhondda Heritage Park – a reported history which is then, of course, told in a certain way. The author seems to think of heritage sites that are much more like the Museum of Welsh Life at St. Fagan's near Cardiff at the time when Raymond Williams visited it before 1975, and

former industrial centres (except those within commuting distance of Cardiff, Swansea etc.) and the consequent mental dissociation of the people remaining in those former industrial towns from society more generally.[19] Moreover, Rhys discusses the effect of the total erasure of visible markers of the (industrial) past from the Welsh landscape, something which Gareth Williams describes in the following way:

> Not only are the people of the area poorer because of the loss of work, the historical evidence of what the place was and what the people did has been taken away and, in the case of coal, reduced to a couple of heritage parks in which people can learn about that foreign country. There is no doubt that heritage parks can teach people about the past in a way that offers opportunities for critical engagement, but we should not confuse this with history. (66)

The erasure of the signs of the industrial history of Wales and the subsequent 'greening' of the de-industrialised place is doubtless a positive development, most importantly for environmental reasons. It is, moreover, a development that most developed countries have faced and have, for better or worse, weathered. What Williams and Rhys are criticising is not the necessity of the process of de-industrialisation itself but the fact that this process did not go hand in hand with a viable strategy for regeneration (Williams 67-68), a regeneration which could have provided a basis for a new identity. Instead, so Willliams's (and Rhys's) argument goes, the ghost of an old South Walian identity based on industrial work and class politics is still there – dead and alive at the same time like Dai Death – but it is increasingly ineffective. The memory of the past is replaced by "a couple of heritage sites", which are ineffective if they are to fulfil the roles of the guardians of the 'real' past. If the memory of place is inscribed in its landscape, this memory has, indeed, been almost completely lost and very little put in its place. Rhys's satirically exaggerated dystopia, therefore, describes Gwyn A. Williams's

> nightmare vision of a depersonalized Wales which has shrivelled up into a Costa Bureaucratica in the South and a Costa Geriatrica in the north; in between, sheep, holiday homes burning merrily away and fifty folk museums where there used to be communities. (303)

Rhys focuses on the 'in between', a sad and lonely place whose community has disintegrated long ago and in which there is nothing to be found except, rather incongruously, a heritage centre. According to Rhys, he thought of Ogmore Vale when he wrote the play, but it is meant to be a place typical of de-industrialised

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which did not at that time include any exhibits from the industrial revolution (Williams "Welsh Culture").

[19] Alan Osborne had looked at a similar phenomenon in terms of social exclusion. See chapter 1.

former industrial centres in South Wales in general (private conversation, 9/2/2002). In the heritage site, "a celebration of our glorious post-industrial heritage" (185), whose centre-piece is an original petrol station, two nameless people A1 and A2 act our their roles day in day out as the attendants of the petrol station (like their real-life counterparts in the Rhondda Heritage Centre). Their isolation is disturbed when a young couple, Lance and Gwen, whose car has run out of petrol half-way up the mountain, come to them in the mistaken belief that this is a working petrol station. A great part of the humour of the play is played out through the difference between 'real' and 'heritage site exhibit', as nothing in the heritage site proves to be real: there is no petrol in the petrol pumps, the telephone is not connected, the business cards of local businesses are either fake or very much out of date etc. This gives Rhys the opportunity to question the 'reality' of heritage exhibits and re-enactments themselves, especially when the 'show' becomes more important than the information contained within it.

All the well-known facts about Welsh history have been crammed into this small heritage site – from industrial disasters to nonconformist preaching, everything is re-enacted. But through the very act of re-enacting the past, the visitors to the centre and, by implication, Welsh people as a whole, distance themselves from the actual past – it becomes a tourist spectacle:

> **A1** Look, sir! Visitors' book. (*produces a visitors' book*) Here we are. "A thoroughly relaxing day out. I especially enjoyed the Cwmblast Colliery disaster. The roof-collapse was most convincing, and certainly had me reaching for my hard hat." – Mrs Jean Poole of Tonyrefail.
> **A2** (*takes the book*) And here's another one – "My husband found it so relaxing he fell asleep in Room Four, with all the Hellfire preachers." – Mrs Beacon of Brecon. (188)

Rhys is deeply critical of the reduction of history to a few, clearly recognisable and invariably stereotypical instances of history, which work well in exhibitions without a great deal of contextualisation. Furthermore, the severing of all connections to the real multiplicity and complexity of the past has surely arrived when visitors to heritage sites merely enjoy the spectacle for its own sake – people, moreover, who are clearly meant to be Welsh, not outsiders. Even the attendants do not really associate the exhibits with their lives and experiences. The past has become myth, but a disabling, crumbling ideological shell, not an enabling myth. Everything, from local businesses to cars has become a distant, somewhat unreal memory in which R.S. Thomas is venerated as a druid in a conflation of images and stereotypes which Rhys finds characteristic of the heritage industry (191-192). He believes that the most crippling effect of the heritage industry is that identity comes to be based

on a few selected images or "totems" of a more or less invented past (private conversation, 9/2/2002). Indeed, the word 'totems' is particularly apt for this play, as the attendants' isolation has led to their reverting to a state of pre-Christian primitiveness. It turns out that the reason for all their prevarication and attempts at making the young couple stay with them, was to get their hands on them and on their car and to sacrifice them to Scrapo, the God of Iron. Because they never leave the heritage site, the attendants believe the cars being driven over the mountain for the sake of their insurance or just "for a laugh" (205) are being given to them to salvage by their God. Lance and Gwen manage to shake their belief sufficiently to make their escape. The attendants are, indeed, shaken and one of them, A2, actually tries to leave the site. Poignantly, the last sentence of the play is A1's shout "You dopey git. It's a dead end!" (207), making clear there is no escape.

It is not only the attendants who have reverted to pre-Christian beliefs. The young couple Lance (Lancelot) and Gwen (Guinevere) turn out to be on a quest for King Arthur's grave after "Merlin contacted us. On her mum's Ouija board. . . . He told us to awaken King Arthur, so that he may save the Welsh nation" (194). This is, of course, an equally pointless, escapist flight into fantastical mythology which does not do much to change the present. In the couple, Rhys satirises the construction of "Romantic Wales" and proves it to be just as disabling as the reduction of industrial history to heritage – although the point is not proven in as much detail. In the play, the couple's quest is comically deflated at once as A1 proudly presents to them the grave of King Arthur in the heritage centre itself until A2 reminds him that it is, in fact, the grave of Arthur King, the old miner (194-195). The characters of the play are obviously not meant to be realistic depictions of Welsh people. They are satirically overdrawn, but their plight, which includes having to fight to the death for the meaningless job of attendant (A2 "killed the previous incumbent . . . . Stole his uniform and assumed a new identity" 189) is very real. This is an echo of Sid's furious disregard for "Mickey Mouse" jobs (41) in Ed Thomas's *House of America*, and the characters' mental displacement from a viable present and future, is very real. Ultimately, Rhys's play is limited to the common complaint about the poor quality of regeneration strategies for South Wales. These focus entirely on the creation of heritage sites as means of recouping some revenue but often at the cost of reducing history to heritage. Yet, on this level the play's black humour conveys Rhys's criticism extremely well, especially as the play comes to life almost entirely through language, an indication that Rhys usually writes for radio. Very little action is

of importance by itself and the simple stage design is dominated by the two petrol pumps, which allows for a realistic staging until farce takes over (182).

Having looked at plays that create a nostalgic (or at least an uncomplicated) image of history and plays that are critical of the way history is often reduced to nostalgia and – in a more decidedly political argument – to heritage as the way out of the financial doldrums of South Wales, I would now like to turn to plays that question the way history is created and ask whom such creations serve. Historiographic metadrama does not only interrogate the mechanism of history, it provides counter-narratives for an accepted version of history – a version that is usually connected to a specific location and deliberately not meant as a *pars pro toto* for South Wales or even Wales as a whole. The critique of 'official' history and the interrogation of the mechanism for narrating history, that results in various counter-narratives, is, as Gilbert and Tompkins point out, a prominent tool in postcolonial drama:

> History inevitably manoeuvres a strategic presentation of certain views and a suppression of others. Postcolonial plays employ many similar strategies of (re)presentation in order to foreground other(ed) historical perspectives and so to disperse the authority inherent in official accounts. (108)

In Brian Friel's *Translations* (1980), for example, the imperialist mapping of Ireland and the practice of the renaming of places in English are interrogated and deconstructed through the very imperfection of the translations involved. In the context of Welsh drama in English, it is less an overtly imperialist 'official' narrative that comes under scrutiny. In Greg Cullen's *Mary Morgan*, an official middle-class narrative is criticised for not reflecting the actual history of the Welsh working-class communities in Wales, whose narrative is then written and performed as a counter-narrative. Thus, structurally *Mary Morgan* can be called a postcolonial play,[20] but its political argument is class-based. The play only implicitly describes the power structures in the play in terms of a colonial argument, although the reviewer Siân Hawkins interpreted the play as a critique of colonialism, conflating the postcolonial and Welsh working-class history in an interesting comment in which the Welsh are identified as working-class who are dominated by the English "gentry," writing that "Mary Morgan is another example of how the Welsh have been badly treated by the English gentry. The character of Mary Morgan condenses the whole history of the

[20] It is interesting to note that David Ian Rabey has categorised Cullen's theatre writing as 'magic realist' or, following the poet Gwyneth Lewis, as 'spiritual realist'. Yet, he does not see any parallels with postcolonial magic realism like Salman Rushdie's and, instead, draws attention to the parallels with Latin American magic realist writers like Isabel Allende (Rabey "Greg Cullen's Drama" 327-328).

Welsh working class" (382). Secondly, the notion of one 'official' narrative even in terms of one counter-narrative, is deconstructed in very recent plays. The plays consciously refuse to deal with the traditional political battle lines and, instead, create personal narratives counter to 'official' history (Sharon Morgan's *Magic Threads*) or discuss the relationship between memory and historical truth without direct reference to political commitments (Laurence Allan's *Angels Don't Need Wings* or Tracy Harris's *Past Away*). Because postcolonial drama is political by definition, the question of whether recent Welsh drama in English is postcolonial remains therefore difficult to answer (see chapter 5).

Greg Cullen's *Mary Morgan* deals with the true story of Mary Morgan, a young servant who in 1805 was hanged for the murder of her illegitimate child. She lies buried in Presteigne, Powys. Her case gained some notoriety because, as local knowledge has it, the father of the child was the son of Mary's employer, who was part of the jury who condemned her to death. It seems that the local population was so outraged at the verdict that they stole the body before it could be taken away to be given over to scientific experiments and interred it in one side of the churchyard. They also placed a stone, whose engraving expressed much sympathy with her ordeal, beside the rather pompous one Judge Hardinge had had erected beside her grave.[21] Mary Morgan's story is in many ways ideal for a playwright who has been commissioned by Theatr Powys to write a play for the inaugural production by the Mid Powys Youth Theatre in Builth Wells. The bare facts of Mary's story are widely known (at least in Powys) but the details of her tale, such as whom she was pregnant by and the reason why she refused to name the father even though she faced execution, have been lost. Thus, Cullen was able to 'fill in' the details according to the point that he wanted to make. The story enjoys great popularity, as Mary's youth (she was hanged aged only 17, a fact emphasised by the equally young age of the actor who played the role of Mary) engenders pity and as the popular mood against the judgement speaks of a defence of one of 'us' against the incomers (Judge Hardinge and the upper-middle class Wilkins's family). Cullen is not interested in creating a documentary play about a historical person, however – he does not even particularly want to defend Mary Morgan, as Green does in her biography. Instead, he uses her story to illustrate how a world structured along hierarchical lines possesses the kind of structures that allows the person (often male) in power to take advantage of someone else (often women and children).

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[21] Jan Morris, *Wales: Epic Views of a Small Country*. Rev. ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000, 214, or *The Morning of Her Day* by Jennifer Green. Liverpool: Divine Books, 1987.

Cullen remembers that the play was an answer to a specific political situation in Britain in the 1980s: "This was a play about how the world changes and how children are its first victims. The play mirrored the rise of the so-called New Right, and their agenda for the welfare state, justice and enterprise" ("The Graveyard of Ambition?" 146). Thus, the play is a historical parable for a contemporary political situation.[22]

A mixture of realist story-telling and meta-historical commentary, the play argues that the rise of the middle classes in the 19th century, which slowly diminished the power of the monarchy, did not significantly change the hierarchical power structure. Instead, the structure was only slightly amended, leaving those without power still in their former positions.[23] Now, however, the promise of a revolt against the unjust system has become remote, since the powerless have colluded in their own subjugation. This thesis, which describes the processes that Sloterdijk had described in terms of cynicism, is very similar to the point of view expressed by Alan Osborne, Laurence Allan (in *The Best Years of Our Lives*) and Patrick Jones. Cullen's analysis of social structures is similar to that of Dic Edwards and Cullen explicitly mentions Edwards and Charles Way as his contemporaries (Cullen "Love, Anger and Money" 364). Basing his analysis of Mary Morgan's story on a socialist class analysis, he examines the mechanics of 'history-making', examining whose story is allowed to become official history as all the incriminating details of Mary Morgan's story are lost. Indeed, it is emphasised that the memory of the young woman would probably have disappeared from view altogether (except as a statistic), if the people of Presteigne had not made sure it would always be remembered in popular history. Cullen thus displaces present-day discussions of class into the time of George III, which allows him to create a class-bound identity unconnected to industrialisation.[24]

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[22] A further reason for writing the play for Mid Powys Youth Theatre was that Cullen was able to act "on a large scale" for a change. "The major theatres were bemoaning the fact that no one was writing large plays anymore and I was sick of twisting my plays so that the actors could double up, change costume and get everything that was needed into a van" (Cullen "The Graveyard of Ambition?" 147)

[23] In the performance, the power structure is emphasised by the set. The play was staged on a promenade stage on three levels, which symbolise the three classes the play deals with (Adams "Inner Need and External Demand" 355).

[24] Cullen might have wanted to discuss a class conflict unrelated to industrialisation to be free of the familiar stereotypes that this invariably invokes. But it might also be the result of Cullen's status as "outsider, a city radical transferred to the middle of rural Powys, a visitor from another culture", as David Adams describes him. Adams argues that Cullen's politics are not place-specific although he situates them in a specifically Welsh context in *Mary Morgan*. Adams continues: "He loves Wales, feels Wales was the country he had adopted, he said to me, but Wales had not adopted him. His background, his upbringing,

All this shows that, like many other writers of history plays from Shakespeare and Marlowe until today, Cullen does not re-create the past for its own sake. He very clearly interprets the present through the past, and he does that by introducing several alienating effects which prevent the audience from slipping into a purely passive attitude that is encouraged by a 'costume drama'-approach to staging history plays. He explicitly invites comparisons between past and present, he refuses to 'historicise' his material by using an older diction and he uses a mixture of realistic and metadramatic scenes, which break up the linear flow of the play. Although the play is set during the reign of George III and refers to the Napoleonic Wars and the fortunes of the East India Company, past and present exist side by side in a plot that is made to appear timeless. This is suggested by the costumes the characters wear and by the stage design: "The set and costumes should be an eclectic mix of periods and cultures, recognisable but unfamiliar" (8). Cullen thus very elegantly circumvents a major problem of community theatre, namely the fact that it usually cannot afford lavish costumes. It is more likely that the company will have some costumes from various periods and in various styles. The variety of clothes and in the set, moreover, makes the narrative meaningful beyond its historical specificity. Secondly, the characters speak in present-day English and no attempt was made to recreate authentic 18th/19th century speech that might have created a sense of the distant past by the sheer unfamiliarity of the language. Indeed, historical veracity would probably have demanded that at least the working-class and the poor speak Welsh. But, a linguistic mix on stage would not only have made casting more difficult,[25] but would have opened up a very different issue which would have distracted the audience from the main argument. Contrary to, for example, Friel's *Translations*, this is not language, national identity and imperialism but capitalism and the rise of the middle classes. Thirdly, the linear flow of the play is broken up by several scenes in which the older Wilkins, Mary Morgan's employer,

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his beliefs, are those of a working-class Londoner steeped in urban conflict politics" (Adams "Inner Need and External Demand" 347).

[25] The play is very clearly tailored for the demands of community theatre. The difficulty of finding enough young actors who could act through the medium of Welsh probably played its part in the decision not to make an issue of language. Other casting decisions had their impact on the text: there are only 7 parts for men but 13 parts for women (not including doubling, as the servant John Kent may be doubled by the militia sergeant). The cast of characters takes into account that community theatre usually suffer from a lack of sufficient parts for women. Siân Hawkins' review also mentions that the King was played by a woman, a further alienating device, showing how it is the position of the individual, not gender, that determines the workings of the class system (382) – although poverty is a female issue as the inhabitants of the shanty town are women, whose husbands have been forced to leave to fight in the war.

is seen in conversation with the King. These furnish the play with a meta-historical commentary, as here the new middle classes speak to the monarchy (Scenes 1, 6, 10, 15, 17, 21, 35 and the end of scene 42). Additional importance is given to the scenes by their position in the play: they open and close it. The meta-historical elements encourage reflection and the juxtaposition of realistic and non-realistic elements creates an alienating effect which focuses and re-focuses the audience on the overall argument of the play. A further alienating effect is achieved by allowing the central characters to communicate on two levels: on a realistic, historical level and on a non-realistic, meta-historical level. Thus, Wilkins is both a historical individual and an representative of his class. In the same way, the Earl of Hereford and his daughter Catherine Devereux, for whom the younger Wilkins forsakes Mary in order to make a good match, are historical individuals and represent the aristocracy's willingness to make real and metaphorical 'marriages of convenience' with the middle classes in order to be 'part of the future':[26]

> **King** You can't let this mongrel mix with our blood, our blood is pure.
> **Hereford** Some say it's past its best and turns to vinegar in our cellars.
> . . .
> **King** These manufacturers, financiers, traders, they are shopkeepers!
> **Hereford** Your Majesty, I shall decide who my daughter shall marry and which alliance will best serve the common interest.
> **King** You speak to me like this? An Earl speaks to me like a bourgeois?
> **Hereford** I have the future to be part of. (45)

In this extract, Hereford's function as 'member of the aristocracy' becomes obvious as the King (ahistorically) is witness to the proposed marriage between young Walter Wilkins and Catherine. When he speaks, it is his class speaking. Hereford is an interesting character because he is the most obviously anachronistic character in the play. He is described as "*snort[ing] cocaine up a rolled banknote*" and as "*decadent*" but "*not degenerate*" (44), a description which suggests the present-day lifestyle of the titled rich. By these various alienating effects, social power structures at the time of George III are analysed but are made meaningful for a present-day audience and attention is drawn to the topicality of the central argument.

The question remains why the story of Mary Morgan proved to be so interesting for Greg Cullen. It certainly has dramatic potential and the fact that it is locally well-known might have contributed to his choice. I believe, though, that the main reason for his choice was that he could link the local history of Powys to a wider problematic and thus write a critique of the British class system 'out of Wales'.

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[26] The distance and the helplessness of the King is symbolised in performance by placing him on "a tall moveable tower" (7). He cannot move on his own and he cannot escape his

Mary Morgan lived in a time when the middle classes were gaining in influence just as the monarchy and, later, the aristocracy stood to lose theirs. For a brief moment there was the possibility of a fairer society – but the play shows how the ascendancy of the middle classes did not bring universal equality and democracy but served to create a capitalist hierarchy in which the poor are still powerless but in which they now (cynically) collude. Both the group of shanty town women and the servants pose no real threat to Wilkins, Hardinge and Hereford. Although they are numerically superior, they do not present a united front.[27] In an interview, Cullen confirms that this is the main argument of the play:

> I think it is Wilkins who wins in the end – the bourgeoisie triumph over the aristocracy. That was the transformation of the time: that the gentry, the *nouveau riche*, rise and change the structure of society, not through revolution, but through metamorphosis of what we accept as social structure. ("Love, Anger and Money" 367)

At the time, in 1987 (first performance in Builth Wells) and 1988 (performance in London), this critique must have been especially powerful. Like other Welsh plays of the late 1980s, Cullen's is deeply critical of the culture of conservatism that brought another election victory to Margaret Thatcher in the general election of 1987. The dramatisation of the history of laissez faire capitalism, for which the story of Mary Morgan is set as an example, seems to point directly to the conservative government of the late 1980s and the parallel is certainly intended to be drawn by the audience and actors alike. Wilkins's pronouncement that "these are times of retrenchment. . . . The time we live in is one where we appear to hark back to old values while we crawl on our bellies to power" (52) can be read and most certainly was understood as an indictment of the Conservative government of the late 1980s.[28]

Place is important for the play, of course. By localising the action of the plot in mid Wales, Cullen allowed for a certain amount of identification with and

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tower, which places him at a distance from his subjects. He is thus considerably disadvantaged, as he cannot see or hear the plotting of Wilkins and Hereford.

[27] For example, Bethan turns against the other shanty town women for money and is later persuaded to execute Mary Morgan, thus leaving Wilkins sr. and jr., Hardinge and Hereford free from guilt (80). Another example is Maggie Harvard, a servant in the Wilkins household. She is the mistress of Wilkins sr., who, after she became pregnant, orchestrated a sham marriage between her and a fellow servant, but kept her on as mistress, humiliating her in front of the other servants. She must have once, like Mary, dreamt of marrying her master. In her disappointment, she betrays Mary shouting "[y]ou think I've suffered humiliations all my life so that you can do it the easy way?" (67), when she could have shown pity for and solidarity with a frightened young woman, whose predicament she once shared. She regrets her betrayal later (69), but by that time it is too late.

sympathy for the central character without, however, allowing Mary Morgan's story to take over the play completely.[29] What makes this play historiographic metadrama is, I believe, the way Cullen displays his interpretation of the mechanics of how history is created. He gives a voice to the many landless poor, dramatises their contradictions and arguments and looks at the hierarchy of servants in detail. It is clear, though, that Hereford and Wilkins are going to write the history that will remain. Their concerted action effectively erases Mary Morgan from the historical record; or at least they succeed, together with Judge Hardinge, in misrepresenting her as a callous murderer. Mary's own silence about the father of her child is bought by Walter's promise to take her away to a "new country with new rules" (48), which in the context of the play presumably means America, but which could also be read as a place where justice is done. Walter Wilkins at first seems to be genuinely in love with Mary but he is lured away from Mary and his promises "to look after [his] child" (49) by promises of wealth and status. Young Walter then panics at the thought of Mary's pregnancy and he supplies her with a knife to kill the baby, thus colluding in the deed.[30] Hereford calls this an act of gross incompetence and orders Wilkins to "[s]ecure a hanging" (69) to shield his own family from controversy. In scene 39, Hardinge's manipulation of the law as 'the King's justice' makes sure that Mary is condemned to death. The aristocracy and the gentry thus close ranks and swiftly erase the just claims of the wronged, but powerless, Mary Morgan from history. On the day of her death, Hereford welcomes Walter jr. into the family and a new chapter of official history, namely that of the 'marriage' between the inexorably rising middle classes and the aristocracy has begun (81).[31]

Contrary to later playwrights, Cullen does not believe in the possibility of subversion through counter-narratives of the powerful ideological monologue narrated by the Wilkins and the Hereford-families. The shanty town women's abortive revolution at the end of the play succeeds only in killing the traitor in their midst (Bethan), "*in an image akin to 'necklacing'* "(82). This invokes the terrible punishment for 'traitors to the cause' of the black struggle against apartheid in 1980s

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[28] The reviewer Ian Kerry certainly interpreted the play thus when he wrote "[The play] is also a reminder for us not to return to Victorian times in our quest for morality" (381).

[29] Such foregrounding would have facilitated an 'us' against 'them' polarisation along class and national lines. Hawkins did interpret the play thus, but I do not think it was Cullen's main intention.

[30] It cannot be proven that the historical Walter Wilkins jr. had, indeed, given Mary the knife. Green, however, comes to the same conclusion (129-31).

[31] The link between Mary's individual story and the making of history is confirmed by Cullen himself: "In *Mary Morgan* the birth of Mary's child jeopardises an alliance which reaches to the King himself. She doesn't know that" ("I Paint Me in the World" 322).

South Africa, an image which clearly links the play both to the present and to the international struggle of the powerless. The servants of the Wilkins' household are all in some way guilty of Mary's death, as they all collude with the system that keeps them in check by enjoying the small tastes of power over each other they are granted.[32] Despite his Marxist background, Cullen does not believe in the possibility of revolution.

> [T]here is a kernel of truth in the play which remains for me, which is that in all revolutionary situations it's never the working class who inherit the earth: it didn't happen in Russia, it didn't happen here, rather there is the revolution of another class system. So yes, Wilkins gets what he wants, but the women are still in the shanty town. ("Love, Anger and Money 367)

Wilkins's pronouncement "The world changes!" (83), which closes the play, means that he and his class are gaining a new position of power, but the world does not change for the working class characters. Cullen's interrogation of the mechanism of historiography, which casts Mary in the role of cruel murderer in order to hide the true power game that is being played out, and his reinforcement of the popular counter-narrative, which insists that Mary had faced a difficult moral choice but, in the end, was not to blame for her action, are, thus, steeped in the kind of class-politics that characterise the writing of the first generation of playwrights after 1979.

It seems that a 'second generation' of writers after 1979, among them Ed Thomas and Sharon Morgan, see the focus on class-politics as reductive and the writing about local history as an example of the problems of the British class-system as a whole as too general to be truly meaningful. These writers would probably not argue away the need for an analysis and interrogation of the British class system, but as a subject for drama they tend to put the individual and his/her history into the foreground. Thus the feminist slogan "the personal is political" acquires new poignancy in the Welsh context, as identity is discussed apart from a collective class-identity. This mostly very recent drama is largely concomitant with the findings of Brian Roberts's research into identity in Blaina and Nantyglo in 1990/91. He was astonished to find that the majority of respondents did not base their identity on a

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[32] Greg Cullen himself feels strongly about his own working-class roots. He describes how growing up working-class can mean a life sentence of low self-confidence: "Its [working-class background] real bequest is that I am cursed both by people who underestimate me and by my own lack of confidence to do anything about it. Sometimes, I can deal with it diplomatically, at others I can erupt with frustration, but then like a rioter, I return the next day to life amidst the ruins of my own neighbourhood, not theirs" (323-24). I believe that the image of the rioter wrecking his/her own environment and then having to return to live within it, the image of ineffectual anger turning upon itself instead of against the 'enemy', lies at the heart of the shanty town women's failed revolution and the failure of the servants of the Wilkins' household to stick together against their employers ("I Paint Me in the World" 323-24).

tradition of working-class history. Instead, identity was more likely to be defined in terms of place (the valleys vs. the South Walian coast or the South of England): "In our research, class was not used frequently as a reference point for identity. The 'full class conflict' view was usually expressed only by a number of retired miners who, typically, had been active in the union" (116). Roberts's research points to the conclusion that the South Walian people who are younger than 40 now base their identity more on place than on the (by now) more abstract loyalties of class and work (see the introduction). A certain individualisation of society – the inheritance of the conservative 1980s –is now as important as the often invoked community spirit, and the diversity of occupations make a class-based identity (reinforced by trade union activism) an anachronism. Thus, people's response to what they regard as 'tradition' or 'history' is as idiosyncratic as the people themselves and much recent drama responds to that individualisation. Furthermore, there is an increased awareness of the constructedness of history, as Ed Thomas's image of the 'house of Wales' (no longer the 'house of America') in *Gas Station Angel* demonstrates. The play is not about the past but (emphatically) about the future – and yet the house of Ace's family goes some way to express Thomas's attitude towards Welsh history and its meaning for Welsh people today. It illustrates how the past influences people, gives them shelter and a home. Yet, its very stability is sometimes a false indicator of security: in the play the sea advances and claims half the house while its occupants have to look on helplessly. Ace's parents at first refuse to leave despite the obvious danger of going down with the past. In the second part of the play, they realise, however, that the house will have to change, to be rebuilt, in order to fulfil a meaningful purpose in the future. Describing their former unproductive nostalgia for a past that was partly invented tradition anyway (67), Manny now believes that the house "ha[d] been babied" (68) and humoured, but it had remained static until it finally became uninhabitable for his son, because one half of the house's past has been lost. If one substitutes the word 'nation' for the word 'house', it becomes clear that Thomas refers to the old topos of the young Welshman who has to leave home in order to have a viable future. But this is not the conclusion to the play: Manny and Mary Annie plan to "rebuild the house", "start again", "[c]leaned", "[d]e-lotteried", "[d]e-governed", "[u]ngoverned", "[f]ree" (72), so that Ace is able to return to forge his future in Wales. The importance of personal memory as opposed to the static shell of the house is stressed as a subversive force (72-73). The house/nation is thus not given up, but changed in order to accommodate the future, personified by Ace, who seeks to leave the old internal divisions of Wales behind: "Maybe I can

soon call myself a European. A Welsh European, with my own language and the rudiments of another on the tip of my tongue" (75). Indeed, the old house could be seen as the 'official' past, an orderly, but ultimately lifeless shell, a planned shape built on an unyielding landscape which is victorious in the end. Only if Manny and Mary Annie leave room for the forces of place, for the magical (the original inhabitants of the land, the *tylwyth teg* [fairies]), the irrational and their personal histories (which include some skeletons in the closet, 91-95), will the family have a future in Wales (see chapter 5).

Such a positive evaluation of memory and personal history, which can help to shape the new house/nation for the future, is echoed in Sharon Morgan's short, imagist, magic-realist play *Magic Threads* (1997).[33] In Morgan's work, the personal is, indeed, political: *Magic Threads* is a poetic exploration of female history, a short monodrama in which narrative, poetry and song are woven together to bring to life ordinary womens' lives which are usually lost from the traditional historical record. Thus, she consciously creates a female narrative counterto the 'official' history with the aim to give a past to women, so that they might be able to have a future. The programme notes to Sharon Morgan's first full-length play *Dreaming Amelia* (Hijinx 2002) illustrate her motivation. Morgan writes:

> I was brought up in Carmarthenshire some miles from Burry Port but then I knew nothing of Amelia Earhart's historic flight. Young girls have a great need for positive role models but so often women are hidden from history. This was my first inspiration. (*Dreaming Amelia* Programme)

In *Dreaming Amelia* the American pilot Amelia Earhart, who really did land in Burry Port on one of her transcontinental flights, becomes the role model for a young girl, who emulates her courage and determination and lives her dream to become a dancer.[34] Rather than a social exploration of the oppression of women, *Magic Threads* is an intensely personal piece: taking a quilt made of the clothes of her relatives as a mnemonic device, the narrator remembers/imagines the lives of her female relatives, snapshots of whose lives she narrates and acts out at the same time (19).

As an exploration of female lives, the play explores female spaces: they are mostly domestic settings like a parlour, a kitchen or a kitchen garden. These places

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[33] For a more detailed reading of *Magic Threads* see chapter 4.

[34] The message of hope and the conviction that everyone has the potential to be who they want to be, are especially important in the context of Hijinx' work in deprived communities and with mixed-ability audiences. While explicitly feminist in content and production (the production team was almost completely female), the play goes beyond Morgan's feminist agenda and has a broad appeal to Hijinx's target audiences and could, in my personal

are not described by stage directions – the play takes the audience to them through words and sound, and by associating them with different characters in the narrative. Grandmother's garden is characterised by an abundance of fruit and flowers and, thus, grandmother is associated with a similar abundance of spirit (16-17). But she is no mere domestic angel:

> She's wandered from the garden, her fruity flowery civilised garden, she's searching in the hedges for wild forbidden plants. With her apron full, she goes back to the secrets of her kitchen. In the darkness of her pantry, in the depth of her saucepan she creates DYNAMITE. (17)

While grandmother every now and then makes use of less than godly powers to make ginger beer, aunt Hetty's parlour, in which she "[k]ept a place for the Saviour / Everyday at her table, / A knife and fork for Jesus Christ / Breakfast supper and tea" (22), illustrates her devotion to a slightly narrowminded nonconformism.

Despite the full and colourful lives the women led, their imprint on the world and, consequently, their history is quickly erased. Although aunt Mari is remembered vividly, her house is just a shell and soon she, too, will be forgotten and become a woman without name, like her mother:

> They were going for a walk to Auntie Mari's house again / Auntie Mari's old shell of a house on the side of the mountain / Auntie Mari who smoked a clay pipe / And never wore knickers / And peed standing up / And had a one-eyed dog called Nel. / And her mother happened to mention / That Aunty [sic] Mari's mother / Had died by the side of the road. / Her mother didn't know her name / Her mother's mother's father's mother, / A woman with no name / And four children / Dying on the side of the road. / Bleeding to death. (24-25)

Evoking the line of mothers, aunts and grandmothers and the places in which they lived and worked, the narrator keeps alive the fragments of memory that constitute female history – all the while aware how ephemeral such fragments of memory are: "Sweet fragment of memory / Stitched together like petals / Of ragged roses / Dancing in the wind / Before flying down the rivers of my dreams" (43-44). The play – written, performed and published in both Welsh and English (and containing a number of songs in Welsh) – is evidently part of a project to make female history less transitory. It does not mean to 'analyse society' or to be 'representative' in the way realist theatre would have attempted to be. Instead, it celebrates a female world which is part of Welsh life – a world accessible through imagination. Thus, 'official' history is deconstructed by a counter-narrative, which is consciously different from the 'objective' tone of historiographic narratives behind which usually a male voice is to be found. Female history is not painfully constructed as being 'as good as' history

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view, maybe achieve more than the often defeatist attitude of the social realist plays discussed in this thesis.

from a male perspective and with a male voice: following Virginia Woolf's statement that women need to write "as women write, not as men write" (Woolf 82) and very probably subscribing to Luce Irigaray's ethics of sexual difference (Grosz 141f.), Morgan creates her own narrative, which has its own poetic and personal language (see chapter 4).

I want to close this chapter with two brief discussions of very recent plays. Laurence Allan's *Angels Don't Need Wings* was commissioned by Hijinx Theatre for its offshoot company Odyssey, a group which brings mixed-ability actors on stage together and which takes plays on tour like Hijinx itself. It was first performed in Cardiff's Sherman Theatre in the autumn of 2002. *Angels Don't Need Wings* is interesting not so much because of its contents but for the remarkable way in which the characters are drawn. As the play was written for Hijinx's '21st birthday ', the focus of the play is a birthday party. The play is set in Merthyr and in Cardiff and tells the story of two young women, Zola and Tina, and their respective 21st birthdays. Their different stories converge when it emerges that they have, in fact, the same father – Benny, the real central character of the play. It turns out that Benny has been lying to Zola and his wife Sonya and has ignored Tina and her mother Shirl, a one-night-stand in Cardiff, completely. But the secrecy goes even deeper than that. Benny has made a copy of an extremely detailed family tree as a gift for Zola, on which he has edited out all the members of his family connected to a terrible accident that happened when he was young: severely traumatised after killing his 21-year-old brother in the old forge where his pub without license now stands, he ran away and shut out the past in a vain effort to drown out his brother's agonised scream. The play proceeds in a linear narrative until the rather blustering, egocentric and fairly unsympathetic Benny (Jenkins 94) confesses all to his assembled family members These are not only Zola, Sonya, Tina, but also the assembled 'past' – various family members long dead – and two other un/real characters, namely Angel, who could be an angel or Benny's alter ego – the man he could have become if he had not attempted to rid himself of his past – and Jack, the ghost of his dead brother, whose search for Zola forms the sub-plot to the play. At the end of the play, the birthday party for the two young women can take place because Benny is no longer lying to himself and has 'allowed in' all the family members he had shut out for so long.

While the solution to the play is slightly too neat,[35] which, if it is a failing, is a typical failing of Allan's plays, it is entirely appropriate for Odyssey's project. Odyssey's work is specifically aimed at a mixed-ability audience and the company includes a number of actors with learning disabilities. It, therefore, suits the occasion for Allan to create a play in which the central conflict is neatly resolved in the end and the play manages, despite certain simplifications in characterisation, not to be simplistic or patronising. What I find most interesting in connection with this chapter is Allan's portrayal of the past. 'The past' are a group of actors, including actors with learning difficulties, who speak in unison in a way reminiscent of the chorus in ancient Greek plays. Its function, though, is different: 'the past' consist of the voices of dead family members whom Benny has 'shut out' in order to suppress the memory of his brother's death. 'The past' sometimes divide themselves into two groups ('Merthyr past' and 'Cardiff past') and speak to each other, commenting on the scene, but only occasionally are individuals identified, like, for example, Benny's parents Idris and Sylvia or Benny as a young man. Choral speaking is a very clever device to include actors with learning disabilities and it also draws attention to the multi-voicedness of 'the past'. Allan's conception of history as 'lived past' is portrayed more convincingly than in *The Best Years of Our Lives*, as 'the past' is literally a collection of people/stories, who/which are in the room with an uncomprehending Benny and who only leave the stage and disappear as Benny allows himself to remember. Furthermore, 'the past' are responsible for much of the humour in the play as they make most of the snide remarks about Benny's present-day reality and self-delusions. Additionally, 'the past' sometimes illustrate past events: when Jack, on his search for Benny and Zola, meets Shirl and Tina, 'the past' excitedly force him to show them the family bible, which includes a family tree as well as some photographs. As the three pore over the photograph, 'the past' point out themselves and provide a live illustration of the photography by posing "*as if for a photograph*" (13). In *Angels Don't Need Wings*, 'the past' thus has a direct influence over the present and is embodied by a group of actors who all represent different, sometimes named, sometimes unnamed, dead family members. In the

[35] Mark Jenkins comments, in my view entirely correctly, that despite his failings "Benny continues to demand love and respect. He does not command it. He does not rise above his human failings. So what we get at the end of the play is not redemption, catharsis, closure – but a loser who has been exposed for deceiving all his relatives with a false family tree. . . . Meanwhile, the family, in turn, continue, inexplicably, to plead with Benny to 'let them into his life'. The question is – why should anybody want to 'enter the life' of a treacherous, bullying, lying egomaniac, who won't let you get a word in edgeways?" (94-95) The final happy ending is thus not entirely convincing.

play, history means memory, and, perhaps more importantly, Allan is not concerned with a communal memory (as in *The Best Years of Our Lives*) but with personal memory. I would not like to suggest that Allan has given up his political beliefs, but the personalisation of history is, nevertheless, striking.

Tracy Harris' *Past Away*, which was commissioned and produced by Sgript Cymru and first first performed in Cardiff's Chapter Arts Centre before going on tour in the autumn of 2002, is a deceptively simple play about the nature of memory and its revisionist tendencies, especially in the wake of personal tragedy and grief. It is a loose collection of dialogues, whose disparity was emphasised in the production (Swansea, Taliesin Arts Centre on 12 October 2002) by interpolated scenes in mime, in which the power struggles of the characters were brought out clearly. The failing businessman Brian and his wife Susan have come back to the home he once shared with his divorced father and his brother Jo. A further character is Eddie, the lodger, who near the end of the play turns out to be Brian's and Jo's half-brother. All characters are engaged in endlessly spiralling dialogues which do not seem to lead anywhere. And, indeed, it is not the meanings of the sentences which are important, but the various degrees of threat, bullying, seduction and other modes of domination in human relationships. As the audience tries to sense in which direction the conversations are heading, they only become gradually aware that the development of the play might not be linear and that the whole action might be remembered by Jo. Jo is a troubled character, with diagnosed psychological problems for which he is supposed to take the pills other characters urge on him at various points in the play, although he himself wants to do without them (80, 90). It might be that the dream-like disjointedness of the play and the many repetitions of the same phrases are the effect of the pills that Jo has been taking – and the audience sees the action unfolding through Jo's eyes. Neither the playtext nor the performance make any of this clear. The process of remembering is itself not much clearer. Jo insists that he can't remember details about the night before but then asserts

> **Jo** I was the only one at [their father's] bedside and I'm the only one who remembers what really happened. I spent hour upon hour walking around that ward. He would tell me things he had never told me before. Things about Mam. About the army. And even things I didn't want to hear. But I promised him I would remember it all. (91-92)

If the play is read as the imperfect attempt of Jo to make sense of the past, the repetitions and the contradictions within the play make some sense: as he is replaying different situations in his head, even those in which he was not involved directly. And the contradictions which occur, for example, when Eddie gives Brian to understand that he is gay, later denying it when talking to Susan (71-72), or when, in

a mimed scene he invites a kiss from Jo but denies its significance on another occasion (53-54), are suggestive of Jo's tortured memory, as he tries to evaluate Eddies behaviour towards him. The suggestions of Susan's pregnancy, the question of who the father is (Brian, Dave, the mysterious bank manager or Jo himself?), her miscarriage, and the underlying question of who is using whom to achieve what, are similarly replayed again and again in Jo's memory. To come back to Schapp's definition, the characters in *Past Away* are very much 'entangled in stories', leaving Jo and, indeed, the audience confused about which story to believe.

The action is localised only insofar as memory is clearly connected to the house in which Jo's, Brian's and Eddie's father died. The fact that Jo walks away from the house at the end of the play, while the other characters stay on, could mean that he is leaving his memories behind as he comes to terms with the grief for his father. In the performance the characters spoke with a recognisable South Walian accent, but an accent is not indicated in the dialogues of the playtext. Harris's play is a radically introspective interrogation of memory and the power relationships within a family. As in much recent Welsh drama in English, for example Gary Owen's *Crazy Gary's Mobile Disco*, the play is almost conspicuously apolitical in the sense that a communal history or a history of place does not figure. Instead it focuses entirely on the more generally postmodern topics of the unreliability of memory and truth. It is far too early to speak of anything like a development, but it will be interesting to see whether the personal interpretation of memory and history does take over from the political interpretation and critique of history in Wales.

In conclusion, I would like to return to Wilhelm Schapp's understanding of 'being in the world' as 'being entangled in stories'. Historical drama certainly shows how the present is influenced by the stories that it inherited from the past and that it, in turn, tells about the past, although the understanding of how these stories come into being differs. I have identified three ways of dealing with the past in plays set in South and mid Wales: the first group of plays thinks of the past with nostalgia and tends to look at the stories of that past uncritically (and sometimes sentimentally) as an expression of virtues that the present has lost. A second group is critical of what it perceives to be the 'grand narratives' of the past and it questions implicitly whom these 'grand narratives' serve. It is also critical of the use that the present makes of history – or the falsified version of history it identifies in heritage. And, finally, a third group goes further than criticising 'official' history: it deconstructs it, shows up its mechanism and the ideologies which help run that mechanism, and it creates counter-narratives to the one criticised. Indeed, very recent plays show a distinct

lack of interest in formative historical narratives of Wales and foreground personal histories and experiences. The production dates of the plays under discussion show a development from a less to a more sophisticated treatment of history in drama, which mirrors the changes in how historiography perceives itself, which, in turn, has its repercussions in the slowly changing realities of Welsh politics and discussions about identity. Yet, it would be going too far to speak of anything like a pervasive trend in identity politics. The number of plays discussed is but small and it is too early to speak of a distinct shift in Welsh self-perception. Furthermore, the continued presence of the nostalgic viewpoint in recent drama, for example in Jones's *Everything Must Go*, which was very popular especially with young people, draws attention to the heterogeneity of viewpoints on the subjects. Nevertheless, I have attempted to show how a pre-occupation with class politics, which characterised the work of many 'older writers' (the 'first generation' to write and produce plays after 1979), has changed to a preoccupation with a personal history. The 'second generation' of writers, who tend to start writing/producing plays in the late 1990s, incorporate an awareness of the multi-voicedness of the past into their plays by refusing to privilege a single narrative. This endeavour might be political in itself, as in Sharon Morgan's feminist rewriting of a male-dominated history, but it is often conspicuously apolitical, as in Harris's *Past Away*.

While the critical evaluation of 'official' history and the writing of counter-narratives are hall-marks of postcolonial theatre, the earlier pre-occupation with (British) class-politics and the later focus on other political interests like feminism, or the complete absence of any political intention, make it difficult to describe contemporary Welsh drama in English straightforwardly as postcolonial. There are certainly elements of postcolonial critique in, for example, *Everything Must Go* or *Mary Morgan*, but the former only creates the very beginnings of a counter-narrative in its assertion of defiance, and the latter clearly subsumes postcolonial concerns under its class-politics.

The most interesting recent development to which I have endeavoured to draw attention in this chapter, is the slowly lessening power of the two 'grand narratives' of Welsh identity to inspire writers: neither the concept of the 'gwerin' nor and its Anglo-Welsh companion, the narrative of the 'Welsh working class' seem to appeal any longer. Characters like Dai Death, who appear in plays of the mid-1980s, already show how the defining power of those narratives, especially the second one, weakens. In the drama of the late 1990s and the early 2000s, the time finally seems to have come to take leave of 'grand narratives' and to interpret society as a

collection of individuals, who have individual pasts. These pasts are often very definitely located in place, as in Allan's *Angels Don't Need Wings* or in Morgan's *Magic Threads*, but the connection might also be more ephemeral, as in Harris's *Past Away*. It will be fascinating to see if that independence of the strictures of the 'grand narratives' will translate into a self-confidence such as that implicit in Raymond Williams's idea of a "[r]eal independence" in which "people [are] sure enough of themselves to discard their baggage" (103), or whether this is a sign of the death of 'society' in Wales.

Chapter 4

Gendered Spaces

An interesting paradox of modern Western theatre is that, although plays about the 'role of women' have been around a long time, plays which interrogate gender are both comparatively recent and few and far between. Plays which place a woman at its centre, like Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* or *St. Joan* or Ibsen's *A Doll's House* or *Hedda Gabler*, make much political, social and cultural capital of the very anomaly of having a woman as heroine. Furthermore, these plays do not make an issue of gender itself but use gender inequality as an example for greater social ills. Ibsen, for example, wanted to make a point about stifling bourgeois social conventions: by turning traditional theatrical traditions on their head through placing a female character in the glare of the spotlights and, thus, in the realm of the public, he was able to make his point with that much more impact.[1] But, while unquestionably helping advance the cause of women's liberation, Ibsen's or Shaw's plays did not interrogate gender *per se*. Even rarer are plays, which do not reduce questions of gender to 'women's issues'.

Indeed, discussions of gender are very often reduced to 'women's issues' in society more generally – a move which tends to rob the potentially explosive discussions of how constructions of gender underpin society of their subversive potential as extant power structures remain relatively untouched because the power relations between the genders are obscured. As in other discussions – for example, about the role of Welsh-speakers in Wales, or the role of minority ethnics in Wales – simply to focus on the group discussed alone serves only to 'exoticise' that group discursively but does not interrogate the complex relationships between the various 'majorities' and 'minorities' in Wales today.

In the following chapter I would like to discuss in how far selected Welsh plays in English interrogate Welsh society in terms of gender. In order to do that, I would like to follow Laurence Senelick's definition of gender as 'performance'. This is a definition which goes back to Judith Butler's discussion of gender and performative speech acts, for example, in *Bodies That Matter*, which has been

[1] A similar mechanism – namely, the reversal of 'normal' social expectations – is the secret of the success of the otherwise not very controversial thriller *Disclosure*, by Michael Crichton. To turn the issue of sexual harassment at the workplace around and have a woman as the perpetrator of the harassment and a man as victim may not be particularly likely, but it helped increase the sales of this thriller in post-feminist America.

influential for the discussion of gender in theatrical performance. Thus, gender is not expressive of an essentialism, a 'nature' of men or women. Instead

> [g]ender *is* performance. As a cultural construct, made up of learned values and beliefs, gender identity (if one can posit such an absolute) has no ontological status. Whatever biological imperatives may order sexual differentiation, whatever linguistic patterns may undergird it, it is outward behavior that calibrates the long scale of masculinity and femininity in social relations. Like a Berkeleian universe, gender exists only in so far as it is perceived; and the components of perceived gender – gait, stance, gesture, deportment, vocal pitch and intonation, costume, accessories, coiffure – indicate the performative nature of the construct. (ix)

Gender is thus defined in terms of the cultural performance which underpins the mechanics of society. This is not meant as a denial of biological difference, of course, and biological difference does, to an extent, inform the creation of gender as it is perceived culturally. However, the way gender is signified is culturally determined and thus constructed.

Consequently, the 'as if'-space of theatrical performance – the space whose function Jill Dolan likens to that of a mirror, "reflective of 'real life' while not *being* real life" – is always defined by considerations of gender (4). Assumptions about gender inform the creation of characters and the system of symbols used to perform characters. Furthermore, assumptions about gender make up characters' frame of reference and the theatrical space in which they are encountered. On a different level, gender imagery and metaphors are also constitutive of the playtext which underlies performance. Indeed, the interplay of playtext and performance practice can open up new vistas on familiar social constellations. For instance, in her chapter on Elizabethan boy actors and cross-dressing in *As You Like It,* Alisa Solomon points out how multiple cross-dressing and theatrical double-vision (the audience will see the character as well as a boy in a dress, who then 'dresses up' as a man) create characters with a purely symbolic function whose gendered 'essence' is called into question: "if one recognizes that on the non-illusory stage characters have no inner essence – they exist only through what is shown and said to us – the postmodern notion of gender as performative, constituted by citational behavior, becomes a more compelling lens through which to interpret these plays" (40-41). Gender assumptions are certainly challenged in the cross-gender casting employed by Caryl Churchill in *Cloud Nine*, which reflects implicit assumptions about character: in the play, a black man is played by a white man to signify society's

expectation that black people behave like white people. Similarly, a white woman is played by a man, a boy by a woman and a girl by a doll etc.[2]

Although gender thus underwrites every play and performance, gender is rarely consciously interrogated in Welsh drama in English other than in plays that discuss women and their role in society. Just as 'whiteness' is rarely recognised as being constitutive of an ethnicity in most Welsh (and British) cultural production, it seems that questions of gender are the prerogative of women writers or of writers who deal with women's issues. I believe that such thinking is dangerously reductive, for it cements rather than removes the traditional male/female dichotomy, which Doreen Massey calls the A/-not A dualism ("Politics and Space/Time" 255ff). The A/-not A dualism describes a cultural mechanism in which men are seen as the original human beings to which women are compared. Women are thus constituted as fundamentally 'different' and their art, their literature and their theatrical production is primarily discussed in terms of 'difference' – a difference which plucks women out of their cultural context, reduces their art to expressions of their 'femaleness' and so does not challenge the traditional patriarchal cultural framework in which female difference is thought of in terms of lack. If women are constituted by their gender but men are apparently genderless, or do not make obvious their own gender bias, traditional norms prevail despite the political efforts of feminism and female/feminist theatre.[3]

Gwyn Thomas's play *The Keep* (1960), set in South Wales in 1954, constitutes an interesting example of invisible gender assumptions. Here the

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[2] *Cloud Nine* has received much critical acclaim for its casting strategies. Cf. however Loren Kruger's critique of these techniques: "The effect of these techniques (old panto tricks and not, as fondly supposed, Brechtian innovation) is nonetheless to make the action of these characters completely predictable, and solicit the audience's assent to this spectacle, rather than criticism of gender stereotyping outside the theatre" (45).

[3] The fact that there is no gender parity in the production of theatre – a fact that becomes obvious when one looks at percentages for women writers, directors, technicians, support staff etc. – makes a true challenge to received norms and traditions of male-centred theatre even more difficult. The figures for women playwrights are, according to Wandor, "dauntingly revealing" as women playwrights listed in directories usually fall short of 10 per cent of the total if one excludes women working for radio and television (Wandor 131). Moreover, "[t]he sexual division of labour [in the theatre] operates on the basis of a pyramid-shaped structure, where men dominate at the top of the hierarchy, and also at the other end of the scale, in the technological and manual areas of backstage production. Women working in theatre (apart from actresses) tend to cluster in the middle. Although since the nineteenth century there has been a strong tradition of women designers, the top professional designers are almost all male. Apart from that, women tend to work in areas which reflect 'servicing' roles similar to those in other industries and in the domestic division of labour – the 'housekeeping' part of theatre: secretarial, administration, assisting, personnel, casting, wardrobe, publicity. All are vital and highly skilled jobs, but also jobs which are largely invisible, not particularly well paid, and rarely given as much credit as they deserve" (130-131).

shadow of the long-departed wife and mother Dinah May, who is believed by her husband and sons to be dead but who, in fact, had escaped to America to live with another man, hangs over the parlour of the Morton family's house. When the truth about Dinah May is finally 'brought home' to the family, Miriam, the only daughter and unpaid servant to her five brothers and her father, emulates her mother's flight from the claustrophobic house. At the end of the play she accepts Caradoc Slee's offer of marriage and leaves the house practically pulling Caradoc behind her. Although the play does appreciate the work of women and presents women as forceful and strong-willed, their escape is only possible through the mediation of men and the basic assumptions about gender roles are not questioned. Miriam's brothers are criticised for being too weak-willed to resist the machinations of their eldest brother Con, but their gender roles are not interrogated despite a context of crumbling certainties of what constituted men's and women's spheres in economically depressed South Wales. Furthermore, it seems to me that the escape of the women is to be read within the wider cultural context in the South Wales of the 1950s rather than as a comment on gender politics. As in Emlyn Williams's *The Corn is Green*, the life-choices of these characters seem to be to stay and stagnate or to leave and breathe freely in another life somewhere else. While Thomas certainly acknowledges that the sphere of the women is more constricted than that of the men and that escape is most necessary for them, the women's fate and their respective choices become a metaphor for the fate of the nation rather than an interrogation of gender roles – especially as Miriam's 'escape' is only a transfer from one traditional household to another.

In plays which are more openly inspired by socialist politics, like, for example, Dic Edwards's *Franco's Bastard* or Greg Cullen's *Mary Morgan*, gender issues tend to be subsumed within the overall political argument. In *Franco's Bastard*, a play that is informed by socialism's wariness of nationalism, the Welsh nationalism/fascism of Carlo is clearly identified with machismo and with his inability to relate to women as fellow human beings and not only as objects of desire. Indeed, Carlo cannot distinguish between sexual love and the violent 'taking' of a woman and, thus, his 'conquests' of the young mixed-race woman Serena and, twenty years earlier, her mother Ruby have distinctly militaristic overtones. And yet, Edwards does not interrogate gender roles in *Franco's Bastard*. In his interpretation, Carlo's nationalism is an invariably violent ideology, which, quite literally, violates its

victims.[4] To make his point, Edwards constructs the two women as victims of Carlo's violent nationalism and I find it telling that only the women are given victim status. Thus, despite a sensitive portrayal of Serena, the play constructs a framework of male agency and of female passivity which is not called into question. *Mary Morgan* places a female character at its centre, but Cullen uses her as an example of a working-class victim who falls foul of the emerging bourgeois middle-class hegemony in the 18th century. Gender inequalities become an example for class inequalities and are not discussed as meriting attention in themselves.

In a sense, this silence on gender, gender roles and the construction of gender of much contemporary Welsh drama in English probably reflects a similar silence in the wider Welsh culture. As far as women are concerned, Kirsti Bohata comments on the lack of in-depth studies of female as well as on feminist histories in Wales, concluding that extant case studies are valuable but can only be regarded as first forays into the field (84). She also notes that Welsh feminist historiography has tended to focus on the 20th century and her own analysis of Welsh ideals of womanhood, female Welsh missionaries and of women and Welsh nationalism in the 19th and 20th centuries thus breaks new ground. Commenting on contemporary Welsh women, Jane Aaron writes of an almost conspicuous silence surrounding Welsh feminism:

> The motivations of a Welsh feminist are currently likely to take her into a range of single issue causes, a great many of which will be recognized and even applauded within contemporary Welsh culture, and yet that culture will not readily recognize, let alone accept as its own, that basic feminism which actually motivated her: Feminism is still often reacted to as an alien Anglo-American intrusion into Welsh culture. Wales seems happy enough with its women's identity as tough and militant fighters for a diversity of causes – peace, the ecology, the language, the working-class community – but not so happy when the cause they're fighting for is unique to them as women. (Aaron 16)[5]

It seems that the avowal of difference from or even of opposition to the present-day patriarchal social structure of Wales makes little sense to Welsh women – nor, judging by the silence on the issue, do men feel the need to interrogate gender. Welsh women and men, whether they are Welsh-speaking or English-speaking,

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[4] The equation of sexual conquest and military conquest does not only have a long literary history (cf. Shakespeare's *King Henry V.* in which Henry's conquest of Katherine is an symbol of England's conquest of France). The systematic rape of Albanian and Croatian women by Serbian soldiers in the Balkan conflict made that connection a bitter reality and served to demoralise the enemy further.

[5] Charlotte Williams recalls a similar attitude towards feminism: "Indeed feminism itself appeared alien to the Welsh culture we were fashioning. The political focus for Welsh women was/is the language and nationalism and my positioning in relation to these issues is contradictory and complex" (191).

often feel beleaguered and culturally under siege and thus it seems to make more sense to downplay issues of gender difference in order to present a 'united front'. Joanne P. Sharp, writing about revolutionary movements in Eastern Europe, remarks:

> There is of course a rationality to the suppression of difference in the name of unity when facing a common foe or struggling toward a common goal. But is it possible for a change in leadership, however revolutionary, to facilitate emancipation for all if gender problems are not addressed before and during the revolution (. . .)? (Sharp 103)

Just as a stressing of gender difference seems unnecessary in a climate of revolutionary social change such as that of Eastern European states, issues of diversity in general and gender in particular have a tendency to be regarded as disruptive in a small nation like Wales which struggles for the survival of its culture and heritage in the face of overpowering Anglo-American influences every day. M. Wynn Thomas has described how two Welsh poets, Gillian Clarke and Menna Elfyn, deal with feminism in conjunction with nationalism. Commenting on Gillian Clarke's poetry, he writes:

> Solidarity is a feature of the Welsh past which is more than ever a necessity in the Welsh present if there is to be a Welsh future. Under such socio-cultural circumstances, the issue of gender-conflict takes on a very different complexion. Clarke's poetry consistently tries to redress the balance – of the historical record, in social arrangements, of cultural life – in favour of previously slighted female experience. But it attempts to do so *without* destroying the fragile integrity of her people by setting male against female. (201)

Menna Elfyn's feminism is, according to Thomas, equally "rooted in a sense of belonging to a vulnerably small national community – a cultural collective that might not survive a deep split along gender lines" (207). While the dilemma for the two writers is undoubtedly real, the question remains why feminism is automatically constructed in terms of 'gender-conflict', of the 'destruction' of a fragile culture, or a 'split along gender lines'. From whose point of view does feminist intervention automatically mean 'conflict'? Surely, the assertion that female experience makes up a Welsh past, present and future as much as male experience does is enriching rather than divisive, especially in a community for which solidarity is so necessary for survival. I believe that a vision of Welsh culture, which constructs feminist intervention – or, for that matter, the intervention of minority ethnics and other minority groups – as disruptive, cannot be sustainable long-term.

A further reason for the relatively low visibility of feminism in Wales could be the way in which life in the populous areas of the industrialised south of Wales favoured complete gender-segregation: men tended to work in heavy industry and

women, if they did go out to work, went into 'feminine' areas of work – light industry, service, teaching etc. (Jones, see Massey "A woman's place?" for similar work patterns in industrial north England). The focus on men as the breadwinners meant that it was male work that counted, while women's work was regarded as entirely supplementary. Recently, though, feminism, female history and an interrogation of gender is receiving more attention at least in academic circles, as conferences on women's writing and women's history in Wales (e.g.Trinity College, Carmarthen, 2000), publications like *Our Mothers' Land* (ed. Angela V. John) and *Our Sisters' Land* (ed. Jane Aaron), *Our Daughters' Land* (ed. Sandra Betts), the (as yet) unpublished PhD dissertation on South Welsh industrial literature and masculinity by Emma Davies (University of Wales Swansea) and the chapter on "En-gendering a New Wales: New Woman, Nationalism and the Empire in the Fin de Siècle" in Kirsti Bohata's (also as yet unpublished) PhD dissertation show.

The central problem of the discussion of gender, of feminist theory and practice in Wales and of feminism in general seems to be the potentially disruptive foregrounding of 'difference'. A politics of 'difference' is problematic for an essentially oppositional culture like Welsh culture because it evokes the spectres of disunity and separatism within an already beleaguered community. Furthermore, 'difference' is often understood in terms of a seemingly biologically determined 'female' outlook on life or, in art, a 'female/feminist aesthetics'. This view, although it seems to make clear that there is no such thing as one 'universal', apparently genderless view of the world, often means that, in practice, women's art is reduced to their 'difference' from an, again supposedly neutral, standard. Thus, the painter Gisela Breitling argues forcefully against an approach which reduces female painters' work to their gender and disregards their cultural socialisation amongst mostly male painters with whom they might have more in common than with each other:

> Women are more often compared with women than with men – and men never refer to women as precedents. Thus all too often like is not compared with like . . . Women artists are uprooted from their historical context and banished to a special area – the feminine – so that their work, their achievements and their ideas usually become incomprehensible. The ghetto of the feminine presents us with a mixed bag of works, the creators of which usually have nothing more in common than their sex. (166)

This superficially liberating approach to female difference actually does not change the patriarchal cultural framework. At best, the achievement of female artists is thus 'rediscovered' and 'made visible', but female art, when solely judged in terms of 'difference', can become safely ghettoised or, worse, irrelevant if it fails to be

conspicuously 'different'.[6] Thus, this approach creates a ghetto of female voices which, once again, can only be expressive of themselves and not of the 'universal':[7]

> The masculine, which because it is defined as the 'commonly human' functions as a linguistic norm (and therefore points towards a signified), does not only exclude women as a category in the writing of history. As the 'universal' it also, in a paradoxical way, makes this exclusion effective as well as invisible. It is impossible for women within this structure to make statements which transcend gender. Female discourse cannot reach out beyond its genderised character (limitations), feminine discourse never includes masculine discourse. (Breitling 164)

Breitling thus illustrates the dangers of an argument based on difference which reduces the female artist's response to the world to issues of gender. Michelene Wandor reacts with barely concealed anger to the notion of a 'feminist aesthetic' in theatre for precisely the same reasons:

> I would argue strongly against there being such an easily co-optable notion as a 'feminist aesthetic'. The idea (attractive to some) that there is something inherently 'male' about the structure of a play is clearly nonsense. The way in which drama becomes form is far too complex for such crudities. Structure is a consequence of context, and can never have any abstract meaning in its own right. (143)

Wandor argues against a criticism which seeks to reduce female playwrights to ambassadors for a theatrical *écriture feminine* – a move which renders almost obsolete all non-experimental, realistic theatre by women. Marvin Carlson has shown that, while a 'specifically female' form of physical performance had characterised early forms of 'resistant' performance by feminists, concerns about this essentialising strategy have been voiced more recently:

> Rachel Bowlby, for example, has warned against too ready an acceptance of bodily 'discourse' as the most effective way for women to 'speak'. 'It remains to be shown', cautions Bowlby, 'that the female body is itself productive of a distinctive mode of subjectivity' (1983: 62). It also remains to be shown whether a 'distinctive mode of subjectivity' is a desirable goal for feminism, since it runs the risk of any essentialist strategy of reinforcing traditional structural relationships between dominant and subordinate positions, thus giving new support to the power relationships they involve. (61)

The discussion of gender in theatrical performance, therefore, has to move away from the rather reductive analysis of 'difference'.[8] This shift from an essentialising

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[6] The same argument goes, of course, for Welsh writing in English and, indeed, for Welsh drama in English, as well.

[7] " No review of women's exhibitions in the last few years has neglected to raise the question of whether and in what way the [female] art on show documented femininity. This question implies the following attitude: if it does, in fact, emerge that women's representations do not differ so greatly from men's then it is quite superfluous for women to be artistically (intellectually, etc.) active, and it is sufficient for men to remain the sole occupants of these areas of human activity." (Breitling 168)

[8] Cf. chapter 6, in which I discuss the debilitating foregrounding of 'difference' in the context of writing about Wales in a postcolonial context.

view of gender in theatre and a more materialist, constructionist discussion seems not to have reached public and a certain amount of critical discourse, however. I find it rather telling that a common response to work by a female playwright is the question of how her work is based on her experiences 'as a woman'. It sounds faintly absurd to ask the same question of male playwrights – and, indeed, the question is rarely put unless the playwright happens to belong to another (ethnic, sexual etc.) minority. The female playwright's voice is thus only expressive of gender while the male playwright speaks for 'humankind'.

An argument based on difference is thus fraught with difficulty if it is not clear from the beginning that 'difference' actually requires the deconstruction of the whole framework of gender construction. A theory of 'difference' which is truly liberating posits 'difference' as the basis of what it means to be human: "The point is to develop an account of the world which treats our perspectives not as subjugated or disruptive knowledges, but as primary and as constitutive of a different world" (Nancy Hartsock quoted in McDowell 42). Only if 'difference' is uncoupled from the assumption that 'difference' implies 'different from a main discourse' and comes to refer to autonomy and primary viewpoints of equal 'differences', can categories like 'the universal' or 'humanity' be refashioned in a truly gender-neutral way.

Luce Irigaray is among the foremost theorists of sexual difference. Before I proceed to discuss the plays, I would like to look at her concept of place and the (female) body. Her reflections could be usefully employed to read plays about gender (difference) in contemporary Welsh drama in English, despite certain drawbacks, notably a tendency to express the construction of gender in essentialist terms. Irigaray's theory of sexual difference is based on her response to Aristotle's concept of place in *Physics IV*, in which he defines place as the container of the things that are placed. This conception of place is intimately connected to the thing placed and undoubtedly owes much to the traditional refusal to think of space as 'nothing', as the opposite of material reality, that, for example, underpins the theory of space as filled with ether. Thus place is conceived of as a vessel which, in turn, is placed somewhere else etc. *ad infinitum*. Irigaray ironises and contrasts "Aristotle's concern about an infinite regress of place" (Casey 323) with her concept of the female body as place. She argues that while the female body is a container that envelops others (for example, the unborn child or her lover during intercourse), she herself is not enveloped in turn. Thus, woman is effectively place-less, a condition with psychoanalytical and cultural implications:

> If I may return to the parallel I have been drawing between the issue of place and the issue of sexual difference, I shall affirm that the masculine is attracted to the maternal-feminine as place. But what place does the masculine offer to attract the feminine? His soul? His relation to the divine? Can the feminine be inscribed or situated there? Is this not the only place where he can live, contrary to what has always been assumed? For the masculine has to constitute itself as a *vessel* to receive and welcome. And the masculine's morphology, existence, and essence do not really fit it for such an architecture of place. ("Place/Interval" 39)

I am inclined to read Irigaray's biological metaphors as culturally determined and determining: the cultural function of woman as place is that of nurture – in a sense, man is grounded in woman who provides the nurture that enables him to reach out into the world. She, however, is not placed thus because man is unable to be place for her – not biologically, I would argue, but because current constructions of masculinity generally do not allow him to fulfil a nurturing function for her.[9] Further, as Casey argues, the female body "has special political significance insofar as [it], whether as mother or as lover, all too often becomes a place *for man* – for his exclusive inhabitation and exploitation – rather than a place enjoyed by woman *for itself* and *on its own terms*" (327). Woman as imagined as place for man is imagined as an envelope, a container or a "transportable mold" without substance of her own ("Place/Interval" 38). Her role is similar, to choose a banal example, to that of a cake tin. The tin gives shape to the cake but has not got any intrinsic value that would make it interesting in itself. Thus, Irigaray's metaphor of woman as place can be read as a social metaphor which underpins patriarchal power structures and illustrates the need for those in power to keep these structures intact. Because "[p]lace is . . . not the thing but that which permits the thing to be", the role of woman as place is absolutely necessary for man's existence ("Place/Interval" 38). What, after all, would become of the cake mixture if the cake tin should refuse to be regarded as a mere vessel?

A further consequence of the fact that woman as place is without substance is that she is usually reduced to her body and to her specific experience and is denied an access to the universal. Using language as her example, Irigaray points out:

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[9] Essentialist constructions of gender often emerge in times of crisis. Thus, women, who have murdered their male partners are very often given longer prison sentences than men, who have murdered their female partners, because women capable of murder are deemed to be 'unnaturally' violent. Contrary to women, men are often able to reduce their prison sentences by claiming 'provocation' – a claim which underpins the view that men's violence is natural and, if provoked, may lead to awful crimes, whereas women are not meant to be violent in the first place. Thus, essentialist constructions of women as non-violent, nurturing and supportive work against equality before the law.

> [T]he self-proclaimed universal is the equivalent of an idiolect of men, a masculine imaginary, a sexed world. This will come as a surprise only to an out-and-out defender of idealism. It has always been men who spoke and, above all, wrote: in science, philosophy, religion, politics. ("An Ethics of Sexual Difference" 121)

Both in critical and in fictional writing, men have tended to write from the position of universality – for and from the vantage point of 'mankind' [sic]. The practice of using the male personal pronoun when referring to an unspecified person in critical writing (e.g. 'the reader' is followed by 'he') is a case in point. Indeed, up to the 1970s it was probably not impoliteness or an oversight that led to the elision of a whole gender in critical writing, but a consciousness that the author *was* addressing only men. This inequality has been addressed through gender-neutral expressions since the 1990s, despite a backlash against so-called 'pc' language at the same time. A further example is the grammatical rule in languages, in which nouns have a grammatical gender, like French, German and Spanish, by which 99 women suddenly become invisible linguistically when joined by one man. Thus 99 German 'Lehrerinnen' (female teachers) will change to 100 'Lehrer' (male teachers) if one man decides to join their ranks. Looking at fictional writing, especially in Welsh drama in English, it is striking how few male writers create female characters for their own sake, that is, not primarily in relation to other characters, while female writers will quite often focus on male characters. Female characters tend to be mothers, sisters, wives, friends of the male characters (J.O. Francis, *Change*, Gwyn Thomas, *The Keep* etc.) and only plays written after 1980s reverse that trend slightly (Alan Osborne, *In Sunshine and In Shadow* (1985), Greg Cullen, *Mary Morgan* (1987), Dic Edwards, *Wittgenstein's Daughter* (1993), *Iola brecht* (1996), without however, analysing gender in any way in these plays. Thus, it can be said that men traditionally write about themselves when they invoke apparently 'universal' qualities. According to this idea of 'universality', everybody who fails to live up to this apparently neutral yardstick is automatically classed as lacking in the special qualities that make up the 'universal'. To have access to the universal, woman has to become like man or speak through men at the price of her femaleness. That this model also applies to the colonial hierarchy, which iconicises skin colour, or the class system, in which heredity, education and wealth become the yardsticks by which people are measured, only supports the general validity of the argument as well as supporting the feminist campaign for a change of the system.

Irigaray's solution to this problem is a radical deconstruction of patriarchal hierarchies and the construction of a cultural framework that would allow both men

and women to be place for each other: "If any meeting is to be possible between man and woman, each must be a place, as appropriate to and for the other" ("Place/Interval" 40). As woman must be allowed to go beyond the body and its specific reality, man must become aware of his own body's capacity to become place and deconstruct the mind/body dualism that controlled modernity. Casey writes:

> Appeals to reciprocity and respect . . . miss the mark: these presume a homogeneous ethical/political space. . . . Above all, it is necessary to recognise that at this historical moment men cannot simply give over *their* places to women (to do so would be only to reinforce an already overbearing patriarchalism) while women, for their part, must cultivate their own places for themselves and for each other. These places ought to reflect their bodily habitudes and interests, that is, their lived specificities, as closely as possible. The same holds true for men, who must attempt to constitute places in the light of their quite different organic structures and corporeal propensities. If this were done by both sexes, the places that result would more adequately reflect the diverse sexual orientations and gender identities of those who shape them and live in them. (328-329)

Thus the 'ethics of sexual difference' comes to be a claim for autonomy on a newly established basis of gender 'differences', which would allow men and women to meet on a level of true equality.

In this chapter, I am going to look at plays which contribute to a challenge of a supposed gender neutrality in the context of a Welsh discourse of place. They range from a reclamation of female space and female history (Sharon Morgan, *Magic Threads*, 1997) to an imaginative exploration of a metaphorical female space in which girls and women are able to create their identity following female role models (Sharon Morgan, *Dreaming Amelia*, 2002). They explore issues of im/mobility and enclosedness of female space while interrogating the supposed freedoms of male space (Lucinda Coxon's *Waiting at the Water's Edge*, 1995); and they attempt to create an analogy between the dualism of male/female space and the (metaphorical) space of the nation, only to show that that very dualism has to be dismantled if the nation is to have a future (Ian Rowlands's *Blue Heron in the Womb*, 1998). Additionally, they skew or 'queer' the dominant heterosexual world-view traditionally expressed in Welsh drama in English and interrogate the meaning of invisible heterosexism in urban culture (Roger Williams's *Saturday Night Forever*, 1998). Finally, I would like briefly to contrast two recent performances in which gender played a major role: Eddie Ladd's *Scarface* (2001) and Mike Brookes, Mike Pearson and Ed Thomas's *Rain Dogs* (2002).

Sharon Morgan, a well-known and accomplished actress, who regularly appears on stage (for example as Vee in the 1993 revival of Alan Osborne's *In Sunshine and in Shadow*) and whose work for TV includes the programme *Tair Chwaer* (*Three Sisters*) for S4C, has come to writing plays fairly recently. She has written for television and radio and has translated and adapted Simone de Beauvoir's *Monologue* for the stage (see the author biography in *One Woman, One Voice* 14). Apart from *Magic Threads*, her first play, Morgan has written *All That You Have is Your Soul* (1997) a play which brings together women from various Welsh legends, namely Blodeuwedd, Branwen, Arianrhod and Rhiannon, and whose style is described in the stage directions as "magical and big" (np). *Magic Threads* is a poetic monologue which was first conceived in Welsh and subsequently translated into English. The first version of *Magic Threads* was entitled *Ede Hud* and was read at the National Eisteddfod at Llandeilo in 1996. It was subsequently performed live at various theatres in 1997, filmed by S4C and screened in 1999.

Sharon Morgan's work is explicitly feminist: she writes about women, for a predominantly female audience and she has employed almost exclusively female production teams for her plays. Furthermore, she moves female experience and female history centre-stage and sidelines male characters and male experience as tangential to the plays' female characters and to the plays as a whole. Hers is a political strategy to overturn the conventional hero-narrative: by creating a female hero-narrative in *Dreaming Amelia* (discussed below) and by eschewing the creation of conventional characters in *Magic Threads*, Morgan offers alternative plot structures whose radicalism is due not so much to their contents as to the subversion of prevailing traditional plot structures focusing on male characters' development. Jeanie Forte has argued that feminist drama cannot be realist because realism supports the dominant ideology by constructing a reader (or viewer) within that ideology (19-20). As I have argued above, I would suggest that this statement is certainly not true in this absolute form. However, feminist theatrical practice has often made use of non-realist forms to provide female counter-narratives and Sharon Morgan makes use of alternative characterisation to drive home her feminist aims (Aston "Introduction").

Magic Threads is a play without a conventional plot. In the tradition of imagism and magic-realism, the play consists of a collage of songs, text in verse and prose without sense of character or plot development. It takes the form of a monologue which explores the lives of the female members of the female narrator's family. They are presented as a series of short, evocative snapshots in which

mother, grandmother, aunts etc. are seen in characteristic poses in the environment upon which they have impressed, so that their surroundings have become extensions of their personalities. The narrator embodies each remembered female relative in turn, flitting from one image to the next as she looks at the different fabrics from her relatives' old clothes which make up the patchwork quilt beneath which she sleeps. The whole play might thus be a dream and its structure follows the erratic associative movements of memory.[10] I would argue that, by consciously avoiding creating a realistically constructed character or a linear plot, Morgan follows the example of earlier feminist playwrights of the 1970s, whose fragmented plots functioned as deliberate attempts to undercut the traditional hero-narratives of (usually) male playwrights (see Wandor's discussion of plays by women in the 1970s in *Post-War British Drama*). These feminist plays were often informed by the same socialism that motivated playwrights like Howard Brenton, David Hare and John McGrath, a politics which both gave them the opportunity to demand equality and equal representation, in the theatre and also inspired an attitude of angry opposition when male playwrights persisted in ignoring women's experiences and lives in their new socialist plays. Playwrights like Jane Arden (*Vagina Rex and the Gas Oven*, 1969), Maureen Duffy (e.g. *Rites*, 1969) or the early Caryl Churchill (e.g. *Vinegar* Tom, 1974, *Cloud Nine*, 1979) often use all-female casts or shift the attention away from a central (male) hero to create a hero-less narrative of many characters. Feminist playwrights also explored collaborative methods of playwriting and production. An example would be the Women's Theatre Group's *My Mother Said I Never Should* (1974-5), which was only partly subsidised and which toured mainly through schools and youth clubs in an effort to reach its target audience (teenage girls, their families and teachers) more easily (Kruger 64-68). These early feminist (often agit-prop) plays form a separate theatre tradition on which plays like *Magic Threads* can draw because they, for the first time, establish women at the centre of the plays and of the production process.

Although definitely written within a tradition of second wave feminism,[11] *Magic Threads*, nevertheless, deviates quite markedly from the Brechtian agit-prop

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[10] For a detailed discussion of the creation of a female history through memory see chapter 4.

[11] Second wave feminism is the name given to the feminist movement of the West in the late 1960s and 1970s. The term differentiates modern feminism, whose main concerns were "four basic issues (equal pay; equal education and opportunity; twenty-four-hour nurseries; and free contraception and abortion on demand)", from the first feminist movement of the late 19th and early 20th century, whose main demand was suffrage for women (Aston 5).

model favoured by British feminist writers of the 1970s.[12] Sharon Morgan does not, for example, make use of 'alienation effects'. Although songs form an integral part of the play, they do not serve to disrupt or distance the audience from the action. Instead, the songs, often lullabies or popular songs of the 20th century, invite the audience to recognise and identify with the women portrayed and to inhabit their places imaginatively. The political intention seems to be the same: women's spaces and women's histories are moved centre-stage and made visible to raise women's consciousness of their own self-worth, power and possibilities. And yet, Morgan never seeks to disrupt the illusion of the 'as if'-space of the theatre. Instead she creates a dreamscape in which she devotes her attention to exploring the symbiotic relationship of the women with their environment poetically, thus identifying and (re-) creating female spaces within a broader Welsh culture that is generally male-dominated. Morgan deviates very consciously from the primarily cognitive Brechtian model of play-writing, which proposed to make the audience reflect on its social position and understand certain issues in order to spur them into action. Morgan, to my mind, seeks to involve the audience affectively: the power of the play lies in the fact that the audience is able to recognise the women she writes about and the environment they live in. The audience can also empathise with, wonder at and celebrate these women, who did not leave a lasting imprint on the region's (let alone the nation's) history and draw inferences regarding their own lives. Thus, the play is as much about creating an awareness about women's spaces and women's histories as were the feminist plays of the 1970s, but the method of achieving this aim is very different. This is probably a sign of the times rather than a sign of a specifically Welsh way of dealing with feminist issues – after all, the idea of the theatre as the place to enlighten people's reason without many concessions to the aesthetic pleasure an audience derives from the theatrical event (Caryl Churchill's work being an obvious exception) did vanish from the stage during the 1980s.

Although Morgan does not give her play a conventional linear structure, the play follows certain rules of composition. The most obvious structural device is that

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[12] Aston describes how Brechtian techniques have come to be usefully employed in feminist performance even though Brecht himself was hardly interested in feminist issues: "In seeking to make visible the 'gap' between 'real' and the representational in a 'not *that*', resistant style of playing, the feminist performer found a useful ally in the political theatre model of Bertold Brecht. Brecht's own preoccupations were class- rather than gender-based. His theatre sought to revolutionise an oppressed proletariat, but failed to see gender difference as an issue in the struggle of the working classes. The potential of the Brechtian model for a materialist-feminist practice, comes, therefore not directly from Brecht, but from the work of feminist scholars and practitioners who have harnessed

of contrast. Thus, the realm of the domestic is contrasted with that of (untamed) nature, comfort is contrasted with danger, exceptionality and elegance are contrasted with the trappings of the every-day etc. Remarkably, Morgan does not create these contrasts in order to situate women on one side, for example in either the realm of the domestic or in that of nature. Instead she deconstructs the dichotomy by claiming both sides for women. The narrator's grandmother is described as bright, beautiful and generous as her garden which is full of flowers and fruit (16-17). But when the woman steps outside her "fruity flowery civilised garden", she goes to get the "wild forbidden plants" to make ginger beer, in whose taste the untamed magic of the landscape is distilled: "Taste the mountain / Taste the stream / Swallow the earth / And swallow the dream./ Suck the seed / and suck the power / Drink the rain / And eat the flower" (17). The grandmother is shown to straddle the realm both of the domestic and the civilised and of the out-of bounds character of the 'magic' of nature. Thus, the characterisation subverts older stereotypes of femaleness as either 'fair' (docile and domestic) or 'dark' (wild and passionate), which can be met in countless narratives down the centuries – notably in the romantic fiction of Allen Raine (for example in *Queen of the Rushes*, 1906), by situating contradictory qualities in the same woman. The identification of this woman's environment with herself characterises her as a woman who sometimes (and as a matter of course) oversteps the boundaries of 'proper' behaviour and who has a deep knowledge of the world. Indeed, she is primarily imagined as a woman who exudes strength and confidence – not at all the demure domestic angel of the Victorian and Edwardian imagination, whose Welsh incarnation was the Welsh 'mam':[13]

> Her grandmother found the power euphoric. / Everything was so clear, so strong, as exciting / As riding down the valley / On her bike / With her feet on the handlebars / With the wind in her wild auburn hair. . . . / She was so strong, she felt no fear. / Definite, determined, / One foot on the hearth /

Brechtian theory and practice to the feminist project" (12). Following from this it is clear that Morgan's feminist, but not materialist-feminist, drama cannot be called Brechtian.

[13] The fact that Welsh women were confined and confined themselves for longer in this ideal image of womanhood was connected to the cultural backlash which followed the publication of the Education Report in 1847, commonly known as the 'Blue Books', in which Welsh women are described as sexually licentious, promiscuous and as having questionable morals. An outraged Welsh nation reacted by denying the allegations and by rigorous self-policing. Notable among 19th century publications, which shaped public opinion in this respect, was the first Welsh periodical for women, *Y Gymraes*, which appeared in 1850. Sian Rhiannon Williams comments that "*Y Gymraes* set out to create a perfect Welshwoman whose high Christian morality and, in particular, virtues of sobriety and thrift would ensure that in future the Welsh nation would be above all criticism" (70). Cf. also Kirsti Bohata "En-gendering a New Wales: New Women, Nationalism and the Empire in the Fin de Siècle".

> Whistling as she turns the Welsh cakes on the plank. . . . / Her power was pagan / It came out of the mountain earth / Mountain water ran in her veins / She worshipped what she wanted / She had no schooling / She WAS GOD and she loved her to bits. (23-24)

Again, the realm of the domestic and the realm of nature converge and grandmother draws her power from the landscape she lives in. She traverses that landscape without fear and is able to bring that sense of strength and power into the domestic setting of her kitchen. She thus exudes a sense of ownership of landscape and home which shape her character as an individual.

Another contrast is invoked in the narrator's great grandmother, who made the quilt the narrator slept in as a girl. She is imagined as the motherly guardian of family memories as she cuts up the clothes and sews them together to make the quilt. At the same time, she comes across as frightening and dangerous:

> Watch yourself, or you'll get hurt! It's me that remembers it's me that wants to, the children won't remember. A quilt like a shawl my girl, no-one can come near you. I keep you safe all night with my needle, it's sharp and prickly like me. I choose the pieces, pieces of life, hope and fear, and shame and loss and celebration. Don't come too close, it could be dangerous. (21)

Being both comforting and threatening, this woman embodies the peculiar power of motherhood. Imagined similarly to Irigaray's concept of the mother as place, she is able to comfort and nurture. But the image has two sides – one that Irigaray possibly had political reasons not to claim for women – namely a dangerous and cruel side which constrains and hurts.[14] The mother binds her children to her in the very moment she pushes them away and thus refuses to conform to the idealistic, self-sacrificing image of motherhood embodied in the Welsh 'mam', an image primarily created for women by men and whose idealisation many women refuse to let go of.

Thirdly, the narrator's mother's elegance is contrasted with her every-day domestic chores: "[T]he little girl watches her mother cutting coal in high heels and silk stockings with seams and carrying water from the well in a big black hat with a spotted veil and no-one could see her" (40). Here the realm of the domestic becomes claustrophobic as the narrator's mother's beauty becomes mere eccentricity through the contrast of her elegant clothes and the mundane chores she has to do. While the domestic setting can be a peaceful and nurturing haven, for example for the little girl in both her grandmother's and her mother's garden, it is clearly stifling the wilder and more romantic impulses of her mother who is

[14] Another mother in the play is described as being so fearful for her child, "[h]er gem, her diamond, her pearl," that she shuts her in to 'keep her safe forever': "You can't be a woman in case / because of in case" (38-39).

(elsewhere in the play) imagined as running naked over a mountain top when a teenager:

> She started to take off her clothes / . . . She started running / And her clothes went up in the air / And fell it didn't matter where / . . . The clothes she didn't want, she didn't want, / she didn't want / The chapel coat, the coat of lies / The hypocritical hat / The scarf that suffocates / The Pharisaical frock / The boots that betray, the Sunday school stockings of slavery./ . . . She runs and runs / Faster and faster in the moonlight / Further and further in the starlight / But the mountain top is endless. (41-42)

The mother's evidently unruly soul is encased in her dowdy but respectable clothes, which she throws away to feel free. Later she is enclosed in a house without electricity, which may be a place to stay, but which cannot provide her with the nurture she needs: Irigaray has written that "[p]lace is never closed", as a truly nurturing place must always leave open the possibility for a subject to relocate and position itself somewhere else ("Place, Interval" 51). An enclosed space, like that of the mother's house, stifles and only allows for a limited expression of individuality. However, in keeping with the complexity of her images, Morgan does not construct the mountain top as coterminous with freedom, for the young woman runs and runs on the mountain top without end and is forced to return as she cannot escape "and sail away on a boat of leaves to sea" (42). The elegant and completely unsuitable clothes the woman wears when doing her household chores later in her life are thus maybe not a completely absurd choice. As she rejects the respectable clothes that hide her personality, she is true to her extravagant self – even though nobody except her little daughter can see her. She expresses a limited freedom by allowing her clothes to act as substitute place for her. The women's environment is consequently invoked through contrasting images that do not cancel each other out. Morgan's depiction of women becomes manifold and she is able to draw truly realistic images of women and their contradictions and complexities without characterising them in a conventional way at all.

Morgan's political point comes across in an image strikingly like Irigaray's image of the female body as place. Wondering what could have become of all the talents hidden inside her female relatives, whose expression a repressive society curtailed, she creates the image of tiny flowers inside the women, buds waiting for their chance to bloom. Because the talents are generally not permitted to flower, they are given to the women's daughters, from womb to womb, each mother being a place of nurture for her daughter who will then give her gifts to her daughter in turn:

> Where are our mother's talents? / Our mother's mother's mother's? / All curled up inside / Deep down in the earth / The little flowers are cwtshing, / They go from womb to womb, / Waiting, waiting[,] waiting. (36)

Women's talents remain hidden and thus unproductive. However, they are not imagined as lost. Instead, the womb is imagined as the place in which women's hopes and talents are given from mother to daughter. The narrator then imagines what would happen if the gifts given from mother to daughter could actually be used by them:

> One day / What if they escaped? / What if they burst out / In all their glory, / . . . Everything will change then / Old roads will disappear / We'll have to find some new roads / To find our way back home, / Waterfalls of roses / Storms of lovely lilies, / Millions of them. (36-37)

The image of the woman as place here provides a reading of the place of women's talents, which so often remain undiscovered. Morgan argues that if women's talents were fostered in the same way that men's talents are fostered the world would change irrevocably, new roads would have to be found and old gender structures would be broken up for an 'ethics of sexual difference' to emerge.

In the play women connect with women, their sense of being is not mediated by men in a way that Irigaray considers to be the prerequisite for an 'ethics of sexual difference'. They are forceful and sometimes ambivalent characters, like the grandmother or the great-grandmother, they are constrained by their circumstances and manage to subvert that constraint to some extent, or they are the victims of their circumstances, like the nameless ancestor who bled to death on the mountain on the way to work in the candle factory (25-26, see chapter 3). Morgan creates a theatrical space which is solely occupied by women who are not stereotypical products of cultural imagination but who are 'real'. In order to describe these women properly and to make visible their hi/stories, she looks at them on their own terms and separate from the men in their lives. Elaine Aston has pointed out that feminist theatrical practice began as an 'objection to objectification', which often went hand in hand with non-realist forms (5-11). A second phase then developed out of this critique:

> For other feminists, re-viewing women's experiences rooted/routed in and through the body was not enough, as this did not pay attention to the material conditions that produce and determine gender, class, race or sexuality. In contrast to the revisionist aims of a body-based cultural-feminist practice, materialist-feminist practice is one which seeks to make a further, arguably more radical, intervention in the apparatus of representation, through the alienation of the gender sign-system. (11-12)

It follows that Morgan's *Magic Threads*, which is essentially concerned with an 'archaeological' project of making forgotten women visible and whose imagery is closely connected with the female body, which has an almost mystical connection with the land, stays largely within the first, essentialist phase of feminist theatrical

practice Aston describes. *Magic Threads* establishes a female world where only a male world has been visible hitherto, but it does not go as far as criticising the signification of gender in Welsh society more generally.

Sharon Morgan's first full-length play *Dreaming Amelia*, commissioned and first presented by *Hijinx Theatre* at Whitchurch High School in 2002, has a linear structure but is of a dreamlike quality that makes the play more symbolic than realist. As in her earlier plays, Morgan interweaves story-telling, the magic of the imagination and an exploration of women's lives. This time, however, the plot focuses on a girl, Betty Parry, who grows up to be a dancer. Despite several setbacks, Betty is able to follow her dream because she, contrary to her down-trodden mother, has a role-model to which she can look up: Amelia Earhart, the female aviator, who landed in Burry Port, Carmarthenshire, in 1928 on the first transcontinental flight to be attempted by a woman. Amelia becomes a symbol of female achievement for Betty, who, through Amelia's example, can break out of the narrow confines of her life in Burry Port and who – crucially – can return to it. Thus the traditional realistic narrative of escape from home is changed in favour of a narrative of connection with the homeland, which is seen as fundamentally important for Betty's identity.

Dreaming Amelia's simple linear plot structure can be read as the female variety of the hero-narrative. It could also be suggested that this kind of plot structure was chosen deliberately for at least two reasons: firstly, *Hijinx Theatre* addresses a specific audience, namely poor and excluded communities, young people and people with learning disabilities. Therefore, to present a hero(ine) narrative, in which the central character succeeds despite the odds and learns to, above all, be true to herself, makes eminent sense. Secondly, Morgan addresses the fact that there is a lack of female hero narratives to which girls can respond. In the programme notes Morgan asks the following rhetorical questions: "Why are women so often moulded into beings that fulfil the needs of others? When does caring become the obliteration of self and when does the drive for self-expression become the negation of others' selfhood?" In her view, too many women are still imprisoned in traditionally subservient roles and do not dare to 'dream up' an alternative for themselves because society still brands women who put their own wishes first as egotistical and because they have very few role models to look up to. Matters are not helped by the fact that possible role models, like Amelia Earhart, do not enjoy universal popularity, so that many girls and women are not aware of other women's successes. Morgan writes that she herself did not know of Earhart's

historic flight, even though she was brought up near Burry Port (programme of *Dreaming Amelia*). Morgan's feminist intervention and the view of society that underwrites it is undoubtedly a result of her own background and upbringing. Recent research has shown that attitudes towards gender roles are changing slowly. The respondents, 13-15 year old girls from east Swansea, traditionally a working-class area of Swansea, "do not intend to relate to the world solely in terms of their relationship to men and children. They crave a much greater independence through work, albeit mostly of a traditional female kind" (Yewlett 256). On the other hand, other research on girls' participation in sports at school and female body image in selected schools in north and south Wales has shown that

> [t]raditional cultural practices related to gendered bodies seem to have taken for granted by most of the young people in our study as part of the everyday reality of social life. In both sport and leisure, boys are encouraged to *expand* their bodies[,] to 'pump it up'[,] to be adventurous and to enjoy the *outdoors, social* elements of *team* sports. Many girls on the other hand were aware of the pressure to *restrict* and *diminish* their bodies in *individual*, *indoor* pursuits like diet and aerobics classes. They sought to achieve a socially approved, sexually desirable body, with the goal of 'getting' a boyfriend and hence being able to perpetuate the female role of homemaker and family *support*. (Sutton, Hutson and Thomas 238-9, italics in original)

This conflicting evidence seems to suggest that there is a need for female role models, who 'make it' in non-traditional spheres or who are shown to follow their dream despite opposition from family and/or friends. *Dreaming Amelia* tells such a tale. The title and the plot structure make clear, however, that the play does not present an example of women's success but imagines the possibilities open to women when they follow their own wishes.[15]

The play is meaningful on many levels. Within the context of this chapter I would, however, like to focus on the importance of place for the happiness and true fulfilment of the central character. Betty Parry's connection to the Carmarthenshire landscape and coastline is an integral element of her identity and of her dancing, which is an expression of her identity. The play delineates Betty's career as a dancer from humble beginnings at 'Madame's' dancing school in Llanelli to touring throughout Wales and then going to New York to dance on Broadway. She finally becomes famous in New York but only at the price of losing her identity: she changes her name to Bethany Paradise. Changing her name signals the degree of

[15] Amelia does appear in the play and she sends letters and money to Betty to encourage her to become a dancer. I would read Amelia's character metaphorically, however. Amelia always appears at a crisis point in Betty's life and through her voice, her letters and the memory of her, Betty manages to find her own destiny. In my reading, it is

alienation she experiences – another signal is that she now speaks with an American accent and appears in shows in which she pleases audiences but does not express herself through her dance (Act Two, Scene Three). In effect, it is unimportant both to her audience and her lover and agent Lou Daniels who she really is ("I love you 'cos you're you and you are Bethany Paradise" 66). The very ease with which she leaves both the show and Lou shows that this is not a realistic narrative but a success-story in which setbacks are minor and easily overcome.

Betty's first steps to overcoming the alienation she feels are finding a book by Isadora Duncan in which the dancer is quoted as writing:

> **Betty** [she reads] "I see America dancing standing with one foot on the Rockies, her two hands stretched from Atlantic to Pacific, her fine head tossed to the sky, her forehead shining with a crown of a million stars"[.] That's me Shirley. That's how I'm going to dance. (69)

In this extract, Duncan is quoted as making an explicit comparison between the American landscape, her body and her dance. When Betty learns to incorporate movements inspired by the sea into her dance, she has truly found a style which is an expression of herself because it is "a form of dance that is totally unique to [her] and [her] alone" (77). Speaking to 'Madame', her first dancing teacher, back in Burry Port, she tries to explain why the dancer Martha Graham could not teach her anything:

> **Betty** [H]er technique didn't work on my body easily because of my bone structure. We're all so different, everything we are has evolved from our life history, race memory, every individual has her own code in space and time, that is the material of choreography and it's the Parry Way in Wales.
> **Madame** Why don't you change your name? Paritski's nice.
> **Betty** I'm not Russian and I'm not American. I compose on my own body and everything this body is, owns, wants, needs, remembers. I'll draw my movements out of the earth, the ever-changing life around me.
> **Madame** The earth of Burry Port! The ever-changing life! Dance was born in the palaces of kings and queens. Its soul is beauty. Its essence truth. Its heart heroic.
> **Betty** That is all around me.
> **Madame** Where?
> **Betty** In the spiritual experiences of the first peoples to roam these lands. In the doomed lovers Nest and Rhys on the bridge of screams. In brave Gwenllian defending her castle. In the waves of the sea, in my mother's life. (86)

Betty constructs a tangible link between her environment, history, the stories of the land and the people, especially the women, who have lived and who live in this place. All these influences make up Betty's art and, thus, her identity. It is a strikingly essentialist image, which is used in an empowering way in the play. I would suggest

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unimportant whether Amelia 'really' meets Betty, since Betty only needs the example of Amelia's life and deeds as a trigger to try and find her own way.

that the elevation of Betty Parry's life and her environment to become fit subjects for art lie at the heart of the play. Far from being too insignificant, as 'Madame' suggests, everything that is meaningful to Betty can become a basis for art – an image that is meant to suggest to the audience that their lives and their environment are not insignificant either. I would argue that the images in the play must be read within its general aims as they would appear simplistic and too neat to be taken seriously as an analysis of gender roles in contemporary Wales.[16] This reading would support my initial point that Morgan is engaged in a feminist project closely connected to the essentialist feminism of Irigaray. Her aim in *Dreaming Amelia* is to provide her audience with a positive tale of a woman 'making it' without compromising her integrity. Furthermore, she shows how Betty's identity is bound up with the land of her birth and thus 'genders' Wales as the 'land of my mothers'. In my reading, she does not provide an analysis or critique of gender roles *per se*, however.

I would now like to turn to a play which, although it foregrounds female experience (of containment), also interrogates the supposed freedom of movement of men. Lucinda Coxon's play *Waiting at the Water's Edge* both describes and was a result of a journey away from home. The play is closely connected to Wales but through its production history – it was first performed at the Bush Theatre in London in 1993 – and its plot, it transcend Wales. Coxon herself has Welsh ancestors and she describes how her Welsh grandmother's longing for 'home' influenced their family.

> I grew up with a powerful sense of something lost, to them, to my father, and consequently to me. A sense of language and of landscape and of lives, from which we were all effectively exiled. What had begun as straightforward economic migrancy became translated into a far more complex dynamic operating within us. (v)

The 'complex dynamic' of going vs. staying, which includes the discussion of where one can fulfil one's potential – at home or away from home – and the different opportunities for men and women to contemplate and act on these ideas, lies at the heart of *Waiting at the Water's Edge.* Only the first scene of the play is set in Wales – in Harlech, North Wales – but the issue of migration, especially of economical migration, which had characterised the 19th and the early 20th century in Wales,

[16] Even though the play is set in 1928-1937, I believe the play is meant to be meaningful for contemporary audiences.

makes this a play with special relevance for the country.[17] The play's central topic is the loss of a sense of place and a sense of self through displacement. However, the play is free from the nostalgia to be encountered in fiction like Richard Llewellyn's *How Green Was My Valley.* Instead, it remains focused on the present, putting forward the argument that home can be any place, as long as a person's past, present and future are contained within it. The play, thus, looks at migration not as a problem but as a reality which makes for a 'complex dynamic', which becomes especially interesting when discussed in terms of gender. The servant Vi is originally from Senghennydd near Cardiff in South Wales and her journey in search of work takes her to Harlech and then to England into the same house in which her would-be friend Su, whom she meets in the first scene, also works. Their French employer Therese Couth is almost totally isolated in England ("Travelling between places weakens a person. Look at me. I should never have left France. My family. Here I have no one." 23) where she does not seem to have any friends and is neglected by her absent husband and son Will.[18] Her class prejudice prevents her from speaking to the servants. Thus, both women have been taken from their homes and are exiled in a place in which they do not feel at home. They also spend their time eternally waiting for a purpose in life. Vi spends her free hours sitting on the beach and looking out to sea to wait for a sign that will give meaning to her life "[s]o [she] won't always be alone" (17). She fervently believes in this sign, since her father had paid heed to a hunch one day, had not gone to the mines to work as usual and was consequently the only man who had survived an explosion that shattered the mine that day (15).[19] Disregarding the fact that her father very probably went mad from the guilt of being the only survivor, Vi never stops hoping to be given a 'sign' herself. Her conviction that she is 'special' because the people in Senghennydd have tended not to associate with her – the child of the survivor of the disaster – means she is effectively immobilised by her search for 'meaning'. The metaphor of im/mobility on the stage does, of course, mirror the way in which women are often immobilised by social conventions. Indeed, the discussion of female immobility, which refers both to

[17] While the history of male economic migration has been well documented, the history of female economic migration, for example the girls who went 'into service' like Vi and Su in the play, remains under-researched to date.

[18] Even though she is French, her name is spelt 'Therese' (and not Thérèse) throughout the play.

[19] This is a reference to the Senghennydd colliery disaster in 1913, in which 439 men lost their lives and which drew attention to the appalling lack of security measures in the coalmines. In the play the accident itself is significant only insofar as Vi's career in Canada (as a man) leads her to become as brutally insensitive to the miners as the colliery owners in Senghennydd had been. Cf. Kenneth O. Morgan (146).

the constraints of movement in her environment (for example, the banishment of the middle class housewife into suburbia and her 'man-made' fear of urban spaces, see Women and Geography Study Group) and to the way in which "women tend to make less use of their bodies than men, move parts of their bodies in an inhibited and discontinuous fashion (. . .), and act in a limited physical space" (Garner summarising Iris Marion Young, 201-2), has been expressed on stage again and again ever since Nora's virtual imprisonment in *A Doll's House*. Vi is immobilised because she searches for meaning through the memory of her father. When she starts work at Mrs Couth's house, she regularly wears his old clothes to be able to slip out to the river Thames undetected. To escape social strictures is only one motive for her disguise – wearing her father's jacket, she becomes him to an extent, and her flight to Nova Scotia disguised as Will is foreshadowed. As it is the disguise that enables her to move freely, she does not recognise at first that she herself still is as unfree as she was before.

Therese is trapped in her big, empty house like the proverbial 'Angel in the House' and is further immobilised by the after-effects of a stroke. She spends her time waiting for either her husband or her son to spend time at home with her. When her son finally comes to see her, she receives him with the bitterness of someone who has "been too long alone" (21). The pointlessness of her existence is aptly captured in the embroidery with which she tries to occupy herself. Although her right arm is paralysed, she carries on working on the decoration of a pillowcase for her son with her left hand. It is an almost desperate attempt at creating something which is useful and she finds this work an uninspiring chore to which she feels compelled because she cannot make herself useful in any other way. The fact that this gift is not welcome only underlines the emptiness of Therese's life.

Will's return home before going off to Canada on business finally brings about a change: he is attracted to Vi and tells her all about his father's business interest in Nova Scotia. He is to go and work as the manager of the business, "Coal and Power", which is in trouble (39). Mirroring similar problems in South Wales, the miners are on strike in Nova Scotia because of wage cuts, "necessary measures" to keep cost down in an area where the cost of producing coal is high (40). He feels guilty about leaving his mother alone but dreams of cutting the ties that bind him to her and of taking Vi to Nova Scotia. She is seduced by the thought of going away and reluctantly allows him to have sex with her – but then pushes his head down on the floor in disgust, killing him accidentally. With the help of Su, she puts on his clothes and goes to Nova Scotia in his stead – accompanied, however, by Will's

ghost. He gives her hints regarding manner and deportment and soon she is able to impersonate him perfectly – exhibiting a ruthless nature in dealing with the striking miners that disquiets even Will. Wearing Will's clothes, she becomes unrecognisable – proving, if proof were needed, that it is the opportunity to wield power, especially in an insecure position, that makes a person ruthless, not her gender. As the long history of cross-dressing in British theatre shows, wearing the clothes – the signifiers – of the other gender implies an act of transgression and often challenges thoughts of what is 'normal' (Wandor 136-140). Vi transgresses the immobility inscribed on her gender by leaving her old female self behind and entering the world of men in Nova Scotia. There she encounters a world which is much like that of the South Wales she knew, and initially Vi hopes to find a home there, as a man, living like her father. The hardness she occasionally displayed when repulsing Su's attempts at friendship is now turned outward like armoury. But, of course, these attempts to construct a home for herself fail catastrophically, because Vi lies both to herself and to others about her identity. She trades in her femaleness for an assumed maleness and, consequently, forgets her old life. While she becomes ever more masculine, despite a pregnancy that increasingly reveals the lie she is living, Vi is less and less at peace with herself. Although she is in a world she knows well and she is in power, she must learn that the goal of her journey towards meaning is the discovery of herself and her friendship with Su when she travels back to Britain in her old clothes and gives birth to her son in the boat.

The link between Therese and Vi is Will Couth, son to the former and 'disguise' to the latter. His character is interesting because the conventions that bind him and the contradictory feelings he has for his mother mean that he is not completely free to act as he wishes. Unlike his absent father, he feels guilty at the thought of leaving Therese alone, and yet he cannot stand the cocktail of suffocating love and guilt she feeds him. Moreover, he is bound by convention, as his self-respect depends on his standing in the world and what he makes of himself, a notion on which his bitter mother can only pour scorn (23). Musing about going to Canada and seeing her disappointment, he is quick to reassure her that "[i]t's just an idea. It may never happen. I'll probably never go" (25-26). Thus, Will is torn between filial obligation and the wish to stretch his wings.[20] Nevertheless, his position is still privileged, because he has that choice, difficult though it might be. When he meets

[20] Therese finally allows him to go after he put the power of the decision whether he is to go or stay in her hands (54-55). It is her only direct influence over her son, and she uses it graciously.

Vi on a bridge over the Thames, she tells him: "You should go. A place like that. You're lucky. I'd go" (41) – but at that time she does not really have a choice. Later, of course, when she does go to Nova Scotia in his stead, she turns out to be harder than he would ever have been (84-85 *et passim*). Indeed, he is so appalled at the change in her – from servant to cruel master, from girl to hard man – that he does his best to make her remember her real self – not out of jealousy, but out of concern ("Just look at you. So much more like myself than I could ever have been. It's almost as if I'd never died. But someone died, didn't they?" 87). Gender is thus clearly revealed as performance, not essence. Or, to be more exact, the performance of gender is shown to be a complex affair that goes beyond stereotypical social expectations.[21]

Vi's and Therese's stories are interlinked – one pursuing an outward journey and the other journeying inward. Therese has another stroke after her son has left her. With nobody to wait for now, she regresses until she is nearly dead. And yet, just as the memory of Su enables Vi to remember her past, Su is not letting go of Therese. Very slowly, she coaxes her back to life once it is clear that it is a life on Therese's own terms and in her own language. Indeed, Su sometimes speaks to Therese in Welsh, a language to which Therese reacts by speaking in French. Gradually, the two women are able to relate to each other and Therese, still painfully slow, can say: "Je ne suis pas solitaire" (107). The final scene shows Su and Therese working together on a new piece of embroidery; but this time it is for Therese's enjoyment only:

> Su: . . .*[Su gives Therese a postcard from her pocket.]* This is a view of the beach at Harlech my mam sent me. I thought we'd copy the picture and make something really big and hang it on the wall. We've enough pillow-slips and such t'last a lifetime. (110)

Creating an embroidered picture for fun and not out of a sense of duty, relating to Su as a friend and not as a servant, and being able to communicate in her own language, helps Therese to uncover and recover her *joie de vivre*. She rediscovers her house as home because she is no longer waiting for her husband or her son to inhabit it but inhabits it herself. Thus, she can now look to the future.

As they start on the picture the two plotlines converge and Vi gives birth to her baby. Approaching home, her accent returns and she, too, like Su and Therese, comes 'home' to her old language (111). Vi's journey to Nova Scotia 'as Wales' showed her that an obsession with the past and flight into a similar, but still foreign,

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[21] A similar argument, which I am not going trace here, is made for class differences, of course, as the developing friendship between Therese and Su and Vi's change into

place, does not lead to self-discovery. Instead, like Therese, she needs to make peace with the past, leave it behind and find her place inside herself and in her friendship with Su.

In the final scenes, Su's importance for both Vi's and Therese's journey to self-discovery becomes clear. She says "Poor Vi. Always looking for meanings. But she'll come home alright. You see the meaning was right under her nose all the time. It was me. It was me" (113). The complexity of the issues of place, migration, exile and language are reduced to the level of human interaction: Su, the nurturing principle, can be place – in Irigaray's sense – both for Therese and Vi, and once the two women realise this, they have, indeed, found their home. Thus, Coxon's solution to the worrying complexity of the idea of 'home' is to internalise it and uncouple a sense of place from landscape or geography. This interpretation is closely tied to issues of gender, since the men in the play, Will, Therese's absent husband, and Vi's dead father, signally fail to 'be place' for Vi and Therese and the women can only find peace in their 'home' once they have stopped living through other people or masquerading as someone else.

In many ways, *Waiting at the Water's Edge* is a simple – even simplistic – play. Its realistic form, linear structure and easily decodable metaphors make the play accessible to many but reduce the possible difficulties of migration, especially with regard to place, to one simple solution: through female friendship and trust in one's own self, any place can become 'home'. Indeed, if the respective ideologies of men as the creator and women as the helpers of men, who have no claim to their own identity, were not so ingrained as to be still visible in the late 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, the play should have been anachronistic in the 1990s. Furthermore, it is never explained where Su is 'placed', so that she can find the strength to be 'place' for Vi and Therese. There is an implicit suggestion that, contrary to Vi and Therese, she has not broken with her family and her home in North Wales, and that she, sustained by regular news from 'home', is able to carry that 'home' with her to her new abode in England. And yet, Su's story tends to slip from the consciousness of the audience as her role is primarily defined as 'helper' to Vi and Therese, a gender stereotype in itself, were one not to take the utopian ending of the play into account, which places all woman on an (almost) equal footing.

After discussing plays which foreground female experience and do much to further the aims of feminist theatre and feminism in general in Wales, I would like to

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ruthless manager shows.

look at a play which, after critically dismantling an unproductive, fossilised patriarchy, deconstructs the male/female dualism in order to create an ethics of difference which allows a future generation to exist in harmony. Ian Rowland's *Blue Heron in the Womb*, premiered at the Tron Theatre in Glasgow in 1998, is an imaginative, non-realist exploration of gender roles in a metaphorical landscape, which can be read as a political commentary on the relation between a narrow, bigoted nationalism and a more positive, nurturing and tolerant national identity. It also looks at the relationship of the different majority cultures of Welsh-speakers and English-speakers in Wales. It is thus a play that works on many levels and I would argue that a gendered reading of *Blue Heron* complements and enriches a political reading of the play and vice versa.

The nameless members of the family, whose story is at the centre of the play, play out roles whose metaphorical import is clearly meant to transcend the domestic setting of most realist drama. Father is the representative of a repressive nationalism and religiosity whose oppressive nature is represented through an oppressive patriarchy. Mother and the twins Woman and Sister react in various ways against Father's power, a reaction which, in the case of the daughters, primarily means getting involved with a man, the absent Cardiffian Alex, who is undesirable, not only in Father's rigid judgement of how a young Welsh man should behave. The trigger of the play's events is the death of Woman's baby son a year ago in a car accident. After Alex had refused to marry Woman and had shown ambivalent feelings towards his son, Father and Mother had picked both Woman and her child up to take them 'home' to North Wales. En route, through a combination of Father's carelessness and bad luck, an accident happened which killed the still nameless baby outright. The family journey to the mountain-top a year later to scatter the baby's ashes in the wind, and the long conversation of Woman and Sister, who find out that Alex was, in fact, sharing them, leads Sister to commit suicide by throwing herself off the mountain. Father, Mother and Sister then travel down to scatter the rest of the ashes at the seaside, which becomes a place of possible resistance to patriarchy: Mother stands up to Father, swims out to sea and drowns voluntarily as Woman is about to give birth. Father finally and improbably dies in a car accident very similar to the one he caused earlier. As he dies, Woman gives birth, assisted by her dead mother and sister. As the language switches to a mixture of Welsh and English, the audience catches a glimpse of the utopian situation of harmony and (political) unity which Rowlands seems to be working for.

The metaphorical nature of the plot was picked up by reviewers. David Adams writes:

> Superficially it is a domestic tragedy. But it is also a metaphor for Wales – as the family so often is, the father representing the oppression of patriarchy, extreme nationalism and the church, the twins representing a divided nation, with the image of the storms that flattened much of the country coinciding with the birth of the baby, the promise of a new birth to come – with its changing attitudes. It is also, of course, about sexual politics, about the abuse of women by men in two generations told from three women's point of view (the men hardly get a look in). (Adams "Retrospective" 251)

David Adams's reading of the play, which I would not have called a tragedy as it ends on a hopeful and positive note, brings out its metaphorical content very clearly. He establishes an almost one-to-one relationship between signifier and signified (e.g. the twins and the divided nation), which is, to my mind, not all that clear, however. It is the relationships between the characters rather than the characters themselves that seem to be symbolic of the nation. Rowlands leaves behind not only the concerns of the domestic drama but also the notion of character. The author himself foregrounds the metaphorical function of the play thus:

> I see [the play] as a metaphor for Wales today. We're at a great turning point, on the verge of becoming a nation. We have to re-invent ourselves and look at the way we react if we are to create a new Wales. The play is about sexual politics. It deals with a family controlled by the father and I'm trying to portray a sort of Welshness that is abhorrent, retrogressive and negative. (Evans)

It is interesting that Rowlands should choose to represent and discuss his political convictions and hopes for the Welsh nation after devolution through the metaphor of gender relations and gender politics. It seems that gender theory, especially the discussion of power inequalities between the genders, is in many ways similar to postcolonial theory and thus conducive to describing and discussing the inherently oppositional regional/national politics of Wales. Secondly, the utopian element in gender theory furnishes the playwright with the possibility of voicing his vision for the future of Wales as a nation.

For the purposes of this thesis, concentration will be on the depiction of the metaphorical space the characters move in and interact with. Instead of providing a realistic backdrop to the action, Rowlands creates a series of symbolic locations with an emblematic function within Welsh culture. The plot moves from location to location in a manner reminiscent of expressionist *Stationendrama* (station drama). The original station drama, for example Georg Kaiser's *Von Morgen bis Mitternacht* (*From Morning to Midnight*, 1917), has one or several protagonists pass "through a number of distinct encounters analogous to the stations of the cross in Catholic churches" (Esslin 378). While expressionist station plays like Wolfgang Borchert's

post-war tragedy *Draußen vor der Tür* (*Outside the Door*, 1946) are very clearly indebted to the Catholic tradition of the Passion of Christ, ending, as it does, with the sacrifice of its young protagonist, Rowland's own station play is rather more removed from the genre's Catholic tradition. *Blue Heron* does, after all, end with the birth of possibility, not with its sacrifice. The emblematic nature of the play's locations (a family's house, a mountain-top, a beach and a road to Cardiff) as well as the non-realistic time-compression, allows the characters to pass from one location to the next in a matter of seconds. This shows the play's affinity with non-realistic forms like expressionist theatre or even the characteristic situations of *commedia dell'arte* rather than with the traditionally realist forms of Welsh theatre in English.[22] Taken together these emblematic locations describe both the real environments that can be encountered in Wales and also invoke the imaging of the Welsh nation in the traditional domestic play (the house) and through geographical signifiers like the mountain, the seaside and the rural/urban divide indicated by the road to Cardiff. These locations function as a metaphor for 'Wales' as a whole. This is made clear by the stage directions ("*A man hovers six feet above Wales*", 16)[23] at the beginning and at the end of the play.[24]

The play begins in the domestic space of a family house. The family "*dressed in underwear prepare for a journey. The women of the family service the Father's needs before their own. The Sister and Woman iron his clothes, the Mother prepares a picnic*" (17). The stage directions indicate that, although the domestic sphere is often described as a female sphere, it is, in fact, dominated by the father.

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[22] While the creation of meaning through metaphors of place may owe something to expressionist drama, the characterisation of Father, Mother, Woman, Sister and Man are clearly not meant to be expressionistic. The aim of an expressionist style of acting "was to achieve emotional transcendence, communicated physically through dynamic and stylized movement, rigid muscular tension, and harshly staccato vocalization. The impassioned, ecstatic actor was 'a man possessed'. . ." (Innes, "Theatre after Two World Wars" 386). This by now anachronistic and probably unintentionally funny acting style is eschewed in favour of a more realistic style which, nevertheless, does not involve 'characters' in the traditional sense.

[23] Man is a curious character. He hovers above Wales as the figure of a possible guardian angel and is able to talk to Sister, Mother and Father just prior to their respective deaths. At the end of the play he is revealed to be the spirit of the dead baby and, thus, could also embody the relative political failure of nationalism prior to the 1997 devolution referendum.

[24] This kind of stage direction is obviously meant to provide information for the reader or the director of the play rather than for the audience, which probably does not realise immediately that the various 'stations' of the play are metaphorical representations of 'Wales'. Rowlands often includes stage directions for the benefit of readers (cf. the stage direction in *Love in Plastic*: "*Enter Woman pursued by Ego*" 93) and thus creates a text which is meaningful on many levels, not all of them theatrical (cf. Adams 245).

Irigaray has pointed out that, although woman might be housed, she is still placeless:

> Again and again, [man takes] from the feminine the tissue or texture of spatiality. In exchange – but it isn't a real one – he buys her a house, even shuts her up in it, places limits on her that are the opposite of the unlimited site in which he unwittingly situates her. He contains or envelops her with walls while enveloping himself and his things with her flesh. ("Sexual Difference" 11)

In the play, the women of the family provide Father with a 'place' through looking after his physical well-being – they dress him and they prepare his food – in a metaphorical equivalent to 'enveloping' him. Although he has (most probably) provided them with a 'place' to live in, the house cannot provide the same kind of nurture that the women provide for Father. In effect, the house is an extension of patriarchal power, his house, in which his rules are carried out. Thus "[a]lthough it is women who are charged with the role of homemaker, what they are required to make is often the product of masculine desires, within the context of an architecture which, until recently, has taken little account of women's preferences" (Shurmer-Smith and Hannam 110). In an image which underlines this unequal power relationship, Rowlands shows Mother, Woman and Sister as servants to Father – and just like servants, they cannot speak their own thoughts openly. A minor quarrel between the sisters is cut short by Father (18) and through much of the scene the audience hears only the women's thoughts which differ markedly from what they say to Father. The habit of thinking one thing and communicating something else, mostly clichés and platitudes, to Father is most ingrained in Mother:

> **Mother** I've learnt my negativity from you, my husband, as most women do. I adopted your values and adapted my life for the sake of peace. And so, on the outside, your values became 'our' values, but inside, I've lived by a hidden code . . . .
> **Father** Slaving away, mother?
> **Mother** With a smile upon my face, Huw, always with a smile[.] (19)

Mother's mimicry of relaxed family relations despite the (unintentionally) cruel remarks of Father can be read as akin to the mimicry of the colonised subject theorised by Homi Bhabha. According to Bhabha, the colonised subject's mimicry of the coloniser provides them with a 'mask', which mirrors the coloniser's values and which prevents the coloniser from seeing that the colonised subject may hide its own, radically different ideas behind that mask (Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man", quoted in Moore-Gilbert 120 *et passim*). Like Bhabha, Rowlands seems to be a little over-optimistic as to the possibility of mimicry. Bhabha develops his argument by describing how the mimicry of the colonised subject is always imperfect and how the coloniser might be unsettled by "the distorting mirror which fractures the identity of

the colonizing subject" (Moore-Gilbert 121). This argument is certainly valid when mimicry is used consciously as a political tool of opposition. I wonder, though, if the colonised subject is really able to stay untouched by the coloniser's ideologies.[25] Is it not possible that the powerless partner (Mother) will have soaked up quite a lot of the ideas of the powerful partner (Father) without realising it? Or, if one takes the image further, will the young generation really be able to cut themselves free from the old ideologies of 'the land of their Father/s' or will some of the old ideas live on in them? Although Mother is especially hesitant to voice her opposition, she does so in the end (on the beach) and she does, in fact, remove her 'place' from Father, who is left emotionally stranded. There is a sense of gradualness of change over generations, but still the reliance on the functioning of mimicry as a political tool could be seen as slightly too optimistic – maybe this is an element of the play which underlines its utopian vision of a new Wales.

The relationship between coloniser and colonised indicated here does not refer to the relationship between Wales and England, however. The Father embodies an unbending, narrow and bigoted Welsh nationalism and nonconformism, which could have come straight from the pages of a Caradoc Evans short story. It is the fossilisation of a formerly meaningful identity-providing ideology of Wales. Hansjörg Bay has described such a stifling, debilitating ideology as the 'narrative shell' of a formerly productive and stabilising national narrative (Bay 27). Indeed, the Father's world-view and his manner prescribe 'our' values for his mother and children. Mother keeps her opposition to herself and the sisters flee into the arms of Alex, a young man from Cardiff, whom Father hates because "his accent [doesn't] fit" (70).[26] Father's hardness becomes finally obvious when he believes that the baby's death – Woman's and Alex's child – "was merely God's way of restoring the harmony", the harmony of his world in which there is no room for urban south Walian strangers and babies born out of wedlock. A more ridiculous side to Father's nationalism is revealed when he says:

> **Father** I'd rather be dead than be Dutch. If you can't put your country into perspective from the top of a mountain, how can you love it, I say?

[25] This question is often addressed in the discussions about the relationship between England/America and Wales. Rowlands is concerned exclusively with intra-Welsh conflicts, and thus the question has to be phrased differently.

[26] The family seems to be from North Wales, Woman now lives in Aberystwyth and Sister might have moved to Cardiff, where Alex comes from. The road that takes the characters from one place to the next also divides (rural) West and North Wales from Cardiff, which clearly has no room in Father's brand of nationalism. The fact that the baby born at the end of the play 'inherits' both rural and urban Wales points to a re-evaluation of community and place in a newly inclusive national identity.

Mother The Dutch are an enterprising nation, Huw[.]
Father Perhaps they are, but their landscape is vertically thwarted. You can not, whatever anyone says, you can not belong to a land as flat as pancakes. Mountains are the memory of a nation written in stone, without them there is neither longing or belonging. I pity the Dutch and I pray for them. (25-26)

The well-known connection between the mountainous landscape of Wales and Welsh identity, which has meant both a life of hardship away from the fertile lowlands, liable to be attacked and colonised by a variety of peoples through the ages, and a place of shelter in times of attack, is here presented as an empty marker of national pride, which is dangerous because it is intolerant of difference. Indeed, such a patronising ignorance robs the symbol of the mountains of its power to be an anchor for a positive celebration of identity – and this seems to be the target for Rowlands's barbed wit: far from denying the power of nationalism *per se*, he writes against a nationalism that has become an ideological shell, intolerant of difference on the outside and unable to nurture the individual on the inside: Father's patriarchal nationalism is a poor substitute for the real nurturing possibilities of place.

On the mountain, the two sisters – "the same but different" (18) – talk to themselves and to each other about the way they used to betray each other by sleeping with the same man. Jealous of each other, each uses her relationship with Alex, who does not seem to be able or willing to distinguish between them properly, to inflict pain on the other. Interestingly, Alex himself does not appear in the play. A recurring character in Rowland's plays, he, or another incarnation of him, had already appeared in *Marriage of Convenience* (chapter 3), where his character illustrated the difficulties involved in being a Welsh-speaker in an English-speaking South Walian valley. Here he instrumentalises the sisters for his pleasure and his wish for eternity through his children (34-35) and he is used in turn as the instrument of the twins' revenge on their father. The scene on the mountain ends with the sisters forgiving each other ("**Sister** I love you Lizzy / **Woman** Love you too… but where do you end and I begin?" 38) and with Sister jumping off the mountain to end her life. It is easy to read the sisters as metaphors for the 'divided' Welsh nation, as David Adams has done. The way the sisters expend energy and emotions to hurt each other rather than live a new life outside their father's house together makes this reading plausible. Yet, it seems that the simple equation of the sisters with the English-speaking and with the Welsh-speaking part of the Welsh population is too simplistic: who of the sisters is identified with which part of the population? And, who is Alex, who has relationships with both women and who seems to be Welsh, too?

Furthermore, a too literal identification of the women with the two main language groups of Wales cannot account for the Sister's suicide. It seems more rewarding to leave traditional concepts of character behind and to concentrate on interpreting the relationships the sisters have with each other, with Alex, and with Father, as a metaphor for the way in which a divisive (cultural) difference is constructed and maintained where it is not (politically) helpful. That this is not an argument against difference *per se* becomes clear when Sister commits suicide to finally " be... without comparison" (47). Rowlands clearly argues against the self-lacerating tendencies within Welsh culture, against too-deep introspection and against the bigotry of parochialism which need to be left behind if Wales wants to survive as a nation on its own terms. The way the sisters are alienated from Father, betray each other and Alex, who betrays them in turn, is clearly symbolic of the way internal cultural strife makes a meaningful discussion of (national) identity impossible. Sister commits suicide to give Woman 'freedom' (50), but she does not disappear. As internal strife dies, Sister returns as a presence which implies difference but not divisiveness. Thus, both Sister and Mother assist at the birth of national possibility at the end of the play.

Arriving on the beach, the family experiences a subtle change in power relationships. It might be a little far-fetched to read the mountain as a (national) symbol identified with masculinity while the beach and the sea is identified with femininity, but it is clear that Father's 'rock-hard', unbending views seem to be challenged much more easily in the shape-shifting, fluid space of the beach and the sea. Indeed, Father himself becomes less unbending and even nostalgic when remembering his relationship with his mother. This woman is described as almost comically bigoted ("Nain immediately took against the Hillman Minx . . . . it went against her grain to be driven round in a Jezebel", 52) and it becomes clear that Father's attitudes actually stem mostly from his mother. Rather than weakening the argument of the play, the inclusion of Nain's influence over Father makes clear that gender oppositions are not clear-cut. Nain is not present as a character and it would be too far-fetched and too literal a reading to speculate about her acceptance of the patriarchal, religious and nationalist values that she then imparted to her son. Instead, I read the gender politics played out between Nain and Father as an extension of the argument about a closed, disabling nationalism: Irigaray, in using the terms envelope/to envelop when describing woman as 'place', draws attention to the fact that a nurturing place is always open on one side, thus allowing the individual to grow, leave and return. Nain is an example of a closed 'place': thinking

of nurture in terms of sheltering him from harm, she did not allow him to go beyond her narrow world-view and, as a consequence, believed that the ideological shell he inherited from her was coterminous with 'safety' (see *Magic Threads*). It is thus an indictment of a memory of the past which, although it is anachronistically comical, still holds sway over the present and stifles newer forms of cultural expression. This reading is underscored by the way (family) traditions like the scattering of the baby's ashes are associated with Father's family. Father disregards Woman's deep distress at the ceremony because it "is important... both to me and my family". When Mother points out that "we are your family", Father explodes: "Lizzy, we are damned as it is. Our lives have been cursed from the day that devil [Alex] darkened our doorstep, don't compound our tragedy" (58). Father feels dishonoured at the thought of 'his family' being witness to the 'tragedy' of one child, now dead, and another one born out of wedlock. As he becomes increasingly abusive in his desire to blame anyone but himself for the accident, Mother finally speaks up before she, too, decides to commit suicide.

> **Mother** I blame myself for my silence when I should've spoken. The countless times you put me down ...
> **Father** When?
> **Mother** When have you not? You do it without realising, but that's nothing compared to the moments I sensed the tragedy yet said nothing. . . . So many silences wasted for nothing ... for nothing, Huw. Perhaps, this day of truths, one silence should be broken. . . . Sitting next to you I prayed for a crash to carry us away before we arrived at Lizzy's; before you could make a victim of another generation. But that day, your God must've been busy because he answered my prayer a touch too late; the wrong life was taken on the wrong journey[.] (65-66)

The challenge comes as a surprise to Father, as does Mother's theatrical suicide. As mother drowns in an unrealistic and exaggerated way which stresses the unrealistic nature of the play as well as the fact that drowning means liberation and not violent death (66-67), Father finds himself without place and is thus completely powerless: he cannot save his wife because his overprotective mother never allowed him to learn to swim ("Nain thought that I'd drown, so I never learnt. I can't ride a bicycle either", 67). Father's sudden placelessness, his fear of being on his own is marked by a profound egotism ("Gwenda! Don't leave me alone to spout monologues in a vacuum" 69). He is finally sent away by Woman to find help. On the road, Father fights the knowledge of his own guilt in the death of his grandchild, but his excuses are pathetic and his assumed superiority broken at last. In conversation with Man, who has been in contact with both Sister and Mother just prior to their deaths, he is forced to concede his failure:

Man Can't you see what you've done? Not just the accident, but the lives you've ruined, the victims you've made, just because of your selfishness and fucking presumption!

. . .

Father For God's sake!

Man Stop hiding behind him!

Father I know no other way to live. It's not easy being the rock when you're a mass of contradiction... To offer answers when you know nothing... To feel your dignity eroding and your sex diminishing. (79)

Thus the ideology of patriarchy, as well as the ideology of a rigid nationalism, is shown to fail all its subjects. The hierarchy elevates some and subjugates others in a way that is based on irrational prejudice and which disregards 'real' experience. Father's failure is not that he is in a position of power within the system of patriarchy, but that he never allows those around him to see that he cannot fulfil that role adequately. And for this omission, for the "sorry" that comes too late (80), he is punished in a scene of poetic justice: Man throws a cat's eye at him and he dies like his grandchild. His death clearly is a liberation, for in the moment he dies, his second grandchild is ready to be born.

On the beach, Woman is joined by Sister and Mother who "*assist at the birth*" (80). The scene is one of harmony and the women's conversation is, significantly, held in Welsh – a Welsh, however, which is mongrelised by including English (swear) words that have been incorporated into the language ("**Sister** Gwthia, Lizzy [Push, Lizzy] / **Woman** Ffycin hel... Sori, Mama / **Mother** Jyst gwthia wnei di [Will you just push]" 80).[27] I believe this can be read as a metaphor for a renewed vitality which can be gained from allowing a measure of influence from another language/culture, as long as the influence is taken on board on the original language/culture's terms. When the child is born on the beach, Woman calls him Phoenix Bach Griffiths. Within the context of the Welsh politics of 1998, a plausible reading of the play could be that the birth of the child out of the ashes of the dead child is likened to a re-birth of an independent Welsh political spirit. The dead child, nameless, nearly aborted and viewed with ambivalence by Alex (28-29) and killed outright by Father (78-79), could then be a personification of the political spirit that was crushed by the 'no'-vote in the first referendum on devolution in Wales in 1979. In 1998, though, the future of Welsh politics was hopeful as Wales, in a difficult 'birth', voted 'yes' by the narrowest of majorities. Phoenix Bach Griffiths[28] has more of a chance to live. While having the same heritage as his dead brother, times have

[27] The translation in brackets seems not to have been available in the performance. The context of the action would have made the meaning obvious, however.

[28] The fact that the child is a boy and not a girl seems to mean that Rowlands is interested not in feminist politics but in gender politics and ultimately in cultural and national politics.

changed. Born on the fluid landscape of the beach and with a 'living' Welsh language as his birthright, he is the heir to a 'mongrel' culture, like Alex in *Marriage of Convenience*, which can only enrich political culture. At the end of the play, Man rises again and "*hovers six feet above Wales*": in an image which is the opposite to the expression 'six feet under', the ghost of the dead firstborn urges the baby boy to "[l]ive a life big enough for us both . . . live, for both our sakes ..." (83).

The discussion of national identity through the metaphor of gender relations opens up a new angle to look at some old issues. Rowlands never did write realistic domestic plays, but especially in this play, he leaves conventional notions of character and plot development to create a purely metaphorical theatrical space in which he can explore issues of national identity after 1997. Although he foregrounds sexual politics in favour of the women in the play, the play moves towards a dismantling of the female/male dualism which has been largely created and maintained by patriarchy. The final family scene of Mother, Sister, Woman, Man and the newborn boy is one of harmony, not a new dualism, this time favouring women. Based on this harmony and the freedom from old constraints, the new national identity can prosper.

A play which most radically questions sexual roles and identity is one which very consciously plays with the clichés of romantic love and romantic plots in drama and television. Roger Williams's *Saturday Night Forever* (first performed at Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff in 1998) is a deceptively simple play, telling a romantic tale of love found and lost. The difference to this tale is that two men fall in love and that the end to their love is violent. Williams's aim behind this short monodrama is twofold: firstly, he refuses to accept the exotic, unpredictable and sexually promiscuous characterisation often ascribed to gay men by the popular media for his character Lee. Indeed, Lee is such an 'ordinary guy' he seems out of tune with the rest of the gay 'scene' in Cardiff. When he finally meets Carl, the 'man of his dreams', their romance progresses in true soap-opera style, thus claiming a measure of normalcy for gay men and their romantic aspirations. However, just as the audience starts hoping for a 'happy-ever-after' fairy tale-ending, Lee and Carl are attacked on their way home, Lee is badly scarred and Carl is killed. This shocking ending to an otherwise clichéd romantic tale draws attention to the fact that a 'normal' existence for gay men is impossible because of the everpresent atmosphere of latent and overt homophobia of mainstream society, which finds expression in the unacknowledged assumptions underlying the construction of

society as heterosexual. Thus, Williams, playing with clichés in the play, breaks up the notion of what constitutes 'normal' romance and love and also interrogates the space of the homosexual 'other', the 'ghetto' of the gay 'scene'.

The play thus contrasts two fundamentally different spaces: the gay environments of private home and gay 'scene' (in other word, pubs and clubs) and the heterosexual sphere of the city of Cardiff. The gay world is a strictly 'indoors'-world, where the heterosexual rules of the outside world can be broken safely. At the same time – maybe as a defence mechanism and in order to be able to present a unified identity to the heterosexual world – the gay sphere has developed rules and routines to which most gay men and lesbian women conform in order to be able to belong. Lee unfortunately does not wear the clothes, like the music and cannot dance to it like Matthew, the boyfriend he leaves at the beginning of the play because they are patently not suited to each other. The ordinarily harmless words "I hate Take That" acquire an additional meaning because they imply the rejection of a whole life-style:

> And it was that comment that did it. . . . He looked at me as if I'd plunged a knife deep into his chest, 'But, but, we like Take That.'
> 'No Matthew, you like Take That. You like Take That, the same as you like Hollyoaks, Titanic, Habitat, Malibu Breezers, and this fucking hole. I don't. I never have done. . . . And as he called after me, I looked back at him and saw the little boy. Pitiful. Lost. I left before his tears could dry. (124)

Matthew, like a perfect stereotype of a gay man, surrounds himself with the emblems of gay lifestyle: manufactured pop-music, camp soap-operas, romantically kitschy films, stylish furniture and alcopops. Matthew's pain is real because Lee's rejection of that lifestyle equals a stripping away of the emblems denoting 'gay', the camp armour which sometimes hides a vulnerable self.

The rejection of the peculiar ghettoised life-style of gay men like Matthew does not bring freedom to Lee, however. Going out to a female friend's party on another Saturday night, Lee notices painfully that he has left not only "a record collection that needed burning" (124) behind, but a feeling of being safe. Watching heterosexual men and women getting ready for their Saturday night, he suddenly feels vulnerable and scared:

> [A]s they moved by in their Ben Sherman shirts and Calvin Klein jeans, laughing and shouting, I felt a little uneasy, scared. The geography was unfamiliar, foreign, and standing here as a stranger it struck me as volatile, unsafe. . . . An animal out of hibernation my senses were heightened. I waited for someone to explode, for one of the leery passers by to approach me, stop me, jeer me. . . . A car sped past me, its stereo growling, and the paranoia won over. 'Keep your head down. Low profile. Don't provoke anyone. You're alright. Keep walking. Keep moving. Just in case.' (126)

Lee is literally without place. Even though he feels scared of the possibility of humiliation and/or attack rather than of an actual threat, it becomes clear that his movements as an 'out' gay man are severely circumscribed. The city is thus a deeply ambivalent space for Lee: on the one hand, only in the city is any kind of 'out' gay life possible at all while, on the other hand, life outside the gay ghetto is still perceived as threatening and alien and serves to circumscribe gay people's freedom of movement to designated gay-friendly areas. The experience described in the play is mirrored not only by that of minority ethnics but also by women more generally, whose simultaneous feelings of freedom (from convention, from suburbia) and fear of the city space is described by the Women and Geography Study Group (148-56). Even in the comparatively friendly party Lee still feels out of place. When Emma summarily outs him in front of her friends, his fear returns: "Alright, perhaps I am exaggerating, but I could've sworn that at that moment every head in the room turned three hundred and sixty degrees and looked at me. Freeze frame. The monkey boy. The man with three nipples. The ho-mo-sex-u-al" (127). Only when he meets Carl does Lee's fear subside and he becomes progressively more self-assured as their romance progresses.

The sad ending of the play, however, shows the consequences of feeling safe enough to be different in a potentially hostile environment. After Carl and Lee have been beaten up so badly that Carl dies, the police ask the questions familiar to every minority: "But why hadn't I stayed to the main road? Why didn't I stay where there were other people who could've see, could've done something to help?" (140). Although this is probably unintentional, the majority culture tends to devolve the responsibility for a minority's safety to the minority itself. Particularly the urban space allows for selected spaces of relative freedom to be different, but once outside this space a gay man, for example, is responsible for his own safety and has to try and avoid attack, while the (potentially) aggressive majority cannot as easily be taught to accommodate difference.

The subversion of stereotypes and the question of what an individual is to do, if they feel 'out of place' even in their designated ghetto, contribute to a discussion of normalcy and difference in gay and in mainstream society. The fact that the action of the play takes place in Cardiff might be a cue to read the play as a metaphor of Wales as a minority nation within the United Kingdom. Yet, I feel this reading is probably a little far-fetched. I do believe, however, that the play's setting is not incidental. Carl's up-beat view that "we are living in the fastest growing capital city in Europe" (134) is strangely out of kilter with the sometimes conservative

attitudes within mainstream Welsh culture. Although homophobia is, of course, not a problem unique to Wales, the silence surrounding the subject even in the arts within the country could mean that sexual difference, just like feminism, sometimes seems difficult to accommodate in an oppositional culture under threat. Very few plays have been written in which homosexual characters appear or in which homosexuality is an issue, for example Othniel Smith's *Giant Steps* (1998) and Lewis Davies's *Sex and Power at the Beau Rivage* (2003), which deals with the friendship of the gay Welsh author Rhys Davies and D.H. Lawrence. By contrast, homosexuality has been a topic for English theatre for a long time – covertly before and openly after the abolition of censorship in 1956 (cf. plays of the 1960s, which broached the subject of homosexuality like John Osborne's *A Patriot For Me* [1965] about male homosexuality and the military or Frank Marcus's *The Killing of Sister George* [1965] about lesbians). Thus, Williams's plays (cf. also *Killing Kangaroos* 1999) break new ground for the discussion of sexual difference in Welsh mainstream theatre.

I would like to finish this section with a brief comparison of two recent performances, both text-based to an extent and performed with the help of multi-media installations, in which gender played a major role. The first one, Eddie Ladd's *Scarface* (2001), was a one-woman production in which the performer slipped into the role of the main character in Al Pacino's film *Scarface* while transposing his tale of violence and oppression within the Spanish-American community to West Wales, where she was born and brought up. In a way, this transposition was literal: Eddie Ladd acted out her role in front of a camera projecting her image into a pre-shot film of her parents' house, the house interior and the landscape surrounding the house. While she ducked into and out of the frame, the film placed her character into the West Walian environment in a near-realistic way, thus creating a disconcerting contrast between live performance and film, a simultaneous closeness and distance, which proved to be the main structural element of the performance. The astonishing energy and physicality of the performance, which made the play-text retreat into the background at times, is reminiscent of the experimental performances of *Brith Gof*, of which Eddie Ladd was a long-time member after graduating from the University of Wales Aberystwyth.

The interrogation of gender and race were placed at the heart of the performance through the transposition of an American cultural narrative to Wales and the device of a female actress playing a violent, macho character from a film live on stage. The performance quite consciously created a double-vision: Eddie Ladd imitated Al Pacino's *gestus* (gesture, deportment) perfectly and the suit she

wore and her closely cropped hair gave her character an androgynous look. At the same time, the audience remained conscious of her gender and was not able to lose itself in the creation of a perfect illusion. As discussed above, cross-dressing is, of course, an 'alienation' effect employed consciously to challenge gender assumptions: dressed as and acting out the role of a man, a female actor draws on her observation of characteristic movements, deportment etc., thus making obvious the artificiality of 'gendered behaviour'. Pamela R. Hendrick, a director and actor trainer, has looked at the way in which in day-to-day interaction a person's gender is almost always clearly obvious to another person despite a sometimes great similarity in body shape, dress code, haircuts etc.: "Sociolinguists suggest that a large part of that recognition comes because we emit a multitude of behavioral signals that serve to establish gender almost immediately". She concludes that "we are all actors, performing gender as learned" (115), a conclusion which is deeply disruptive of a patriarchal culture whose power structures are established biologically. In a sense, cross-dressing and the spectres of the 'manly woman' or the 'effeminate man' are so disruptive because gender assumptions which tend to be presented as 'natural' are revealed as 'cultural'. The challenge to patriarchal power structures was clearly intentional in *Scarface*: Eddie Ladd, whose stage-name alone has an androgynous air, experienced the change from female to a male role as liberating, for taking on a man's role meant leaving the trappings of femaleness and female body movements behind (private conversation 12 December 2002). It is a change that goes beyond the kind of cross-dressing in performance whose effect is based on either deception, as in the non-illusory theatre of Shakespeare, or a more or less comic effect as the actor's movements still designate one gender while they are dressed as another (as, for example, in pantomime or music hall).The experience of liberation through this carnivalesque gesture of cross-dressing is, of course, like the carnivalesque moment itself, political (cf. the writings of the Bakhtin circle on carnival, for example in his work on Rabelais) as the interruption of 'normalcy' disrupts the category of the normal, if for a brief moment only.

Connected to the gender politics implied in the cross-cultural, cross-gender performance of *Scarface* are issues of colonialism. The plot of the film *Scarface*, which is about the struggles within a Spanish-American community, is literally transposed to Eddie Ladd's parents' house in West Wales. The performance-text was spoken in both English and Welsh, with a measure of overlap, so that, although bilingual speakers were clearly privileged, monolingual speakers of English were still able to follow. In this way, the struggle between Spanish as a minority language in

America was shifted to the often problematic relationship between Welsh and English in West Wales. Furthermore, the political connotations of Eddie Ladd's impersonation of a male character and the 'liberation' that this entailed, clearly functioned as a commentary on the unequal relationship of Wales and England/America.

The structure of double-vision, of seeing a man and a woman, America and Wales, Spanish/American and Welsh/English, was most effectively developed through the technology used in the performance. Eddie Ladd played skilfully with audience expectations and viewing habits, creating a double 'alienation' effect: firstly, she declined to use the more traditional mode of (almost) direct audience address which is employed in most monodrama or in plays which consist of a series of monologues like Gary Owen's *Crazy Gary's Mobile Disco*. Instead, she acted solely for the camera, which projected her image in close-up into the pre-filmed scenery on screen. Secondly, she subverted the expectation that most audience connect with film, namely that the film will be naturalistic in form, which allows the audience to suspend their disbelief and 'escape' into the world of the film for a few hours. Certain images were used repeatedly, sometimes the background could not clearly be seen and the fact that this 'film' was created 'live', was being performed in real-time, worked against a suspension of disbelief on the part of the audience – especially as the performer was present in a literal double-image in front of the screen all the time. According to Eddie Ladd, this intentional showing of the 'frame', of the mechanics of film-making was also a consciously employed 'alienation' effect underscoring the thematic alienation effects of the performance (private Conversation 12 December 2002).

Rain Dogs, a text- and film-based performance by Mike Brookes, Mike Pearson and Ed Thomas first performed in the Chapter Arts Centre in Cardiff (2002), shares with *Scarface* the concerns of distance and intimacy and the use of film in live performance, but in its interpretation of gender issues it could not be more different. Whereas Eddie Ladd uses her performance to question gender assumptions and, at the same time, draws explicit comparisons between gender and postcolonial issues, *Rain Dogs* is an exploration of male angst in the urban space of Cardiff. The performance space in the Chapter Arts Centre was rectangular, with the audience seated along two walls in an L-shaped auditorium. The stage space itself was largely empty, except for two microphone stands, lecterns and television monitors, which enabled the readers/performers Mike Pearson and Ed Thomas to synchronise text and films. Two screens were fixed to

the wall and on it were projected two different films at the same time: one showed ten short films in which ten male faces (actor and non-actors, and none of them characters in the traditional sense) were filmed in extreme close-up. The men had their eyes closed and the very nearness of the camera view remorselessly caught every muscular tic, every sign of nervousness. This was an image of extreme vulnerability as the gaze of the audience became almost voyeuristic in its freedom to scrutinise these faces without challenge. The texts, which had been carefully scripted onto these faces, seemed to voice the thoughts of the men: they spoke of the lure of her, the city, and of her ultimate rejection of them. The second film showed the men in the city: most of them stood still within the crowds of people in Cardiff's busy city centre, slowly scanning and taking in their environment but not interacting with it.[29] These films were filmed with a CCTV camera, that omnipresent tool of observation in urban environments. The use of the CCTV camera and its jerky movements only enhanced the feeling of alienation experienced by these men and the voyeuristic gaze of the audience – after all, the purpose of CCTV is observation and not identification (as in realistic films) or interaction.[30] The other films were shot usually with the help of a handheld camera which followed the men as they sat in a boat going round Cardiff Bay or in a bus traversing the city centre. Here, too, the men avoided any contact, be it with other people or with the camera and thus with the viewer. The two films screened simultaneously thus very skilfully gave an impression of both intimacy and distance, or observation rather than interaction, that often are characteristic of city spaces.

In the second half of the performance the audience was stunned to see the tenth man suddenly open his eyes and address the audience directly by speaking the lines that had formerly been spoken about him. The direct gaze in which the man held the audience at once connected them to him, where before the audience had only looked at him. After the tenth man, the ninth man opened his eyes, spoke his lines and so the performance gradually 'counted down' to one. The other screen, meanwhile, showed a film shot through either car or bus windows as they traversed

[29] There was one exception to this rule: one man, who sat in a pavement café, did speak to two young people who had sat down at his table. From the film, though, it was unclear whether they had spoken to him first or whether he had started the conversation. From the set-up of all films it seems to be more likely that he was spoken to first and then could not keep up his silence.

[30] A further 'alienation effect' was introduced by the visible distance between performers/readers and films. Mike Pearson and Ed Thomas (and Mike Brookes) appeared in full evening dress, looking and acting more like compères than actors. The fact that the texts were read out and not acted out underscored the impression of distance.

Cardiff at night. Familiar landmarks, such as the upper end of Queen Street with the statue of Aneurin Bevan, the castle, the central bus station, the Millennium Stadium, etc. floated past on this never-ending journey, in which the viewers seemed compelled to 'drive away from' and to return to the city centre at intervals. The performance text indicated a certain kind of closure, ending every man's lines with the words "and they were ten". But the performance certainly did not provide disclosure or a solution to the problems posed.

In a sense, *Rain Dogs* is a rewriting of a familiar theme: angst, loss of connection to place and isolation in a crowded city environment, an environment which is, moreover, clearly gendered. The performance is situated within a long tradition of seeing the city as woman, which is discovered, taken over, 'conquered' by man. The 'Women and Geography Study Group' has described how landscape is often constructed as feminine because of its association with the "natural" as opposed to "cultural" spaces (168-69). Since the cityscape is a built environment, they interpret it as constructing gender through the (often gendered) assumptions made about the different uses to which the city space is put: thus the design of housing estates, for example, disadvantages women because they usually do not support the idea of female employment due to their lack of childcare facilities and comparative distance from the workspace (149). I would argue, however, that the process of feminising and thus objectifying landscape can be transferred to the cityscape. In fact, the city as 'woman' has become a trope in modern literature and drama. In Shakespeare's *King Henry V.*, for example, the siege and the conquest of the city of Harfleur, which occurs in the third act, is explicitly gendered as the city is addressed as female ("I will not leave the half-achieved Harfleur / Till in her ashes she lie burièd" 3.4.9). Furthermore, the conquest of the city is later mirrored by Henry's (sexual) conquest of Katherine.[31] Symbolically, the male agent has thus conquered the essentially passive female space and subject. *Rain Dogs* keeps this image of the city as female and confers it on Cardiff. In one of the texts, for example, the male subject recounts his acquaintance with various 'women': Catherine, the Queen etc. and it is only the person with a knowledge of Cardiff street names who is able to decode this text as referring to the city itself. This very witty text refers only to female street names, although the writers could have mentioned as many male street names. Accordingly, the relationship between male subject and feminised city is sexualised: on the basis of heterosexual love, the male subject walks from female street name to female street name, trying to 'conquer' them all. Interestingly, though,

the city proves to be un-conquerable and the man in the extract mentioned finds himself hugging the unyielding kerb stones of the streets in a gesture that implies the man's need for intimacy and the city's rejection at the same time. Thus, far from challenging traditional gender roles as Eddie Ladd had done, the performance actually reinscribes male agency and female passivity – the city's passivity turns into a passive aggressive rejection, however, which the male agent is not able to overcome.

Throughout the performance, through text and the films, there is a sense of movement. The men are continuously driving towards and then driving away from the heart of the city without ever reaching it. This movement reminded me of Baudelaire's flâneur, the man who traverses the city and who, by traversing it, owns it. The wanderings of the flâneur are also described in Walter Benjamin's work on Baudelaire (see "Der Flaneur") and in Michel de Certeau's work on cityscapes. I find de Certeau's work specially interesting as he not only attempts to read the ability to move in a leisurely fashion and gaze freely in Benjamin's terms, he also tries to decode the movements within the cityspace itself. He writes that from a view above the city, the movements of pedestrians inscribe a kind of text onto the city, a text which they are, however, unable to read themselves:

> The ordinary practitioners of the city live "down below," below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk – an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban "text" they write without being able to read it. (93)

This paragraph implies a detachment of the pedestrians from the city itself – they seem to meander through the streets in a random way without being able to ascribe meaning to what they do within the context of the cityspace. This is, indeed, the image of the male agent in *Rain Dogs*: contrary to the city space, he is not passive (and there are no female 'characters' in this performance except the city itself) but he cannot 'read' his journey through the city and make his 'relationship' with the unresponsive city meaningful. De Certeau, however, continues:

> Their story begins on ground level, with footsteps. They are myriad, but do not compose a series. They cannot be counted because each unit has a qualitative character: a style of tactile apprehension and kinesthetic appropriation. Their swarming mass is an innumerable collection of singularities. Their intertwined paths give shape to spaces. They weave places together. In that respect, pedestrian movements form one of these 'real systems whose existence in fact makes up the city'. (97)

De Certeau thus affirms that the movement through the cityspace itself, the appropriation of space, is what makes the movement of the pedestrians meaningful.

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[31] In 5.2.291-3, Katherine is likened to a besieged 'maiden city'. Cf. Gurr 15.

Just like Baudelaire's original flâneur, de Certeau's pedestrian owns the city. The crucial difference is that Baudelaire's flâneur establishes ownership through his gaze, while de Certeau's pedestrian owns the city by walking through it. Thus, the sense of ownership has shifted somewhat: de Certeau's pedestrians have lost some of the original flâneur's security of purpose and self-confidence. *Rain Dogs* goes a step further. In contrast to the modernist flâneur, the men in the films are no longer the self-assured individuals who can take possession of the (female) city simply by virtue of being male: the postmodern male is portrayed as being alone, alienated and roundly rejected by the city. He may circle the city in daytime or night-time, but he can never get back to the heart of the city. The men in the films traverse the city on foot and in various modes of transport but there is no sense of meaning in their wanderings, nor is there a sense of belonging which ties them to the city. I would argue that the theme of angst and rejection is perfectly captured by the use of technology and by the short films shown during the performance. Furthermore, in their very isolation the men, who are the subjects of the performance, experience a lack of belonging which aligns them with other city dwellers and which is interesting when compared to the more usually close relationship of place and community expressed in Welsh discourses of place. It is interesting to encounter a Welsh performance in which place does not automatically confer a sense of place and belonging. The interrogation of gender roles strikes me as somewhat self-indulgent rather than challenging, however.

To conclude this section I would like again to draw attention to the scarcity of plays about gender. As the example of mainstream English theatre shows, plays about gender rather than women's issues tend to be written after a considerable canon of feminist plays, whose main function is consciousness-raising, have been written and performed. And as women playwrights (let alone feminist playwrights) are scarce in Wales, as there are few plays with major roles for women and fewer plays without a central (male) character, it seems that Wales has a lot of catching up to do as far as feminist theatre is concerned. On the other hand, this fact enables Welsh feminist theatre to employ different and maybe more theatrical methods to further their ends than English feminist theatre had tended to do (cf. Sharon Morgan's plays). Looking at the current funding situation, however, it is doubtful if Welsh theatre can establish such a rich canon of feminist theatre and theatre about gender as the one established in England in the (comparatively) richer 1960s and 1970s.

The selection of plays/performances discussed in this chapter do not, therefore, mirror a wider trend in mainstream Welsh theatre. Indeed, only Sharon Morgan and Eddie Ladd consistently write/perform plays about gender. Feminist issues and gender issues are generally seen in conjunction with other social issues like nationalism and postcolonialism. It would perhaps be strange if gender were discussed in isolation, as it is so obviously a socio-cultural phenomenon itself. Yet, again only a minority of writers, namely the writers/performers discussed in this chapter, do foreground questions of gender and place them on a par with other social questions, instead of using them purely as metaphors for other issues. It turns out that gender is a particularly useful tool for looking at the power imbalances of postcolonial relations as the basic questions underlying both gender theory and postcolonial theory are similar: 'who has power?', 'what is that power based on?' and 'how can the system be challenged to establish an "ethics of difference"?' The establishment of a system based on 'difference' is especially interesting within the context of Welsh culture, of course, as the very survival of the Welsh nation depends on the acceptance of difference both internally and externally (within the UK).

That some drama/performance prefers to re-inscribe a traditional gender dichotomy as *Rain Dogs* does, for example, is not surprising, nor is it particularly reactionary. *Rain Dogs* is simply a sign of new insecurities in times of change, which this particular performance connects to feelings of isolation, rejection and angst within the millennial urban environment. What is more insidious is the continued silence surrounding not only feminist issues but gender more generally – the youngest generation of Welsh playwrights (for example Gary Owen or Tracy Harris) do not seem to be interested in questions of gender at all. It seems that feminist drama and drama about gender has still to escape its own ghetto.

Chapter 5

A New Mythology for Wales?

"son, this ain't no western movie matinee
and you're a long way off from yipee yi yay"
Wall of Voodoo, "Call of the West"

"Shrug off the complex"
Tystion

The use of the term postcolonial with reference to Wales has been and remains controversial. Most studies on postcolonial theory and literature do not consider Wales or Welsh literature (in either language) as subjects for inquiry. In my view, the controversy is connected to a certain inflexibility of the postcolonial paradigm itself, whose increasing use in mainstream theoretical discourse has led to the creation of new orthodoxies as to what postcoloniality does and does not refer to despite an increasing fuzziness of the term itself. On the other hand, the term's relative popularity in critical discourse has meant that it has been somewhat uncritically appropriated for Wales, for example in Michael Hechter's concept of "internal colonialism". This chapter argues for a critical evaluation of the usefulness of postcolonial methodologies for the drama of Ed Thomas and Ian Rowlands, especially if these methodologies are underpinned by a theory which attempts to come to terms with the complexity of the Welsh situation and aims to reposition Wales at the centre of its own discourse.

That Wales and Welsh literature are generally omitted in critical writing about postcolonialism is in part due to a certain epistemological blindness of postcolonial studies itself, which may be the result of its history but which, nonetheless, needs revising. It has been usual in postcolonial studies to regard 'Britain' as a homogeneous entity, thus ignoring the existence of Wales as a 'nation without state'.[1] Furthermore, 'Britain' is seen purely in terms of being the colonial 'centre' to which the postcolonial nations that have emerged from the colonised peoples of the Empire are contrasted. Although much of the political impetus behind postcolonial activism, writing and theory is concerned with 'centring' the postcolonial experience,

[1] According to Guibernau nations without states are defined in the following terms: they are "cultural communities sharing a common past, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, and wishing to decide upon their political future which lack a state of their own. These communities are included within one or more states which they tend to regard as alien, and assert the right to self-determination, sometimes understood as further autonomy within the state, though, in other cases it involves the right to secession" (1-2). Guibernau includes Wales in her case studies of nations without states (9, 119-123). See also McAllister.

the dichotomy itself remains largely in place and the emerging postcolonial identities are to a large extent based on creating a discourse of difference from the former colonial centre. The problematic category of difference as a signifier of identity also often implies a great geographical distance between former coloniser and colonised. I am aware that postcolonial critics have begun to tackle the simplification that this theoretisation of postcolonialism entails (cf. Ania Loomba xi-xviii, 7-19), but it does underpin even fairly recent studies. For instance, Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins feel it necessary to justify their inclusion of Irish theatre (in English) in their *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* in the following terms:

> Ireland, Britain's oldest colony, is often considered inappropriate to the post-colonial grouping, partly because it lies just off Europe. Yet Ireland's centuries-old political and economic oppression at the hands of the British – and its resistance to such control – fits well within the post-colonial paradigm. (7)

I find both the reasons for Ireland's exclusion and Gilbert and Tompkins's argument for its inclusion problematic: firstly, one can take issue with the categorisation of Ireland as "Britain's oldest colony", as 'Great Britain' itself did not actually exist as a meaningful political unit before the 18th century, while the systematic colonisation of Ireland began in the mid-16th century (cf. Porter 34ff, Youings 246ff). Moreover, the authors refer to a curious argument by which Ireland's 'inappropriateness' for a postcolonial status is indicated by the fact that "it lies just off Europe." This argument homogenises the ethnic and cultural mix not only in the British Isles and Ireland but also of Europe as a whole, casting 'Europe' in the role of 'centre' and, thus, ignoring colonial relationships within Europe itself.[2] The argument becomes stranger when one remembers that Ireland is very definitely located within Europe and not "just off Europe," a fact underscored by Eire's endorsement of the European Single Currency. Thus, despite the authors' argument for an inclusion of Ireland within the postcolonial paradigm, it seems to me that the postcolonial paradigm referred to by the authors needs to be revised. Part of the problem is that the paradigm chosen by the authors only differentiates between 'settler colonies' like Australia, Canada and the USA, and colonised peoples in, for example, the Indian subcontinent or Africa. This definition of 'colony' locates the colonial relationship between white vs. non-

[2] Postcolonial experiences within Europe include the colonisation of Finland by Russia and Sweden, the colonisation of Norway by Sweden and the colonial relationship between Denmark and Greenland among others. An inclusion of these Scandinavian countries within the postcolonial paradigm would cast Ibsen's plays and novels like Peter Hoeg's *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow* , which deals with the Danish colonisation of Greenland, as postcolonial literature and drama. It remains an interesting question why these texts tend not to be interrogated by postcolonial critics, who seem to be overwhelmingly associated with English Departments within universities.

white peoples and the imperial aggression solely as emanating from the European centre and directed at non-white peoples that are usually situated at a great geographical distance from Europe. Thus, Ireland presents a problem because it is a colony situated at the heart of the European centre and both coloniser and colonised are white.[3] In the case of Wales, the relative geographic nearness and racial similarity to the 'centre' – despite its cultural distinctiveness – is complemented by the problematic of time: Welsh colonisation occurred at a time when the English nation-state was only just consolidating itself. Through the "Act of Union" (1536/1543) of England and Wales, Welsh local political institutions and administration were effectively taken over by their English counterparts, making a postcolonial case based on difference and the now traditional 'centre-margin' dichotomy hard to uphold.

Indeed, the continued importance of the 'centre-margin' dichotomy and over-valuation of difference present the most challenging problems to a useful engagement with postcolonial theory and practice in Wales. What I refer to as the 'centre-margin' dichotomy is the originally orientalist view that placed the coloniser's home nation in the centre of perception and the colonies on the margins, a move that automatically classed the colonised as worth less than the coloniser, needful of 'education', 'help' and 'control'.[4] Postcolonialism turned this view on its head, as exemplified in Salman Rushdie's original phrase 'the Empire writes back to the Centre' (quoted in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin) – in other words, the erstwhile margins would become the new centres by resisting the pull of the colonial 'centre' induced by a sometimes centuries-long cultural inferiority complex on the side of the postcolonial state. In a sense, the postcolonial work is done when the link between former colonies and the coloniser is severed to an extent that the former coloniser stops being the first point of reference for the ex-colony – when the 'centre-margin' dichotomy is dismantled. Hitherto, postcolonial studies has, to my knowledge, failed to do that, however. By virtue of its very existence, postcolonial theory upholds the 'centre-margin' dichotomy because its dismantling might change the discipline forever, if it does not make it obsolete.[5] The 'centre-margin' dichotomy is debilitating

[3] A further problem is that a section of the Irish population (like the Welsh) were themselves colonisers and thus actors in the great imperial adventure.

[4] A case in point is the Education Report of 1847, more commonly known as the 'Blue Books'. Cf. footnote 13 in chapter 4.

[5] This quite possibly contentious view might be underpinned, however, by the continued comparison of the literature of the coloniser vs. the literature of post/colonial authors in postcolonial studies courses. If the 'centre-margin' dichotomy were truly deconstructed, Indian literature in English would be compared to other Indian literatures, Pakistani

in the Welsh context because the constant reference to the English (metropolitan) centre makes a true definition of a Welsh identity more difficult. The issue of the over-valuation of difference in postcolonial studies is tightly connected to this. Naturally, post-colonial nations and their cultural output tend to be informed by an awareness of difference from the former coloniser. Several literary and dramatic strategies identified by Gilbert and Tompkins are specifically designed to show up the difference of postcolonial theatre to that of the British centre (i.e. mainly English stage realism), among which recourse to traditional elements like ritual or story-telling, the use of indigenous languages, the use of performance space outside theatres and rewriting English canonical plays have been the most common strategies (Gilbert and Tompkins *passim*). The expression of difference and especially the connection to pre-colonial times are rightly called important facets of the creation of a postcolonial theatre. Welsh drama in English is, however, tightly connected to English theatre and its methods, and it uses English as its medium of expression. Sometimes a superficial reading is not able to identify Welsh drama in English as such if a reading based on an exaggerated notion of 'difference' is applied. An example would be Catherine Tregenna's play *Art and Guff* (2001), which, according to Jeni Williams's review, was misunderstood in London, where reviewers did not detect the symbolic value of the nationalities of the characters ("two innocent Welshmen, a predatory Englishman and a sycophantic Scot"). The play was, in her view, a "study of cultural displacement and shock of two rural boys in the big city" and, thus, gave a specifically Welsh view of the metropolis (Jeni Williams, "Art and Stuff" 58). It seems that Tregenna's view was not 'different' enough to be picked up as postcolonial – but does that invalidate a postcolonial approach when discussing her play? I believe that an exaggerated reliance on 'difference' can mean that difference is flagged up at the cost of a concrete substance of identity. A Welsh identity based on difference from the English

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literature, Bangladeshi literature, Tibetan literature etc. rather than with British literature. Undoubtedly, this approach is chosen in India itself, but not by postcolonial studies in the West. Cf. a comment by Peter Hulme, in which he objects that non-European literature is very often not read within its own context, but read in juxtaposition with European literature (quoted in Loomba xv). Cf. also E. San Juan's (largely polemic) criticism of postcolonialism: he argues that the fact that "[p]ostcolonial discourse generated in 'First World' academies turns out to be one more product of flexible, post-Fordist capitalism, not its antithesis" (8). In other words, he argues that postcolonial theory's closeness to poststructuralist and postmodernist theory, which are clearly located in the academies of the west, have undermined postcolonialism's efficacy as a political tool – an efficacy it still had when it was situated at the heart of the postcolonial struggle itself. Frantz Fanon's work and his concept of *négritude*, for instance, remains firmly located within the Algerian postcolonial struggle.

(metropolitan) centre can lead to a more or less desperate search for difference (beyond the Welsh language and cultural practices connected to the language) which then, flippantly put, may find expression in a certain 'leek and rugby'-version of identity, especially in the popular media. The problem of difference within a postcolonial context was recognised by Raymond Williams as early as 1975, when he wrote:

> To the extent that we are a people, we have been defeated, colonized, penetrated, incorporated. Never finally of course. . . . There is a very skilful kind of accommodation, finding a few ways to be recognized as different, which we then actively cultivate, while not noticing, beyond them, the profound resignation. These are some of the signs of a post-colonial culture, conscious all the time of its own real strengths and potentials, longing only to be itself, to become its own world but with so much, too much, on its back to be able, consistently, to face its real future. (103)

Williams very eloquently articulates the sense of resignation in a postcolonial culture, in which a sense of self is always coupled with a feeling of inferiority towards the colonial 'centre'. What interests me in this short extract is the way Williams highlights the "few ways to be recognized as different", which are 'actively cultivated' because 'difference' seems to constitute the only legitimate way of constructing a separate identity. Moreover, Williams astutely observes that creating a Welsh identity based on a more or less stereotypical difference from the English metropolitan centre is actually an act of collusion: it is a "very skilful kind of accommodation", as such difference can be safely classified as 'folkloristic' by the 'centre' and ignored. Thus an over-valuation of difference can lead to a silencing of real complexity of identity. That such accommodation – playing on the English metropolitan centre's expectations of Welshness like Rhys Ifans's character in the film *Notting Hill* – cannot constitute a viable basis for an identity is clear. For Wales to "become its own world" means to, finally, sever the 'centre-margin' link to the English metropolitan centre, a step that might be more difficult to take than even Williams implies. Entrenched as the over-valuation of difference is, it remains questionable whether the majority of Welsh people are, indeed, "conscious of [their] own strengths and potentials", which are by nature not easily identifiable. For generations, thus, the argument of Wales's "lack of national self-confidence" has been reiterated – a fact which, according to the journalist Owain Wilkins, results in the all too understandable situation that "[the Welsh] are more than ready to deflect accusations against Welshness yet [they] are loathe [*sic*] to explore [their] own ideas regarding what Welshness actually is" (8). In other words: difference does not make

for substance and this is an issue which is explored again and again in the work of Ed Thomas and Ian Rowlands.

However, even before postcolonialism became an accepted and even mainstream discipline in western academies, the postcolonial paradigm had attracted some attention in Wales. Interest dates back to the 1970s, a development which, as noted earlier, can be traced back to the American Michael Hechter's influential work *Internal Colonialism* (1975). Earlier works like Ned Thomas's *The Welsh Extremist* (1973) had employed what might be called postcolonial terms in phrases like: "Our acquaintance with power, with advancement, has been usually through England and always through English. Our Welsh life has been an inward one" (125). The inward life of especially the Welsh-speaking Welsh has in another cultural context been captured in Frantz Fanon's phrase 'black skin, white masks': in order to succeed, a Welsh person would have had to play by 'English' rules in an unequal power relationship which is suggestive of colonialism. Ned Thomas based his conclusions mainly on Welsh language culture and it is noteworthy that writers working from within that culture had employed a cultural reading, which might now be described as postcolonial, much earlier. Thus, activists like Michael D. Jones and polemicists like Emrys ap Iwan conceived of the Welsh situation in these terms. In the anglophone context, the writers R.S. Thomas and Emyr Humphreys – both of whom have a strong interest in the Welsh language – and then the poets of the 1960s showed a great interest in widening and 'popularising' such a reading. Thus, Hechter's work was received with much interest in Wales.

Hechter's "internal colony" approach attributes the persistent underperformance of a particular region to the relationship it has with an external, dominant, partner" (Day 59). The theory of 'internal colonialism' seemed particularly interesting to Welsh scholars because the undeniable forces of cultural homogenisation within the UK coupled with economic structures which made Wales dependent on England suggested a colonial relationship. Furthermore, examples of English dependence on Wales, especially on Welsh natural resources, even more clearly highlighted English dominance, as the now iconical,[6] often-quoted and well-documented case of the flooding of the rural village of Capel Celyn in the Tryweryn valley shows (cf. Bohata 37 *et passim*, Gwyn A. Williams 291, Morgan 335 *et passim*). Capel Celyn was evacuated, its population relocated and the valley

[6] The fact that 'Tryweryn' has become an icon denoting 'colonialism' and has crossed over into popular usage may be documented by the song entitled "Tryweryn", which can be found on the Welsh rap band Tystion's album *Shrug Off Ya Complex.*

subsequently flooded in order to create a reservoir, which was to provide water for Liverpool. The way people were forced to relocate despite strong local opposition is reminiscent of the manner in which some Native American tribes were resettled in reservations against their will, for example in the infamous "Trail of Tears" in 1838/9 (cf. "The Cherokee "Trail of Tears").[7] In both cases, local sentiment, attachment to place and the right of the local population to political decision-making were ignored in favour of the needs of the English/American population. Indeed, the appropriation of natural resources and of landscape by the English 'colonisers' for their own use suggests a colonial relationship between England and Wales, and the subsequent politicisation of landscape and place in the imagination of the Welsh clearly suggests such an interpretation (cf. Day who quotes the example of the writings of Alexander Cordell (62), Bohata 36-81). Furthermore, the concentration of economic and political power in the south-east of England is sometimes felt to disadvantage Wales disproportionately and the history of economic deprivation in the former industrial centres shows how the concentration of primary industries in Wales did not benefit Wales in the long term, as it was too obviously dependent on export and more generally on British secondary industries. Although Wales probably cannot be compared directly to British third world colonies, Wales's dependency on the export of primary goods (much like cotton, sugar etc. in the former British colonies) does suggest a similarly 'colonial' relationship with the economically powerful centre, as no provisions were made to secure against the collapse of those primary industries. Therefore, a theory of Wales as "forming a part of the Third World situated within the First World" (Day 65) gained currency and fed into the theory of 'internal colonialism'. Thus

> [c]laims about the internal colonial status of regions . . . aroused interest not just within Wales but in other places similarly gripped by the prolonged and intractable nature of relative deprivation. It was one of the strengths of the model that it highlighted the extent to which people in many regions had been experiencing a sense of loss of control over their own lives and economic and social fortunes in the face of contemporary economic developments. (Day 61)

Yet, attractive as it had been as a political rallying call, the concept of 'internal colonialism' has been dismissed at least in the social sciences because of its many factual and theoretical errors (Day 62). According to Day, the model fails to account for Wales's real economic situation today (other parts of Britain subsidise Wales, and not the other way around, there is no cash outflow out of Wales into England

[7] Cf. also M. Wynn Thomas's work on Welsh identification with Native Americans, who are obviously colonised peoples within the USA (Thomas, "Wales's American Dreams" 235-240).

etc., 62-63), and it fails to account for economic differences within Wales. The fear of cultural homogenisation and Wales's economic weakness seem to me to be linked to a whole complex of reasons, chief among them the economic and cultural forces of globalisation, which cannot be reduced to the rather simplistic model of 'internal colonialism'.

The question whether Wales is in a relationship of 'internal colonialism' with England or whether it is to be considered postcolonial remains a difficult one to answer. Matters are not helped by the global nature of postcolonial theory which, in the definition of Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin in their seminal *The Empire Writes Back*, "cover[s] all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (2).[8] Postcolonial criticism thus attempts to theorise global forms of colonialism in a definition which generally covers both a political struggle and a critical discourse (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 1-2). The area Gilbert and Tompkins look at is even broader: they include non-European neo-colonialism by discussing, among others, Filipino theatre which 'acts back' to US American domination. In their definition, postcolonialism is

> an engagement with and contestation of colonialism's discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies. Colonialism is insidious: it invades far more than political chambers and extends well beyond independence celebrations. Its effects shape language, education, religion, artistic sensibilities, and, increasingly, popular culture. A theory of post-colonialism must, then, respond to more than the merely chronological construction of post-independence, and to more than just the discursive experience of imperialism. (2)

While illustrating the multifarious effects of the colonial discourse well, Gilbert and Tompkins's book suffers from the two central weaknesses which tend to creep into postcolonial criticism: firstly, in an effort to embrace all manner of different colonialisms, their definition of post/colonialism is not specific as to location and time and the time-specific meaning of 'post' ('after' independence), which Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin have been at pains to eliminate from their definition, has come back through the back door. While thus apparently all-embracing, nations without state like Wales are excluded from this definition.

A definition which focuses on postcolonialism as a strategy, as an activity of anti-colonialist resistance, might be more helpful in the Welsh context and a definition like Loomba's could open up the field of postcolonial inquiry for Wales. She writes: "[i]t has been suggested that it is more helpful to think of postcolonialism

[8] Despite their broad temporal framework, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin situate the sphere of postcolonial cultural activity in nations that have been subject to "European imperial domination" (2). Their definition does, thus, exclude Wales and Ireland.

not just as coming literally after colonialism and signifying its demise, but more flexibly as the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism" (Loomba 12). This "contestation of colonial domination" might take several forms, among them, and most interestingly in the context of Welsh drama in English, an effort to create an indigenous theatre, which, by virtue of being an expression of Welsh identity, resists the forces of a global homogenisation of cultures. Postcolonial theory can, thus, never be separated from political practice and special care must be taken to apply a rigorous theoretical practice and to localise the theory in specific contexts and localities to prevent it from becoming a 'pick-and-mix' collection of more or less vague theories (cf. Bohata 13 *et passim*).

Seen as a postcolonial political practice of resistance of colonial and neo-colonial forms of domination, postcolonial methodologies can be usefully applied to reading Welsh drama and performance in English.[9] Moreover, recent global developments seem to indicate, as Joseph Kruth puts it, a shift from "the old paradigm of Newtonian reductionism" to an "emerging paradigm of interconnectedness based on the science of complexity". Kruth is an economist who identifies closely with the theory of sustainable communities. I believe that the understanding of the world as interrelated complex systems could provide a much-needed re-evaluation of the political practice of postcolonialism. Theories of complexity have emerged with quantum mechanics (Kruth).[10] It is interesting to note that dramatic structures increasingly reflect theories of complexity by subverting traditional linear forms.[11] An example would be Michael Frayn's play *Copenhagen* (1998), which not only stages the (fictional) last meeting of the physicists Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg, whose work on quantum mechanics and the uncertainty principle revolutionised modern physics, but incorporates chaos and complexity theory in its structure by creating a circular narrative which endlessly curves in on

[9] Unfortunately, my focus on text-based theatre means that I am not able to look at largely non-text-based theatre and physical theatre, although an art form which quite deliberately subverts the dominance of language and develops a language based on gesture, voice and movement could be very fruitfully examined in the context of postcolonial practice. The very success of *Brith Gof*, *Moving Being*, Eddie Ladd or Welsh dance companies like *Diversions* attest to the power of physical theatre.

[10] Kruth limits the paradigm shift he describes to western societies and its applicability globally needs to be examined further. As Wales is located within the western hemisphere, his caveat does not present a problem, however.

[11] It is also interesting to note that writers of prose fiction seem to be much more inclined to experiment with non-linear structures. Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* is one of the earliest novels and a very early example of a non-linear narrative. It must be borne in mind that the importance of linearity in realist plot structures is a result of a specifically Western way of thinking which became dominant in the 19th century and is, as such, not applicable to non-Western theatre.

itself without ever reaching closure. Ed Thomas, too, consciously refers to chaos as a (dis?)organising principle for his work ("Wanted" 60).

The theory of complexity is, in Kruth's definition, connected to that of sustainable communities, which I would, in turn, link with postcolonial theory. Read primarily as a politics of resistance against co-option by the more powerful forces of colonialism and neo-colonialism, postcolonial theory aspires to 'centre' a nation within its own discourse and to allow it, in Raymond Williams's words quoted above, "to become its own world". The theory of complex systems and that of sustainable communities does nothing less than re-imagine the world in terms of interconnected networks of regions and small-scale localities, situating political decision-making at the level of the local rather than the nation-state.[12] In the case of Wales, this concept means a strong case for complete devolution, but also a radical rethinking of the concept of the Welsh nation itself and an acceptance of the rich complexity of the various localities within Wales as opposed to a more or less rigid idea of what a 'national identity' should consist of. Like George Eliot's image of society as a web of interconnected relationships, the globe is imagined as a such a complicated network. That does not necessarily mean that these relationships are without tensions, however: "[t]his web of relationships replaces linear hierarchies in many but not all ways. It does not mean that all events or locations on the web are of equal importance any more than all sites on the World Wide Web are of equal interest or quality" (Kruth). Thus localities can still be in an oppressive relationship with other localities, but the theorisation of the web of localities effectively dismantles the 'centre-margin' dichotomy by (at least theoretically) removing, in the case of Wales, England/America as the first point of reference. Wales is as connected to England as it is to many other countries of Europe or the world.[13] Furthermore, as political decision-making should be local, the theories of complex systems and sustainable communities become an interesting model for Guibernau's 'nation without state'. Guibernau argues that, as the nation-state loses more and more influence (both economically and in terms of providing a viable identity) through the increasing power of supra-national organisations and corporations, the regions and nations without states could bypass the nation-state and become "new

[12] My aim in stressing the political impact of the theory of sustainable communities is not to divorce it from its original ecological and economic context. The politics of sustainability informs much of the National Assembly of Wales's actual work, be it in the implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21 and Local Agenda 21 or in the administration of Communities First-initiatives. All these include policies stressing the importance of sustainability within an ecological and economic context.

[13] Cf. my discussion of Raymond Williams's concept of 'Welsh European' discussed below.

global political actors" (149-174). Wales's role in the new Europe of the Regions might be a case in point. While I do regard Guibernau's conclusions as a trifle optimistic since, as Kruth pointed out, the relationships of the global network are by no means equal, I believe that a focus on the nation without state as having the possibility for political agency is to be welcomed because it entails a shift of viewpoint. To look at Wales as an independent political actor within a network of (however unequal) relationships is different from seeing Wales on one end of the centre-margin relationship with the erstwhile coloniser. This model embraces the full complexity of Wales's relationship with other nations and, by implication, takes into account the multiplicity of influences on Welshness: it locates Wales at the true centre of its self-definition. Wales would thus achieve another step in the postcolonial "*process* of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome" (Peter Hulme quoted in Loomba 19).

I believe that Welsh dramatists like Ed Thomas and Ian Rowlands create a version of Wales in their plays, which can be described in the terms outlined above. Their theatre is an example of a resistance to the stifling convention of English stage-realism, which is an expression of a postcolonial politics of resistance.[14] Furthermore, both playwrights go beyond resistance by imagining Wales as the centre in a time when the former colonial power England and even the neo-colonial power of America have ceased to be a first point of reference in the nation's self-definition. No longer content to celebrate difference over substance, these writers/directors create versions of what a substance of a Welsh identity (among other Welsh identities) could be like, while accepting the possible multitudes of complex Welsh identities – identities which are based on their reception (and criticism) of existing blueprints for Welsh identities. This new drama, written (and quite often directed) by writers like Ed Thomas, Ian Rowlands and Simon Harris, creates a theatre that looks to the future and to the possibilities of an expression of Welsh identity based on 'internal difference', i.e. the possibility of making 'Welshness' meaningful for all Welsh people, in order to avoid meaningless stereotypes. Because these plays tend to be focused on the future, on 'possibilities' and fluidity of form and expression, they tend to include utopian elements.

[14] In that their theatre differs from, for instance, the theatre of Dic Edwards. While Edward's theatre comes out of a reaction against stage realism, his non-realist theatre is born out of an engagement with postmodernism and with the political opportunities that a non-realist approach to creating stage realities open up – a politics which is non-nationalist

Ian Rowlands, a Welsh-speaker born and educated in south Wales, is an actor, a director (*Theatr y Byd*), artistic co-ordinator (*Bara Caws*, a Welsh-language company based in north Wales) and has written for the theatre since the early 1990s. He describes himself as being very influenced by the *Commedia dell' Arte*, which he describes as a "theatre of ideas" ("Theatre as Exorcism" 70). Consequently, he writes "plays that [are] concerned with discussing issues rather with presenting characters" (70). Because Rowlands is essentially uninterested in characters and their motivation and prefers to leave his audiences "with a set of impressions, not literalism", his plays have been consistently anti-realist (71). I would argue that a postcolonial reading of his plays is worthwhile because his consciously anti-realist work can be described in terms of a search for a truly Welsh theatre which centres the Welsh experience and situates it within its own discourse. He is emphatic about the importance of language to create a nation and in his own plays tries to conjure up a landscape through language that transcends the everyday while expressing the everyday: "Through my own use of language I try to create an 'epic' Welsh voice with which I can discuss the common experience" (73). The endeavour to create such an 'epic' voice can be read as postcolonial practice: in a similar way the dramatists of the Irish Renaissance like Yeats and Synge created an authentically Irish voice through the medium of English to describe their postcolonial experience. Robert F. Garratt describes Yeats's process of finding an 'Irish' voice thus:

> To be non-English was to avoid the dominant literary tradition, the first step towards originality for Irish writers. But since the Irish tradition lacked a definitive shape and an established continuity, where could these writers look to give their art a framework, a sense of reference, and a connection with the past? Yeats solved this dilemma by emphasizing the evolving nature of the tradition and its open-endedness. Irish writers could not only turn to a native tradition for sources and inspiration but in their use of Irish materials, *they could also create the tradition*. (23, italics added)

Thus, Rowlands's idiosyncratic voice can be said to take part in the creation of a tradition ("Theatre as Exorcism" 75), which is part of a postcolonial political practice of 'writing back to the centre'. Connected to the creation of a Welsh theatrical tradition is an unselfconscious centring of Welsh experience as a natural thing to do, as something which is not necessarily expressive of an angst borne out of a colonial inferiority complex. Rowlands notes:

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and socialist. Thomas and Rowlands, by contrast, are very much interested in the question of the nation.

> If Welshness on the international stage is not a problem then we don't need to make an issue of it. In my work I don't deal with Welshness in crude terms. I don't deal with 'Welsh identity' and I don't use the jargonistic terms that some people use. My work is inherently Welsh. I come to my work from a Welsh perspective, but I don't make Welshness an issue. As a nation we should stop bemoaning the fact that Welshness is our greatest problem and concentrate, as Welsh people on becoming citizens of the world. I am looking forward to an unselfconscious cultural future. ("Theatre as Exorcism" 74)

A Welsh perspective which does not necessarily make Welshness an issue but is,as it were, a 'given', is the outcome of a postcolonial politics that has deconstructed the 'centre-margin' dichotomy, the invisible colonial umbilical cord to the English metropolitan centre. It also implies a sense of cultural independence that has nothing to do with political separatism: what it refers to is a strengthened sense of self, an identity filled with substance, a sense that Welsh people can identify who they are, even if that includes a variety of possible definitions, without feeling the need to construct a, more or less, fictional difference from metropolitan Englishness. Rowlands goes on to stay that it is the Arts that can provide a vision for "a group of disparate people [to] become a nation" (74), thus defining his art as a political tool and, I would argue, as postcolonial political practice, which must be read within a tradition of Welsh cultural nationalism that has been a feature of especially Welsh-language cultural politics since the 19th century.

I now want to look at *Marriage of Convenience*, a monodrama chosen mainly because it reflects Rowland's political concerns, namely the centring of Welsh experience in a 'natural' way and the creation of a vision for the nation, most clearly. *Marriage of Convenience* originally opened at Coleg Meirion Dwyfor in Dolgellau in 1996 and was booked to tour ten community venues throughout Wales. In the year 2000, when the collection *One Man, One Voice* was being compiled, the play was still touring and approaching its hundredth performance. It also won several awards, among others the Herald Angel Award at the Edinburgh Festival in 1997. Interestingly, the play has also attracted widespread media attention and has been the subject of TV documentaries (cf. the introduction to the play in *One Man, One Voice* 83). The reasons for its popularity can be explained in a variety of ways: firstly, the play is a monodrama which is relatively easy to stage as it features only one actor and does not require an elaborate stage set. It is thus easily transferable to community venues and to spaces not originally designed for plays.[15] Secondly,

[15] Ian Rowlands frequently makes use of non-theatrical spaces to stage his plays. Like Ed Thomas and Firenza Guidi, he is interested in exploring the synergetic effects that come out of a 'marriage' of different art forms. Thus, he staged *Love in Plastic* at the Glynn

the largely autobiographical play situates Alex, the character, very specifically in a south Walian valleys community, thus achieving a sense of recognition by the audience of the experiences of his character. Describing the bilingual, bi-cultural Welsh experience through the metaphor of a journey from the valley up the mountain and down to the valley again, Rowlands describes the peculiar complexity and inner tensions of that experience without diminishing its complexity by trying to find a 'solution'. Instead, he describes the process of coming to accept complexity as the defining principle of his experience as a necessary part of growing up.

Critics have commented on the importance of an interpretation of the interesting family constellation of the play: Alex's dead father, who bequeathed Welsh-language culture to his son, the aggressive anglicised stepfather, who, in beating his stepson, reacts with violence against that Welsh-language inheritance, and the essentially passive mother, who comes to be the focus for her son's oedipal desires (cf. Adams "Stories 197-8). However, I would like to focus on the spatial metaphors of the play more closely – on the way the traditional images of valley and mountain and the journey between them come to express a new Welsh identity.

The stage space is empty save for what I take to be a projection of an image of a valley and a mountain: "*Night. Dawn reveals a rock which hangs above the valley as if suspended from the clouds*" (85). The precarious balance suggested by this image is replicated in Alex's own precarious position between cultures – the position he finds himself in at the beginning of the play. The first journey described takes Alex and his father up mount Snowdon. Wales's highest mountain becomes a symbol for possibility:

> When we reached the peak, we headed straight down for the cairn. And as my father lifted me onto the crown of Snowdon, there was a window in the cloud and the whole of Gwynedd appeared beneath me like a split Tesco bag spewing its contents around my feet. In my father's arms, I stood on top of the world. (99)

Jeremy Hooker has written perceptively about the position of the poet on the mountain in Welsh literature in English:

> Mountains are holy. They are also places of temptation. A poet may look down from on high on the people in the valley, alienated, or knowing himself part of thcoem [sic]. He may feel tension between the pull of the community below, and freedom to dream on the heights. The view from the mountain may present a choice between solitude and society. (32, cf. also Rees19-20)

Vivian Art Gallery in Swansea within an installation created specially for the play by Tim Davies. *Marriage of Convenience* does not include other art forms, however.

Although Alex is no poet, he experiences the trips to the mountain as a journey "out of the dark and into the light" (85). Even as a boy, Alex experiences the "freedom to dream" Hooker mentions, but also the sense of distance from the community below. Safe in his Welsh-speaking father's arms and thus grounded in a particular culture, he has the world lying at his feet. Later journeys show him that both the journey up the mountain and the journey down the valley require difficult decisions.

The second journey takes place on the day of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer's wedding. Alex has since grown up to be a young man and has become a wanderer between worlds. From a view of 'the world', he has come to understand the complexity of valleys life in close-up:

> The valleys are tribal; streets are countries; districts, Empires. You're not a Rhondda lad, a Porth boy or a Glynfach kid, you're from Kimberly Way or Cymmer Road. Identity changes from street to street, like species in a rain forest. You live in a world as small as a Goldcrest's egg, and you protect your own whatever the price, and the price is always violent. Violence is the valley's lingua franca; the dialogue of the afraid wanting to instil fear. (97)

The inhabitants of the valley villages try to rescue an element of control over their lives by dividing their place into smaller and smaller segments over which they have management. Politically and economically powerless, the valley community of the 1970s in which Alex grows up is drawn as the battlefields of those who try to defend what little source of self-respect they have left "whatever the price". In an atmosphere of economic decline, 'protecting your own' becomes a formula for survival. Deprived of a say in matters regarding their own lives and livelihoods, people have become afraid and they react by instilling fear in everybody they perceive to be different, because difference might entail the promise of 'betterment'. Alex is 'dangerous', for his knowledge of the Welsh language makes him different and in an uncomfortable way more 'complex' than the community he grew up in (cf.107-108). Alex repeatedly yearns to climb the mountains again in an effort to recapture the sense of owning the world and its possibilities, to "glimpse an horizon that stretched from Porthcawl to Brecon" (88) and, thus, to escape the smallness of his world. When he does travel up a mountain again he is with a group of friends in "Fifi's Mini [which] crawled asthmatically up the mountain road" (99). Alex and his friends are on their way to the Republican picnic of a group of Welsh nationalists, whose picnic is held in defiance of the valley community's party in celebration of the Royal wedding. Alex experiences a mixture of emotions at the party. On the one hand, the slightly smug feeling of superiority engendered in this purely oppositional event and the very real sense of comradeship in the face of an overwhelmingly

hostile linguistic majority create a feeling of specialness in Alex: "On that mountain top, I was given a glimpse of a broader horizon and I knew then that I would never climb back down, I had left the Valley for good. That knowledge made me feel both excited and guilty" (102). The guilt Alex feels is connected to the fact that he has to deny his mother's inheritance (she does not seem to speak Welsh) and his class (the Welsh nationalists are described as middle-class, 102) and, thus, part of himself. Another sense of guilt is triggered by his knowledge that

> [m]y Welsh wasn't a mother tongue, it wasn't suckled from my mam's breasts in the pews of Capel Salem. My accent was cooked up in the saucepan schools of the South East Wales; a blackboard exercise, unidiomatic and thin, the offspring of a marriage between a language and a region that had long since forgotten the sound of its own past. (101)

Traversing a hostile region which, especially in its present climate of fear for its own survival, has forgotten the sound of its past, Alex realises that a Welsh language learnt at school does not provide him with ready-made community and a passport to belonging. Nor does the minority status of the language imbue the teachers of the language necessarily with a sense of empathy and tolerance. Alex's teacher

> taught us that Wales was its language, and the language was Wales. He led us to believe that the only true Welshman was the one who spat in the eye of oppression, naturally we wanted to spit with the best of them. So we spat over each other, spat over everything and we believed that through spitting we would all be a part of a glorious Welsh nation. Unfortunately, as I grew older, I came to realise that not all spit is equal in Wales. . . . It was a case of pedigree and I spoke with a mongrel tongue. (101)

As a 'mongrel' Alex is too 'impure' for either community whose identity is based on a wholesale rejection of the 'other'. He thus becomes a wanderer between two tightly sealed off communities; in an act of transgression, he crosses the seemingly impenetrable boundary between them every day on his way to school and back. David Sibley describes boundary crossing as fraught both with feelings of anxiety and the exhilaration of transgression (32) – the anxiety of the 'mongrel' who is not totally accepted by either community is mixed with the exhilaration of being able to move between worlds. A person who has acquired Welsh at school might fear that he/she does not have a complete grasp of the language and thus be anxious – but he/she also has the insight that comes with having a command of two different systems of signification, which, in turn, inform the culture they are used in to a large extent. And it is precisely the ability of Alex to feel at home in both worlds that makes him suspicious to those who cannot follow, such as Alex's would-be girlfriend Wendy, who is described as "simpler" in the sense of 'less complicated' by her father because she does not speak Welsh (107). Lulled in a false sense of security

at the Republican picnic on the mountain, Alex finds it doubly difficult to return to the valley, but return he must because the people on the mountain are not his own.

The third journey takes Alex up mount Snowdon again. He is in his mid-twenties and this proves to be a journey of true enlightenment in which he learns to accept the complexity of his own bilingual and bicultural identity. Importantly, however it is not his way up the mountain which provides enlightenment but his way down. The precarious journey down the ridge "barely a foot wide" becomes a powerful metaphor for the adult Alex's consciousness of his identity. "On my left, the mountain dropped vertically to oblivion. On my right, there was an eighty degree gradient. Immediately I sank on all fours and crawled crabwise across the face" (109). Balancing on the tiny path, a metaphor for that liminal zone between anglicised culture and Welsh-speaking culture, Alex becomes deadly afraid for his life. Suddenly, his whole life is revealed to be a dangerous balancing act between two places, neither of which he belongs to totally. This sense of unbelonging makes him wish to give up and fall into the oblivion of anglicisation. But then he sees a man proudly walking the ridge unafraid:

> On Crib Goch, after making peace with my world, I was on the verge of sailing the wind when I saw a man walk the ridge above me. He didn't crawl on all fours across the face, he walked, knowing the danger, embracing the fear. Suddenly, I felt imbued with a passion for life; the desire to keep living. I realised that I had to walk that blade's edge off that mountain. So I grasped the wind in my palms, stood on the ridge, and walked the mountain's teeth into the sun. (110)

Alex realises that he must embrace the fear of transgression. If he is to find peace within himself, he must not hanker after another's definition of the right place to be in: *his* place is where *he* stands, even if that place is considered a non-space by other people. His is what postcolonial theory describes as a hybrid identity: as Robert Young points out (and has been explained elsewhere in this study), contrary to the 19th century understanding of hybridity, a biological metaphor which signified a mixing of species or races (understood as different species), the term has acquired a different meaning in the field of cultural criticism:

> Hybridity . . . makes difference into sameness, and sameness into difference, but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different. . . . This double logic, which goes against the convention of rational either/or choices, but which is repeated in science in the split between the incompatible coexisting logics of classical and quantum physics, could be said to be as characteristic of the twentieth century as oppositional dialectical thinking was of the nineteenth. (26-27)

In other words, the very premise upon which a dichotomic model of cultural homogeneity is construed is called into question. A hybrid relationship cannot be

regarded as the grafting together of two different, 'pure' things, as all culture is always already a 'mixture'.[16] The result is the necessary acceptance of complexity which overcomes the limitations of dialectical thought. Similarly to Alex, the narrator of Meera Syal's autobiographical first novel, a second-generation British-Indian girl, understands that ordering her world into an 'Indian' part and an 'English' part makes no sense to her, as her experience includes both parts. At the end of the novel, she exclaims:

> I now knew I was not a bad girl, a mixed-up girl, a girl with no name or no place. The place in which I belonged was wherever I stood and there was nothing stopping me simply moving forward and claiming each resting place as home. (303, cf. von Rothkirch)

David Adams has described Alex's condition as a "bipolar disorder", interpreting the imagery of 'high and low,' among other things, as the condition of the manic depressive (Adams "Stories" 199). Yet, it would seem that the play is precisely about Alex's growing awareness that his 'bipolar' nature is only 'disordered' in the eyes of the purists. He must embrace his mongrel nature: his journey does not end on the mountain top – Alex achieves 'enlightenment' by finding his way down again and making a difficult peace with the valley.

Marriage of Convenience echoes Rowlands's political concerns expressed in his other plays in many ways.[17] *Glissando on an Empty Harp*, a play first performed at the Taliesin Arts Centre in Swansea in 1994, is a play essentially about identity and art (Adams "Retrospective" 246). It features two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon-like figures, who live on the Thames Embankment. They are thus situated in the heart of the colonial metropolis, but at the same time they are not very subtly relegated to the margins of that society, living the life of homeless drunks who sleep beneath a bridge. Again, place is not a realistic background to the action, but in this anti-naturalist play it functions as a metaphor for the structures of power and domination in which the characters are caught up.

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[16] Despite its wide usage in postcolonial criticism, the concept of hybridity as it is used by Homi Bhabha has been the subject of some criticism. Ania Loomba, for example, writes that "despite the accent on hybridity and liminality, Bhabha generalises and universalises the colonial encounter. Thus, ironically, the split, ambivalent, hybrid colonial subject projected in his work is in fact curiously universal and homogeneous – that is to say he could exist anywhere in the colonial world. Hybridity seems to be characteristic of his inner life (and I use the male pronoun purposely) but not of his positioning. He is internally split and agonistic, but undifferentiated by gender, class or location" (178). Thus, the concept of hybridity must be used in conjunction with considerations of gender, class, location and, I would add, language. Alex's sense of hybridity is certainly informed by the place he lives in, by his working-class community and by the languages he speaks.

Eric and Emrys superficially conform to the stereotype of the poetic but drunken 'Celt'. The stereotype is even elaborated on: Emrys is the Welsh-speaking romantic idealist poet standing for the Welsh-speaking people of Wales and Eric, the social realist poet, stands for the anglicised part of the population. They are caricatures of a whole tradition of literary and cultural expression: Emrys is apparently able to produce "an epic poem glorifying your life and triumphs – something Aneirinesque" (196) at the drop of a hat, although, considering that he has not actually achieved anything, "[i]t won't be that long, but it's the principle that counts" (196). Eric is "a realist" who likes "daylight and the ethics of predictability" (172). He thus stands in the Anglo-Welsh realist literary tradition. Yet, the traditions they stand for, caricatured though they might be, are utterly silenced in London, casting them in the role of dominated and maybe even colonised people.

At the same time that these stereotypes are constructed, they are deconstructed, for both Emrys and Eric are not what they seem. Despite his claim to realism, Eric finds himself wishing for a romantic liaison with Dora, who appeared at the beginning of the play on their beach to give birth to a box/baby. Emrys, the romantic, turns out to be capable of ruthlessness: he is willing to go to any lengths to steal Dora's box/baby (188). Between them, they seek to dominate Dora and, thus, they reproduce the dominant power relations between the sexes. It has been suggested that the discussion of gender relations can be read as a metaphor for the colonial relationship between England and Wales (Adams, "Retrospective" 252), and it is worth noting that this reading does not have a clear-cut meaning, since Emrys and Eric are both oppressed and oppressors at the same time. They patronise and threaten Dora as much as they are (presumably) patronised and threatened by a society that marginalises them. It becomes clear that the boundaries which separate coloniser and colonised, oppressor and oppressed are "fuzzy" (cf. Thompson and Day 40) in the sense that "[t]here is always some uncertainty about where the edge of Category A turns into the edge of Category B" (Sibley quoting Leach, 33). In this liminal zone, which Rowlands imagines as the cliff's edge between valley and mountain, the poets inch their way forward ("We are the musing bemused picking our way across Crib Goch in the dark" (189). In the end it becomes obvious that they have chosen to side with power, though: they viciously grab the woman and the box/baby and "*perform a ceremony with a knife. Eric holds the box. Emrys stabs a knife into it*". The poetic justice of the play,

[17] *Blue Heron in the Womb* has already been discussed in chapter 4. I will therefore omit its discussion here.

however, decrees that, triggered by the Woman's anguished cry "No!", loud music 'deafens the poets to death' (232). A political message which can be gleaned from the discussion of sexual politics in the play is that employing the oppressor's methods leads the characters astray and the hope that is contained in (Pan)Dora's box of possibilities will never be theirs. Hope is embodied by the silent character Fergus, who also is Head (a video projection of Fergus's head). He is imprisoned in his very own box, a TV. As Head is "*released into the world*", so is the promise of hope (233).

Love in Plastic (1995) deals with the issues of belonging, facing up to the realities of life and changing life if necessary. The nameless characters, who meet in a restaurant but are not brave enough to embark on a new life together, are both unable to face up to their home: Woman is an actress who lies about her background and Man has sealed himself off from reality completely, living in a house laminated in plastic and only leaving it in a space suit. These characters personify the two stereotypical reactions of Welsh people to their home, namely leaving it behind and denying their roots or isolating themselves in radical introspection, which leads to a metaphorical death of fear (159). Woman's Agent, an outsider who controls her life to such an extent that he even follows her into death with the words "[d]on't sign anything till I arrive, baby" (157), effectively keeps her from forming ties with Man who could have linked her with her past. Man is fearful of defying "tradition" – a "tradition" which is very plainly invented by the Waiter on the spot (142) – and is thus partly responsible for the failure of their escape to a new life together: "We can't afford to dare the tradition. To me the slightest risk is not a risk worth taking" (145). An invented tradition holds him 'in place' and he cannot take that step that would take him from self-obsessed introspection to a life in the 'outside world'. In the end, only the Waiter is left, the creator of a pastiche of 'reality' made up of an invented tradition, laverbread curry and pre-recorded 'atmosphere' for his empty restaurant. Interestingly, he is the only character who is granted a momentary experience of epiphany. On a holiday trip to Ireland, his wife and he travel out to a small island, "a grey rock set in a grey ring of sky and sea" (158), an image which could be read as Wales. Having left his wife in a café, he climbs the cliff alone in a journey towards enlightenment, which is replicated in *A Marriage of Convenience.*

> I walked right up to the edge of the cliff kid, no fences stopping me, and I stood on the knife edge of the Atlantic. Behind me was the 'ole of Europe, in front of me next stop America, behind me the past, in front of me the future, and I was there; the most alive I could ever be and I wanted to leap off and fly like I used to leap off the rocks and soar over Ogmore beach when I was an

> immortal kid. 'Cause on the edge there was no Morwood. There was no fort, there was no wife an' no God, it was as if the whole universe was flowing through me. I was like the neck of an egg-timer that turns eternally. And on the blade's edge, the 'appiest moment I ever 'ad in my life . . . . (158-59)

The Waiter experiences a moment of total freedom in a place which connects him with the world. For that second he forgets the smallness of his own environment and situates himself somewhere between Europe and America. But instead of leaping off and losing contact altogether, he walks back down the cliff, back into his ordinary life. Among several possible readings of place in *Love in Plastic*, the discourse of place and the attitudes of the characters to place reveal the difficulty and the ambiguity of a liminal existence between the trappings of nationalism and a denial of belonging.

Rowlands's work can thus be said to situate Wales and the Welsh experience in a way which carries with it connotations of complex systems, of chaos and unpredictability: it thus overcomes a desperate search for identity on the basis of exaggerated notions of difference. Turning to Ed Thomas, one is struck that his plays describe a similar trajectory, from a few plays which are clearly concerned with a palpable frustration with the present to an exuberantly positive hope for the re-birth of the nation after devolution. With hindsight, and, curiously, in total contradiction to Ian Rowlands (cf. Introduction), Thomas describes the 1990s as a "special time for me and for groups like Volcano and Brith Gof" ("Moving On" 126). Thomas acknowledges that events after 1998, after the production of *Gas Station Angel*, were difficult on many levels and he has not yet written a full-length stage play again. Maybe a certain disillusionment with the political process which has not yet delivered a "coherent policy for the arts in Wales that's actually got vision and balls" (127), as well as being tired of being co-opted and celebrated as the figurehead of the new Welsh drama, as someone who could get the message across to the media, have left their mark on Thomas: "I've always had plenty to say, but over the last three or four years I got tired of saying it" (127). Greg Cullen has commented on how Ed Thomas's political commitment to Wales has been rather useful to Welsh theatre:

> Few [immigrants (like Cullen)] here [in Wales] are ready to accept our place whilst authentic white, Welsh voices remain so shamefully underdeveloped. With the invention of Ed Thomas daylight has appeared. Ed fits the bill exactly, bilingual, butcher's son, Valleys boy, rumoured to have worked in the steel industry, articulate and more than any of these attributes he wants to write about Wales and the Welsh at the end of the twentieth century. Phew! Now perhaps other Welsh writers can write about whatever they want rather than be constantly brought to the altar of 'what it means to be Welsh?', every time

> someone wants to commission them. Besides, Ed does it so well. ("The Graveyard of Ambition?" 150)

This argument is certainly double-edged. While acknowledging that Thomas has important things to say for Wales today, his comment also seems to imply that now, with Thomas as figurehead of a politically committed theatre, other writers can get on with other (more important?) things. Not that the impulse of wanting to free Welsh writers from the thematic focus on Wales and Welsh identity is so wrong in itself – critics, too, have complained that Welsh plays are often criticised on the basis of either seeming 'too Welsh' or 'not Welsh enough' rather than on the relative merits of their form and contents (Anna-Marie Taylor, "Introduction" 1). However, describing Ed Thomas in terms of a phenomenon that 'fits the bill' and potentially spouts politically relevant drama *ad infinitum* pins down Thomas and his spectrum of interests to the narrow field of Welsh politics and Welsh identity. It is not surprising that he seems to have suffered from 'politics fatigue' after 1998. He also seems to be in two minds about the powers of the National Assembly: "And will the Assembly be able to afford [a sustainable policy for the arts]? If it can't what do we do? *Get political again?* What does that mean?" (127, italics added). Thomas's work as playwright and director certainly had been political until 1998 and by reading selected plays by him of that period I will discuss how his political views have shaped his art and how the work of Y Cwmni/Fiction Factory is translated in a positive vision of the future of Wales by looking closely at *House of America*, *Flowers of the Dead Red Sea*, *Song from a Forgotten City* and *Gas Station Angel*.[18]

House of America is a play of enduring popularity, a "cult hit" according to David Adams ("Edward Thomas" 147). First staged in 1988, it was revised and toured the UK in 1989. It won various awards, was again revised and staged in 1992 and toured the world in a radically rewritten form in 1997. The screenplay for the film *House of America*, which came out in 1996, already shows the direction the new play was to take. The film was first screened at BAFTA Piccadilly in October 1996. The film then went to various countries, including the USA, and was critically acclaimed, winning various BAFTA Wales Awards. It would be interesting to juxtapose the different versions of the play, which surely reflect Thomas's and Y Cwmni/Fiction Factory's changing preoccupations and responses to the political situation of Wales from the mid-1980s to the late 1990s. Due to reasons of

[18] David Adams has drawn attention to the fact that the plays by Ed Thomas are more often than not products of a group effort: "we cannot ever separate the playwright from the company" (145). For the sake of convenience, I will always refer to the author alone, but

availability, I will focus my discussion of the play on the first version (1989) and the screenplay (1996, here referred to as *SP*).

The play stages the story of the Lewis family whose failure to come to terms with their deprived environment leads to a mental escape into an imaginary 'otherworld'. The consistent tendency of the characters to evade problems rather than face them and to bemoan the lack of a contemporary youth culture in Wales without attempting to create one themselves come to a head with the arrival of an Open Cast mine, which is set to literally unearth a dark family secret: the young people, Sid, Boyo and Gwenny believe that their father had left them and gone to America, when, in fact, their mother had killed him because he was unfaithful. Mam ('Mother' in the play) flees into a Hamlet-like, half-real, half-pretended madness in order to avoid facing facts, whereas Sid and Gwenny stage their own escape to 'America' as an elaborate mind-game, in which they take on the names and the characteristics of 'Jack' (Kerouac) and 'Joyce' (Johnson) after reading Kerouac's *On the Road*. But their 'game' becomes deadly real, when Gwenny loses her sense of self and turns into 'Joyce' upon hearing the news that her father's body has been found. In a rage, Boyo kills Sid and Gwenny, who has become pregnant by Sid, commits suicide. The film changes major aspects of the play and, thus, emphasises continuity rather than abrupt, tragic death. Especially the anti-hero Sid Lewis is evaluated differently in the film. Commenting on the first conception of the character, Thomas notes:

> 'The play was written as a backlash against my days in London when I thought I was someone else. I tried to suppress my Welsh accent, I wanted to be just a South London boy. This is why I wrote the play. I hated its main character, Sid Lewis, a bloke who took on the iconography of somebody else.' (Roms, "Making it New" 14).

In the 1997 version of the play and in the screenplay, the nihilistic Sid is still a flawed character, but his flaws are no longer tragic:

> There is in *House*, too, the idea of Welsh characters being cool dreamers. There is nothing wrong with Sid, he just selects the wrong dream. But the quality of his imagination is terrific. In the play the choice of the wrong dream becomes a tragedy. In the film, however, as soon as you put Sid Lewis on a motor-bike, the loser becomes the hero. We use the South Wales landscape in the film and Wales appears as the big little country. Wales is shot in colour and America is black and white, and America appears quite small. While complaining about Wales's lack of heroes, we have in the film created one. ("'Not Much of a Dream Then Is it?'" 126)

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generally understand the plays as the outcome of collective thought and writing processes.

From a character, whose lack of ownership of a viable cultural identity turned into tragedy, Sid Lewis has become a figurehead of 'Cool Cymru' – somebody who through virtue of being an anti-hero acquires an almost James Dean-esque aura. I would argue that the true originality of *House of America* does not primarily lie in its creation of a Welsh 'Rebel without a Cause', but in the fact that it addresses specific issues, is placed in a specific context and still manages to be epic in scope, tragic in the Aristotelian sense: "Edward Thomas's plays work so well partly because they are located in the particular – geographic, cultural, temporal, personal – but by working in classicly [sic] mythic terms they are also universal" (Adams, "Edward Thomas" 151). *House of America* is concerned with a specific economic and cultural climate, which is the product of the Thatcher era of ruthless de-industrialisation without sufficient plans for regeneration and which resulted in an atmosphere of defeatism that struck at the very root of a concept of place in Wales. Suddenly feelings of belonging, of a pride in one's community, which had been actively fostered by the one-industry/one-employer economic structure of much of south Wales, were regarded as a *passé* attitude that was actually obstructing 'progress' as defined by the Conservative central government.[19] Yet, the enthusiastic international response to *House of America* is testimony to its universal appeal (Ed Thomas "'Not much of a Dream Then Is It?'" 119).[20] Thus, the play can be seen as a first step in Thomas's project to create 'a new mythology' for Wales ("Wanted"). And central to that mythology are Welsh landscapes and cityscapes. So, the decision to makes Wales appear 'larger' than America in the film *House of America* and to shoot it in colour, whereas the American landscape appears in black and white, make Wales appear more 'real' than the America of the Lewis's imagination – which, of course, it is. It could also be argued that the creation of a 'new mythology' for Wales can be read within the postcolonial paradigm as an attempt to 'write back to the centre', which here is understood to mean American cultural neo-imperialism. Moreover, by virtue of creating a truly 'Welsh' story, which audiences can identify with and, thus, own, a step is taken towards the deconstruction of the centre-margin link to England/America.

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[19] Cf. Norman Tebbit's infamous exhortation for people to 'get on their bikes' and leave economically deprived areas as a political 'strategy' for minimising unemployment, instead of government programmes to revitalise deprived communities by strengthening their sense of place and by providing economic structures for redevelopment.

[20] Thomas mentions in the interview that *House of America* has been translated into French, German and Spanish (Catalan). It has been performed in France, Germany, Spain and Montreal. Cf. "'Not Much of a Dream Then Is It'" 119.

Ed Thomas has said that the process of writing for him rarely starts with character or dialogue, but that it might start with a landscape ("'Not Much of a Dream Then Is It?'" 120). The landscape of *House of America* is concrete and symbolic and in that the play remains within the traditional form of the realist play. The play's two central symbols are also its main settings: the first being the house, which becomes the 'house of America', the space of denial and delusion. The second is the Open Cast mine, which oppresses the family members as the mine creates too few 'Mickey Mouse' jobs for the whole community, thus effectively destabilising the community's support mechanisms (cf. Jeni Williams, "Fantastic Fictions" 433). It also threatens it symbolically as it brings to light the (literally) buried past. Jeni Williams has offered another insightful reading of the Open Cast mine: by tearing the landscape apart, it severs the connection between people and place, because 'place', i.e. the collection of landmarks and the feelings of belonging they engender, is literally erased by this particularly radical form of mining. Lucidly, she connects Thomas's treatment of landscape to postcolonial theory, a paradigm, which may be said to include neo-colonialism:

> *House of America* seems to bear out Said's contention that postcolonial writing seeks to establish the homeland as a complex space defined through memory and imagination, history and mythology – not an economic resource for somewhere else. But the ecological devastation caused by the open cast, a form of mining that tears the land apart, reduces it to precisely that: a place without landmarks, history, stories, uninhabitable, a pure resource. ("Fantastic Fictions" 434)

Thus, the Open Cast mine becomes a metaphor for an all-round exploitation of place. This reading is emphasised in the film, where the neo-colonial domination of America is made more obvious by making the mining company American, thus extending the metaphor of a cultural domination to an economic one. The play uses the Open Cast mine as a less deliberately political and, one might argue, less polemical, metaphor. Here the mine is closely connected to the play's structure, as it is the device which moves the plot forward: the unnerving advance of the mine shatters the fragile peace of the family, as Mam fears that her secret is now bound to come to light and as the sons have to witness their failure to gain jobs and, thus, a measure of self-respect on a daily basis as the mine comes closer. The noise of the mine, which the stage directions describe as a "[*l*]*oud crashing, blasting noise,*" (14) intrudes into the characters' lives, forcing them to flee further and further into their imaginary 'America' (Sid and Gwenny) or into a half-pretended, half-real madness (Mam) as they try to avoid acknowledging the truth about their lives and their identities.

A measure of the intrusiveness of the mine is given early on in the play when the tremors of the advancing mine frustrate the attempts of Gwenny and Boyo to build a house of cards, which, of course, is itself a symbol for the 'house of lies' that the characters construct for themselves (cf. Jeni Williams, "Fantastic Fictions" 430). The symbol is used in such a way that their different failures to make the house of cards stand in Act I foreshadow their fate in Act II. Gwenny's house will not stand because the tremors of the advancing mine make the very foundations of their family house shake in a way which foreshadows the way her fragile sense of self implodes when her father's body is literally unearthed by it. The fact that she cannot feel the tremors but attributes her failure with the house of cards to a draught can be interpreted as a tragic failure to see real cause-and-effect reasons, another fact which makes her retreat into the identity of 'Joyce' rather than face up to her own situation (15). Boyo nearly manages to make his house of cards stand, but it is knocked over by Mam in a way which underscores her domination over him and her ability to manipulate his emotions, which suggests a quasi-Oedipal relationship between them (19; cf. Katie Gramich on the subject of the power of Mam, 162-63). Sid builds his own card trick a little later but then he "*gets up and accidentally tumbles the cards. We see that he has glued his card trick together*" (62). He is thus exposed as a cheat and a liar, as someone who does not accept responsibility for his actions and as someone whose willingness to use his lies to pretend that he can control reality leads to death and destruction in Act II. In a sense, Sid's house of cards mirrors the way that lies and silences keep the Lewis family together like the glue holds the cards together. Indeed, Mam's frantic efforts to keep the family together function very much like Sid's glued-together house of cards – her lies have kept the house of lies from falling down (29-30).[21] In the film, that similarity between Mam and Sid is emphasised by the fact that Sid is shown to have witnessed his father's death and that he, thus, colludes in Mam's efforts at cover-up by creating a fantasy-world that provides an escape route for him, which he later, fatally, shares with Gwenny (cf. Jeni Williams, "Fantastic Fictions" 431).

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[21] The house imagined as a structure which keeps the family together by facilitating their non-communication and their refusal to face up to their silences and lies can be described as taking further a similar image in Gwyn Thomas's *The Keep* (1960). In Gwyn Thomas's play, the house is imagined as a prison which keeps the characters from spreading their wings – a prison, however, to which the father and the younger brothers of Con submit willingly. Interestingly, it is the female characters who manage to break out of this claustrophobic dwelling: Miriam escapes through marriage (although it is unclear if that is a pseudo-escape) and, more importantly, her mother escaped to America. Her escape is real and is held up as an example for the characters in *The Keep*. In *House of*

The symbolic function of the house is stressed through the symbolic way of staging it.[22] Unlike the cluttered house interiors characteristic of realist naturalism (cf. Gwyn Thomas's *The Keep* or the first stage version of Alan Osborne's *In Sunshine and in Shadow*), the interior of this house is not described in detail. Thus, the Lewis's family home becomes 'a Welsh home', which is, unlike the stereotypical 'home and hearth' usually described as "the site of warmth, sustenance, discourse" (Pearson 19), an image of repressed violence and a madness brought on by that repression. The non-realistic staging of the house in an otherwise realistic play introduces tragedy to the play, a form which moves the family and its concerns out of the realm of the ordinary and the specific into one of powerful emotions and epic actions.[23] Like Pandora's box, the house contains all kinds of negative passions: Mam, for instance, paints her blue room red in a gesture which echoes Lady Macbeth's efforts at distancing herself from her deed – efforts which only draw attention to her guilt. In the film, the connection to Lady Macbeth becomes even clearer, as Mam's manic efforts at painting only succeed in splashing red colour everywhere in an image which suggests trails of blood (*SP* 162-163). Even the hearth is subverted into an image of destruction, as Mam burns some clothes – possibly her own blood-stained clothes – in a vain effort to eradicate the past (56-57, cf. Gramich 162).[24] Thus, the house is understood as an organic unity of building and family in a way which is reminiscent of classic tragedy, where a 'house' generally comes to an end with the death of the tragic hero (cf. *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*). A prose tragedy that comes to mind in this context is the dark, Gothic tale *The Fall*

America that escape route is blocked and the claustrophobia induced by the house turns into psychosis.

[22] Cf. the pictures of various performances of the play in *State of Play*.

[23] Like Jeni Williams, I would take issue with Katie Gramich's view that "[Thomas] is a playwright who writes with an awareness of the impossibility of tragedy in a postmodern age. He can allude to it, plagiarise it, play with it irreverently or longingly, but he can't have it. Neither can we" (164, cf. Jeni Williams 419). Jeni Williams writes that one could interpret *House of America* as "akin to the Jacobean tragedy of the misfit struggling within nets of autocratic power" (419). I believe that even though Thomas may not copy the Aristotelian model in all aspects – which, of course, other writers have not done either – the writing of a Welsh tragedy furthers his project of contributing to a 'new mythology' for Wales. Tragedy implies failure, sometimes on a grand scale, but it also implies the greatness of the personality who is allowed to fail on such a grand scale. Sid Lewis fails on a grand scale because he fails to connect his dreams and ideals (borrowed however they may be) with his reality – and, thus, be becomes a Welsh tragic hero. Thomas was not to return to the tragic model in his later plays, however.

[24] In the film, this scene is turned into a series of flashbacks in which Sid, as a child, sees his mother burn her blood-stained clothes. It is an equally apocalyptic image, for we see that "[*h*]*er face is blackened, her eyes wild*" (224 *et passim*).

of the House of Usher by Edgar Allan Poe, in which the house represents a similar organic unity between it and its inhabitants.[25] Thus,

> [t]he house's fragility indicates the vulnerable state of its inhabitants; far from being a solid 'castle' which invests the family with a sense of security and belonging, the house crumbles around them, an image of their own disintegration and homelessness. (Gramich 162; cf. Rhys 154)

Juxtaposed with the house, which fails to inspire feelings of belonging, is the 'America' of Sid's and Gwenny's imagination. 'America' is imagined as everything Wales is not and, because this imagining depends on an *ex negativo* description of difference, it remains curiously hazy and lifeless. We get a first indication that Sid's and Gwenny's 'America' is about as 'real' as Narnia, when Mam tells Boyo that she has given Gwenny an address for her father which is obviously fictional and carries with it echoes of the novels of the American writer Sinclair Lewis (*Babbit* and *Main Street*): "Mr Clem Lewis, Main Street, Dodge City, The West, America" (69). Boyo immediately knows that this is a fake address, but Gwenny needs to believe in this place where she and Sid can escape to if things become too difficult in Wales (cf. Jeni Williams, "Fantastic Fictions", on Gwenny's need to imagine the father she cannot remember, 431). Sid does not enter into the fiction entirely, but he suspends his disbelief for the same reason that he glues the cards together to make his house of cards stand: he cannot bear failure and would rather cheat than not seem to win. He needs to imagine another place to a Wales he cannot stand because reality reminds him of the inconsequentiality of his own existence and his failure to change his life.[26] Thus he projects onto America everything he wants Wales to be:

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[25] Cf. Martin Rhys for the significance of the family in the context of Welsh drama in English.

[26] Martin Rhys has pointed out that the Lewis children do not have the slightest connection with Welsh history or tradition, for example, through older family members: "Despite Mam's sometimes eccentric attempts at evoking some sense of the past, her three children have not the slightest idea of where or whom they come from" (154). As I have shown in chapter 3, this conspicuous lack of tradition and history is a characteristic theme of Welsh drama in English of the 1980s and 1990s. Thus, *House of America* cannot be divorced from the specific historical context. I would argue that this feeling of being severed from (unspecified) past certainties is responsible for Ed Thomas's call for a 'new mythology' for Wales. It would be interesting to compare this response with Welsh-language writing. Prys Morgan quotes the beginning of Aled Islwyn's Eisteddfod-winning novel *Cadw'r Chwedlau'n Fyw* ('Keeping the legends alive', 1984), in which one of the characters, Gethin, complains: "Wales hasn't got any history. She hasn't had a history for generations. Bumbling on, surviving from one century to the next. Romanticising the past... Keeping the legends alive, that 's all recent Welsh history has been about...". Morgan continues: "Gethin is bitterly critical of the Welsh for deceiving themselves with reach-me-down heroes or unreal clichés about nonconformity, radicalism, male voice choirs and rugby" (19). While the complaint sounds uncannily like Ed Thomas's criticism, the two voices seem to come from opposite directions: the creator of Sid Lewis made him a character cut off from all tradition, while Islwyn created a character who complains of too much 'mythology' ("What sort of condition is a nation in that has to think twice before

> **Sid** Plenty of work there, too, Boyo, plenty of space, sun, sand, fancy riding across it chasing the sun on a Harley Davidson, money in your pocket, tiger in your tank, Hendrix on the Walkman – no helmet, just free and moving West. (44)[27]

Sid's image of 'America' is curiously lifeless, without detail – it is a generic landscape defined by Sid's negative feelings about Wales (he feels confined, he has no money, he is not aware of any internationally famous Welsh heroes he could be proud of) and it is also lifted wholesale from Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, the book which becomes Sid's and Gwenny's bible – the text by which they construct their vision of paradise. 'America' is the cypher for an unspecified, semi-mythical 'elsewhere', a dreamscape quite unlike the real American West, which the characters signally fail to fill with life. Similarly, Sid's unhappiness about his life does not automatically translate into a concrete vision of who he would like to be:

> **Sid** . . . If I had to answer a straight question, I'd have to say I wish I'd been born someone else, somewhere else.
>
> **Boyo** Oh yeah? ... like who?
>
> **Sid** I don't know ... someone else.
> *[Pause.]*
> Jack Kerouac. (45)

The only alternative identity Sid can come up with is Jack Kerouac's partly fictionalised identity. Tellingly, the heroes of American popular culture mentioned throughout the play, namely The Velvet Underground,[28] Dionne Warwick, Jack Kerouac and Jimi Hendrix, are cultural icons of the late 1960s and1970s, the time Sid's father allegedly disappeared to America. There is thus a connection between Sid's displaced identity and his father: it seems that Sid tries make up for the lack of a father figure by imagining himself in his father's shoes in America (cf. Thomas on his obsession with absent fathers in "'Not Much of a Dream Then Is It?" 119, and Jeni Williams's Lacanian interpretation in "Fantastic Fictions" 415-16, 431-32). As a place for his own identity, the America of the 1970s seems peculiarly outdated in the

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deciding where genuine historical events end and legends and fairy stories begin?" Quoted in Morgan, 19). It would be interesting to analyse these different positions further. Unfortunately, such an undertaking is beyond the scope of this thesis.

[27] In the film, Sid's quasi-heroic status is emphasised by actually giving him a Harley. It may not start first time, but it is still evokes images of a road-movie made in Wales.

[28] Part of the point is, of course, that John Cale of the *Velvet Underground* is Welsh. It is ironic to note that, after having conformed to the stereotype of the Welshman who leaves Wales behind, that Cale, having rediscovered his Welshness, was part of the celebrations surrounding the opening of the National Assembly for Wales in 1999.

late 1980s, even if Sid is meant to be "pushing thirty" in the play (23).[29] As in Chaudhuri's reading of Pinter's *The Homecoming*, America

> evokes a peculiar kind of space: space that has not evolved – or cannot evolve – to the condition of place, that is of local identity. The America of the play includes no city or state names; it is a vast undifferentiated space that can only be described in naturalistic terms, not cultural ones. It is the perfect rendition of what Howard Kunstler has called "The Geography of Nowhere" . . . . (115)

As in Pinter's play, 'America' is the unreal 'other' to the real but unsatisfactory reality of Wales – or England, in Pinter's case. It remains a blank canvas on which the characters fail to draw because they have bought into the consumerist aspects of the American Dream, not the positive, enabling aspects of it.[30] The exported American mythology of consumerism and the global homogenisation of culture according to the American model often called 'McDonaldisation' is felt acutely in countries like Wales.[31] Jeni Williams has read the role of the absent father in terms of the loss of a meaningful 'symbolic order' for Sid. The play is thus situated within

> a wider, dysfunctional culture of small countries everywhere who have lost what Thomas calls their 'sustaining myths' and look to America for their replacements. Thomas sees the American Dream as an 'exportable myth ... of freedom and equality [which] is wrapped in crass commercialism.' This absent father thus offers no escape to the problems of a culture under siege but, by promoting the desire for access to the symbolic order of another society and another law, signals instead a seductive cultural death. (Jeni Williams, "Fantastic Fictions" 432)

In the play, the tragic ending is thus inevitable. And yet, the structural mixture of naturalist realism and tragedy, a style Ed Thomas has described as "heightened realism" ("Wanted" 55), has not quite the potential for a truly enabling cultural myth. Firstly, naturalist realism is the antithesis of tragedy, as the characters are meant to be psychologically 'rounded' characters (in E.M. Forster's term), who live in a recognisable environment.[32] Accordingly, some members of the audience were confused by a play that seemed to career out of control. A reviewer notes that:

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[29] Cf. Martin Rhys, who also notes that "[i]t is interesting that Sid's dream is already out of date by some twenty years at the time of the play's first performance" (162).

[30] Ed Thomas does not question the power of the American Dream *per se*. He acknowledges it is a mythology which can be accepted, attacked, dismantled and reassembled within its own American context, for example by playwrights like Arthur Miller, David Mamet and Sam Shepard. What he seeks to create is a Welsh mythology, which works in a similar way. ("Wanted" 56).

[31] For a discussion of the different and often ambivalent feelings of Welsh writers towards America and the images of America exported to Wales see M. Wynn Thomas, "Wales's American Dreams".

[32] Plays like Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* seem to contradict this assessment. However, I would maintain that performances of the play which stress the tragic nature of this American 'Everyman' Willy Loman automatically move away from a realistic portrayal

> Thomas avoids creating a state-of-the-nation piece by taking the extremest course available. As his South Wales family disintegrates beneath the hammer blows of incest, fratricide and open-cast mining, it ceases to be representative of any likely community. Eventually, so little happens to the mother, sons, and daughter except what makes their troubles worse, that even as a family representing only itself the drama forfeits belief. (Kingston, quoted in *State of Play* 197)

Kingston seems to have been unable to reconcile the realist beginning of the play, which suggests a realist 'representation' of community, with its tragic ending. While his reading seems to be conditioned by the all-pervasive mode of stage-realism, which does not allow for a non-realist conception of character, symbols and plot, one can understand his confusion because the play had not been conceived as a tragedy from the outset. I do not agree that, therefore, modern theatre is unable to be tragic – the later plays of Howard Barker being a case in point. But, in order to give his play the scope of tragedy, even if he was never to return to the tragic model itself, Thomas had to create a highly individualistic theatrical form, which owes little to realism. Following the theatrical trajectory described by dramatists like Howard Barker, Thomas's plays have become less and less realistic. Moreover, the play attempts to create a new Welsh mythology – even if this story is tragic – by employing the topoi of ancient Greek drama and by grafting them on to a Welsh context. Wales is no longer the place without a contemporary mythology and, read in the context of postcolonial theory, this means a centring of the Welsh experience without recourse to its traditional 'other', namely England. Furthermore, because the neo-colonial 'other' is exposed as a perverse "dream-machine" (Herbert Blau, quoted in Daniel Williams 151), the path is cleared for a truly Welsh mythology.

In his subsequent plays, Thomas turns away from realism, while still, and seemingly paradoxically, remaining political. Heike Roms writes:

> Thomas attempts nothing less than turning the conventional notion of the 'political' in theatre on its head. What interests him is not so much the way in which the theatre may be able to reproduce a political reality, but the way in which reality is able to accommodate the models for identity and political action that the theatre has imagined into being. This has made Thomas the most stylistically conscious playwright in Wales, whose interest in the political implications of form and style sets him apart from the British dramatic convention of social realism. ("Caught in the Act" 131-132)

Thomas's leaving behind the structures of stage realism can be read in terms of a postcolonial strategy to find an 'authentic' theatrical voice which could speak for

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of the depression years. Although very different from a purely symbolic play (with political meaning) like *The Crucible*, *Death of a Salesman* loses its realistic specificity when interpreted as a tragedy of America.

Wales.[33] After *House of America*, his project has become the search for a "theatre of invention" which he contrasts to a "theatre of adoption", a style which Thomas links to "English and European styles and traditions" and which are, in his view, not wholly equipped to describe a Welsh reality ("Wanted" 57). That deficiency is very much connected to the fact that in order to describe a reality realistically, it has to be 'there' to be described first – and this is what Thomas denies:

> It is true that the only reality for me is the reality of myth. The only thing I see in Wales is defeat and I personally find defeat difficult to live with. I have therefore constructed my own Wales in order to convince myself that I and the culture and the city in which I live have any value, because I know only too well that outside Wales we don't feature on any map. ("Wanted" 58)[34]

Whether or not one agrees with this rather sweeping statement, it is obvious that a theatre which can only describe "defeat" (as it does in the first published version of *House of America*) cannot be productive in the long term. Yet, part of the postcolonial project is not only challenging the extent to which the values of the colonial 'centre' have permeated the 'margins' but also an attempt to develop a new, 'authentic' voice, which expresses a national/regional identity without recourse to the (former) coloniser. Thus, Thomas's theatre can be read as a productive force within the postcolonial paradigm. Furthermore, his move away from realism can be read as a rejection of the social realist mode of writing that informed early Welsh writing in English, especially the industrial novel, as "[t]he powerful working class movements of the past have fragmented and the social realist model of the industrial novel which once spoke for them seems now . . . irrelevant to men writing in Wales" (Jeni Williams, "Fantastic Fictions" 414). In this way, a mode of describing reality, which is no longer meaningful to writers like Thomas and which, significantly, created a solidarity based on class rather than nation, is left behind.

Flowers of the Red Dead Sea is a radically anti-realist play without conventional plot structure or character development, in which the search for a submerged, nearly lost sense of self – which has to be re-constructed through

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[33] By using the word 'authentic' in this context I wish to define Ed Thomas's response to Wales's political reality as uniquely his own. Thomas himself has professed himself to be unmoved if other people's sense and expression of Welshness do not correspond to his own ("Wanted" 55). In that sense, 'authentic' means idiosyncratic as well as 'not based on a search for difference from English/British stage traditions'.

[34] Ed Thomas's project of creating a 'new mythology' has not remained uncriticised. Martin Rhys, for example, likens this project to the workings of the opencast mine of *House of America*: "One wonders how similar is this process [of opencast mining] to Ed Thomas's appeal to reinvent Wales. The surface is being ripped up and – after the opencast has got all it wants from underneath – eventually replaced" (154). It seems that the rejection of 'old mythologies' which is implied but never directly mentioned by Ed Thomas, can be deeply offensive to some.

dreams and art – is the main focus for the action. It was first performed in Glasgow in 1991. It also illustrates the way in which even the performed play is still 'work in progress' for Ed Thomas, as the published version is radically revised and only includes two of the original cast of characters. The action takes place in "*a world of chains, knives, steel, blood and falling objects*" (103) – a surreal abattoir[35] which serves as both workspace and living space for the characters Mock and Joe and in which rusty household goods fall from the sky. Consciously fictional, the world of the characters is limited to the stage space, a fact that is underscored on the fictional level by sound effects, which indicate that the abattoir is surrounded by water (145 ff.). The darkness in which the water is enveloped and the water itself can be read as an outward expression of the characters' fear of the unknown and also as a threat to their sense of self. When the characters first realise that their space is surrounded by water, they are too afraid to make sure that this is really the case (144-145). Their sense of place is disturbed, but their fear is directed not so much at the presence of water as at the fact that there might be an unknown world beyond their space and beyond the water (147). Like Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*, the characters know that their reality is unbearable but they cannot leave their (fictional) space because they are afraid of what they do not know, a new space of the imagination which might imply change. At the same time the presence of the water can be read as a metaphor for oppression: Mock frequently dreams of drowning (110ff.) and his triumphant cry "I AM STILL HERE!" (112) after emerging from such a dream alludes to far more than coming out of a nightmare – echoes the Dafydd Iwan's celebrated song "Ryn ni yma o hyd", which signals the by-the-skin-of-our-teeth survival of the Welsh culture despite the odds.[36] A second context in which Mock's dream of drowning can be read is, of course, the flooding of the Tryweryn valley, whose iconic status as a postcolonial symbol I have mentioned above (cf. Jeni Williams, "Fantastic Fictions" 418, Rabey). This reading of a drowning of a whole culture is underscored by Mock's admission that he does not remember who he is because

> **Mock** . . . Everything floats by past my ears, past my lips, a million words passing, a whole language, a way of life, a people drowning, a mother, a father, grandmother, grandfather, daughter, son, sister, brother passing by.

[35] The choice of setting might have been inspired by biographical influences: Ed Thomas's father is a butcher.

[36] The symbol of drowning gains in importance, because Mock is convinced that the unseen character Cragg, who is Mock's and Joe's boss, and, by implication their oppressor, tried to drown him. In Mock's dream, however, he is able to turn the tables and Cragg dies instead. In keeping with the overall interpretation of the play, I would suggest that Mock here refers to the survival of (post)colonial Wales.

> Silent, sad, unmarked, peaceful, mad but sad, dead sad. I don't know who I am. Where am I? (134-135)

The sea which seems to surround the stage space – but which may well only be present in the minds of the characters – threatens annihilation and that danger, as well as the allusion to Tryweryn, identify the weird abattoir, in which two men are showered with unwanted consumer goods and which they cannot leave, as Wales. It also can be read as an indictment of 'the Welsh condition': as the double-bind of a threat of an annihilation of self through the drowning of a culture and a fear of the unknown beyond the unbearable present – which is presented as a failure of the imagination more than anything else. The characters are left to to stagnate, lose the memories of who they are and finally submit to the will of an external force (cf. Storr quoted in Rabey 178).

The dialogue contains a few references to Welsh popular culture (references to Tom Jones, 103-107) and stereotypes (the ubiquitous sheep, 150). And yet, it is the (unreliable and confused) characters' painful search for meaning and identity, which most clearly identifies them as Welsh. At times, Mock and Joe almost ritualistically invoke their identities as butchers in a slaughterhouse:

> **Mock** I'm a killer.
> **Joe** I'm a salter of skins.
> **Mock** This is a slaughter-house. (107)

And, yet, they are not able to establish an identity or describe their space beyond these phrases. Mock suffers from a loss of memory and is unable to create his present because he cannot remember his past (119 *et passim*). In the course of the play he becomes increasingly confused and dominated by Joe, who seems to have resigned himself to not knowing, not remembering. He is the exponent of a mentality that has given up fighting for a distinct Welsh identity and has allowed itself to be submerged in a 'Britishness' signalling a conformity with Anglo-American (consumerist) values. Jane Aaron makes a similar point when she describes Emyr Humphreys' bitter reaction to the lost referendum of 1979, which is, to an extent, fictionalised in his novel *Salt of the Earth*: "A people who have lost their sense of independence have lost the capacity to stand on their own feet. They will let anything happen . . . . The serf mentality fears freedom more than death itself" (Humphreys 8, cf. Aaron, cf. also Aaron and Thomas 284). The fate of a people colluding in its own (cultural) annihilation is a theme that Thomas returns to again and again. But in the post-*House of America* plays like *Flowers of the Dead Red Sea*, he also describes the painful process of finding an 'authentic', 'independent' voice – a voice which is not heard in isolation, but which chooses its allegiances

instead of accepting overwhelming (neo-)colonial pressures without dissent. Whereas Joe has fully internalised the colonised subject's fatalist and defeatist attitude, Mock keeps trying to remember who he is:

> **Mock** I am not the only one asking questions, there must be others who lurk.
> **Joe** IN A BAG OF IGNORANCE.
> **Mock** WE ARE NOT IN A BAG OF IGNORANCE.
> **Joe** OF COURSE WE ARE. WE FOLLOWED. WE DID THE FOLLOWING. THE PIPER PLAYED HIS TUNE AND WE COCK-A-DOOD-LE-DOOD. WE FOLLOWED THE BUGLE OF SWEET GENERAL GOOD![37]
> **Mock** WE SHOULD NOT HAVE FOLLOWED.
> **Joe** We are the hungry chicks of defeat, Mock, the waiting dodos, the soon to be extinct. We are insignificant, ignored, afraid, silent and forgotten. WE ARE THE LAST PLACE. (159-160)

Joe's argument is clever and seductive, his is a nihilism which glories in defeat. He argues that they themselves gave up their powers of decision-making to the 'General Good' and have received their rewards: he quite happily furnishes their space with the second-hand, rusty and broken goods that are raining down on them throughout the play (120). I would argue that the way their space fills up with more and more unwanted rubbish mirrors the gradual loss of a sense of place and self experienced by the characters. These consumer goods serve to obscure the distinctiveness of place that makes it able to provide a sense of identity, serving, as they do, to homogenise and standardise its features.

Compared to Joe, Mock seems less articulate, less attuned to 'reality' and almost childish in his refusal to accept the status quo. And yet, it is implied that it is Mock's obstinate refusal to "LIVE IN SHAME" and his insistence on "CHOICE" (158) that might save Wales from (cultural) annihilation. His name signifies that 'mockery' could be a tool to unsettle and question the status quo, thus functioning much like Bhabha's concept of mimicry (cf. Jeni Williams, "Fantastic Fictions" 417). 'Mimicry' is a result of colonialism and also a tool against the influences of colonialism: as the colonisers impress their values, their moral system, etc. on the colonised subject, the colonised subject is forced to take them on board and to 'imitate' them, as they are not her/his own. At the same time, the coloniser can never be sure if the mask of obedience, i.e. the perfect imitation of the coloniser's values and ideas, does not

[37] The play puns on the phrase 'the general good', which is transformed into the person 'General Good', who is identified with colonial military power. Implied in the comparison is the seemingly rational argument for colonialism, namely the 'white man's [sic] burden' of bringing 'civilisation' to the colonies in the name of 'the general good'. Like other Welsh writers, Thomas draws an explicit parallel between the plight of the North American Native Americans and the Welsh: Mock hates the "General Good" because "it was General Good who slaughtered red Indians, wiped them off the face of the earth and murdered the buffaloes, turning the prairies into blood", implying that a similar fate might be lying in store for them (122).

hide a mutinous spirit beneath it. Furthermore, through an imperfect imitation (and imitation is by nature imperfect), the coloniser's values and ideas are 'played back' at her/him in a 'mongrelised' way, unsettling her/him in her/his own world-view. Thus, 'mimicry' can be used as a political tool, although its effects can obviously only be measured over a long time, if at all (cf. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man", cf. also Moore-Gilbert 120 *et passim*). Mock is an example of the unsettling power of the 'mockery' of mimicry, for he never ceases to question the status quo, although it remains questionable whether mimicry/mockery alone can be a force for change, or whether political action must follow in order to achieve real change.[38] A further way to subvert Joe's 'down-to-earth' nihilism is by harnessing the force of dreams and of art. Mock seems to be the only character who can dream. Although his dreams are mostly nightmares in which his life is threatened, he also has enabling dreams, which show him a way into his own past in which he might have known and loved an artist called Dotty. Recalling his dream, he says:

> **Mock** . . . She is an artist. She paints with oil on canvas. Sea horses and a heavy sky, a moon or sun of red. She is naked, but she dances on the sea, her long hair flows, her arms reach up, perhaps she is laughing, perhaps she is free. She is sprinkling yellow flowers on a dead red sea.
> *[Pause.]*
> She turns and looks at me, I feel I should know her... I think that I used to love her... She said art can save culture. (135)

Here, the frightening image of the red dead sea, which might be the same sea that surrounds the slaughterhouse, is changed through art: Dotty re-imagines it by filling it with sea horses and by sprinkling yellow flowers on it. Despite the heavy sky, she can dance across the sea and the fearful image that suggested drowning to Mock has been brought under control. 'Art can save culture' because through art, alternative versions of reality can be explored and a way out of the debilitating status quo might be found.

This process is anything but straightforward, however. Hampered by Mock's insistence that he do his job in his own way against the wish of the unseen Mr Cragg,[39] Joe wrestles Mock to the ground first verbally than literally. He beats him up and eventually hangs him up like a carcass. Yet, Thomas does not stage defeat in the face of the colonised subject's collaboration with the coloniser – the end of the

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[38] This is an issue not resolved in the play, which focuses on the psychology of (post)colonialism rather than the political struggle itself.

[39] Mr Cragg is Mock's and Joe's employer who never appears in the play, but who controls the characters' actions in a way which brings to mind the equally unseen Godot in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952) or Wilson in Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter* (1957). In a postcolonial reading, Cragg symbolises the neo/colonial power Joe is in thrall to and to whom Mock tries to stand up to.

play suggests that Mock will live on as a nagging memory and keep the last vestiges of difference and individuality alive in the face of cultural homogenisation. The importance of the fact that Mock's consciousness survives together with his belief that 'art can save culture' is brought out in the last minutes of the play: the last image the audience sees is "*a painting of a woman dancing on a red sea*" that "*can be seen hanging above the set*" as "*the lights fade*" (166). Secondly, the last words are spoken by Mock, who reiterates "I'm still here, Joe. . . . I AM STILL HERE" (166), an echo of his triumphant cry as he woke up from his nightmare of drowning, signifying that he will turn into a tenacious memory that will be forever in the back of Joe's mind.

Song from a Forgotten City is another radically anti-realist play, in which the space of the city is explored. The play premiered at the Chapter Arts Centre in Cardiff in early 1995, toured Wales and the UK and then opened at the Royal Court Theatre in London as a Barclays New Stages Award winner. The play also toured internationally, playing at the British Theatre Festival in Bucharest (Romania), the Bonn Biennale (Germany) and the Melbourne International Festival (Australia). I believe that the anti-realist nature of the play lends itself to translation – it allows for a variety of interpretations and thus becomes meaningful in more than one specific context. The play's central preoccupations, namely the search for a meaningful identity, an identity which is not 'small', but loud, affirmative and metropolitan, and the concern with fiction, reality and the role of the artist in society, are, indeed, meaningful in an international context – especially in countries in which, for cultural or historical reasons, the national question has not been answered.[40] I would like to focus here on the writer's dream of the metropolis as a place for an affirmative national identity, one which is not reducible to familiar stereotypes.

Song of a Forgotten City plays on two fictional levels. On the first level, Carlyle, a writer, lives with his friends Benny and Jojo in a squat in an area which is

[40] In this context, I find it interesting that the play has been translated into German and Catalan. Catalonia is, of course, another nation without state, whose political predicament is similar to that of Wales and which can thus be expected to be interested in the issues explored in the play. The German interest is, on the face of it, harder to explain, were it not for the fact that the play's theme of a national identity based on the dream of a metropolis (and metropolitan lifestyle) reflects the shift of German national consciousness when Berlin became capital of Germany (again) in 1990. The fact that it probably took until the last change of government in 1999 before Berlin really *felt* like the capital of Germany probably made this play – with all its questions of what a national identity might consist of – a pertinent one in the German context. Another reason could be that the new political climate was now more conducive to discussing the difficult issue of national identity – especially as this discussion occurs within a (for Germans) non-threatening context.

signified as a "*docklands location*" in Cardiff. "*Syringes and whisky bottles litter the set*" (65) and we get the impression that none of the men has a very firm grasp on reality. The play opens, however, on another fictional level, namely the Angel Hotel in Cardiff on International day. Wales has just lost a rugby game and the city seems to echo with the silence of defeat. Carlyle appears and asks for a room and the themes of the play are developed in the conversation between him, the night-porter and the bellboy. The fictional levels increasingly intersect, so that the audiences cannot be sure which of these is 'real' and which might be the product of the writer Carlyle's imagination. Audience expectations are subverted, as the expected realist setting of the hotel is again and again revealed as a fiction – although it remains unclear whether this is a fictional hotel of Carlyle's imagination or the 'real' Angel Hotel in Cardiff. Indeed, at one moment in the play it becomes unclear whether the whole play is not a figment of Carlyle's imagination (112), at another Carlyle himself is identified as a "major character", which suggests that he himself is not 'real' (43). This elaborate shifting of fictional levels is not purely playful, however. Through this device, Thomas explores the experience of being "insignificant" and "voiceless" as an inhabitant of a small country, whose preoccupations have no impact whatsoever on an international platform. Thus, the figure of the Welsh night-porter, a "minor character", becomes a symbol for Welsh people in general:

> **Carlyle** The voice of the Welsh Night-Porter is invisible in the pan-national world of fiction, he and many of his ilk will be consigned to the dustbin of the insignificant forever.
> **Night-Porter** I am not insignificant.
> **Carlyle** I know that and you know that but who else in this world cares Night-Porter?
> **Night-Porter** I care.
> **Carlyle** And I care too, my job is to give a voice to the voiceless, the dispossessed, the fuck all squareds who come from fuck all and who got fuck all. . . . Our voices must be heard Night-Porter, we must play our part on the world stage. We've got to show that the way we live, love and die means something, that we are part of the world, not unique but similar, universal, like small countries all over the world! You're a minor character Night-Porter.
> **Night-Porter** Well fuck me, there was me thinking I was real. (41-42)

Carlyle's words echo Ed Thomas's own views on the relative insignificance of Wales internationally: "The way we live our culture doesn't mean anything to anyone else" ("Wanted" 56). In *Song from a Forgotten City*, Thomas has moved beyond the introspective mood of *House of America* and *Flowers of the Read Dead Sea* – his main preoccupation is the barely existent image Wales projects in an international context. Within the international world of fiction, the Welsh night-porter is imagined as an insignificant figure and his protestations that he is, within his own world, not at

all insignificant, do not change that position. Carlyle's, that is, the writer's, answer is to provide a "voice for the voiceless" – but not by moving the actual lives of the "dispossessed" centre-stage, as Alan Osborne, Laurence Allan and, recently, Patrick Jones had done. Indeed, Thomas is dismissive of the realist theatre of the 1970s and 1980s:

> I think that theatre should release the imagination for people who want to be taken on a journey. . . . I dislike the kind of theatre, represented by the theatre of the 70s and 80s, that tries to bring everything down to ordinariness. . . . I enjoy the theatre of the imagination, the theatre of possibilities. . . .The actors are the fiction-makers and the audience are the collaborators. To refuse to acknowledge this fundamental difference is to create the theatre of the ordinary. In my kind of theatre I aim at the extraordinary. ("'Not Much of a Dream Then Is It?'")

Ed Thomas does not believe that the job of the dramatist is to make the socially invisible underclass visible, but to imagine a world in which Welsh night-porters are no longer invisible. The kind of cultural invisibility and lack of self-confidence Thomas speaks about is thus seen as a product not of social inequalities but of the inability to partake of an internationally exportable mythology – it is seen as a state of mind ("'Not Much of a Dream Then Is It?'" 116). Carlyle does not take it upon himself to speak for the culturally or otherwise "dispossessed"; instead, he includes himself among the "dispossessed" – those who are doomed to play bit-parts on the world-stage, if at all. His response is to imagine a metropolitan Wales, a place of possibilities:

> **Carlyle** It's a metropolis man. (*Pause*) A place where something good might happen. You get off a train and you look up at the tall buildings where the sun reflects in all the windows. You hear a clock striking twelve... you smell food from all over the world coming at you from every angle, and you hear ships blowing their horns as they come into dock man. You feel throbbing in the pit of your stomach. You feel alive. The city is yours. You know that people from all over the world want to come and visit it... to feel it for themselves. They want to share your city with you for a day... or a week... then go back home and tell their people that they never knew such a city existed man. Your city. Your country's city. You aren't invisible. . . . A place where you aint [sic] treated like a piece of shit. A place where you're not a fuck-all squared. A place that counts on the scale of things. It is noted for something good. It is not invisible. (57-58)

Carlyle's long, rambling, stoned vision of the metropolis is remarkable for its lack of detail. Indeed, he does not actually describe a place at all, but a state of mind. It is definitely not Cardiff, for Carlyle describes the Welsh capital city as a potential candidate for metropolitan status, which has, however, some growing to do:

> **Carlyle** . . . I came to the city in search of the metropolis and found only Cardiff. This aint [sic] a city for dreamers man. Sometimes I'm not sure it's a

> city at all, more like a place waiting for something good to happen. Like it hasn't been invented yet. Like it doesn't really believe it exists. (45)

The metropolis is a place for "dreamers"; it is a place that does not form its inhabitants so much as provide a mould for people to leave their impression in. Carlyle's vision encompasses the need for freedom and for agency – rootedness, a sense of belonging and tradition do not seem to figure in his vision. The anti-realist vision of the metropolis means, however, that this space of possibility might mean different things to different people. Another important feature of the metropolis is that it is large: it is thus a measure of Welsh ambition, self-confidence and a certain ability to 'think big' which has nothing to do with the size of the Welsh population. Indeed, when Carlyle, in an earlier scene, tries to 'pitch' his vision of the Welsh metropolis "with 2 or 3 million people, man" to the film-maker Jackson, Jackson's incredulous comment ("But the fucking country's only got 3 million", 47) reveals him as someone who has not got the imagination to visualise how the spirit of the metropolis might be meaningful for Wales. Thirdly, like the famous film whose title it echoes, Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, Carlyle's metropolis is a place of the future, although it is an utopian vision, no dystopia. As mentioned above, tradition and history do not seem to figure in Carlyle's vision and there is no palpable sense of place unless one were to define it as encompassing the freedom of the city's inhabitants to live as they please. I do not read this as a critique of a historical view *per se*, however, but as a critique of a reduction of identity to 'traditional' national stereotypes. The play opens with images of a lost rugby game, of a silent pub in which the barman commits suicide because the crowd fails to sing and of the silent crowd watching the highlights of the lost game in Welsh, a language that nobody in the crowd understands (14-21). The characters reminisce about "the golden years" in which "Taffy knew his rugby" (21-22, cf. Jeni Williams, "Fantastic Fictions" 424-25). The implications are clear: even if rugby-playing, communal singing and a sense of self maintained through the Welsh language had been meaningful once, they are so no longer, at least not in Cardiff. Later, when Jackson, high on cocaine, dreamily puts his hand into a water-filled washbasin and 'remembers' Wales as a peaceful, rural place ("It was good Carlyle… it was real, it was my country, our country… it was Wales Carlyle… it was beautiful…", 49), Carlyle brutally destroys this flight of fancy by pulling "*a dead, poisoned, plastic fish and a hand holding a sword out of a bucket*" (49), thus undermining the image of the rural idyll by pointing out the ravages of environmental damage and the meaninglessness of history (seen as a history of battles) for the present. As Jeni Williams points out, the play shows

how a tradition reduced to stereotypes cannot support a meaningful identity in the present ("Fantastic Fictions" 413). Instead, the basis for a future in which Wales appears "on the map" is to have a space of opportunity and possibility, in which stereotypes no longer keep people back.

The play implies that the metropolis of Carlyle's imagination could be the sought-for departure from meaningless tradition and debilitating stereotypes: in a proto-mythical image, which conjures up the bible's nativity scene, Carlyle dreams up the birth of a nation:

> **Carlyle** Inside my head is a city of seven or eight million people. A Welsh city. A metropolis. A city with high life and low life with stasis in between. A city of opportunity. A city of death. . . . Somewhere on the outskirts of the city a man and a woman are making their way to a hotel. . . . The woman is heavily pregnant. . . . She wants to give birth in the city. She wants it to happen in the city because she wants to give birth to a country. Without a city she can't have a country. She can only imagine the pain of birth. But she wants to give birth. She wants a country. She imagines the city. A metropolis. (115-16)

Heavily symbolic, this narrative of the birth of a nation is Carlyle's own 'brainchild'. It could be the beginning of a new national myth, which would have the metropolis, the space of possibility, at its centre.

The play with fictionality in *Song from a Forgotten City* and its anti-realist nature contribute to the interpretation that the audience of Thomas's 'theatre of invention' must be an active, creative audience, which helps flesh out the gaps in Carlyle's vision according to their own dreams. Thomas confers on the audience a great deal of freedom, but also a great deal of responsibility, as the metropolis described – and it is only described and not indicated in any way through the stage space – remains without detail and almost featureless to the end. Depending on the audience and its expectations, the play can thus be hailed as a great imaginative feat or a failure, if the audience should decide not to accept the responsibility to imagine the metropolis for itself – let alone if the audience does not agree with the image of the 'metropolis' as a viable space for a national identity. But Thomas does agree with Howard Barker, when the latter insists on the willingness and the responsibility of the audience to think for itself:

> The liberal theatre wants to give messages. It has always wanted to give messages, it is its way of handling conscience. But no one believes the messages, even while they applaud them. . . . It is always the case that the audience is willing to know more, and to endure more, than the dramatist or producer trusts it with. The audience has been treated like a child even by the best theatres. It has been led to meaning, as if truth were a lunch. The theatre is not a disseminator of truth but a provider of versions. Its statements are

> provisional. In a time when nothing is clear, the inflicting of clarity is a stale arrogance. (Barker 45)

Thus, the metropolis, the space of possibilities, has to remain a vision without detail by definition. A detailed, clear image would have been an imposition of Carlyle's and, by implication, Thomas's vision on the audience, who would have been free to agree or disagree with the vision shown, but who would not have been able to contribute their own vision. That does not mean that the theatrical experiment that is *Song from a Forgotten City* cannot fail if the audience finds the journey on which it has been taken on too difficult. I would argue that *Gas Station Angel* develops Thomas's 'theatre of invention' further, but, by including a theatrical form of magic realism, makes the journey an easier one to take.

Gas Station Angel was premiered at the Newcastle Playhouse in 1998 in a co-production between Fiction Factory and the Royal Court Theatre. Subsequently it toured Wales, the UK and Europe. It has been translated into German and has been played by repertory companies in Berlin, Bremen, Hannover (Hanover) and Hamburg. The notes for the play indicate that a Spanish production is planned for Bogota in Columbia. Like the previous plays, *Gas Station Angel* has changed with different productions and two different playtexts have been published. The changes include a changed order of scenes, the cutting of two minor scenes involving the chorus of teenagers and old drinkers in the pub, and some rewriting. The focus here will be on the original playtext published by Methuen in 1998 but on important changes in the revised version published in 2002 will also be commented upon.

What is most striking about *Gas Station Angel* is the way in which fluidity is used as the central organising principle: the play is not overtly concerned with plot or character development, but with presenting a collage of stories told by various characters through which a Welsh reality is imagined. The play forms an organic whole – the revised version more so than the first version, as I shall show below – and one suspects that the play's two-part-structure has more to do with convenience – one does need an interval in a play of this length – than with any fictional reasons. As in other contemporary plays which employ story-telling as a structural element (cf. Conor McPherson, *The Weir*, Michael Frayn, *Copenhagen*, Neil LaBute, *Bash*), the story unfolds as it is told by its protagonists. What makes *Gas Station Angel* such a brilliantly innovative play is the way the plot follows the narration/narrators. There are many points of view; major characters and minor characters have a chance to manipulate the plot by presenting their views; and, importantly, the stage setting changes according to the story told. Sonja Fielitz refers to the way in which a

sense of place is created through dialogue as "Wortkulisse" (word scenery, 163 *et passim*). In other words, the scenery is mainly created through the stories told about it, a characteristic *Gas Station Angel* shares with most non-realistic plays. 'Word scenery' is by no means a new way of creating a sense of place on stage; indeed, most theatre until the realist period has made use of the dialogue to 'set a scene'. In a postcolonial context, word scenery acquires a political meaning however, since the power of the convention of European stage-realism is denied in favour of a more imaginative way of staging place, which is often connected to indigenous modes of story-telling and orality (cf. Gilbert and Tompkins 126 ff). In *Gas Station Angel*, too, the scenery is not so much shown as 'told' and there are a great variety of voices which do the 'telling'. Jeni Williams comments on how this technique creates an almost orchestral effect:

> Rather than focusing on the individual trajectory of a single voice at the expense of the others Thomas creates a polyphonic texture that quickly builds a community of voices. And even though the characters are only talking, the layers of intercut memories produce a sense of activity and movement, memories that bubble up and enact themselves before our eyes rather than speaking from any fixed place or present. (Jeni Williams, "Fantastic Fictions" 440)

Of course, the political interpretation, especially if it is given a postcolonial slant, is that every single one of these voices has to be heard, because only if all voices are heard does the audience get the 'full' picture. Despite a clear distinction between major and minor characters, none of these voices is marginalised. The fluidity of the plot is further reinforced by an equal fluidity of a multi-dimensional and multi-functional setting:

> *Set in an ever fluid landscape but based on the remaining half of a house whose other half has fallen into the sea. Dislocated, unreal, fantastic, functional, witty and full of possibility. Beds turn into cars, mountain becomes beach, airport becomes supermarket, this world the underworld, shapes and structures bent and shaped to become something else. Transformation is everything, magic and invention vital. Dreams, myth and reality exist on the same plane as long as the sky doesn't fall down to earth.* (2; stage direction omitted in the revised version of the play)

By giving the characters the power to change the background to their story, the central point of the play, namely the ability to change one's life by imagining it differently, is underscored in a powerful way. Furthermore, the overlapping of "dreams, myth and reality" on the same plane of existence indicate that the play can be read as magic-realism transferred to the stage (cf. Jeni Williams, "Fantastic Fictions" 438). Although magic realism has routinely been identified with postcolonial writing, I would not agree that this must be automatically so. A pertinent

example would be Günter Grass's seminal novel *Die Blechtrommel* (*The Tin Drum*), which includes magic-realist elements and which was an acknowledged source for Salman Rushdie's equally important novel *Midnight's Children*. While the latter novelist clearly makes use of magic realism as a technique to destabilise the colonial 'reality' impressed on India by Britain, a similar case cannot be made for *Die Blechtrommel*, which catalogues Germany's slide into fascism and the immediate post-war years from a slightly off-centre perspective (both geographically and through the viewpoint of a vertically challenged narrator). I would, however, tend to read Ed Thomas's use of magic realism in *Gas Station Angel* within the postcolonial paradigm. In *Gas Station Angel* a true centring of the Welsh position takes place; the play attempts a reconciliation between present and past, this world and the 'underworld', reality and imagination – and it is the outcome of this reconciliation which turn out to be the true voices of Wales.[41] The play is written against the tradition of English stage realism and against the pervasive cynical fatalism of the colonial subject (cf. Sid in *House of America* or Joe in *Flowers of the Dead Red Sea*). Furthermore, as Jeni Williams rightly points out, the play rejects conventional notions of the 'hero-narrative', so characteristic of mainstream drama:

> It is interesting that Thomas's strategic allocation of attention to . . . peripheral voices attracted the censures of *The Independent* critic Dominic Cavendish who did not seem to understand it. Already uncomfortable about the play's 'whimsy,' he complained that 'the play's main problem is that, for all their dreams of flight, Ace and Bron never stand out from the rest of the crazy talking town.' Yet, the point is surely not that they are the special ones, the only ones who want extraordinary things, but that . . . their voices are part of a woven texture of stories that challenge the idea of the 'chosen one,' of the fixed and favoured centre. ("Fantastic Fictions" 449)

Eschewing the traditional hero-narrative for a tapestry of voices, a new narrative of the Welsh nation seems possible in the play.

The play oscillates between two main settings to which a third world, namely Bron's and Ace's imagined Wales of the future, is added in the second part of the play. Jeni Williams has read the "unfixed rural setting" of the play as the space of the pastoral romance (440), and the almost uncharacteristically upbeat, life-affirming overall tone of the play with the romance plot of Ace's and Bron's meeting at its centre does make such a reading plausible. I would however disagree slightly with her assertion that the rural setting is 'unfixed', as the playtext does give an indication of its settings. The first main setting is the house "*whose other half has fallen into*

[41] The fluid shifts between this world and the underworld seems to suggest that the collection of Celtic mythological folktales called *The Mabinogion* may have been an influence on the play.

the sea" (2). The coastal setting of the house is not identified as such, but the fact that the house is built on 'fairy-land' (12 *et passim*) and that its environment seems to invite romance, make an identification of the location as west Wales possible, which has traditionally been identified with the uncanny, and the earthy, sexual nature of love. Furthermore, one of Manny's remarks seems to indicate that the family live close to Llanelli (11), which also seems to be the 'smalltown' where Bron and her family live (21). Taking this literal reading further, Swansea airport could be identified as the airport to which Bri takes Bron (29). However, while this reading does pin down the location of the action fairly closely, the atmosphere of small-town life created in the play transcends its west Walian setting. Taking that location as a starting point, the play's emphasis on the world of the imagination makes this play meaningful for the nation as a whole.

Ace's family live in a house built close to the coast, which is slowly eaten away by the sea. Through the cyclical time-structure of the play, which follows the traditionally cyclical structures of oral story-telling, the audience sees the result of the big storm that finally makes half of the house collapse into the sea from the beginning of the play, but the events leading up to the storm are then narrated in the first part of the play. Like the house in *House of America*, this ruin of a house can be read as a symbol for defeat and claustrophobia. However, the inhabitants of the house in *House of America* are better compared to the 'white trash world' of the James family in *Gas Station Angel*, while the house and Manny can be read as a certain kind of Welsh nationalism. The house is presented as only barely surviving the onslaught of a force beyond its inhabitants' control until half of it finally loses that battle. The tenacity of survival, even if only half of the house still stands after the storm, must be read together with Manny's defiant cry "We'll still be here. (*Pause.*) I'll still be here. (*Pause.*) I WILL STILL BE HERE!!!" (51). Manny here echoes Mock's use of the same phrase in *Flowers of the Dead Red Sea* and it refers to a nationalism which, confronted with, on the one hand, a daily onslaught against its very existence and, on the other hand, a far more pernicious denial of its very existence, has maybe become entrenched in a purely oppositional stance.[42]

[42] Although it is tempting to read Manny's use of the phrase "We'll still be here" and the disappearance of half of the house in terms of the slowly disappearing Welsh language and Welsh language culture, I do not think that that is the intention of the author. Bron and Ace, the protagonists of the kind of Welsh future that Thomas dreams of, are both Welsh-speakers (the latter to a lesser degree than the former) and, thus, a polarisation of defeat and survival of Welsh culture along linguistic lines cannot be a worthwhile interpretation. I would suggest that it is rather more worthwhile to read the house in terms

Manny's response to the eviction order from the council and to the ultimately stronger sea is to shake his fist and vow to stay alive despite the odds, but it does not involve an effort to re-imagine his position (6). Change, for him, implies surrender and even a pointless resistance seems to be better than that.

> **Mary Annie** Our house will fall into the sea.
> **Manny** So into the sea it will fall then.
> **Mary Annie** But ...
> **Manny** We're not moving, Mary Annie. (10)

Manny is identified with the house, a structure that has almost miraculously withstood the elements of change and of destruction over time, but that clearly cannot fulfil its function, once one half of it has been swallowed up by the sea. The ruined house, thus, is a symbol for a fossilised Welsh identity, into which Manny retreats and which is no longer able to create a meaningful national ideology for the present (cf. Hansjörg Bay's definition of a fossilised ideological narrative as a 'narrative shell').

This reading is underscored by the way the house is literally undermined by the workings of the fairies, the tylwyth teg, who are associated with the land. In my reading, the tylwyth teg symbolise the world of magic and of possibilities in the play – a world which is not without danger, as the tylwyth teg also confuse people and lead them to commit actions they would not normally have committed (cf. Mary Annie's temporary loss of sanity when she shoots Bron's brother Bri). Mary Annie, who feels the influence of the 'otherworld' of magic most strongly, says of the fairies: "Magical things can still happen in this cruel world, see. You've just got to know where to look, that's all". While she explains her belief that the fairies have helped her get pregnant with Ace, "[*m*]*usic can be heard as we see fairies, angels and succubae dance*" (13), and the magic of the tylwyth teg becomes visible for an instant or – depending on one's interpretation – the magic of storytelling makes the tylwyth teg become alive. In both cases, the anarchic energy of magic disrupts the every-day. According to Jan Morris, the word 'fairies' does not describe the character of the tylwyth teg adequately:

> Some people thought that the souls of the Druids, or even later the Romans, hat been transmuted into the *Tylwyth Teg*. . . . They were powerful beings. Though they were generally small of stature, they were not winged or dainty in the nursery kind. Usually invisible, they manifested themselves especially at scenes of ritual or festivity – dances, weddings, funerals, when unsuspecting mortals, very often drunk, were liable to be snatched into their spell. They were unpredictable and often vindictive, and they were able to change a man's character . . . . More alarming still, they could play around with time – cross

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of a fossilised ideological shell, which can no longer provide meaningful guidance to its inhabitants.

> the path of the *Tylwyth Teg*, and chronology would lose all meaning for you . . . . (Morris 86-87)

In a sense, the tylwyth teg undermine not only the house and the fossilised national ideology associated with it but also the whole plot structure of the play: chronology and linearity of story-telling lose their meaning and the magic of imagination is just as real as 'reality' itself. There are many ways of interpreting the tylwyth teg, the 'otherworld' they inhabit and the chaos they wreak in 'this world' psychoanalytically, but I would like to concentrate on a more political interpretation. Mary Annie is convinced that the tylwyth teg want to take revenge on the house and its inhabitants:

> **Mary Annie** I've seen them with my own eyes, my mother's seen them and her mother before that, they used our field, they danced on it till [Manny] ploughed it all up, but they won't dance again till they've had their revenge on us. It's not the council we got to be afraid of, it's the fairies. They're in cahoots with the sea. (15)

Mary Annie is the character who is presented as being most in tune with the living every-day traditions of Wales, which includes the baking of Welsh cakes and the singing of Welsh-language songs like 'Myfanwy'. Judging from Manny's dismissive attitude towards her singing (12), he does not value her way of keeping traditions alive, so concerned is he about the continued survival of the house – not realising that it is every-day gestures like hers that make the 'house of Wales' inhabitable. Moreover, he seems to have ploughed the field in ignorance of the fairies' existence, imposing his view of rationality and sanity on the fairies' 'otherworld'. The revenge of the fairies, however disruptive it might be, is therefore ultimately beneficial, since it brings Manny, who has, indeed, survived the storm in the second part of the play, back in touch with his own 'roots'. Interestingly, the vision created by Manny and Mary Annie, who are once again the archetypal couple 'Man' and 'Wiff', is that of a centred Wales, is radically altered and independent from the British government and global capitalism. It is, in fact, the vision of a sustainable community.

> **Mary Annie** We'll mop up the carpets.
> **Manny** Rebuild the house.
> **Mary Annie** And start again.
> **Manny** Cleaned.
> **Mary Annie** De-lotteried.
> **Manny** De-governed.
> **Mary Annie** Ungoverned.
> **Manny** Free. (72)

Interestingly, this explicitly political scene, in which a possible future for Wales is imagined as a sustainable community – in other words, as an environmentally sound, politically independent nation – was shortened significantly in the second

printed version of the play, cutting out the environmental aspect almost completely but leaving in the anti-capitalist ideas (382-383).

The world of the Ace family is juxtaposed with the "*white-trash world*" of the James family, which is called to conjure up a world populated by thugs and football hooligans but also because it reflects the self-definition of the characters as essentially worthless (16). This world is associated with the James' house (16), the modernised 'Ship and Pilot' pub (18-19), the supermarket where Bron works (20 *et passim*) and the park where anonymous teenagers argue about brand names, drink, take drugs and have sex (30-33). Here, too, the scenery is primarily created through the stories told about it, and its central characteristic is that it is fake. Symbolic for this is the modernised 'Ship and Pilot' pub where Gruff goes to drink because "the Ship's the place I've always drunk, . . . and my father did, and his father before that" (18). The pub has changed beyond recognition since Mr. Entertainment has transformed it into a noisy money-making machine (19). The interior of the pub has been 'gentrified' to look like a 'Laura Ashley country kitchen', but appearances do not make for reality:

> **Gruff** [I]t's a pub not a bastard country kitchen pretending to be a country kitchen with flowers and curtains and fancy little alcoves with plasterboard and ply, it's all crap. And it's not even wood. It's fucking joke wood. WHO THE FUCK ARE THEY TRYING TO KID?" (19)

The truth is that nobody believes in that fake gentility – but the characters have nowhere else to go. Speaking about Patsy, one of the teenagers in the park, Ace comments: "She's only seventeen but already the prison bars are crowding her head" (32). This comment might well be made of all inhabitants of the 'white-trash' world: because they do not have the imagination to imagine a different world for themselves, they are effectively imprisoned in the fake, plastic hell which has been created for them. Gruff does not keep going back to the 'Ship and Pilot' because he likes it but because he cannot imagine going anywhere else (19-20). The drinkers he joins there have lost all individuality and are, like the chorus of anonymous teenagers in the park, only identified by different voice. However, where teenagers like Patsy were still able to mourn the fact that they "ain't got no dreams" (32), the drinkers in the pub are reduced to rugby chants in lieu of conversation (39).[43] Quality of life is here measured by consumption: Keith, who is Bron's boss at the

[43] Both the choral scenes of the teenagers in the park and the drinkers in the pub have been cut in the revised version. Although they help to juxtapose the 'white-trash world' with the world of possibilities Ace and Bron imagine for themselves, I believe the scenes were cut because these new characters, who only appear very briefly, distract from the main characters, especially if the characters were doubled by the cast.

supermarket in the first version of the play and who is a "trolley-boy" in the second version, suggests to her that "[y]ou can tell what kind of a person someone is by the chocolate they eat", a chat-up line which is typical for the consumerist world the characters live in (64). Bron's brothers Bri and Marshall are locked in a conflict of their own. When they were children, Bri had saved Marshall from drowning, yet their subsequent story shows that both of them are unable to become the heroes of their remarkable tale. Unable to get any recognition for his deed from his father, Bri thinks up ever wilder strategies to regain, if not his father's affection, then at least a reaction. In the end he slaughters Dyfrig's lambs before he disappears, his disappearance an echo of that most mysterious occurrence in Welsh popular culture over the last few years – the disappearance of Richey Evans, the erstwhile singer of the Manic Street Preachers. As Jeni Williams has pointed out, Bri's tale makes him almost a Sid-like figure but "unlike that of Sid, it is never allowed to become tragic. Thomas evokes the love-affair of the doomed hero with his absent/distant father in order to displace it firmly from the centre and allow other narratives, other voices that space" (444).

Only Bron can escape the confines of this sick world. Acting on impulse, she takes Bri's Marina 1800 TC and invites Ace to go for a ride "into the heart of Saturday night" (16). They drive to the airport, spend a night at a motel and then return the next day. Thus, their escape is not a literal one: contrary to the main characters of earlier plays, whose escape is always a literal escape from the confines of Wales (J.O. Francis's *Change*, Emlyn Williams's *The Corn is Green*, Gwyn Thomas's *The Keep*) or whose inability to escape signals the extent of their despair and is, often, their doom (Alan Osborne, *Bull, Rock and Nut*, *In Sunshine and In Shadow*, Patrick Jones, *Everything Must Go*), Bron and Ace's escape is one of the imagination. Their freedom is a freedom of the mind, they have no 'prison bars inside their heads' because they create the landscape of their imagination themselves:

> **Ace** We were stoned and beautiful taking time out in the country, innocent and free. And as we drove further and further and higher and higher into the night I swear I saw most of Wales spread out in front of me. . . . I could see for miles. Into England, Devon, Cornwall and beyond Cornwall, France, then Spain and right at the bottom at the far end of the horizon, I swear I can see the lights of North Africa. All of Europe spread out in front of me, of us. . . . I felt in my bones that the times are a-changing. Maybe I can soon call myself a European. A Welsh European, with my own language and the rudiments of another at the tip of my tongue . . . . (75)

Ace's stoned, rambling monologue is, I would argue, an expression of the new paradigm of complexity, in which the place of Wales takes up the centre of Ace's personal map. Yet, with ease, he transcends Wales and connects Wales with various English counties and then with European countries in a way which characterises the non-hierarchical networks of localities in the theories of sustainable communities and complex systems. Ace envisions a time when issues of identity have stopped preoccupying Welsh people so that they can call themselves "Welsh Europeans". The phrase "Welsh Europeans", which was used by Raymond Williams as early as 1978 and which gained currency in the pro-devolution camp in1979 (cf. Osmond 144), conjures up a Welshness which is articulated in opposition to a 'Welsh and British' or a 'British (instead of a Welsh)' identity. Since the 1960s, a slow transformation distanced the Welsh intellectual left from England and from the use of the word 'Britain' as meaning England. For somebody like Raymond Williams "England, bourgeois England, wasn't [his] point of reference any more" (quoted in Osmond 145, Daniel Williams, *Raymond Williams*) and the reference to a Wales situated within Europe instead of Britain seemed to promise a certain amount of freedom. It is a call for a political independence beyond the nation-state, through which the nation without state can bypass the nation state and become its own political agent in a "Europe of the regions". This process of dissociation for the politically interested Welsh intelligentsia could only continue in the years of British conservatism. In the climate of renewed enthusiasm after the yes-vote for devolution after 1997, Ed Thomas uses the phrase 'Welsh Europeans' again to underline his hopes for a new sense of Welsh self-confidence, which places Wales side by side with England, different but equal. It clearly is an expression of the sense of optimism felt by a certain section of the Welsh population shortly after 1997, an optimism which has, however, to be accompanied by the willingness to imagine a new mental landscape for Wales. In the play, Bron is given the voice to articulate the political message of the play: "[t]o be Welsh at the end of the twentieth century you got to have imagination" (63). Another line, which was deleted from the revised version of the play, reads "We just got to use our imagination and stay away from supervisors . . . . Because they fuck up your head, make you forget who you are" (66). Ed Thomas, whose own political education was significantly influenced by Gwyn A. Williams, here seems to be engaging in a conversation with Williams's famously pessimistic conclusion to his book *When Was Wales?* ("Wanted" 56, Williams 304). In order to 'produce Wales', Thomas seems to say, Welsh people need to imagine Wales according to their own wishes. In a web-chat in September

1997, a medium so quick that it is generally not conducive to good grammar, he describes his political vision thus:

> I see my job as a writer is to help people imagine a new Wales... not just one new Wales but two million new Waleses! If you accept that the stereotypes are no good anymore – we've only got one mine left – and you want to call yourself Welsh first and maybe British second. Then you just make it up!! Make Wales cool, hip and sexy! ("Ed Thomas discusses...")

Gas Station Angel is essentially a play for the future: Ed Thomas asks his audience to dispense with the unproductive stereotypes and fossilised identities of the past (in the shape of the house that falls into the sea) and to invent a Wales of the future. Because he is aware of the potential complexity of that future, he argues against a realist reproduction of reality of Wales. Heike Roms notes:

> Theatrical naturalism, usually associated with a truthful reproduction of reality, in [Thomas's] view produces an invented and distorted image of Wales, whereas the 'theatre of invention' is truly representative of Welsh reality. . . . The 'theatre of invention' has thus set itself a difficult task: rather than reproducing an actual Welsh identity, it seeks to represent a Wales that does not yet exist. ("Caught in the Act" 133)

Thus, the theory of complexity can be said to underpin *Gas Station Angel* in a central way, resulting in a play that is complex in its structure and in its content. This sense of complexity is informed by Thomas's essentially postcolonial politics which seek to remove Wales from its place in the shadow and make its voice heard outside the British Isles. Furthermore, the play's ending is largely left open. The revised version of the play achieves more of a sense of closure through a re-arrangement of scenes and a revised ending: in the revised version, it becomes clearer that Ace tells Bron of their 'family secret', namely that Bri has in fact been shot by a crazed and distraught Mary Annie, to whom Bri appeared to be one of the tylwyth teg, and is no longer just 'missing'. Bron can take this secret home to her mother, who can make peace with herself and her son, and thus the play closes on a sense of peace but not necessarily closure (revised version 404-5). In a sense, the lack of closure is another invitation to the audience to take the ideas suggested in the play further and to frame their responses to the play in their own way.

In conclusion I would like to assert the usefulness of postcolonial methodologies in reading the plays of Ian Rowlands and Ed Thomas, a practice which might result in a rethinking of the parameters of postcolonial theory itself. As I have shown, both Rowlands's and Thomas's work follows a trajectory of resistance to a Welsh self-definition, which puts Wales firmly on the 'margin'-end of the 'centre-margin' dichotomy, to a 'theatre of possibility', in which that dichotomy is systematically deconstructed. In *Marriage of Convenience*, in parts of *Song from a*

Forgotten City and especially in *Gas Station Angel*, the Welsh experience is no longer defined through an exaggerated importance of 'difference' from England or America. Instead, to use Raymond Williams's phrase once again, Wales becomes 'its own world' and deals with its own issues by re-imagining reality. This is the goal of what I would call postcolonial practice, especially if such a re-imagination of reality is connected to an acceptance of the underlying complexity of reality, which makes a continued thinking in terms of dichotomies non-viable in political terms. Thus, a postcolonial practice, its terms and its tools, can be usefully applied to a consciously political Welsh drama in English.

As a coda, it might be interesting to mention, however, that explicitly political theatre, which is concerned with creating a new sense of the Welsh nation through theatrical imagination, seems to be identified with only a few writers, Rowlands and Thomas among them, who seem not to have generated a trend of writing about the nation in a similar vein after 1998. The plays mentioned, especially *Gas Station Angel*, seem to have been written at a time of national optimism after the yes-vote of 1997 when the National Assembly of Wales still promised a solution to a wide range of problems and issues. Now, after the Assembly has been at work for its first term and, mainly due to its financial constraints, has not been able to fulfil all hopes, new dramatists seem to turn away from political theatre. I am unable to say whether the one is a result of the other, but the very apolitic nature of, for example, Tracy Harris's *Past Away* (2002) and Gary Owen's *Crazy Gary's Mobile Disco* (2001), two plays commissioned by *Sgript Cymru*, seem to indicate either a fatigue with political theatre and with Welsh politics in general, or a new confidence in Welsh theatre, which does not need to create theatre about the nation any longer. Personally, I doubt whether the latter is the case and am inclined to interpret the new apolitical theatre as an apolitical backlash against the positive political theatre of dramatists like Rowlands and Thomas. It remains to be seen whether new dramatists of the future will come back to the question of the nation and whether they, in turn, will complain of a lack of tradition of Welsh drama in English.

Conclusion

In the conclusion to her very insightful PhD thesis Kirsti Bohata calls for a

> much wider study . . . which not only encompasses more of the abundant 'literature of place' from Wales, but which also considers the important issue of whether there may not possibly exist contemporary forms of literary criticism that may be at least as well suited to the Welsh preoccupation with place as is the postcolonial approach demonstrated here. (293)

While I will not claim that this study fills the gap in literary criticism Bohata mentions, not least because it is concerned with drama and not with literature as such, I would suggest that this thesis attempts to map some of the territory of a critical approach that takes place as its central concern. While the new centrality of place is by now well-established in the fields of human geography, philosophy and cultural studies, it is still a relatively new way of reading drama and theatre. Una Chaudhuri's *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama* has broken new ground in this respect. From a vantage point from Wales, its main shortcoming is that it concentrates on America as place – something that is inevitable perhaps as the author lives and writes in America. Thus, this thesis is to be read as an exploration of nearly uncharted territory. As a consequence, the resulting 'map' is perhaps unfinished and maybe even painted with broad brush strokes in parts but will hopefully be able to serve as a basis for modifications and further refinement in future research.

I have attempted to show how, in the wake of a renewed interest in place in the Western World, a discursive construction of place, which largely replaced a more essentialist construction, became increasingly important in Wales from the 1980s onwards. At the same time and not coincidentally, a shift in the importance of place in Welsh drama in English contributed to new and exciting explorations of new dramatic/performative possibilities in new writing for the stage in Wales. Instead of the literary realist paradigm, which had influenced the great majority of plays until the late 1970s, playwrights started to experiment with form and, least importantly, with the representation of place on stage and, metaphorically, in the playtexts.

Since overviews of Welsh drama and especially Welsh drama in English are still lacking,[1] this survey must necessarily be regarded as being of a provisional

[1] At the time of writing the University of Wales Press was considering a most interesting book proposal by Anwen Jones, who teaches at the Drama department of the University of Wales Aberystwyth. In it she proposes to provide a survey of the Welsh national drama movement in both languages (English and Welsh). She will then compare Welsh drama to national theatre movements in other European 'nations without state' like Catalonia. Jones's book will be much-needed source material for the student of theatre in Wales and will be the first overview since Olive Ely Hart's PhD thesis (1928) and Cecil Price's very short *The Professional Theatre in Wales* (1984).

nature. As such it cannot hope to address all the issues connected to the critical discussion of place in Wales, nor all those connected to contemporary drama and theatre in Wales. By adopting a paradigmatic approach and by focussing on a selected group of writers and plays, a model for reading contemporary Welsh drama in English was created according to which a variety of other plays might be read.

It would be useful at this point to briefly mention new routes for departure. As I have indicated in my introduction, a detailed study of the early Welsh drama in English and of the early Welsh drama in Wales would be of great value. It is to be hoped that the study proposed by Anwen Jones fills this gap (see footnote below). Furthermore, it would be fortuitous if the major plays of the 'early flowering' of Welsh drama (1909-1930s) as well as the plays written until the 1960s could be collected and reprinted. Two or three volumes of primary texts would be an invaluable source to theatre practitioners, who might recognise and acknowledge their 'tradition' more readily if the plays were available in bookshops, and to students of drama and theatre in Wales alike.

In my first chapter I focus on the plays of Alan Osborne, Peter Lloyd, Laurence Allan and Patrick Jones and attempt to answer the question in how far the realistic paradigm of for dramatic representation of place is slowly being superseded by other forms of representation. Thus, this chapter also functions as a starting point for the following chapters. An interesting departure would be to consider the interrelationship between theatrical form and representation of place in community theatre and in youth theatre. Playwrights like Ewart Alexander and Charles Way come readily to mind, as do Kaite O'Reilly and Laurence Allan, whose prodigious output is barely touched upon in this thesis. Unfortunately, most community plays remain unpublished, a factor which makes research all the more difficult. Again, one or two volumes of collected community and youth drama would aid performers and students alike. Moreover, the tremendous output of companies like *Hijinx Theatre* and plays commissioned by the *Sherman Theatre* in Cardiff would warrant a more detailed survey.

In my second chapter I concentrate on one of the most interesting but also one of the most controversial playwrights of Wales: Dic Edwards. A special focus of this chapter was the imaginative ways Edwards creates place in his plays and the (invariably) political message connected to place. It would now be interesting to discuss Edwards as one of the most prolific *British* playwrights and to compare his writing to that of his friend and mentor Edward Bond.

In chapter three I look at plays concerned with interpreting the past in the light of the present and the representation of place in these plays. I look at three different categories: plays that view history nostalgically, plays that seek to separate 'constructed' history from 'real' history, and historiographic metadrama. Again, it would be worthwhile how history is perceived in community and youth drama. Ewart Alexander's history plays and community plays about local history would be interesting cases in point. Furthermore, an extremely valuable project, which unfortunately was beyond the scope of this thesis, would be the comparison between Welsh language and English language theatre in their treatment of history and place.

The fourth chapter presents a discussion of gendered readings and creations of place. For two reasons the chapter is inevitably biased towards female experience and feminist theory: firstly, the development of a theory of masculinities is only just beginning in Wales and much theoretical groundwork still has to be done. It was felt that this thesis would not have been the right place to try and break new ground in this respect. Secondly and, with regard to my first point perhaps paradoxically, female and feminist theatre is very thin on the ground in Wales for reasons discussed in the chapter. Moreover, as if to distance themselves from the political ground that tends to be occupied by male playwrights, Welsh women playwrights rarely discuss place and questions of the nation in their plays, preferring more introspective, often seemingly 'placeless' plays. Lucy Gough, for example, whose work deserves closer study had to be disregarded for the purposes of this study because Wales tends not to be a setting in her plays, nor does she interrogate place in the way her (predominantly) male colleagues do. Furthermore, the work of female playwrights is rarely published, which makes the study of their work all the more difficult. There are many critical avenues as yet undiscovered: the unpublished works of, for example, Firenza Guidi and Kaite O'Reilly warrant further research. Furthermore, the work of male playwrights, apart from that of Ed Thomas, has received but little attention of gender theorists. I believe that much fruitful research could be done in this respect – especially in the still emerging field of masculinity studies. The powerful connection between man and the land has often been remarked on in readings of Welsh writing in English. It would be very interesting to see interpretations of the connection between the male self and place in drama from the point of masculinity studies.

The final chapter concerns itself with a postcolonial studies approach applied to certain contemporary plays. The aptness of some postcolonial theory for Welsh

literature in English has been ably demonstrated by Kirsti Bohata in her PhD thesis *Postcolonialism Revisited: The Challenging Case of Welsh Writing in English*, which is about to be published by the University of Wales Press. My approach has been to take a few central tenets of postcolonial studies, to interrogate them critically with regard to the specific Welsh situation and to use as theoretical basis for the chapter a modified postcolonial approach, which takes the development of the concept of sustainable communities into account. As Bohata has shown, the fact that Wales was in many ways both victim and perpetrator of British/English imperialism makes it an especially interesting subject for study within a postcolonial framework – a project which has hardly begun. Another interesting topic for discussion, which could take the postcolonial theoretical framework as a point of departure, is the study of black, Asian and other minority ethnic drama and performance in Wales. Research into modes of production as well as reception of groups such as *India Dance Wales* or of the plays of writers like Othniel Smith would be of great value.

Kirsti Bohata mentions that

> [o]ne of the perceived disadvantages of Welsh writing in English [is] that it is multiply-marginalised in terms of its relations to the literature of England, the English literatures of the rest of the world, and Welsh language literature, to say nothing of its tenuous cultural basis in Wales itself. (297)

She goes on to interpret this state of affairs as a potential blessing in disguise, as it encourages readings which stress interconnectedness rather than an artificial isolation. One feels inclined to suggest that Welsh drama in English is even more marginalised in Welsh culture, as it is often regarded as but a subset of Welsh writing in English. Sadly, there is also some truth to the claim that an evening out at the theatre – especially when literary contemporary Welsh theatre in English is being shown – does not belong to the most favourite things to do for most Welsh people. British theatre, for which read largely London and Edinburgh theatre, hardly takes notice of theatre in Wales. Only recently has a London-based company, *Sorted Productions*, taken sufficient interest in contemporary Welsh theatre in English to organise an annual conference on the topic. Unfortunately, the 2003 conference did not manage to encourage many Londoners to attend, although many theatre practitioners, writers and aficionados from Wales turned out for the event.

However, the fact that Welsh drama in English is ignored by most 'mainstream' (and often 'non-mainstream') theatre in Britain should, in my view, be a reason to continue studying it. In the face of a (real or imagined) absence of a theatrical tradition in Wales, contemporary Welsh drama in English has produced works of rare beauty. Alan Osborne's *In Sunshine and in Shadow* , Ed Thomas's

Gas Station Angel, Sharon Morgan's *Magic Threads* and Eddie Ladd's *Scarface* belong to the most challenging, beautiful and interesting pieces of drama and performance written in the British Isles in the last 20 years. It is to be hoped that the new interest in place will contribute to the continuing discussion of the exciting field of Welsh drama in English.

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