

**Visible Welshness:  
Performing Welshness at the National Eisteddfod in  
the Twentieth Century**

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Submitted to the University of Wales in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Wales Swansea

2004

## List of required redactions

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**Visible Welshness:  
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This thesis examines Welsh national identity in the twentieth century through the medium of the National Eisteddfod of Wales. The National Eisteddfod is arguably the largest cultural festival in Europe; it is certainly the largest cultural event in Wales. At the turn of the twentieth century it was a popular festival but very different from its present form. During the course of the past century, the Eisteddfod has evolved into a highly symbolic Welsh-language festival, and one of the more powerful and evocative manifestations of Welsh-language culture and nationhood. The ideological imperative given to the festival as a result of its perceived intrinsic connection to the language gives the Eisteddfod much of its identity and its political power. However, language is not the only significant device through which the Eisteddfod has demonstrated Welshness; there are other, equally powerful, facets of Welsh identity that resonate from the festival. The chapters demonstrate these different elements, as well as the varied theoretical approaches I am taking in this process. The second chapter focuses heavily on historical cultural geography and looks at the role of location and place in Welsh identity in the twentieth century. The third chapter looks at various contemporary stereotypes of Welsh identity, using a post-colonial framework of Metropole and Periphery, and an emphasis on the role of binary juxtapositions in the construction of identity. Chapter Four looks at various structural aspects of the festival itself, considering the formal performance of identity through the Eisteddfodic ritual. Chapter Five looks at the informal performances on the Eisteddfod field (*Maes*). Finally, the last chapter examines the role of language and nationalism in the construction of modern Welsh identity. Together they paint a picture of the changing nature of Welsh culture and the correlated construction of identity during the twentieth century.

## 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 where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people I need to thank who have helped me write this thesis. First of all I must thank my supervisors, Professor Prys Morgan and Dr Gareth Pritchard, for their guidance and patience. Prys Morgan has taught me so much about Welsh history and culture and without him and his vast and impressive memory this thesis would not exist. Gareth Pritchard has seen me through the final years of this work, and has been a critical and motivating force during the crucial stages. Their help has been invaluable.

I must also thank the staff at the National Library of Wales and the Public Record Office, for their help and forbearance during my lightning visits. The staff at the research room at the Swansea City Library also have been very kind and patient with me on my many visits to read microfilm; they also have been unceasingly kind in tracing seemingly random facts for a rather strange American girl. They, along with the staff at the Cardiff Central Library, the Carmarthenshire County Records Office, and the Swansea University libraries, have exhausted their knowledge of the Eisteddfod to help me find materials. Without this help I would have been truly stuck. I particularly wish to thank the Peter Davies and the National Eisteddfod Association for letting me into their offices on several occasions. Through Peter I have had nearly unrestricted access to the surviving archives of the National Eisteddfod, without which this study would have been impossible. Many other individuals have helped me along the way. There are countless people who have shared their memories of and thoughts on the Eisteddfod with me. Specifically, Captain Dillwyn Miles was of great help, sharing his memories of the Eisteddfod. Academically, I owe a great deal to Professor Kali Israel at the University of Michigan for her help with the early stages of this project, as part of my M.A. I am also indebted to the contributions of Professor Stuart Clark and Dr Prys Gruffudd who have each read drafts of various pieces of this work, and have helped me find my way through the occasional episodes of conceptual darkness of this thesis. Finally, I would also like to thank my Welsh language tutors through the University of Wales Department of Adult and Continuing Education, Siân, Robin and Mark. They have not only helped me learn the language and culture, but have provided comic relief throughout my three years. *Diolch yn fawr iawn i chi i gyd.*

On a more personal level, I want thank my friends and family. It is they who have seen me through this long process and kept me sane. Nigel and Paul have put up with me and listened to my ramblings for the past three years. Sarah has done that for the past twenty-three. Misha has been the best big sister I could have hoped for. She has constantly challenged me, made me think and, along with Marc, has read drafts and advised me throughout the past few years. My mother and father have always told me to study what I want and to follow my dreams, however long they might take and far away from them they might take me. They have provided moral and financial support throughout this process. Grandma Jessie showed me that women can do this, and Grandma Evelyn showed me that I did not need to. Finally, I want to thank Rob for his proofreading abilities, and for keeping me sane through the final stages of this.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

The Eisteddfod, then, has evolved from a medieval festival testing-ground-cum-house of correction for professional bards and minstrels into a popular festival which annually highlights the literary scene with the aid of the Gorsedd. ... That 'the National' acts as a means of heightening an awareness of language and literature as humanising forces which no society can neglect with impunity is not too large a claim to make for it.<sup>1</sup>

A sense of Welshness is a reality for [Welsh] people. Whatever it consists of, it testifies to the permanence of a national spirit.<sup>2</sup>

The Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales is a distinctly Welsh institution: it is a cultural festival whose popularity has transformed it into a cultural icon in modern Wales – a veritable microcosm of Welshness. As such, the eisteddfod prompts questions about its meanings as a site of national identity and Welshness. Eisteddfodau date back to the twelfth century, but died out as a cultural institution by the early modern period. Today eisteddfodau range in size from the National Eisteddfod, held every August in different locations around the country and host to thousands of competitors, to small local gatherings in impromptu settings, such as pubs and churches.<sup>3</sup> The modern National Eisteddfod was spiritually reborn and reorganised in the romantic revival of Celticism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>4</sup> It grew as an institution and in popularity in the Victorian period,

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<sup>1</sup> Hywel Teifi Edwards, *The Eisteddfod* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1990), 74.

<sup>2</sup> Gareth Elwyn Jones, *Modern Wales: A Concise History c. 1485-1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 222.

<sup>3</sup> For an especially good discussion of the basics of the eisteddfod in the modern era, see D. Ben Rees, *Wales: The Cultural Heritage* (Ormskirk: G. W. & A. Hesketh, 1981).

<sup>4</sup> In the same period, Iolo Morganwg introduced the Gorsedd traditions and ceremonies that ultimately merged with the Eisteddfodau and continue in twentieth-first-century Eisteddfodau. The Eisteddfod was "reborn" in 1789; the Gorsedd created in 1792. The two were joined in 1819 at Carmarthen. Iolo Morganwg, et al., established "a new Welsh past which ignored the complexities of an earlier 'British' past. In so doing they were providing a Welsh equivalent of similar cultural revivals in the Scottish



essentially taking its current shape in the flourishing of Welsh culture that accompanied the Liberal Ascendancy in the 1880s.<sup>5</sup> In the years since then, the National Eisteddfod has been a dynamic and adaptable institution. Although with tenuous roots in a bardic past, it has incorporated contemporary practicality and idyllic “tradition”, so that by the turn of the twentieth century, “Reactionary Romanticism ... coexisted with progressive radicalism in the Eisteddfod.”<sup>6</sup>

### Theoretical Framework and Historiography

Wales is a process.  
 Wales is an artefact which the Welsh produce.  
 The Welsh make and remake Wales  
 Day by day, year by year, generation after generation  
 If they want to.<sup>7</sup>

The National Eisteddfod is an invented tradition; it has a very real historical tradition, yet there is an element of invention and fantasy attached to its modern manifestation that endows the festival with its meaning. Certainly, nations are very real entities, determined as much by structural elements, from their geography and climate to the ethnic communities that inhabit the national territory, as they are discursively constructed, in the imaginations of those who inhabit them, both geographically and psychologically. In a Foucauldian sense, nations and nationhood are “a ‘discursive formation’, a way of speaking that shapes our consciousness”.<sup>8</sup> Although this argument represents one end of the conceptual spectrum, it nevertheless provides a useful lens

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Lowlands and in Ireland.” Hugh Kearney, *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 138.

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: History of Modern Wales 1880-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 18.

<sup>6</sup> Prys Morgan and David Thomas, *Wales: The Shape of a Nation* (London: David and Charles, 1984), 203-204.

<sup>7</sup> Gwyn A. Williams, *The Welsh and Their History* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 200.

<sup>8</sup> Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997), 3.

through which to examine such concepts. Certainly, nations are dynamic and fluid; they are temporally unfixed communities, constantly changing and altering in relation to the times. Further, because it is changeable and fluid, national *identity* is located in culture rather than politics and the socio-economic power structure.<sup>9</sup> The substance of these imagined communities of nations stems from the popular acceptance of culturally constructed concepts and invented communities. Cultural institutions such as newspapers and the popular press, educational structures, and arts organizations such as the National Eisteddfod, all contribute towards a community's sense of identity.<sup>10</sup>

Gellner calls attention to the selective “amnesia” of national histories that enables members of a “nation” to construct their own identity – to a degree.<sup>11</sup> Following from Foucault’s proposition that nations are discursively constructed, this concept is central to that of invented traditions and identity construction. As Doreen Massey says, traditions “do not only exist in the past. They are actively built into the present also.”<sup>12</sup> Created out of an idealised past, “invented traditions” present an often homogenised and distilled image of the nation.<sup>13</sup> Thus it is important to examine the “role of myths, ideas, images and so on which have given the Welsh self-

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<sup>9</sup> Tony Curtis, “Introduction”, in Tony Curtis, ed., *Wales: the Imagined Nation, Studies in Culture and National Identity* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1986), 9.

<sup>10</sup> In this context, Benedict Anderson’s study of the relationship between the press and national identity construction provides an interesting practical comparison for this study. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

<sup>11</sup> “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist.” Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 55-56; Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1964), 169; Ernest Gellner, *Culture, Identity and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 7.

<sup>12</sup> Doreen B. Massey, “Places and their Pasts”, *History Workshop Journal*, 39 (Spring 1995), 184, 185.

<sup>13</sup> Dave Marks, “Great Little Trains? The Role of Heritage Railways in North Wales in the Denial of Welsh Identity, Culture and Working-Class History”, in Ralph Fevre and Andrew Thompson, ed., *Nation, Identity and Social Theory: Perspectives from Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 206.

consciousness down the centuries and at times of challenge and crisis have, it may be argued, sustained the very existence of Wales.”<sup>14</sup> Homi Bhabha says that

Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realise their horizons in the mind’s eye. Such an image of the nation - or narration - might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, nations are imagined but must appear to be normative and must be taken for granted. To study it we must focus not only on the object itself, but also on its language and rhetoric – the signs that represent and construct the nation.<sup>16</sup>

The National Eisteddfod has evolved over the centuries to represent various aspects of Welsh culture.<sup>17</sup> However, it has long been the platform for more than cultural performance; politics have always been a part of the National Eisteddfod.<sup>18</sup> As such, through its early function as one of the few national institutions, the National Eisteddfod was a site of public discourse and debate in Wales. As a result of these debates and contested meanings, the Eisteddfod has never been a static institution. Rather, it has become one of the key sites of the construction of a sense of Welsh identity. Throughout the twentieth century, it has incorporated contemporary

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<sup>14</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition* (London: Canto, 1983); Tony Curtis, 1986; Ralph Fevre and Andrew Thompson, *Nation, Identity and Social Theory: Perspectives from Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999); Prys Gruffudd, “Tradition, Modernity and the Countryside: The Imaginary Geography of Rural Wales”, *Contemporary Wales*, 6 (1994), 33-47.

<sup>15</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, “Introduction”, in Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), 1.

<sup>16</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, 1990, 2-3.

<sup>17</sup> Eisteddfodau date back beyond the *modern* National Eisteddfod, which only began as an institution in 1861.

<sup>18</sup> In fact, the National Eisteddfod has three distinct arms: music, literature and a sense of political radicalism. Charlotte Davies, “‘A oes heddwch?’ Contesting meanings and identities in the Welsh National Eisteddfod”, in Felicia Hughes-Freeland, ed., *Ritual, Performance, Media* (London: Routledge, 1998), 345.

practicality and idyllic “tradition”, as well as various other currents of contemporary culture. Consequently, it helped to forge ideas of Welshness.<sup>19</sup>

Many studies have been completed on the various aspects of Welsh culture and social history that form the ideological boundaries for the construction of the Welsh community.<sup>20</sup> Traditionally, however, Welsh historiography and studies of national identity have focused on the nineteenth century as the catalyst for many of the definitive features of modern Welsh nationhood, such as nonconformity and the fate of the Welsh language, and even the eisteddfod. Few works have focused on these features of nationhood as catalysts for the creation of identity. Although the Eisteddfod has been discussed in various forms and on many levels, for one of the foremost cultural institutions in Wales, there is a relative lack of analytical historical material. Furthermore, few of the existing works provide a substantial analytical discussion of the Eisteddfod throughout the twentieth century – much less a satisfactory discussion of the (nationalistic) meanings imbued in the Eisteddfod.<sup>21</sup>

This study of the National Eisteddfod will contribute to different bodies of academic literature. First, it will contribute to the body of historical work focusing on modern Welsh culture and identity by enlarging upon the opus of work specifically

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<sup>19</sup> One merely has to look at a list of competitions to notice the mixture of the “ancient” and the “modern” evinced through the druidic appearance of the bards and the technological exhibits in the arts and crafts tent. Prys Morgan and David Thomas, 1984, 203-204.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Trevor Herbert and Gareth Elwyn Jones, eds, *Wales 1880-1914, Wales Between the Wars* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988); *ibid.*, *Post-War Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988); Philip Jenkins, *A History of Modern Wales 1536-1990* (London: Longman, 1992); Kenneth Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: History of Modern Wales*, 1981; Gwyn Williams, *When Was Wales?* (London: Penguin, 1985).

<sup>21</sup> Notable among the historical discussions of the Eisteddfod are Hywel Teifi Edwards’ contributions to the field, although they primarily contribute towards an understanding of the development of the National Eisteddfod as a cultural and national phenomenon in the nineteenth century. See also works by Prys Morgan, “From death to a view: the hunt for the Welsh past in the romantic period”, in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 1983. Additionally, Dillwyn Miles’s monographs on the Eisteddfod and Gorsedd throughout their long histories are useful administrative studies of the festival. See

studying the Eisteddfod, both academic and otherwise. Many of these have focused on the Eisteddfod as an institution, rather than as a means of examining Welsh identity. For example, the works of Hywel Teifi Edwards and Dillwyn Miles provide excellent descriptive discussions of the history of the festival, but they are limited in scope either chronologically or in purpose.<sup>22</sup> This study will provide a detailed discussion of some of the major themes evident in the discourse of the twentieth-century Eisteddfod.

This thesis also contributes to the more general growing body of literature on Welsh cultural institutions and practices, and the ways in which they contribute to ideas of Welsh identity. Notable are the works of Gareth Williams, David Allsobrook and Peter Lord.<sup>23</sup> Each of these scholars examines the interplay between identity and various cultural mediums in Wales. In this context, because this thesis is a discussion of Welsh identity, as manifested at the Eisteddfod throughout the twentieth century, it will also contribute to historical discussions of the Welsh nation and Welsh national identity, specifically the debate on the role of culture in constructing identity.

This study also will broaden the field of study of ritual and performance studies and make a contribution towards the historical study of festivals. There are many historical studies of festivals. Some of these studies employ similar theoretical frameworks to contemporary ones, using festivals as an historical lens through which

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Dillwyn Miles, *The Secret of the Bards of the Isle of Britain* (Llandybïe: Gwasg Diefwr Press, 1992); Dillwyn Miles, *The Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales* (Swansea: C. Davies, 1978).

<sup>22</sup> Edwards focuses on the Eisteddfodau of the nineteenth century, while Miles primarily chronicles administrative changes to the Eisteddfod. See the works of Hywel Teifi Edwards, Dillwyn Miles and Clive Betts.

<sup>23</sup> See Gareth Williams' discussions of rugby, David Allsobrook's discussion of the evolution of Male Voice Choirs and Peter Lord's discussions of art in Wales. Gareth Williams, *1905 and all that: Essays on Rugby Football, Sport and Welsh Society* (Llandysul: Gomer, 1991); David Ian Allsobrook, *Music for Wales: Walford Davies and the National Council of Music, 1918-41* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992); Peter Stead, "Wales in the Movies", in Curtis, Tony, ed., *Wales: The Imagined Nation: Studies in Culture and National Identity* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1986), 159-180; Peter Lord, *Imaging the Nation* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000).

to examine a particular historical period, culture, and identity. Notable among these studies are the works of Becky Conekin and Chris Rasmussen.<sup>24</sup> Conekin examines the 1951 Festival of Britain and the role it played in contemporary identity construction; Rasmussen attempts a similar goal, but in reference to American state fairs. Both emphasise the “readerly” role of festivals and their performative function. Despite these innovative studies, many others are merely chronicles of a festival.<sup>25</sup> As with the works of Dillwyn Miles, they are useful histories of institutions, but do not include a contribution to the broader discussion of identity or performance. This thesis attempts to join the former group and use the framework of performance studies to investigate an historical institution. As such, it problematises the notion of performance and the reflective nature of such cultural festivals and rituals. The study considers the Eisteddfod as a facet of twentieth-century Welsh culture, and examines the ways in which it reflects that culture. Subsequently, it questions the role of cultural signifiers of identity and an Andersonian notion of imagined communities. Finally, this thesis also will add to the study of festivals by adding to the sub-genre of specifically Welsh performances and rituals. As mentioned above, there are few analytical discussions of Welsh cultural institutions. Notable among them are the works of Charlotte Aull Davies or Carol Trosset that examine the late-twentieth-century Eisteddfod and its correlated sense of identity in an anthropological mode. It is important to note that this

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<sup>24</sup> Becky Conekin, *The autobiography of a nation: the 1951 Festival of Britain* (London: Manchester University Press, 2003); Daniele Conversi, *The Basques, The Catalans and Spain: Alternative Routes to Nationalist Mobilisation* (London: Hurst and Company, 1997); Chris Rasmussen, *State Fair: Culture and Agriculture in Iowa, 1854-1941* (Rutgers University, Ph.D. dissertation, 1992); and David E. Nye, “Ritual Tomorrows: The New York World’s Fair of 1939”, *History and Anthropology* 6:1 (1992), 1-21.

<sup>25</sup> Frank Thompson *The National Mod* (Stornoway, Isle of Lewis: Acair Limited, 1979); Mary Humphries *A World That Sings: A personal and historical account of the International Eisteddfod at Llangollen* (Cardiff: John Jones Cardiff Ltd, 1972).

study is not dissimilar to these studies. However, the historical perspective of this thesis makes it unique.<sup>26</sup>

## Methodology

The study of British cultures ... cannot be simply an examination of facts and institutions, it must also involve a study of the discourse that shape them.<sup>27</sup>

Following from the above discussion, there are some basic methodological and theoretical issues I must address before continuing with my study. First are my choice of source materials and my choice of language. I am an English-speaker and my Welsh is not fluent. As a result, I have focused mostly on English-language sources. This is a methodological issue wherever a community under study is bilingual, but more so because of the nature of this study, where meaning is read into language usage and word choice.

Only a fluent knowledge of the Welsh language would be adequate to enable me to use fully Welsh-language sources in a manner comparable to my use of English-language sources. Nevertheless, my linguistic abilities have enabled me to select assorted important Welsh-language materials and to do a substantial number of translations. However, the majority of my source material, both from archives and from newspapers, is English language. The resulting disparity in my selection of

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<sup>26</sup> Charlotte Aull Davies, 1998; Carol Trosset, *Welshness Performed: Welsh Concepts of Person and Society* (London: University of Arizona Press, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> See Susan Bassnett, "Introduction", in Susan Bassnett, ed., *Studying British Cultures: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1999).

research materials is evident most strongly in the body of archival materials (primarily in private deposits at the National Library of Wales).<sup>28</sup>

A degree of linguistic bias in my sources and research has been perhaps inevitable. Certainly, bilingual fluency would have enabled my selection of newspapers to be more broadly inclusive of Welsh-language periodicals, and potentially different attitudes towards the festival and the language. However, I have selected a wide range of English-language periodicals and other source materials so as to provide a survey of contemporary opinions that is as comprehensive as possible. Moreover, it is important to realise that for much of the century, the Eisteddfod was not specifically a *Welsh-language* festival, but rather a *Welsh* festival.<sup>29</sup>

Before going further, it is important to clarify what is meant by “Welsh”, both in this study and in the source materials. It is not the goal of this study to assign or affix national identity, but to determine popular discursive concepts of identity in twentieth-century Wales. Thus, it follows individual labels and identifiers. Practically, and for all intents and purposes, unless specifically labelled otherwise, everyone who regards himself or herself as Welsh is Welsh. I am using non-Welsh voices in my analysis if they are available; these voices, even if English, Irish, American, etc., by virtue of being published in the press, became part of the contemporary discourse, and thus part of the Welsh public sphere.

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<sup>28</sup> I have used Welsh-language archives materials, although not as meticulously and with as subtle an understanding as I would have perhaps liked. I have made extensive use of English-language newspapers in Wales during the twentieth century, and have made cursory studies of Welsh-language media materials. While not fluent, my reading level is sufficient to determine general content of Welsh newspaper articles, both in the mainstream English-language papers, as well as in Welsh-language periodicals such as *Y Cymro* and *Y Faner ac Amserau Cymru*.

<sup>29</sup> The obvious change came with the introduction and implementation of the All-Welsh Rule.



Related to this discussion is that of the spelling of names. The spelling of names has been reproduced exactly as they appeared in the sources. This often means that they are misspelled by current standards, or that certain symbols and accents that appear in my text do not appear in quotations. Further, the spelling of place names used is that which was most common during the period studied and in the sources used. This means that, in many cases, there has been a conscious choice between a Welsh spelling and an English one. It is hoped, however, that any subsequent political bias, as related to the choice of spelling, is minimal.

It is also necessary to define the boundaries and limitations of this study. To facilitate a frank and detailed survey of the National Eisteddfod and Welsh national identity in the twentieth century, I have selected ten sample Eisteddfodau on which to focus my discussion and analysis. These ten years were spread throughout the century and provide representative foci around which to base my study. To attempt to discuss all 103 Eisteddfodau that were held during the designated time period of the long twentieth century would be a logistical impossibility in a thesis of this length. Rather, by concentrating on ten particular years, and on occasion using them as a catalyst for further discussion, the study is given clarity and focus. Although the study is not strictly limited to these specific years, the vastness of the topic behoved such a limitation.

In practical terms, the use of sample years enables the use of a wider variety of source material for each year. By limiting the number of Eisteddfodau studied, it was possible to look in more depth at those included, and to eliminate some possible

methodological problems.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the more detailed examination of the sources enabled me to understand the contemporary issues more comprehensively. In fact, the focus on ten specific years is particularly related to newspaper discourse. I have used material from other years that has been pertinent to my discussion.

For the purposes of this study, the “long” twentieth century stretched from 1899 to 2000.<sup>31</sup> The selection of focus years is based on historical importance and topical significance, rather than geographical or social-cultural boundaries of identity.<sup>32</sup> It is not the explicit intention of this thesis to determine where differences lay within Welsh national identity. Rather, it aims to conduct a qualitative historic survey of Welsh identities as performed and viewed at the National Eisteddfod.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, although the study focuses on ten years and brief linear moments in Welsh history, my approach is thematic rather than chronological. The subsequent chapters are broken into broad categories of analysis, into which individual aspects of specific years will be discussed.

The study’s first focus year is 1899. Although technically in the nineteenth century, it was a significant year in the context of Welsh identity, as it presented a link between the old and the new. It was representative of an era of late Victorian civic

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<sup>30</sup> For example, rather than looking at more Eisteddfodau and only one newspaper for each year, I examined at least three or four newspapers for each year, thus allowing for editorial and publishers’ bias.

<sup>31</sup> However, for added emphasis and topic relevance, I have included some discussions from 2002.

<sup>32</sup> That is, it was not based in any way on the location of Eisteddfodau – whether along geographic or socio-economic, or any of the various cultural aspects affecting Welsh identity, such as language. (For example, I did not base my decisions on such identifying characteristics as Balsom’s “Three Wales” model of varying degrees of Welshness, or on any sense of a North-South divide. Although I accept that location of the festival invariably and inevitably plays an important part in who participates, the success of the festival, etc., the intricacies of that selection are beyond the scope of this study. See Denis Balsom, “The Three Wales Model”, in John Osmond, ed., *The National Question Again: Welsh political identity in the 1980’s* (Llandysul: Gomer, 1985); Denis Balsom, *The nature and distribution of support for Plaid Cymru* (Glasgow, University of Strathclyde Centre for the Study of Public Policy, 1979); Denis Balsom, Peter Madgwick and Denis Van Mechelen, *The political consequences of Welsh identity* (Glasgow : University of Strathclyde: Centre for the Study of Public Policy, 1982).

prosperity and the great Anglo-Eisteddfodic tradition, as well as the growing Pan-Celtic movement. Further, it also delineated certain themes that would prove to be important to the twentieth-century Eisteddfodau.

1911 was an important year for Wales, both politically and culturally. Not only did it see the investiture of the Prince of Wales, the first since medieval times, but it was a year of great labour unrest and social instability. I chose 1926 for similar reasons; falling in the middle of the economic slump of the interwar period, it was a time of social hardship and labour unrest that proved to be a trial for the National Eisteddfod. It also, however, marked a period of change and evolution for the Eisteddfod, and a definite introduction to the modern era.

Similarly, 1937 saw one of the last Eisteddfodau before the Second World War, and marked the beginning of a new era in Wales. It fell the year after the arson attacks on the Llŷn Peninsula and saw the beginnings of a new, popular and overtly political nationalism in Wales expressed on the *Maes*. It was also a year of significant Eisteddfodic reforms, such as the introduction of the All-Welsh Rule.

1944 was interesting on several levels. It was important primarily because of the context of war that shifted focus and purpose. However, it was a bit of an anomaly for the National Eisteddfod, and was used by the British Council to represent *British* culture during the war. As a result, the Eisteddfod's ideological focus in 1944 was on non-typical aspects of culture, and there was a distinctly international flavour to the festival.

The first Eisteddfod to implement the All-Welsh Rule was held in 1950. This ruling marked a significant change in tone for the Eisteddfod. It was now defined

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<sup>33</sup> Differences and boundaries will inevitably arise, through implicit means, in the discourse.

predominately around language usage; officially, it became the festival for Welsh-speaking Wales.

I have chosen to examine two festivals from the 1960s. The Eisteddfod opened the decade by again visiting Cardiff; the 1967 Eisteddfod was held in Bala. Held at the beginning of a turbulent era in Welsh society, the 1960 Eisteddfod was another significant turning point in the history of the Eisteddfod and of Wales. It marked the end of one era – that of a conservative, traditional Welsh culture – and the beginning of a new, modern one – which was clearly visible by 1967. Indeed, by the Bala Eisteddfod, Wales was witnessing the emergence of a new society and a new Eisteddfod, both concerned with various aspects of modern Welsh life.

By 1979, the year of the failed devolution vote, the Eisteddfod had become a fully “modern” institution, and concerns included the fiscal future and the nature of sponsorship of the festival. The Caernarfon Eisteddfod was a poignant choice for a focus year; the festival was held just five months after the referendum and the subsequent mood was clearly evident on the *Maes*.

The final focus year, 2000, closed the century and presented a new beginning for Wales. It fell after the second, successful, devolution referendum and the establishment of the new Welsh Assembly. Consequently, it marked the apogee of the political struggles for much of the century. Moreover, it signified a changing Welsh social-economic landscape, as Wales was adapting to a post-industrial climate.

Despite the apparent linear division of this study into sample years, this is not a chronological survey. In fact, because this study is not a linear history of a festival, but is in effect a diachronic investigation of twentieth-century Welsh identity and the National Eisteddfod, it adopts a hermeneutic approach to the study of culture and

historical inquiry. As mentioned above, the study examines the ways in which meanings of Welshness developed and circulated during the twentieth century.<sup>34</sup> It is not a chronicle of the Eisteddfod in the twentieth century, nor is it meant to present alterations in Eisteddfodic structure, organisation, etc., during the period. Rather, this is an historical study of Welsh identity, as performed and viewed at the National Eisteddfod. It is a study of Welsh culture, as reflected at the Eisteddfod. As Susan Bassnett says in the quote at the beginning of this section, cultural studies must be discursive and elastic. Thus, the following version of cultural history combines several disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, and cultural geography, examining them in an historicist mode.<sup>35</sup>

This study of the National Eisteddfod is in fact a study of Welsh identity in the twentieth century. The Eisteddfod has become a symbol of Wales. Indeed, the National Eisteddfod is more than just a symbol; it is a site of the performance of Welsh identity. By studying the performances related to the Eisteddfod, both formally and informally, it is possible to gain a greater understanding of different conceptions of Welshness occurring during the twentieth century. According to Elizabeth Fine and Jean Spear, studying performance is “a critical way for grasping how persons choose to present themselves, how they construct their identity, and ultimately, how they embody, reflect, and construct their culture.”<sup>36</sup> On a larger scale, public spectacles are expressions of *collective* identity that formulate and create society: “spectacle is a

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<sup>34</sup> Susan Bassnett, 1999, xix.

<sup>35</sup> See Adam Kuper, *Culture: The Anthropologist's Account* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 229.

<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth C. Fine and Jean H. Spear, “Introduction”, in Elizabeth C. Fine and Jean H. Spear, eds, *Performance, Culture and Identity* (London: Praeger, 1992), 10.

public display of a society's central meaningful elements."<sup>37</sup> Moreover, as Turner says, ritual creates a sense of "communitas", or community. Although there are certainly problems with this concept - notably that the identities performed are often consciously performed and, thus, not truly reflective as much of identity as of a façade or a mask - performance is still a useful way of understanding identity. There is a certain reflexivity to performative ritual that blurs the boundaries of identity construction. In this context, festivals such as the Eisteddfod are useful gauges of identity - though certainly not all identity. As DaMatta's analysis of Carnaval concludes, "it was not Brazil that invented Carnaval; on the contrary, it was Carnaval that invented Brazil."<sup>38</sup>

It is true that the Eisteddfod has contributed to the invention of modern Wales, as much as the reverse. Whereas the Eisteddfod does not represent the identity of everyone in Wales, it has become an aspect of their identity – if as nothing more than an iconographic image of what makes Wales unique.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, we cannot underestimate the influence of the changing nature of broader Welsh society and culture on the festival; by looking at changes in the festival, it is possible to see how discourse reflects particular moments in Welsh society and culture, and possibly shifts over time.

Spectacle is important in this particular framework because it gives agency to the audience as well as to the performers. As Paul Hendon says in his study of the Festival of Britain, along with the creators and organisers, the festival audience was

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<sup>37</sup> W. O. Beeman, "The anthropology of theatre and spectacle", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 22, (1993), 380.

<sup>38</sup> R. DaMatta, "On Carnaval, informality and magic: a point of view from Brazil", in Edward M. Bruner, ed., *Text, Play, and Story: The Construction and Reconstruction of Self and Society* (Illinois: Waveland Press, 1984), 245.

<sup>39</sup> The National Eisteddfod cannot represent everyone in Wales; only 20 per cent of the population speak Welsh and can thus understand it.

co-author of their national story.<sup>40</sup> This sense of reflexivity corresponds with the participatory nature of the Eisteddfod.<sup>41</sup> The Eisteddfod is a similarly reflexively performed ritual that provides a platform for the creation and expression of identity. The study of such a festival delineates how and along what boundaries and limits the participants' identities were defined and constructed. Thus, the nature of such a study necessarily focuses on the textual analysis of the various individual participants in this process, rather than the broader structural changes occurring simultaneously.<sup>42</sup>

In fact, spectacle includes its audience in very complex ways. It is affected by the nature of the audience, both the actual crowds who watch and those who are imagined to be observing. Furthermore, the audience is part of the spectacle; it is itself spectacle, and its ways of participating – audience “performances” – may reconstruct the nature and meaning of the spectacle itself. By participation, the audience not only absorbs the identity given to it, but also actively defines itself. Finally, the spectacle should be seen as dynamic; if indeed it “is a site for contesting meanings, it may itself alter in meaning over time and be constituted of different activities and different audiences”.<sup>43</sup> In this way, the Eisteddfod is a useful medium through which to study identities in Wales because, as a dynamic popular event, it enables a multitude of voices to become clear through its discourse.

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<sup>40</sup> See Paul Hendon, “The Festival of Britain and the voice of the people”, *Critical Quarterly*, 41:4 (Winter 1991), 15-27.

<sup>41</sup> Paul Hendon, 1991, 17. See also Mary Banham and Bevis Hillier, eds, *A Tonic to the Nation: The Festival of Britain 1951* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976); Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 9-10. The reciprocal nature of the dialogue of the Festival provided the *idea* that connected a heterogeneous collection of objects and building, narratives and voices and created a *national* community. The idea that the plan of the festival contributes to its meaning is similar to Michael Billig's concept of “banal nationalism”.

<sup>42</sup> Although, certainly, structural elements are discussed when relevant.

<sup>43</sup> Charlotte Aull Davies, 1998, 142. For the last point, see also J. Boissevain, “Introduction”, in J. Boissevain, ed., *Revitalising European Rituals* (London: Routledge, 1992); Prys Morgan, 1983.

This discursive expression of identity is not always clear or uncomplicated, however. Indeed, the concept of performance carries with it methodological issues, particularly in an historical context. The most obvious problem with the study of the Eisteddfod is that Eisteddfodwyr are not necessarily representative of all Welsh people, or even all people in Wales. This is a limitation inherent in the nature of any similar study of a festival, but one that has become increasingly apparent with reference to the Eisteddfod, as it has evolved into an exclusively Welsh-language institution during the course of the century.

Similarly, of those Welsh people who chose to participate in their “national” festival, the relationships between the individuals and the meanings they invested in their festival were not uncomplicated and were driven by various power relationships that extended beyond the *Maes*. As a large cultural festival, the National Eisteddfod was controlled by a relative few. In an historical context it is fundamentally difficult to reach a deeper level of public opinion for such a festival. These people constituted the Eisteddfod notables and dignitaries: the men (nearly always) with power in various spheres of Welsh life who contributed to the structural organisation and ideological imperative of the festival, as well as providing the vast bulk of public commentary in the media. They were a combination of intellectuals, politicians, and community leaders. They were the primary authors of published Eisteddfodic discourse.

Because of the nature of this study, and the fact that the majority of source material has been derived from the press, there are power relationships within the media that must be considered. Certainly, due to the dialectical nature of this study, the choice of newspaper discourse as the primary body of my research material is highly appropriate. Newspapers provide “a dialectical battle of words and images”, and can be



an excellent means of learning public opinion.<sup>44</sup> However, although there was a difference between those who created the signs and symbols and those who viewed and reacted to them, frequently, the same elite who ran the Eisteddfod ran the newspapers – or at least wrote in them. Thus, the majority of the extant text in reference to the Eisteddfod – whether in archives or on a newspaper page – was produced by a minority of the population; they were the privileged social and cultural elite in Wales. In fact, the editorials and presidential speeches, as well as the special Eisteddfodic features, are usually written by the same, select group of literary Eisteddfodwyr – and often members of the Gorsedd. They were the most actively vocal group of agents in the discursive construction of identity and the definition of community membership at the Eisteddfod.

Further, because the bulk of my data comes from the popular press, and was thus subject to personal opinions and control, it is important to discuss the political views of the source material. Certainly newspapers espoused the particular views of their owners, editors and writers. In order to fully interpret this source material, it is necessary to understand the newspapers' individual political and cultural views, particularly regarding the Welsh language and national particularism. These areas will be discussed throughout the thesis, as relevant to the discussion of the particular newspapers.<sup>45</sup> Importantly, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the very nature of

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<sup>44</sup> Further, the use of newspapers provides a consistent source of discourse for this study. Any attempt to include a broader discussion of media coverage of the Eisteddfod would be too confusing, with all the changes in the twentieth century (including particularly the evolution of radio and television). Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in late-Victorian London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 305.

<sup>45</sup> The *Western Mail* dominated the Welsh press for much of the century, effectively creating itself as the “national” newspaper for Wales. Papers of lesser importance, but equally worthy of mention because of their repeated use in the thesis, are the *South Wales Evening Post*, the *South Wales Echo*, the *Liverpool Daily Post* and the *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald*.

these papers' extensive coverage of the Eisteddfod implies a strong sympathy, if not support, for the Welsh language.

This potential bias is a limitation but not a limit; there are other sources of public discourse, such as letters to the editors and the gossip columns in newspapers, as well as private archival collections and memories.<sup>46</sup> The use of a wider variety of source materials does not eliminate the potential problems resulting from a narrow representative body, but it helps by broadening it slightly. Furthermore, although the societal elites provided most of the surviving available voices, there are others available, if one looks deeper into the extant discourse. For example, it is possible to gauge the popular support of the festival, not only through the general attendance rates and how filled the pavilion was, etc., but also through the changes that occur in the festival.<sup>47</sup>

A related issue lies in the nature of this cross-disciplinary study. Historians must rely on surviving pieces of the puzzle and cannot use their own observational skills – as anthropologists can – to fit them all together. It is not always easy to determine popular opinion in an historical context. Turner's concept of a "web of meanings" is useful but problematic, as the historian does not have a limitless amount of sources of performance. It is inevitable that various aspects of the hegemonic structures in Wales interact with the historian's ability to listen to voices on the Eisteddfod *Maes*. A final point should be mentioned here: the nature of much

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<sup>46</sup> Although certainly many archival collections are maintained based primarily on the "importance" of the individual involved – thus making a broadly inclusive study inherently impossible.

<sup>47</sup> For example, it is relatively easy to deduce that for a new competition to be introduced and to remain a fixture of the Eisteddfod, it must have had a relatively significant level of popular support. Another, not so silent, expression of support can be found in newspaper accounts of the early twentieth century; when recounting speeches at the Eisteddfod, reporters often parenthetically insert applause and audience comments into their accounts.

Eisteddfodic discourse has traditionally been oral and thus relatively little is recorded on paper. Because much of the discourse was temporal, and existed in an inherently transitory manner, we cannot pretend that what has survived in the media is truly representative of Eisteddfodic opinion.

In summary, the National Eisteddfod is one of the premier cultural institutions in Wales and is interesting as such because of the nature of public participation in its discourse. Both audience and performer “perform” Welsh identity in many diffuse ways on the Eisteddfod *Maes*. Indeed, this is a study of the National Eisteddfod of Wales as a reciprocal function of national identity. Identity, performed on a regular basis, is both a function of and a product of the Eisteddfod.

Culture is not a self-contained text; rather, it must be seen in a political, social and economic context of change that must be approached through its symbols.<sup>48</sup> Ellis says: “the meaning of invented traditions can only be ascertained by setting them within their historical context through ‘thick description’ of social, political, and cultural divisions within which they are performed.”<sup>49</sup> Following Geertz’s concept of “thick description”, this study is an attempt to read the various signs and symbols of

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<sup>48</sup> George G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century* (London: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 118-128; See also Pierre Bourdieu and John B. Thompson, eds, Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson, trans., *Language and symbolic power* (Cambridge : Polity in association with Basil Blackwell, 1991); Pierre Bourdieu, Matthew Adamson, trans., *In other words: essays towards a reflexive sociology* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990).

<sup>49</sup> John S. Ellis, “The Prince and the Dragon: Welsh National Identity and the 1911 Investiture of the Prince of Wales”, *Welsh History Review*, 18: 2 (December 1996), 272-194; John S. Ellis, “Reconciling the Celt: British National Identity, Empire, and the 1911 Investiture of the Prince of Wales”, *Journal of British Studies*, 37 (October 1998), 391-418. These two articles can be compared to more conventional studies of the Investitures. See Francis Jones, *The Princes and Principality of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1969); David Cannadine, “The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the Invention of Tradition, c. 1820-1977”, in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 1983, 101-108; Tom Nairn, *The Enchanted Glass: Britain and Its Monarchy* (Derby: Radius, 1988); Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture”, in Clifford Geertz, ed., *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3-32.

the Eisteddfod and the Eisteddfodwyr, to try to obtain a fuller picture of Welsh identities during the twentieth century.<sup>50</sup>

### **Goals of Study**

National identities are, like everything historical, constructed and reconstructed; and it is our responsibility to decode them in order to discover the relationships they create and sustain.<sup>51</sup>

In this study, I hope to enlarge upon the understanding of agency among a segment of the Welsh population, and to provide a sense of how some people in Wales conceived of Welshness throughout the twentieth century. The aims of this thesis are two-fold. First, it will explore the concepts and representations of Welshness, in a context of other debates and issues surrounding the National Eisteddfod. Secondly, it will provide a much-needed history of the National Eisteddfod in the twentieth century.

The first purpose of this study is to develop a better understanding of ideas of Welshness in the twentieth century. As a historical study it crosses disciplinary boundaries. Indeed, in some ways this is an historical ethnography; it examines the Eisteddfod “by searching out and analysing the symbolic forms – words, images, institutions, behaviours – in terms of which, in each place, people actually represent themselves to themselves and to one another”.<sup>52</sup> In this context, the Eisteddfod is used functionally as a site of public performance. To understand fully the importance and implications of a study of the role of the National Eisteddfod in constructions of

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<sup>50</sup> Clifford Geertz, 1973, 3-32.

<sup>51</sup> J. R. Gillis, “Introduction”, in J. R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations. The politics of national identity*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 4.

Welshness, they must be situated within the (broader) context of Welsh nationalism and history. If, in modern Wales, great emphasis is placed on cultural aspects of nationhood, this is partly because of the assimilated nature of the structural aspects of the Welsh state – or rather the Welsh part of the British state.

The study's second purpose is to provide a history of the Eisteddfod in the twentieth century. Importantly, however, this study is not an administrative history of the organization, but rather a cultural history of some of the key aspects of the festival and the interplay with Welshness and identity in the twentieth century. Similarly, it makes no pretensions towards traditional narrative. Indeed, hopefully it provides a narrative to the Eisteddfod in Wales that is both primary and alternative – a synchronic organisation that links together various pieces of the puzzle of Welsh identity in the twentieth century in a non-linear fashion.<sup>53</sup> As Foucault says, historic change is not necessarily cumulative or progressive, seamless or rational, guided by fixed underlying principles. Thus, the discipline of history must not always be restricted to a linear and cumulative manner, and the telling of chronological narratives. Although in certain discussions, a linear approach has been taken, generally it is organised thematically. Moreover, the dedicated Eisteddfodwyr will certainly find many gaps in this history. I have not attempted to include everything in this study. Not only would that be an enormous task and physically impossible, but it is not my goal to chronicle, rather to selectively discuss the symbolic importance of certain changes at the festival and what they have said in reference to Welsh identity in the twentieth century.

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<sup>52</sup> Clifford Geertz, "On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding", *American Scientist*, 63 (January-February 1975), 48. Moreover, like the anthropologist, I have visited the National on a few separate occasions to conduct informal 'fieldwork'.

## Conclusion

Out of struggle and strife grew a pure and distinctive national culture... [that is] keeping silent watch over all that is truly Welsh.<sup>54</sup>

The National Eisteddfod has always been a mixture of many elements; that coexistence has continued throughout the twentieth century. Today the National Eisteddfod is the site of competitions, concerts, and community; people often spend the whole week in specially-constructed camp sites near the Eisteddfod grounds, listening to the rock concerts, brass band and choral competitions, looking at the arts and crafts displays, and crowding into the main pavilion for the highlight of the week, the awarding of the Bardic crown and chair.<sup>55</sup> Because of its diverse nature, the Eisteddfod has represented Welsh identity perhaps more than any other historical institution in Wales. Indeed, lacking in formal state structure and the associated institutions for much of its history, Wales has been forced to rely on cultural institutions and organisations to give it identity and form. Of these cultural aspects of the Welsh nation, the National Eisteddfod reigns supreme as one of the foremost institutions through which Welsh people define themselves and their nation. Thus it is a highly useful medium through which to study Welshness and Welsh identity. It is the purpose of this study to explore the representations of Welshness attached to the National Eisteddfod in the twentieth century, to look at its spiritual, ideological and cultural

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<sup>53</sup> Judith Walkowitz, 1992, 5.

<sup>54</sup> *People and Places: WALES* (short film by Disney, 1957).

<sup>55</sup> The guide to the 1998 National Eisteddfod says that "its purpose is ... to promote the Welsh language, to encourage popular participation in the artistic and cultural activities, and to provide enjoyment. Promoting the Welsh language is paramount; it is what distinguishes the National Eisteddfod from every other festival. For this reason Welsh is the only official language used on stage in the main pavilion and in the satellite pavilions." Anonymous, *Eisteddfod: An Introduction and Guide to Non-Welsh Speakers* (Cardiff: Wilprint Group Ltd., 1998), 1.

importance, how it “became a national mania in Wales” and to explore the nature of the Eisteddfod’s identity.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Prys Morgan and David Thomas, 1984, 204.

## Chapter Two

### The Symbolic Significance of Location and the Historical Geographic Imagination

Landscapes, whether focusing on single monuments or framing stretches of scenery, provide visible shape; they picture the nation. As exemplars of moral order and aesthetic harmony, particular landscapes achieve the status of national icons.<sup>1</sup>

Landscapes are not purely physical; they are a spatially oriented “framing convention” used to refer to “the meaning imputed by local people to their cultural and physical surroundings”.<sup>2</sup> Thus they are ideological constructs, created by people through personal and collective experience and engagement with the physical world around them. As such, landscapes are narratives, creating a sense of place and spatiality through the ways in which they are perceived and constructed. These “cognitive maps” enable people to orientate themselves and form a cultural narrative that assigns significance to land. This means that landscape, or location, is more than a geographical entity. It is a socially constructed concept that functions to create social identity. There is meaning assigned to images and places giving them an identity that, in turn, gives meaning to these places. Daniels and Cosgrove define landscape as “a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing or symbolising surroundings”.<sup>3</sup> It is “created by people – through

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Daniels, *Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Eric Hirsch, “Landscape: Between Place and Space”, in Eric Hirsch and Michael O’Hanlon, eds, *The Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Daniels and Daniel Cosgrove, “Introduction: Iconography and Landscape”, in S. Daniels and D. Cosgrove, eds, *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of past Environments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1. “‘Location’ is ... represented ... as the ‘inter-animation’ of sense, speech and memory.” James J. Fox, “Introduction”, in James J. Fox, ed., *The Poetic of Place: Comparative Perspectives on Austronesia: Ideas on Locality* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1997), 2-3.



their experience and engagement with the world around them”.<sup>4</sup> This location of “landscape” within the realms of ideological constructs does not infer a dissociation from a physical sense of space and place. Rather, it is useful as an innovative way of conceptualising landscape and its effects on identity formation.

Indeed, there is a reflexive relationship between the past and the landscape. James Fox emphasises the “importance of narratives of the past in defining a landscape of specific places [in the present]”.<sup>5</sup> He further argues that “Specific places identified by name form a critical component of a social knowledge that links the past to the present.”<sup>6</sup> In this way, the visual and metaphorical images of the past construct an identity in the present. As ideological constructs, then, landscapes are part of Anderson’s “Imagined Community” and can function to construct national identity. Accordingly, landscape and location are a part of historical memory and therefore identity. They provide a visible framework for the existence and interchange of popular memory – a site of the performance of identity.

Further, this reflexive relationship constructs an ideological space for the societal performance of identity: the public sphere. Habermas defined the public sphere as a place for social intercourse, “a field of discursive connections” within which communication flows and creates a more authentic community than the state can do.<sup>7</sup> Hegel’s concept of civil society similarly conflates location and ideology, making the

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<sup>4</sup> Barbara Bender, “Introduction: Landscape – Meaning and Action”, in Barbara Bender, ed., *Landscape: Politics and Perspective* (Oxford: Berge, 1993), 1.

<sup>5</sup> James J. Fox, 1997, 6.

<sup>6</sup> James J. Fox, 1997, 6-7.

<sup>7</sup> Craig Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (London: MIT Press, 1993), 37.

“place” of identity formation largely conceptual.<sup>8</sup> Civil society is the dialectical stage on which identity is publicly performed *within the public sphere*. Indeed, this concept of civil society is grounded in the public sphere as an abstract place for human interaction and identity construction. The National Eisteddfod was an early aspect of Welsh civil society and, as such, an important way of studying Welsh identity. Importantly, however, these abstract notions of public space are often grounded in physical location. Indeed, the Eisteddfod was much more than an ideological space, it provided a very real physical site for discourse on things Welsh; the *Maes* was important both ideologically and physically. This chapter will explore the interaction between the two.

Certainly identity construction is based on more than an abstract notion of societal space and its largely symbolic boundaries, and the subsequent location of individuals within the ideological sphere of public discourse and interaction. Welsh nationhood and identity frequently have been defined around traditional *geographic* concepts such as community, space and place.<sup>9</sup> In his discussion of Welsh nationalism and historical geography, Pyrs Gruffudd says that the territory and landscape of Wales

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<sup>8</sup> It is “a specialised and highly complex network of rules, institutions, agencies, groups, practices and attitudes evolved within the legal and political framework of the nation-state to satisfy individual needs and safeguard individual rights”. Z. A. Pelczynski, *The State and Civil Society: Studies in Hegel's Political Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 263.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, E. G. Bowen, “The Geography of Wales as a Background to its History”, in Ian Hume and W. T. R. Pryce, eds, *The Welsh and Their Country* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1986); W. T. R. Pryce, “Wales as a Culture Region”, in Ian Hume and W. T. R. Pryce, eds, *The Welsh and Their Country* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1986); Pyrs Gruffudd, “Prospects of Wales: Contested Geographical Imaginations”, in Ralph Fevre and Andrew Thompson, eds, *Nation, Identity and Social Theory: Perspectives from Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999); Andrew Thompson and Graham Day, “Situating Welshness: ‘Local’ Experience and National Identity”, in Ralph Fevre and Andrew Thompson, eds, *Nation, Identity and Social Theory: Perspectives from Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999); Brian Roberts “Welsh Identity in a Former Mining Valley: Social Images and Imagined Communities”, in Ralph Fevre and Andrew Thompson, eds, *Nation, Identity and Social Theory: Perspectives from Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999).

have played a significant role in the process of national cultural imagination.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, “the ‘imagined communities’ of the ... nation depend on the drawing of boundaries which arise through the formation of ‘images’ of who ‘belongs’, and who does not, to the group or area.”<sup>11</sup>

For much of the twentieth century, the spatial metaphor for Welsh culture was represented through the concept of “culture zones”. The bases for division vary in usefulness but, generally, each of these zones were based in a sense of there being a “pure” version of a particular culture.<sup>12</sup> Denis Balsom’s “Three Wales” model is the most useful. His model uses the concept of “culture regions” to examine the role of the Welsh language in Welsh culture and identity. He states that Wales is not a natural geographic entity, and that some form of ideological division is a useful analytic device. The “Three-Wales Model” delineates three such culture regions: British Wales, Welsh Wales, and *Y Fro Gymraeg*.<sup>13</sup> It unites the spatial and ideological elements of Welsh identity in a way that is very appropriate to a discussion of the performance of identity at

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<sup>10</sup> Prys Gruffudd, 1999, 149-167.

<sup>11</sup> John Borland, Ralph Fevre and David Denny, “Nationalism and community in north west Wales”, *Sociology Review* 4 (1994), 49-72; Brian Roberts, 1999, 118. See also Graham Day and Jonathan Murdoch, “Locality and community: coming to terms with place”, *Sociology Review* 41:1 (1993), 82, 90.

<sup>12</sup> Essentially, there is a core area, that is, the “zone of concentration” for a particular culture. Next there is the domain, or the “outlying area dominated by the patterns of the culture ... but with less intensity and homogeneity”. Finally, there is the sphere, where elements of the culture “may be apparent but not dominant”. This is similar to E.G. Bowen’s inner and outer Wales. D. W. Meinig, “The Mormon culture region: strategies and patterns in the geography of the American West: 1847-1964”, *Annals Association of American Geographers* 55 (1965), 191-220. See also Alfred Zimmern, *My Impressions of Wales* (London: Mills and Boon, 1921); John Aitchison and Harold Carter, *Language, Economy and Society: The Changing Fortunes of the Welsh Language in the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 13.

<sup>13</sup> Denis Balsom, Peter Madgwick and Denis Van Mechelen, 1982, 6. See also Denis Balsom, 1979; Denis Balsom, 1985.

the National Eisteddfod.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, his results indicated the integration of linguistic and geographical senses of place and identity.

Spatial and temporal elements function in the construction of the cultural category of “community” and identity; they are manifested in constructions such as heritage sites (or anything that can be connected to “spectacle” or “gaze”) that combine the ideological and the physical into one identity. These “sites” are then created as “sacred” objects that illustrate the “inheritance” of the nation through its possessions, educating the population, helping to make a community – that is, the nation.<sup>15</sup> Moreover,

the imagination of community requires an endless dissemination of multiple histories that add to the imaginative geographies of the nation, but they do not add *up*. ... It is through the dissemination of narratives that the idea of a collective identity (a nation, a place, a region) takes shape. When these histories of identity are brought into alignment with geographies of identity, collective identity becomes tied to place and thereby to boundaries.<sup>16</sup>

Cultural sites (in a very abstract sense) are also very real boundaries – “territorial configurations of space-time relations, where past is spatialised in the present”.<sup>17</sup> In this sense, the National Eisteddfod is a cultural site for the expression of Welshness(es). Indeed, in this framework, as a location both symbolic and “real”, the Eisteddfod fits into the network of personal relationships and public discourse that constitute Welsh civil society.

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<sup>14</sup> Certainly, Balsom’s model is not directly applicable in this situation, due to the study’s historical nature, much of which precedes his study. However, there are some similarities. Metropolitan areas such as Cardiff represented anglicised urban communities similar to Balsom’s “British” Wales; Swansea represented English-speaking industrial Wales – what Balsom referred to as “Welsh” Wales; and Machynlleth and Caernarfon were situated firmly within *Y Fro Gymraeg*, the most self-identifiably Welsh of all areas of Wales, where the language and culture were strongest. Llanelli was problematic in this model, as it was an industrial town, but culturally situated within the *Fro*.

<sup>15</sup> Bella Dicks and Joost van Loon, “Territoriality and Heritage in South Wales: Space, Time and Imagined Communities”, in Ralph Fevre and Andrew Thompson, eds, *Nation, Identity and Social Theory: Perspectives from Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 207, 218-220.

This chapter will explore the role of the Eisteddfod as a site of the performance of identity in modern Wales. The location of each National Eisteddfod has played an important role in how the Eisteddfod has been perceived and represented. Throughout the twentieth century the Eisteddfod visited a variety of sites around Wales. There are some locations the festival returned to and some that it only visited once. Each village or town had an identity based in its geography and its history. There was meaning invested in that identity once the Eisteddfod was connected to it. The Eisteddfod's identity as national cultural festival, and consequently preserver of the nation's culture, implicitly assigned a broader *national* sense of identity to that region. That is, by selecting a region as the host venue, the Eisteddfod organisers, both on a local level as well as nationally, were emphasising that region's particular traits and identity. This chapter will investigate some of the key discussions related to location at the Eisteddfod in the twentieth century, and how they reflect larger trends in contemporary Welsh society.

After a brief discussion of demographic trends, the chapter will be divided into four main sections. The first section discusses the physical and ideological construction of Metropolitan Wales, particularly as related to two Eisteddfodau held in Cardiff: 1899 and 1960. The second section discusses the ideological importance attached to rural areas as host locations for the Eisteddfod. It will look primarily at the 1937 Eisteddfod. The next discussion uses the Llanelli Eisteddfod in 2000 to focus on an industrial Wales, and the effect the evolution into a post-industrial Wales had on Eisteddfodic discourse. Finally, this chapter will examine the concept of the peripatetic nature of the Eisteddfod, looking specifically at the discourse in 1979 at Caernarfon.

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<sup>16</sup> Bella Dicks and Joost van Loon, 213-214.

Before continuing, it is important to clarify some of the concepts central to the discussion in this chapter, and throughout the thesis. Implicit in the discourse of industrial and rural Wales were concepts of “tradition” and “modernity”. In the context of this discussion, these concepts are ideological constructs, imbued with meaning. Certainly “tradition” refers to real traditions, just as “modernity” refers to the modern world, and its related accoutrements. However, the ideas of tradition and modernity were powerful ideological and psychological tools in Eisteddfodic rhetoric, implying correlated notions of continuity and change, old and new, and good and bad. Thus, they must be perceived as partially reflective of public opinion and changing concepts of Welshness.

### **Demographic Trends in Twentieth-Century Wales**

Balsom’s model provides a good starting point for a discussion of some general demographic trends in Wales during the twentieth century. There are roughly three sorts of population areas in Wales: great urban civic centres, smaller industrial towns and the geographically substantial (but demographically diminishing) rural areas. In the context of this chapter, Urban, or Metropolitan, Wales was generally conceived to include the heavily industrialised and “urban” civic centres that were situated in what Balsom would later term “British” Wales; they included Swansea, Cardiff, and later Newport.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Bella Dicks and Joost van Loon, 216. See also Andrew Thompson and Graham Day, 1999, 44, 45.

<sup>18</sup> Between 1901 and 1971, for example, although large cities like Cardiff, Swansea and Newport grew rapidly into relatively large metropolis, they were the only cities whose population approached 100,000. Swansea’s population continued to grow from 94,537 in 1901 to 173,413 in 1971; Newport’s population grew similarly steadily from 67,270 in 1901 to 112,286 in 1971. Certainly Swansea did not fall into the same “region” in Balsom’s model. It provides a good example of the inapplicability of Balsom’s model to a historical study of Wales; in the early part of the century it was (arguably) as cosmopolitan and urban as Cardiff.

Industrial Wales included the industrialised areas that remained smaller and thus retained a stronger “Welsh” identity, though not often centred on the language; they included the Welsh valleys and areas such as Llanelli.<sup>19</sup> Rural Wales included the non-industrialised areas, where the language remained strongest longer.<sup>20</sup>

Migration trends resulted in the demographic upheaval of Wales during the twentieth century. The effects of these migratory patterns were felt throughout the nation and produced subsequent changes in the developing social geography of twentieth-century Wales. The prevailing transformation was the population shift from rural to urban and industrial areas. Although the population of Wales grew throughout the century, there was a population decrease in rural counties.<sup>21</sup> For example, between 1921 and 1931, the population of Wales decreased by 63,142.<sup>22</sup> In Montgomeryshire, the population decreased during this period, at a greater rate than throughout Wales.<sup>23</sup> Because the population of the county was decidedly rural, it was representative of the pattern of rural decline throughout Wales.<sup>24</sup> The pattern of depopulation, of an ageing society and an economically stagnant area suitable largely for development as a kind of

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<sup>19</sup> Llanelli does not fit easily into Balsom’s model. It is industrial, like much of British Wales, but Welsh-speaking, like the *Fro*. Thus, Balsom’s model, while useful, is not entirely applicable and suitable in the context of this study.

<sup>20</sup> In Eisteddfodic discourse, little distinction was made between areas in *Y Fro* and those in Balsom’s “British” Wales.

<sup>21</sup> Certainly there was much out migration, both from the rural areas and from Wales generally. However, birth rates and in migration combated any decrease. L. J. Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics vol. I* (Pontypool: Mid Wales Litho Ltd., 1998).

<sup>22</sup> The natural increase of 205,565 was tempered by the net migration of 268,707. See L. J. Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics vol. I*, 1998, 68.

<sup>23</sup> It decreased by 2,790; with a natural increase of 2,205 but a net migration of 4,282. This was a decrease of 5.4 per cent of the population of Montgomeryshire in 1931, compared to a decrease of 2.6 per cent in all of Wales. See *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>24</sup> Agriculture was the primary occupation/industry; of 16,125 occupied men in 1931, 8,134 (50.4 per cent) were employed in agriculture. Of 4,787 employed women, the largest number (2,512) were employed in services, sport and recreation; 14,006 were unemployed. These figures should be compared to those of an industrialised county such as Glamorgan; in Glamorgan in 1931 there were 415,371 employed men, of whom only 10,137 were employed in agriculture (2.4 per cent). See *Ibid.*, 126-9.

national park was hard to alter. As Kenneth Morgan says, rural Wales was “becoming a kind of vast Indian reservation, beautiful but barren, depopulated and dying”.<sup>25</sup>

Conversely, the population of industrial areas was growing for much of the early part of the twentieth century. With the industrial boom in nineteenth-century Wales, there was considerable inward migration, towards the industrialised valleys and areas of South Wales.<sup>26</sup> The population of the South Wales valleys grew quite quickly in a short period of time. Between 1801 and 1911, for example, Cardiff’s population increased a hundred-fold; more to the point, the population doubled in twenty years between 1881 and 1901.<sup>27</sup>

Yet although throughout the twentieth century there was fairly steady inwards migration towards more urbanised areas, there were few large towns in Wales. For much of the century, Welsh life balanced between rural communities and an increasing number of small, urbanised areas and towns. Conurbations such as Flint, Llanelli, Merthyr and Tredegar all swelled significantly for much of the century.<sup>28</sup> Even smaller areas such as Brecon, Abergavenny and Carmarthen saw increased populations during the twentieth century.<sup>29</sup> The biggest change in the second half of the century has been in “suburban” areas in South Wales that traditionally have not been independent centres of

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<sup>25</sup> Kenneth Morgan, 1981, 330. “By the mid-1970s, a booming tourism, with the growth of caravan parks and chalets and other features of the twentieth-century leisure industry, was the most dependable source of annual income for many of these tourist areas.”

<sup>26</sup> Check in Kenneth Morgan, *Modern Wales: politics, places and people* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995).

<sup>27</sup> The population of Cardiff in 1901 was 164,333 (up from 128,915 in 1891, and 82,761 in 1881).

<sup>28</sup> Llanelli grew from 25,617 in 1901 to 38,416 in 1931, and dipping by 1971 to 26,383. Merthyr grew from 69,228 in 1901, peaking slightly earlier in 1911 and 1921 at 80,990 and 80,116, and falling to 55,317 in 1971. Flint grew continuously from 4,625 in 1901 to 14,662 in 1917.

<sup>29</sup> Of all the major towns in Wales, only Caernarfon lost population, and that was temporary. Caernarfon’s population in 1901 was 9,760; it dipped to its lowest point in 1921 (8,307), and was 9,260 in 1971. L. J. Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics vol. 1*, 1998, 62-65.



population. Caerphilly, for example has continued to grow as a result of its proximity to Cardiff, becoming one of the larger towns in South Wales.<sup>30</sup>

Another related demographic trend was the decline of the language. Initially, as people moved from rural areas to urban areas, the language continued to thrive. Indeed, in the uniquely Welsh conurbations of the industrial valleys, the Welsh language remained strong well into the twentieth century, despite the pattern of depopulation of the rural linguistic heartlands. However, rural areas were hit increasingly hard as the century progressed. The steady depopulation of the traditional stronghold of the Welsh language in rural Wales was ultimately compounded by the influx of English-speakers. Indeed, not only were “native” Welsh-speaking populations shrinking, but there was an influx of English-speaking tourists and owners of holiday homes. In fact, due to the *universal* decline of the language, rural areas remained a Welsh-language stronghold well into the post-war era.<sup>31</sup> Ironically, language was increasingly seen as a hallmark of Welshness, particularly in *Y Fro*; Mr Evans claimed that “Merioneth is the most Welsh county in Wales – 76 out of every 100 people speak Welsh.”<sup>32</sup>

By the early years of the twentieth century, other factors, such as in-migration from areas outside of Wales, and the ever-encroaching influences of American and British popular culture, were affecting the decline of the language in industrial areas. The industrialised areas that had harboured Welsh-language culture throughout much of their boom period were also under threat as the century progressed. It was only after the

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<sup>30</sup> In 1901, Caerphilly had a population of 15, 835: significant but small compared to many other surrounding towns with higher populations. By 1971, however, Caerphilly had a population of 40,788; it had continued to grow, while that of other towns had either settled or fallen back to lower figures.

<sup>31</sup> L. J. Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics 1974-1996* (Pontypool: Mid Wales Litho, 1998), 11.

influx of English-speaking emigrants to industrial Wales cemented the pattern of decline in industrial Wales that there was a perceived threat to the future of the language. The combination of inward migration and a rapidly spreading English-language popular culture meant that the Welsh language would not last.<sup>33</sup> Ironically, it has been in industrialised areas such as Cardiff and Swansea that the language renaissance has occurred in the last decades of the twentieth century. Despite the relative concentration of Welsh speakers in rural areas, however, and an arguably artificial renaissance of the language towards the end of the century, the Welsh language was in decline throughout the twentieth century.

Certain demographic trends were fairly consistent throughout the industrialised areas of Wales. For much of the industrial period, they were known for the strength of the Welsh language. Furthermore, these industrialised communities became bastions of Welsh working-class culture and helped form some of the stereotypical hallmarks of “Welsh” culture: working men’s institutes, male voice choirs, rugby and the Labour Party. However there were also noticeable differences between the majority of these small urban areas and the largest, most anglicised of these conurbations. The Welsh language was heard increasingly less in the larger industrialised areas - particularly Cardiff - and it declined at a more rapid rate. More noticeable was the growth in the civic nature of certain of these cities. The result was the separation of some

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<sup>32</sup> Mr Evans, *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 1967, 4. For a discussion of the political and cultural views of the *Western Mail* see Appendix Five.

<sup>33</sup> See Owen John Thomas, “The Welsh language in Cardiff c. 1800-1914”, in Geraint H. Jenkins, ed., *Language and Community in the Nineteenth Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), 193-194; Kenneth Morgan, *Wales: politics, places and people*, 1995.

industrialised areas into “metropolitan” centres that were heavily anglicised and multi-cultural.

Cardiff was simultaneously representative of these demographic trends, and unique in its status. There are several reasons for this extraordinary status. First of all, Cardiff absorbed more people, from all over the world, during this period than any other urban area in Wales. This growth was based in structural factors. Firstly, only a few of the industrialized areas such as Cardiff were ports, enabling a great flow of people in and out, as well as goods. Cardiff was a major port within the British Empire. Not only did this affect the economic growth of the town and city, but also the social composition. As Kenneth Morgan says, at no period was Wales “with its heavy industry more central to the performance of the British economy and the international ramifications of its finance, investment, capital outflow, and export trade”.<sup>34</sup> Coal production in South Wales rose from 16 million tons in the 1870s, to 30 million in 1891, and to 56.8 million in 1913.<sup>35</sup> Cardiff was a growing city, and economically one of the most important in the British Empire. Coal from the city’s ports travelled the world over.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, as the “natural output for the South Wales Coal Field”, the city was absorbing population at an unparalleled rate.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, this population was increasingly heterogeneous, with large immigrant populations from all over the British Isles and abroad. By the turn of the twentieth century the town had become a “populous,

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<sup>34</sup> Kenneth Morgan, 1981, 59.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 60. See also G. M. Holmes, “The South Wales Coal Industry, 1850-1914”, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of the Cymmrodorion* (1976), 183.

<sup>36</sup> See M. J. Daunton, “Coal to Capital: Cardiff since 1839”, in Prys Morgan, ed., *Glamorgan County History, Volume VI. Glamorgan Society 1780-1980* (Cardiff: Glamorgan County History Trust, 1988), 203-224.

<sup>37</sup> *Eisteddfod Frenhinol a Chenedlaethol Cymru Caerdydd, 1899: Official Programme*, 2. See Kenneth Morgan, 1981, 71.

dynamic port”; indeed, it was possible to refer to Cardiff, if not as a city, as a “Metropolis”.<sup>38</sup> Early in the century, the emigrants to the urban areas were predominantly from Wales and Welsh-speakers. However, later waves of emigrants brought other languages and cultures. Throughout the century these patterns were most particularly pronounced in Cardiff. For example, there was considerable English and Irish Catholic emigration into Cardiff in the second half of the nineteenth century. By the 1911 census, every county in Wales and England was represented in the population of Cardiff and “observers could only wonder at the size and bustle of such a cosmopolitan centre”.<sup>39</sup> At the 1905 victory against the New Zealand rugby team, the correspondent “Ap Idanfryn” noticed that: “rubbing shoulders with the jubilant Welsh were the ‘confident Englishman, the negro and the yellow-skinned Japanese and Chinese’.”<sup>40</sup>

A second structural factor contributing to Cardiff’s unique growth lay in the financial interests of the Bute family. Cardiff grew throughout the twentieth century. In the early years of the century, the Bute family greatly expanded the dock areas of the city, which greatly increased its industrial role in Britain and the world. As a result,

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<sup>38</sup> See Owen John Thomas, 1998, 181; John Davies, *History of Wales* (London: Allen Lane – the Penguin Press, 1990), 384, 439. Additionally, this phrase was used in the newspaper reports of the 1899 Eisteddfod.

<sup>39</sup> See Owen John Thomas, 1998, 181-82.

<sup>40</sup> This is not to say that Swansea or other industrialized areas did not enjoy similarly diverse populations. However, various factors combined in Cardiff to ensure that it became a place unique in Wales. Certainly, there were few cities in Wales in the twentieth century. Cardiff was the first to be granted city status and Swansea followed in 1969, although for all intents and purposes, Swansea had the social, economic and cultural amenities of a city long before then. Swansea hosted the National in 1907, 1926 and 1964. Swansea also hosted the Eisteddfod in 1982, although the actual location was in suburban Swansea, rather than the city itself. However, for much of the century, Swansea was not comparable to Cardiff, as its civic fortunes decreased as those of Cardiff increased. This was due to a variety of factors, perhaps most obvious was the combination of the financial interests of the Bute family in Cardiff’s docklands and the devastating effects of the Second World War in Swansea. See Gareth Williams, “Y Maes Chwarae a

Cardiff's civic centre expanded: "The latter half of the nineteenth century saw attempts to bring other cultural amenities to the new urban and cosmopolitan society of the town."<sup>41</sup> Both the Marquess of Bute and Lord Tredegar donated land to the City for use as public parks in the 1890s. It was during this period that municipal cultural institutions such as the Library and Museum were established, as well as educational institutions such as the University College of South Wales.<sup>42</sup> Cardiff was granted city status in 1905; it became the capital of Wales in 1955. It had become unique in Wales: a great civic centre, a metropolitan mixture of Wales, Britain and the world.

As a result of its extraordinary growth, both demographic and economic, Cardiff was an example of the increasingly anglicised nature of urban areas in Wales. The changes that brought about the decline in Welsh-speakers in other industrial areas began earlier in Cardiff, again making the city unique within Wales. As with the other industrialised areas of Wales, throughout the early part of this period of urban growth and expansion, Cardiff remained a Welsh-speaking town. As late as the 1830s, for example, it remained largely Welsh speaking.<sup>43</sup> Welsh was the language one heard on the streets, shops and the chapels – although not necessarily the churches.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, as

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chenedligrwydd yng Nghymru 1880-1914", in Geraint H. Jenkins, ed., *Cof Cenedl V* (Llandysul: Gomer, 1990), 121-123.

<sup>41</sup> William Rees, *Cardiff: A History of the City* (Cardiff: The Corporation of the City of Cardiff, 1962), 160-161.

<sup>42</sup> The library was established in Cardiff as early as 1860, but in 1880 a more permanent building was begun, with help of Bute, that housed not only Library, but also the Museum and the Science and Arts School. The University College was established in 1883, but greatly extended 1930-1962. There was also much expansion around the Cathays Park civic centre in the early twentieth century.

<sup>43</sup> In 1801, Welsh was the main language spoken and had a prominent place in the town's day-to-day commercial life. In 1838, the town's Council recognised the importance of the Welsh language by advertising for a Clerk of Markets who could speak Welsh. As late as 1849, Welsh was still considered to be an advantage in commercial life. Owen John Thomas, 1998, 182-3; John Davies, *A Pocket Guide to Cardiff* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002), 126.

<sup>44</sup> Welsh-language culture was fostered by the nonconformist chapels and by a variety of small, localised cultural events such as eisteddfodau. Owen John Thomas, 1998, 182-3, 185-6.

William Rees points out in his history of Cardiff, the increased use of the Welsh language in the town after its mid-nineteenth-century boom “was further stimulated during the nineteenth century by the coming of the industrial workers to find employment in the new constructional works, the railways, the ironworks and the Docks, ultimately to make Cardiff their home”.<sup>45</sup> By the 1850s, however, emigrants from outside of Wales were flooding into Cardiff to work in the rapidly expanding docks and industries.<sup>46</sup> In addition, as Cardiff grew in economic importance, it grew in stature among other leading industrial cities of the world; among those cities, English was the *lingua franca*.<sup>47</sup>

In fact, the numbers of Welsh speakers was declining rapidly in Cardiff. By 1877 Wirt Sikes observed that:

No Welsh is heard on the streets of Cardiff. It is preached in some pulpits and spoken in some homes, and the most cultivated burghesses take pride in their knowledge ... of the Welsh language and literature: but for the common uses of life the English language is as much the language of Cardiff as it is of New York.<sup>48</sup>

Although there was no census data on the Welsh language before 1891, there were other indications of the decline in the language usage in Cardiff before then. By the 1880s, Welsh-language nonconformist chapels were experiencing considerable difficulty because of the decreasing use of Welsh in the town.<sup>49</sup> Members of the town’s Welsh cultural elite began to fight back by organising committees to promote bilingual

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<sup>45</sup> Owen John Thomas, 1998, 190; William Rees *Cardiff: A History of the City*, 1962, 160-161.

<sup>46</sup> These workers were largely English speakers from Ireland and South-western England.

<sup>47</sup> Owen John Thomas, 1998, 187-88.

<sup>48</sup> Wirt Sikes, “On the Taff”, *Harper’s new Monthly Magazine*, LIV, no. 321 (1877), 330. See Owen Thomas and Gwynedd O. Pierce, “University College Cardiff. Coleg y Brifysgol Caerdydd 1883-1983. A View of the Past”, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of the Cymmrodorion* (1984), 176.

<sup>49</sup> Mari A. Williams, “Cardiff: Glamorgan” in Geraint H. Jenkins, ed., *The Welsh Language and the 1891 Census* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 55.

education, Welsh-language culture, and the preservation of the language. However, as early as the turn of the century, much of Cardiff spoke English.<sup>50</sup> In fact, as shall be demonstrated, the language was in serious decline *throughout* Wales by the second half of the twentieth century, and the location of the Eisteddfod was increasingly seen as necessary to preserve the language and reflect the Welshness of a region.<sup>51</sup>

### Metropolitan Wales

In 1899 the Eisteddfod was held in Cardiff. At that time Cardiff's fortunes were on the rise. It was proud of its cosmopolitan character, and that was reflected in the discourse surrounding the Eisteddfod. The introduction to the official programme of the Eisteddfod was written in English. It gave a brief history of Cardiff, beginning in ancient times, but mostly focussing on the industrial present. In fact, given the emphasis in the programme on Welsh industry, the choice of Cardiff as the site of the 1899 National Eisteddfod seemed to be purposeful, and was meant to emphasise this new cosmopolitan and urban area, while maintaining a distinct Welsh flavour. Industrial Wales was trying to grow and Cardiff was its main focus for growth, economically and socially and culturally. By bringing the National Eisteddfod – a recognised and established national

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<sup>50</sup> In 1891, out of 164,134 residents in the town, 22,515 (13.7 per cent) spoke Welsh. Yet, according to the next census, by 1901, Cardiff had 151,925 residents over the age of three years. 12,395 (8.2 per cent) of those people were Welsh-speaking; but only 329 were monoglots. In Wales, out of an entire population of 1,864,696 people (aged three years and over), 929,824 (49.9 per cent) were Welsh-speaking; of those 280,905 were monoglot. See L. J. Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics vol. I*, 1998, 83, 78.

<sup>51</sup> One only must read the newspaper accounts surrounding the selection and/or proclamation of a new location to notice the trend of drawing attention to various regions' ties to the language. For example, in 1951 "the chairman [of the Llanrwst Council, Mr R W Roberts] said no locality in Wales was more Welsh than the area of which Llanrwst was the centre, and the town and district had done more than most places to keep the Welsh language alive." *Welsh News*, December 1948 – from papers of Elwyn Roberst (2), box 18 (at NLW).

cultural institution – to the town, the festival’s organisers (many of them eminent residents of town) were making a powerful statement: Cardiff had arrived.

The National Eisteddfod had been to Cardiff before, in 1883. It had been an extremely anglicised affair, with only two of the oral adjudications delivered in Welsh.<sup>52</sup> To many of the cultural and intellectual elite in Cardiff this Eisteddfod emphasised the crisis of the Welsh language in the town.<sup>53</sup> However, despite an increasing amount of Welsh-language cultural institutions and organisations, the 1899 Eisteddfod was not particularly “Welsh”. In fact, the predominant theme of the festival was its Pan-Celtic reunion. This emphasis was met with criticism and censure. A *Western Mail* editorial criticised the inclusiveness of the Cardiff festival: “By paying so much attention to strangers there is danger of losing sight of the distinctively Welsh character of the Eisteddfod. The visitors, of course, must be in the picture, but they should be in the background, and not in the forefront.”<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, there was a fracas regarding the hiring of German-Hungarian musicians for some of the fringe events, rather than local Welsh musicians. Correspondents to the *Western Mail* complained that there was not enough Welshness at the Eisteddfod in Cardiff: “Why engage this foreign band when we have first-class bands in Cardiff. ... If this is to be a national eisteddfod let it be so – not international.”<sup>55</sup>

Interestingly, at this time there was an apparent lack of criticism of the inclusion of both English participants and the English language. Although the “Saxons” were not

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<sup>52</sup> Owen John Thomas, 1998, 194.

<sup>53</sup> Men such as Edward Thomas (“Cochfarf”), John Viriamu Jones, and Dan Isaac Davies.

<sup>54</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Monday 24 July 1899, 4.

<sup>55</sup> Harry James, Secretary Cardiff Branch Amalgamated Musicians’ Union, Letter to Editor, *Western Mail*, Friday 14 July 1899, 6.



described in favourable tones, criticism was mostly confined to their alleged lack of musical and artistic temperament; their right to attend the festival was never questioned. The Cardiff Eisteddfod was not a particularly “Welsh” festival in the sense that the focus was on Welsh people and Welsh talent, but not the Welsh language. Its theme of a Pan-Celtic brotherhood stretched to include those on the other side of Offa’s Dyke in an inclusive embrace. For example, the inclusion of English choirs in competitions was seen as merely friendly rivalry, albeit in a vaguely (and impotent) nationalistic sense. The *South Wales Echo* commented that the “lasses of Birkenhead and Stoke-upon-Trent will come down to do battle for England”.<sup>56</sup> Generally, criticism of the anglicised and semi-multicultural nature of the Cardiff Eisteddfod was rare. One example came as an editorial in the *Western Mail*:

The English element was strongly in evidence, as, no doubt, it will be at Liverpool also next year. But it was unavoidable in a place like Cardiff, though not, perhaps, to the extent the committee thought desirable. However, when the Eisteddfod happens to be held in a more Welsh neighbourhood the local committee will have their revenge by making the pendulum swing a little in the opposite direction.<sup>57</sup>

Indeed, urban areas such as Cardiff were seen to be too cosmopolitan to be properly Welsh. However, this “foreign” characteristic did not seem to harm the Eisteddfod, either in the eyes of its organisers or the Eisteddfodwyr.<sup>58</sup> The *South Wales Echo* approved of the mix of people in Cardiff:

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<sup>56</sup> *South Wales Echo*, Wednesday 12 July 1899, 4. The *South Wales Daily News* and the *South Wales Echo* were both Liberal newspapers from their establishment in the nineteenth century until they were taken over by the *Western Mail* in 1928. As such, they were generally more sympathetic towards *Cymru Fydd* and ideas of Home Rule, although their positions on the language were unclear as they avoided discussion of the language.

<sup>57</sup> Editorial Comment, *Western Mail*, Saturday 22 July 1899, 4.

<sup>58</sup> Lord Castletown’s address as president, quoted by “Our Own Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 6.

It was in more senses than one a cosmopolitan gathering, and never before have the National Eisteddfod meetings been inaugurated with greater eclat. Churchmen and Dissenters, Roman Catholics and Protestants, Cymry and Saxons, united together to offer the town's heartiest welcome to the Eisteddfod on its visit to the Metropolis of Wales.<sup>59</sup>

One commentator noted that Cardiff was primarily an English-speaking city, but that it had gone out of its way to make the Welsh-speakers welcome.<sup>60</sup> The Cardiff Eisteddfod therefore was deemed a success. Eisteddfodwyr registered shock at the success of the festival in 1899. "Awstin" remarked: "Cardiff has, notwithstanding its cosmopolitan character, proved that it can be national as well as inter-national in its support and its welcome."<sup>61</sup> Additionally, "Zetus" had "not expected such an emphatic Eisteddfodic flavour to exist in the musical purlieus of Cardiff".<sup>62</sup> For the most part, Eisteddfod organisers and Eisteddfodwyr alike felt that the Cardiff Eisteddfod should reflect the growing, changing nature of the city, rather than remaining narrowly and archaically Welsh. A correspondent for the *South Wales Echo* summed up the apparent public consensus well:

I cannot help emphasising the very pertinent remark of yours that 'Saxon and Scot, Irish and Welsh, we are all part of the great amalgam, the British nation', and I also hope with 'Man About Town' that 'the Pan-Celtic revival should not be permitted to foster any spirit of parochialism or the caste of race, or draw a barred fence of nationalistic sentiment'. I do not think it will, for I have noticed during the week all sorts of men working together for the success of the National Eisteddfod. This is as it should be, for in Cardiff we are cosmopolitan, and any attempt at race particularism would be fatal to progress in many branches of public life in our great and growing Cardiff.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *South Wales Echo*, Tuesday 18 July 1899, 3.

<sup>60</sup> *Western Mail*, Monday 1 August 1960, 6.

<sup>61</sup> "Awstin", *Western Mail*, Monday 17 July 1899, 5.

<sup>62</sup> "Zetus", *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 6.

<sup>63</sup> "The Man About Town", *South Wales Echo*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 2.

The organisers of the 1899 National used Cardiff fully and to its best advantage with the Eisteddfod. The new public amenities, such as the Town Hall, the Free Library and Museum were opened up to house exhibitions of Welsh antiquities and cultural artefacts. “The Man About Town” commented on the “most elaborate arrangements” that were being made and the “special facilities” on offer:

Eisteddfodwyr should by no means miss the ‘sights’ of Cardiff, whilst not neglecting the Institution which they have come into town to support. The Museum contains a valuable collection of objects of interest to Celts, and ... all true Celts should not miss a visit to the Museum. ... Again, the Free Library has a distinctive Welsh character in its Library of Welsh Books and rare MSS. ... To attend the Eisteddfod and miss the Welsh section of the Museum, which offers a safe and fitting custody of the Gorsedd regalia – and the Welsh Library would be certainly showing lack of patriotism and a want of appreciation of real nationalistic work.<sup>64</sup>

Furthermore, the introduction to the city in the beginning of the List of Subjects goes into great detail regarding the recent industrial history and civic structure of Cardiff. As a guide to the location, it is more focused on commerce than tourism, and is reflective of a forward-looking sense of the city’s identity. There is a picture of one of the “chief thoroughfares” of the city, near which “are situated most of the Public Buildings of the Town”.<sup>65</sup>

As mentioned above, the Cardiff Eisteddfod was a vehicle for promoting the city to Wales and the world. Indeed, part of the purpose of the Eisteddfod has always been the promotion of Welsh arts and culture for the good of the Welsh people – as Lord

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<sup>64</sup> “The Man About Town”, *South Wales Echo*, Tuesday 18 July 1899, 2; *South Wales Echo*, Thursday 13 July 1899, 4.

Castletown said, “their material and intellectual advancement with the retention of their national characteristics, their Celtic language and all those treasures of Celtic tradition which had been bequeathed to them by an immemorial past”.<sup>66</sup> Mr Alfred Thomas, MP, referred to the Cardiff Eisteddfod as “the first in-gathering of the great harvest of the future”; his speech was met with popular support and applause.<sup>67</sup> A reporter from the *Western Mail* also summarised the role of the Eisteddfod in 1899 thus:

Well, what was the value of gatherings of this kind? In the first place, they knew that they urged men on and kindled that spirit of emulation, which inspired them with feelings of enterprise and energy, and spurred them on to rivalry with other people, which was one of the great motive powers that tended to the good of humanity at large. (Applause.) Then they saw that these feelings had practical results in the composition of music.<sup>68</sup>

The Victorian Eisteddfod’s role as an educational and inspirational festival was synchronous with Cardiff’s turn-of-the-century progressiveness. But it also emphasised a certain degree of antiquarianism; this was evidenced by the Pan-Celtic theme and the renewed emphasis on the Gorsedd and its traditions. Although there was already discourse and debate within the Gorsedd regarding the modernisation of the “ancient” circle.<sup>69</sup> This tension and the ensuing power struggle between ideas of “heritage” and “modernity” was one that pervaded the twentieth-century Eisteddfod. The gathering of the delegates from the Celtic nations was seen as a “revival” of a glorious past, and was

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<sup>65</sup> The other pictures are of an anonymous farmhouse (or similar building) and a view of the Castle front. *Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Frenhinol Caerdydd 1899 Rhestr o’r Testynau*, 6-7.

<sup>66</sup> Lord Castletown’s address as president, quoted by “Our Own Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 6.

<sup>67</sup> *South Wales Echo*, Friday 21 July 1899, 3.

<sup>68</sup> “Our Own Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 5.

<sup>69</sup> There was a prolonged debate in the *South Wales Echo* over possible changes for the Liverpool Eisteddfod in 1900. *South Wales Echo*, Saturday 15 July 1899, 2.

intended as preparation for an equally glorious future. The *South Wales Echo* rhapsodised:

The gathering will be a glorification of the Celtic revival. ... But think of the anachronism of the flower of Celtic bardism sitting on the roof of the Library, sipping Welsh coffee, smoking Rhondda cigars, and listening to the strains of a *German* band! It is sufficient to make the ghosts of Iolo Morganwg and Taliesin scale the roof and disturb the harmony.<sup>70</sup>

Similarly, President Owen said that:

The Eisteddfod of Wales was not merely a matter of antiquarian interest, but was a living fact in the present day. (Applause.) The great and crowning glory of the institution was that, without losing one jot of its traditional character, it admitted and accommodated itself to the requirements of each succeeding century. (Applause.)<sup>71</sup>

Moreover, the heritage of the region was emphasised in presidential speeches and newspaper reports. Lord Windsor bragged that they had “in Glamorgan a county as rich with historical Welsh traditions as any of their part of the Principality”.<sup>72</sup>

Cultural enjoyment was part of a self-help, improving theme that the National Eisteddfod propagated. In fact, one of the most consistent debates related to the twentieth-century Eisteddfod was that of the balancing act between entertaining the masses and enlightening them. The Mayor emphasised this point, saying that,

though they expected to get a large amount of pleasure from the beautiful singing and the addresses of learned men and the other good things provided by the Eisteddfod, their great aim was to promote art, science, and literature, and to produce works which should have a permanent effect upon the well-being of the Principality. (Applause.)<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Owen’s presidential address, quoted by “Our Own Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Friday 21 July 1899, 6.

<sup>72</sup> Lord Windsor’s presidential speech in the *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 5.

<sup>73</sup> Mayor’s presidential address, quoted by “Our Own Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Friday 21 July 1899, 6.

One of the ways in which this progressiveness was highlighted was in the subject matter for competitions, particularly the arts and crafts. A prime example of the functional and educational emphasis at the Eisteddfod was the competition for the best design for the decoration of the front parlour of a workman's cottage. Sir Lawrence Alma Tadema said it was "important and interesting" to "brighten the existence of the workmen in their houses".<sup>74</sup> Another correspondent to the *Western Mail* concurred: "I ... hope that the results will be educative as well as remunerative."<sup>75</sup> Indeed, that the Eisteddfod was an outlet for promoting Welsh arts and educating the Welsh people was a given assumption. But there was pressure, both from within and without, to alter the make-up of the festival. The subjects chosen for competition in Cardiff were eclectic and represent this ideological straddling of two worlds: old and new. For example, in the arts and crafts tent, entries included the best sample of homespun yarn, wooden spoons and a Welsh coracle, as well as more modern prizes such as those in photography and for a set of lantern slides "illustrating the working of a Welsh Colliery".<sup>76</sup> The modernistic and progressive strain of thought that was exhibited at the Cardiff Eisteddfod meant to keep pace with times, but also to make sure that the Eisteddfodwyr were entertained and educated. These themes will be returned to in different contexts in successive chapters.

Thus, Cardiff in 1899 was an example of the celebration of a new and progressively modern Wales. There was pride in the role Cardiff played within Wales, Britain and the Empire. The Eisteddfod of 1899 was a way of showing off the city and

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<sup>74</sup> *Western Mail*, Monday 17 July 1899, 5.

<sup>75</sup> Mr J. R. Lewis, secretary of the Carmarthen Choir, Letter to the Editor, *Western Mail*, Monday 10 July 1899, 6.

<sup>76</sup> From the *Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Frenhinol Cymru Caerdydd, Gorphenaf, 1899: Testunau – Adran yr Adroddiadau*.

its many new features to the people of Wales and abroad – specifically the members of the other Celtic nations who were attending the festival as delegates. Despite increasing concerns about the future of the Welsh language, and the Eisteddfod's role as a cultural institution in preserving that language, the Cardiff Eisteddfod of 1899 was very much a product of its urban, cosmopolitan environment. The first National held in the city after it was granted capital status was constructed on the same ideological framework.

### **A Capital for Wales**

When the National Eisteddfod returned to Cardiff in 1960 it found a booming city that just five years previously had been named the Capital of Wales. As a result, the Eisteddfod in 1960 found itself in a similar situation to that of 1899. The 1960 festival reflected the ambient excitement and sense of change in the newly named capital, just as the festival in 1899 had reflected the rising fortunes of the soon-to-be-named city. Nevertheless, Cardiff changed in the decades since the Pan-Celtic Eisteddfod of 1899 – and so did Wales. The population of both Wales and Cardiff grew, while the Welsh-speaking population decreased.<sup>77</sup> In fact, the size of Cardiff was central to its success as both a city and Eisteddfodic host.

By the post-war era, the Cardiff civic centre had been further expanded and modernised fully incorporating the various factors that made it comparable to the great urban centres of Britain. It merged past and present “into the same civic fold”; it was “a

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<sup>77</sup> The population of Wales grew from 1,864,696 in 1901 to 2,518,711 in 1961; Cardiff's population grew from 151,925 to 243,246 in the time period. The number of Welsh speakers declined in Wales from 929,824 (49.9per cent) in 1901 to 656,002 (26.0per cent) in 1961, and in Cardiff from 12,395 (8.1 per cent) to 11,545 (4.7per cent). L. J. Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics vol. I*, 1998, 78, 83.

tangible expression of the strong sense of citizenship of its inhabitants”.<sup>78</sup> It had grown as a site of civic identity for Cardiff and for Wales. The official programme and list of subjects for the Eisteddfod illustrated this emphasis. There were three pictures in the programme: one was an aerial view of the city centre, one was of the city hall, and one was of the National Museum.<sup>79</sup>

Indeed, the “new” capital city was a blend of old and new, much in the same way post-war Welsh identity was being fashioned. Wales was “buoyed up” by the post-war mood of optimism and growth. Kenneth Morgan says that: “Everywhere there was a euphoric mood of social change.”<sup>80</sup> The crowning glory of this alleged new post-war affluence in Wales was the creation of Cardiff as the capital of the Principality. A contemporary history of the city celebrated this new role:

Today Cardiff enjoys all the amenities of a modern city and it has established itself as a civic force in the Principality. The achievement of more than half a century received fitting recognition when in 1905 King Edward VII conferred upon it the status of a City. Fifty years later, in 1955, the City attained by royal decree of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, the privileged position of capital of Wales and premier city of the Principality, thereby adding lustre to its name and at the same time giving formal acknowledgement of the claims of Wales as a nation.<sup>81</sup>

Importantly, the recognition of Cardiff as the capital city of Wales in 1955 was “symbolic of a greater sense of nationhood”.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> William Rees, 1962, 18.

<sup>79</sup> There were maps of the city and South Glamorgan as well, but these do nothing other than give the Eisteddfodwyr directions and help them to locate the Eisteddfod in Cardiff, and Cardiff in South Wales.

<sup>80</sup> Kenneth Morgan, “Wales since 1945: Political Society”, in Trevor Herbert and Gareth Elwyn Jones, eds, *Post-War Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), 11.

<sup>81</sup> William Rees, 1962, 18.

<sup>82</sup> Chris Williams, “On a Border in History: Wales 1945-1985”, in Jones, Gareth Elwyn and Dai Smith, eds, *The People of Wales* (Llandysul: Gomer, 2000), 239-240.



Much attention was drawn to this fact in 1960, and the status this appointment gave both the city and the nation. The various daily presidents and assorted members of the Eisteddfod Dignitaries repeatedly mentioned the occurrence as something noteworthy and to be celebrated.<sup>83</sup> Sir Thomas Parry-Williams, president of the Eisteddfod Court, said in his opening speech that “although it was not the first time the festival had been held in Cardiff it was the first time for it to be held in the capital of Wales”.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, Mr George Thomas, MP for Cardiff West, emphasized how much the citizens of Cardiff had been looking forward to the Eisteddfod, “since the city had been made the capital of Wales”.<sup>85</sup> The official greeting by the Lord Mayor of Cardiff in the *List of Subjects* prefaced the gathering (in both Welsh and English):

Cardiff was recognised as the Capital City of Wales in 1956 and the visit of the Eisteddfod can be of help to deepen our consciousness of the responsibility of this honour which carries with it and affords a splendid opportunity for Welsh men all over the world to visit their Capital. It is undisputed that Cardiff is a convenient centre, as more than half of the entire population of the Principality is resident within a circle of fifty miles.<sup>86</sup>

Not only did the Lord Mayor emphasise the new political status given to the city, but also he alluded to the new psychological status and role of Cardiff, and the subsequent respect due to it as the capital city.

Related to this change in status was the changing role Cardiff now played within Wales as its capital. In the discourse surrounding the Eisteddfod, Cardiff was represented as central ideologically, if not geographically, to the Welsh nation – as the

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<sup>83</sup> “As it is the first national to be held in Cardiff since it became the Welsh capital it is tragic that the adjudicators having decided months ago there was no poem worthy of the Chair. ...” Anonymous

“Leading Eisteddfodwr”, quoted by Westgate, *Western Mail*, Monday 8 August 1960, 8.

<sup>84</sup> Quoted in Geoffrey Thomas, *South Wales Evening Post*, Monday 1 August 1960, 1.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

epitome of modern Welshness. As the new political capital it was only fitting that it host the roving cultural capital of Wales. Cardiff was a modern and progressive city, but one that did not forget or overlook its connections to the past. According to Alderman Thomas Evans: “Going to the Eisteddfod in Cardiff was like going to the Eisteddfod in the heart of Wales.”<sup>87</sup> Interestingly, the discourse on Cardiff as the Eisteddfod host-location in 1960 focused more on the role of the city as (political) capital of Wales, and thus the hub of the nation, rather than Cardiff as in any way a stereotypically “Welsh” city. This is a change from other years and other locales when discourse stressed the role of the language and culture of the region. This is also a change from the earlier discourse on Cardiff, when the focus was given to civic amenities, but without their subsequent *national* status.

Furthermore, by 1960 Cardiff was able to celebrate a new sort of heritage: industrial heritage. What in 1899 had been thought of as progress and associated with the future was now increasingly part of a Welsh past. In fact, although the industrial aspects of the city were celebrated in 1899, they were not seen as “heritage”. In 1899 heritage meant the same emphases on a rural, language-oriented, culture of the *gwerin*.<sup>88</sup> Conversely, Cardiff in 1960 celebrated its particularly industrial heritage.

A more distinct, regional focus on Cardiff also was evident in 1960. This focus was made clear in the discussions related to the 1962 Eisteddfod. In her appeal for the National to be located in Llanelli, Miss Olwen Williams said it was just as suitable to

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<sup>86</sup> Helena Evans, Lord Mayor of Cardiff, “Cyfarchion (Greetings)”, *Rhestr Testunau Caerdydd Awst 1-6 1960*, 7,9.

<sup>87</sup> Alderman Thomas Evans, chairman of the Finance committee of the Glamorgan County Council and day president, quoted by Lyn Owen Rees, *Western Mail*, Thursday 4 August 1960, 4.

<sup>88</sup> The concept of the *gwerin* will be discussed in the next chapter.

bring the Eisteddfod to the “kitchen” of Wales - that is, Llanelli – as it was the “parlour”, Cardiff.<sup>89</sup> The kitchen was the working heart of the home, the heart literally and metaphorically; the parlour is a place for display and a showcase. By referring to Cardiff as the parlour, Williams emphasised the city’s identity as the nation’s showplace, the capital city of a many-roomed house. It was the place to feature various national attributes, such as the docks that connected Wales to the world and the cultural institutions that made Cardiff a worthy city. In this way, Cardiff could be viewed as a microcosm of modern Wales. But the two sides of the city, culture and industry, were inseparable.

Perhaps ironically, despite this focus on a (new) sense of industrial heritage, the Eisteddfod of 1960 continued to embrace modernity, just as it had in 1899. The Eisteddfod carried on the Victorian themes of progressiveness, educational purpose and spiritual improvement that dominated the early National Eisteddfodau. Indeed, these aspects resonated in the Queen’s speech, which was well broadcast through the media.

She said:

[T]he strengthening of the economic life of Wales is most encouraging and gives all of us great satisfaction. But I am especially glad to be here when the *things of the spirit* are the main concern of the week during which the Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales is meeting in this city.<sup>90</sup>

The celebratory progressive modernity of the 1899 festival had been tempered by the intervening trauma and, the related focus on the security of the idealised *gwerin*, of the middle years of the twentieth century. Out of this merger, a new sense of Welshness was slowly emerging.

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<sup>89</sup> Geoffrey Thomas, *South Wales Evening Post*, Wednesday 3 August 1960, 1.

### The Rural Idyll of Wales

As the century progressed, demographic changes meant that the population of Wales was changing. There was a real and perceived threat to the rural way of life in Wales. As a result, the nation became increasingly polarised between rural and urban areas, and there seemed to be a renewed emphasis on the Welshness of rural areas that ran conversely to the extant socio-economic changes. Inward migration and linguistic change combined to contribute to the view that the rural areas of Wales were not only the preserve of the language, but also in a state of dangerous degeneration.<sup>91</sup> It became increasingly common to use smaller, more rural sites for the Eisteddfod, and to focus on these traits in respect to the Eisteddfod and Welshness.

The location of the Eisteddfod in 1937 was especially typical of this trend. The Eisteddfod in 1937 was held in Machynlleth, a village in the rural “heartland” of Wales. Wales in 1937 was in crisis. It was part of an increasingly modern world, and a world threatened by war. As was the case throughout much of Britain, the First World War damaged the social structure of Wales. The industrial boom that had held up Wales’ economic structure through the first decades of the twentieth century had collapsed in economic depression and turmoil by the late 1920s.<sup>92</sup> By 1937, the situation in Europe

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<sup>90</sup> Frank Gold, *South Wales Evening Post*, Friday 5 August 1960, 1.

<sup>91</sup> In 1931 Montgomeryshire’s population was 46,267, with 18,845 Welsh-speakers. The total population of Wales in 1931 was 2,472,378; of those 909,261 spoke Welsh. Thus, the percentage of Welsh-speaker within the entire population of the county was 40.7 per cent; this was higher than that throughout Wales, at 36.8 per cent. Of these, 3,152 were monoglots, and 15,693 were bilingual. See L. J. Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics vol. I*, 1998, 79, 81.

<sup>92</sup> For example, the number of employed persons in Wales fell steadily from 1922 (548,000), reaching its low point in 1932, before slowly climbing up again in the late 1930s (reaching 524,000 in 1939). Similarly, the numbers of “paupers relieved” decreased from 60,217 (1900) to 57,357 (1920), but rose

was dismal and there were growing storm clouds over the continent that shadowed much of Britain. Furthermore, the language was fading out of everyday use in much of Wales; and Welsh nationalism was growing as a response. In 1936, three of the founding members of the Welsh Nationalist Party set fire to an RAF bombing school in the Llŷn Peninsula, thereby instigating a new era of nationalist protest in Wales. In this context, the Eisteddfod of 1937 was held in a confusing political, social and economic climate.

Machynlleth in 1937 was a small town with a notable history. As the site of Owain Glyndŵr's medieval Welsh parliament, the town had a proud Welsh national "tradition". Importantly, the site of his Parliament House, Plas Machynlleth, was used for the Eisteddfod. "The spirit of Owain Glyndwr called it [the Eisteddfod] there [to Machynlleth]."<sup>93</sup> By the middle of the nineteenth century, Machynlleth was an established mid-Wales market town, with a largely Victorian town centre. By the 1930s, tourist guides to Wales were referring to the town as "a bustling little town in summer, filled with tourists and anglers".<sup>94</sup> Mention was made of the town's connections to Owain Glyndŵr and to Plas Machynlleth. Importantly, it remained "strongly Welsh".<sup>95</sup> The Eisteddfod President's welcome to visitors expressed just such a sentiment:

Within a stone's throw is the ancient Parliament House where Owen Glyn Dwr in 1404 summoned his supporters to frame the laws of their country, nearly a century before Henry Tudor ascended the throne of England. ... To-day, without sacrificing our liberties or losing our national characteristics, we live at peace with our neighbours.<sup>96</sup>

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significantly to 96,725 (1930) and 105,174 (1938). See L. J. Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics vol. I*, 1998, 133; *Ibid.*, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics vol. II*, 1998, 178-180..

<sup>93</sup> Lord Atkin in *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 6 August 1937, 7.

<sup>94</sup> W. H. Piehler, *Wales for Everyman* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1935), 131.

<sup>95</sup> Elizabeth Beazley and Peter Howell, *The Companion Guide to North Wales* (London: Collins, 1975), 299.

<sup>96</sup> Davies, the Eisteddfod President, *Rhaglen Swyddogol*, 33.

As stated previously, due to the various social and economic pressures in Wales and Britain, by the 1930s there was increased focus and support towards the idea of holding the National Eisteddfod in smaller, rural, areas. The *Cardiff Times* reported: “the festival need not be considered the monopoly of the big towns and the industrial areas.”<sup>97</sup> It was noted that Machynlleth was one of the smallest towns,

but notwithstanding its size, its welcome to the Eisteddfod would be warm and hearty. Machynlleth was not only the centre of Wales, but also the true heart of Wales. He referred to the associations of the town and said the district had been faithful to the ideals of the Eisteddfod.<sup>98</sup>

Machynlleth was ideal because it was small and bucolic, but also because of its distinguished historic past. “No town has ever housed national heroes with nobler ideals.”<sup>99</sup>

The larger towns, although they contained the bulk of the Welsh population, were increasingly perceived as being too big to have an “Eisteddfodic” atmosphere. Furthermore, their “Welshness” was questioned. In the discussions surrounding the selection of the “quaint old market town of Llanrwst” as the host location for the 1951 Eisteddfod, discourse related to this shift was explicit.<sup>100</sup> Emphasising the strength of rural communities, Councillor J. O. Jones said that he thought it strange that the district had not previously staged the National. He welcomed the fact that the festival had begun

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<sup>97</sup> *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 14 August 1937, 5. The *Cardiff Times* was taken over by the *Western Mail* in 1928 and became increasingly similar in politics and cultural views to its parent paper. By 1950, the *Times* was essentially a weekly version of the *Mail*.

<sup>98</sup> Mr W. A. Breese, chairman of the Machynlleth Urban Council, in *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 6 August 1937, 7.

<sup>99</sup> T. O. Phillips, MA, in the *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 31 July 1937, 1.

<sup>100</sup> “Llanrwst Prepares for its Greatest Week of Festival” - anonymous newspaper clipping from papers of Elwyn Roberst (2), box 18 (at NLW)

to visit small places, rather than “as in the past, big towns only”.<sup>101</sup> In fact, rather than a big town or city, a more typical choice for the location of the national festival would be one of the many villages or towns around Wales. This trend presented such a marked shift that newspaper coverage emphasised the role of small areas as hosts:

This year ... Llanrwst, a small market town, consisting mainly of one long rather grey street, celebrated sometimes for its harpists, has taken on that pleasurable but prodigious task. The population of this historic little town is under 3,000, but a week from [now] ... [it will be] invaded by a multitude of 120,000 to 130,000. ... And how, you may well ask, can a small community face up to all that? ... Well, these small towns that get the Eisteddfod consider a great honour is conferred on them. They dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to the mission of making it a success. Each new Eisteddfod must be the greatest ever! The little Davids will show the Goliath towns of Wales that size is not everything ... especially in the areas where the Welsh language is still vigorous.<sup>102</sup>

This conviction was largely related to language usage, which by the twentieth century was declining as rapidly as industrialism had expanded in the previous century. A more detailed discussion of the language issue will follow in chapter six. Here it is important merely to contextualise the issue within the discussion of regional historic tradition. Machynlleth’s historic tradition was fundamental to the ideology of the Eisteddfod, as it was itself an institution with a long, though debated, tradition. David Lloyd George said it was:

Good that the country districts were visited, for these were the home of the Welsh language. This year the Eisteddfod had come to the lovely valley of the Dovey, where the Welsh language was still thriving. It was like a tree planted by still waters which showed no signs of withering leaves. Machynlleth was the capital of Owain.

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<sup>101</sup> Councillor J. O. Jones of Llanrwst, in *Welsh News*, December 1948 – from papers of Elwyn Roberts (2), box 18 (at NLW)

<sup>102</sup> Llanrwst was smallest location (pop 2,800) to date to host modern National Eisteddfod. “Little Town Prepares an Eisteddfod ‘Miracle’ ” - anonymous newspaper clipping from papers of Elwyn Roberts (2), box 18 (at NLW)

Glyndwr and, therefore, it was a very suitable district for the holding of the national festival. Owain Glyndwr had been one of the greatest statesmen of Wales in the Middle Ages, and fought for the rights of the people for education for the children and tried to incorporate in a government the aspiration of a small nation. He was one of the greatest men of the last [sic] century, and certainly one of his own age.<sup>103</sup>

Similarly, Dr C. A. H. Ashton, the Archbishop of Wales, said the memory of Owain Glyndwr lingered over Machynlleth.<sup>104</sup> Importantly, this historical tradition was strongly nationalistic. Owain Glyndwr was popularly known as the last Welsh Prince of Wales, who unified the nation in the middle ages. The associations between Glyndwr and the Machynlleth region bequeathed it with a powerful legend and nationalistic idea, laying a foundation for later nationalistic activity. In the region's more recent past, the first Plaid Cymru summer school was held in Machynlleth in 1926.<sup>105</sup> A detailed discussion of the political and cultural nationalistic climate in 1937 will follow in chapter six. In this debate, however, it is important to call attention to the ways in which the history of the region was constructed in nationalistic terms.

In these times of social and economic distress in Wales, smaller areas were seen by certain Eisteddfodwyr to be more authentic and more zealously faithful to the ideals of the Eisteddfod. Despite changes in its structure, traditionalists saw the Eisteddfod as a truly Welsh institution. The Rev. E. Ebrard Rees declared that:

The Welsh streams are here [at the Eisteddfod] in their purity and clarity, unpolluted by foreign tendencies and not coloured by foreign influences. ... What Wales was yesterday is shown in this

<sup>103</sup> Lloyd George in *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 6 August 1937, 10.

<sup>104</sup> *North Wales Weekly News*, Thursday 12 August 1937, 10. Another reference to Glyndwr was made by Lord Atkin ("The spirit of Owain Glyndwr called it [the Eisteddfod] there [to Machynlleth].") in *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 6 August 1937, 7.

<sup>105</sup> Kenneth Morgan, 1981, 206.



institution; what Wales is to-day is clearly enunciated; what Wales will be tomorrow is given in anticipation for those who will see.<sup>106</sup>

The Eisteddfod was often presented as a timeless and eternal representation of the Welsh nation. Indeed, much was made of the history and “long eisteddfodic tradition” of the Machynlleth region.<sup>107</sup> Ralph Beaumont, MP, felt the site of the 1937 Eisteddfod was the most ideal and appropriate ever chosen:

Not only is the town of Machynlleth situated in an incomparably beautiful setting in the heart of rural Wales, but the actual ground upon which the Pavilion has been erected is hallowed with tradition, for it was, until recently, the home of an ancient Welsh family, connected for several centuries with the life of the Dyfi Valley.<sup>108</sup>

Other commentators further aligned the region’s heritage specifically to the Eisteddfod. The Rev. J. H. Williams made a case for the strong links between the region and an eisteddfodic tradition. Machynlleth was “a town which has made no small contribution to Welsh history and culture”.<sup>109</sup> Williams stressed that, in “estimating this contribution, we must not confine our attention merely to its great and honoured associations with Owain Glyndwr”, but also look at notable poets from the region.<sup>110</sup> Therein lay the real wealth of Welsh history: the cultured *gwerin* and the poets. P. Wheldon was concerned about the maintenance of this tradition:

What we have seen and heard [at the Eisteddfod] is truly part of the Welsh tradition of which we are proud but about which many are anxious and disturbed. Anxiety about the future of this tradition is no new thing in our history, but it is in these days more acute than ever, because the dangers to this tradition are obvious to all

<sup>106</sup> Rev. E. Ebrard Rees in *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 24 July 1937, 1.

<sup>107</sup> J. Lloyd Thomas in the Eisteddfod supplement, *Western Mail*, Monday 2 August 1937, 5.

<sup>108</sup> The Hon. Ralph Beaumont, MP, in the Eisteddfod supplement, *Western Mail*, Monday 2 August 1937, 5.

<sup>109</sup> “Bards of 15th Century Machynlleth”, J. H. Williams of Bangor, Eisteddfod supplement, *Western Mail* Monday 2 August 1937, 3.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

and the value of the tradition is perhaps better and more critically appreciated.<sup>111</sup>

As shall be demonstrated later, these fears were common by the 1930s as industrialisation and modernity were making the “traditional” *gwerin* obsolete. Thus, situated as it was in the historic and rural “heart” of Wales, Machynlleth was an appropriately historic and suitably “Welsh” site for the “traditional” festival of Wales.

The very idea of rurality was highlighted to further construct a notion of purity and an almost essential sense of Welshness, continued from ages immemorial. The physical environment of Machynlleth and Powys was emphasised as pastoral and the epitome of a rural idyll: “Here, in a sylvan setting, in a spacious park surrounded with green and wooded hills ... in that historic and romantic spot.”<sup>112</sup> The fact that the National was held in a large park surrounded by fields and wooded hills, “Within a stone’s throw is the ancient Parliament House of Owain Glyndwr,” emphasised the connection between the rural location and the ancient “tradition” of the area.<sup>113</sup> In addition, the pictures illustrating the *Programme* emphasise this pastoral identity. There was a view of the town, showing its location: nestled in the hills and farmland. Not only was Machynlleth seen as a stronghold of things Welsh, but it was seen as a

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<sup>111</sup> P. Wheldon in *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald*, Friday 13 August 1937, 4. The *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald* was involved in a Labour dispute in 1912. In 1937 it was generally pro-British in politics, but not without some support for linguistic nationalism. It was adamantly supportive of the Welsh language and protests for its preservation. It took a more radical stand than the *Western Mail*. Regarding a protest against the Great Western Railway’s language policy: “It was not surprising that a strong protest at this ban was made.” (Editorial, *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald*, Friday 30 July 1937, 4.) In 1967 it was still supportive of the language, particularly of the Eisteddfod’s role therein. T. Jones Owen said: “The Eisteddfod is beginning to exercise its rightful task of defending and safeguarding the Welsh culture, literature and language.” (T. Jones Owen, *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald and North Wales Observer*, Friday 4 August 1967, 6.) By 1979 it had become less evidently radical or, indeed, political. There was no overt political discussion in Eisteddfodic discourse, related to either politics or language.

<sup>112</sup> Davies, the Eisteddfod President, *Rhaglen Swyddogol*, 33.

<sup>113</sup> *North Wales Weekly News*, 29 July Thursday 1937, 3.

“picturesquely situated” rural setting for a similarly picturesque festival.<sup>114</sup> In “The Land of the Dyfi” in the programme, Iorwerth Peate introduced to the Eisteddfodwyr an area of indescribable beauty, with “sleepy” streams and “blue remembered hills”.<sup>115</sup> He continued: there was “no great material intrusion of alien influences: it has ever been a region where the native tradition has been safe and invincible, sufficiently in contact with the outer world to maintain that tradition definite and alive.”<sup>116</sup> The stress on the ruralness of the Machynlleth region created a sense that it had been untouched by modernity and industrialisation, and thus unchanged for centuries. Related to this idea of Machynlleth constituting a physical border of Welsh Wales was the concept of the “Talerddig Divide”. This divide was physically situated at the Talerddig signal box at the summit on the Cambrian Railway's line through the “heart” of Wales to Machynlleth. Ideologically, it represented a watershed between Welsh and English cultures.

In a similar manner, the discourse at the Bala Eisteddfod of 1967 also emphasised the correlation between location and identity. According to the discourse, geographically, Bala was in central Wales. Neither North nor South, the rural Welshness of the region only served to emphasise the geographic position: “Bala should make it the most ‘Welsh’ Eisteddfod geographically since 1959 at Caernarvon.”<sup>117</sup> Physically as well as ideologically, Bala was close to the core of Wales. Moreover, the rural nature of Bala and Merioneth were seen to be beneficial to the area and to the Eisteddfod. For

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<sup>114</sup> T. O. Phillips, MA, in *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 31 July 1937, 1.

<sup>115</sup> Iorwerth Peate, *Rhaglen Destunau Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Frenhinol Cymru Machynlleth Awst 1937*, 25.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Mr John Roberts in *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 1967, 3.

example, the chairman of the Eisteddfod Council, Emrys Roberts, said he hoped that future Eisteddfodau would be invited to “the rural areas of Wales”.<sup>118</sup> The Bala region was “surrounded by some of the finest unspoilt scenery in Wales, rich woodlands, picturesque river valleys impressive mountain ranges, dominated by the well known Cader Idris”.<sup>119</sup> The illustrations in the *Programme* and *List of Subjects* show an idyllic area: a quaint high street, a neighbouring village with a picturesque local church, and various maps that show the visitor where the beauty spots of the region are. In fact, there was a full-page advertisement welcoming visitors to the region, proclaiming in both Welsh and English: “Welcome to beautiful Bala and district, the land of history and charm.”<sup>120</sup>

Connections were drawn between this “unspoilt” aspect to the region and an essentialist ideal of Welshness. As in 1937, part of this idea of purity was based on the strength of the language. The *Liverpool Daily Post* said:

This is the natural setting for the event, deep in the heart of the countryside and at the very core of Welshness. Here the Welsh spirit is liberated from the inhibitions of a perpetual duality. The Cymry are themselves unaffectedly comradely, speaking their traditional language which for all its far-off origins, is remarkably adaptable and flexible to the needs of a scientific, machine age, with an élan that springs out of sheer enjoyment and a sense of the rich heritage bequeathed over long centuries.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>118</sup> Michael Lloyd-Williams in *Western Mail*, Thursday 10 August 1967, 5.

<sup>119</sup> *Rhaglen Swyddogol Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Frenhinol Cymru Sir Feirionnydd Y Bala 1967*, Lerpwl: Hugh Evans a’I Feibion, Cyf./Gwasg y Brythyn, 1967), 16.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>121</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, Tuesday 8 August 1967, 3. The *Liverpool Daily Post* was sympathetic, if not overtly supportive of the Welsh language in 1937. By 1967, it was occasionally more radically supportive of the Welsh language and relatively anti-English in cultural politics, although it did not support devolutionist policies. H. W. J. Edwards wrote in it that “Welsh should be pushed down our throats”. (H. W. J. Edwards, *Liverpool Daily Post*, Friday 18 August 1967, 5.)

Indeed, not only was the setting of Bala seen as ideal because its rural setting was picturesque and lovely, but it was also the focal point of a continuous tradition of a practised Welsh culture. Interestingly, the discourse constructing this broader sense of historical, cultural continuity and “tradition” in Bala was nearly identical to that in Machynlleth.

Connected with this sense of a continuous past and “tradition” was an emphasis on folk culture and the *gwerin*. This accent was particularly strong in 1937. The *gwerin*, or “folk” of Wales, were a rural people, and the Machynlleth Eisteddfod set about to celebrate them and their perceived purity and essentialism. The concept of the *gwerin* will be discussed more in the next chapter. Before continuing, however, it is important to note that this folksy idea was not new to Wales in the 1930s. On the contrary, it had become the hegemonic interpretation of Wales and Welshness in the nineteenth century, born out of the Romantic Movement.<sup>122</sup> In the *List of Subjects* Peate said that the people of Machynlleth were

leaven in the life of Wales. Like all country folk they are conservators of tradition: they marry their sons and daughters with primeval rejoicing, mourn their dead with prehistoric ritual, and, in the troubles of their simple life, occasionally even seek the advice of the ‘conjurer’. But still not forgetting their immemorial rites, they can discuss philosophy, religion and science with a knowledge and a wisdom which betoken a rich culture. People

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<sup>122</sup> “The Welsh themselves constructed moralised discourses of landscape and rural life by echoing the aesthetics and the narratives of English antiquarians to create a subtly different geographical imagination. From this indigenous concern with landscape, continued into the national revival of the later nineteenth century, we eventually see emerging the romantic idea of the *gwerin* – the ‘folk’ or the common people of Wales – as rural, Nonconformist, moralized and Welsh-speaking; an idea that would be used in opposition to Anglicization and to the imposition of an urban-industrial Britishness on Wales.” See Prys Gruffudd, 1999; Prys Morgan, 1983; *Ibid.*, “The *Gwerin* of Wales: myth and reality”, in Ian Hume and W. T. R. Pryce, eds, *The Welsh and their Country* (Llandysul: Gomer, 1986), 134-152.

such as these are the real saviours of Welsh culture and it is they who invite you to Machynlleth in 1937.<sup>123</sup>

In 1937 there was emphasis on numerous aspects of folk culture. Some of the emphasis was found in blatant pedantic speeches, but some was evinced in more subtle ways. For example, the female stewardesses wore “Welsh costume”.<sup>124</sup> In his presidential speech, Sir Robert Webber complimented the people of Machynlleth on their rural hospitality, which he linked to the ideals of the *gwerin*: he “had never seen Welsh hospitality, kindness and friendship so amply illustrated. Machynlleth did not have many hotels, but mansions, farmhouses and cottages had opened their doors to welcome everybody.”<sup>125</sup> It was proposed by Sir Robert that everyone opened their homes to their fellow countrymen and Eisteddfodwyr, assured that they would find kindred spirits there who shared the same folksy ideals of Welshness.

There was a great deal of continuity among the subjects and competitions in 1937. As the *Cardiff Times* said, most of the competitions “adhere closely to the model of previous Eisteddfodau”.<sup>126</sup> More significantly, however, there were exhibits on period costumes; competitions for traditional folk crafts such as a horse shoes, a birch broom, and a set of drawings “of different agricultural implements now obsolete”; and lectures on various facets of folk culture.<sup>127</sup> These components emphasised connections to the

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<sup>123</sup> Iorwerth Peate, *Rhaglen Destunau Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Frenhinol Cymru Machynlleth Awst 1937*, 26.

<sup>124</sup> The male stewards in white coats with red dragon badges. *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 6 August 1937, 7.

<sup>125</sup> *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 13 August 1937, 8.

<sup>126</sup> *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 3 July 1937, 16.

<sup>127</sup> “Period Costumes – Welsh Exhibits Never Before On Show: Special arrangements are in hand to make the arts and crafts section of permanent educational value. ... Addresses will be given by Sir Cyril Fox, director of the National Museum of Wales, on ‘Nature and Culture in Central Wales’, and Mr Isaac Williams, keeper of art at the Museum, on ‘Life and Work of Richard Wilson, RA.’ ” *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 10 July 1937, 16. See also *Rhaglen Destunau Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Frenhinol Cymru Machynlleth 1937*, 95-115.

“traditional” past. Importantly, however, and reflective of the interwar period, there was still a cosmopolitan, modern element at the Eisteddfod in 1937:

During the coming week Machynlleth, the former seat of the first Prince of Wales, will be the home of a most cosmopolitan and enthusiastic throng – the most cultured democratic gathering of any country in the world ... and few eisteddfodau have given Wales such a profoundly ambitious programme. Machynlleth has displayed great initiative, and may the cultural benefits that accrue from the Eisteddfod be a milestone in the history of the Eisteddfod in Wales.<sup>128</sup>

Further, there were still modern innovations in the Eisteddfod. For example, included in the 1937 programme was a new emphasis on the prose competition, including a competition for a collection of miscellaneous essays and the awarding of a new prose medal.<sup>129</sup>

In his lecture on “Folk Culture” at the Cymmrodorion Society meeting, Iorwerth Peate stressed the “spiritual life” of those traditions:

[I]t is customary to-day to talk in Wales about culture, but I fear it is because it is in danger of disappearing, but I hope that is not so. There are to culture two aspects – the spiritual and the temporal. ... There is need to-day to stress the national spiritual culture and the international temporal culture. The greatest sin is to think that there is no loss in losing a language. ... The culture of Wales has been neglected too long; but I am pleased to say that the National Museum of Wales is the first national institution in Britain to lay stress on the study of folk culture.<sup>130</sup>

The discourse at the Eisteddfod was part of a larger, and increasing, general debate in Welsh society in the inter-war era, leading up to the establishment of the Folk Life Museum in 1948. Further, Peate’s stress on the need to preserve what was left of Welsh culture before it disappeared was central to the ideological crisis of the Eisteddfodau of

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<sup>128</sup> T. O. Phillips, MA, in *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 31 July 1937, 1.

<sup>129</sup> The Prose medal was a controversial topic in 1937 and will be discussed in greater depth later.

the middle twentieth century: a growing disjunction between ideas of “heritage” and “modernity”. The resulting friction between old and new also was evidence of a changing purpose of the Eisteddfod evident in these debates: a shifting away from education and towards preservation. The Eisteddfod increasingly became seen as a lifeboat to a dying culture, usually defined around the language.

Connected with the concept of pastoral purity was the argument that this rural “tradition” was part of an essential Welshness and identity based in the language. As the language had declined, so had confidence in the uniqueness of Welshness; language is often one of the primary identifiers of ethnic and national grouping. There was increasing desire to emphasise those traits and characteristics that made Wales unique. The Eisteddfod was not only a Welsh cultural festival, but it was a part of that culture and a distinctive manifestation of Welsh identity. Thus, it was key to defining Wales and separating it from the rest of the British Isles. The Rev. E. Ebrard Rees said the National Eisteddfod could “mark the culture of the nation”.<sup>131</sup> However, that culture was increasingly *less* particularly Welsh:

In the ordinary run of Welsh life there is not much to distinguish it from English life. ... I have known strangers walk the streets of Cardiff in the hope of hearing Welsh and failing to do so. While searching for Welsh they heard two or three Eastern languages. ... There is nothing peculiarly Welsh about the University of Wales. ... When we come to the National Eisteddfod we come to something that is not only Welsh, but something that is Wales. It is peculiar, unique, different, isolated, original. Here is the line of difference between Wales and other nations. Here is something that shows Wales up. It is a peculiarity and a characteristic. ... So the Eisteddfod is the preserver of that background of Welsh life and as it goes on its peregrinations from town to town, North and South, it will carry with it its distinctive message. It is never

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<sup>130</sup> From his “Lantern Lecture” at the Cymmrodorion Society, Monday.

<sup>131</sup> Rev. E. Ebrard Rees in *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 24 July 1937, 1.



exhibited, but none can miss it. To those who have eyes to see, it is writ large on all the activities of the Eisteddfod.<sup>132</sup>

There was seen to be a reciprocal relationship between the festival and Welsh culture; one could not survive without the other. However, the crises of “modernity”, of anglicisation and of economic chaos were taking their toll on Wales. In fact, according to Rev. Rees, the “Welsh hwyl” was dying by the 1930s.<sup>133</sup> Again, the concept of the Eisteddfod as preserver of Welshness was evident. The Eisteddfod was the preserver of “true” Welsh culture.<sup>134</sup> It could fight against the cultural onslaught at least, if nothing else. That was the argument used when less “Welsh” areas campaigned for the annual festival. Locating the festival in 1937 in Machynlleth, however, was seen as a medicine for the festival itself. Like a rest cure, it could gather its strength and gain momentum for the battle ahead. Lloyd George expressed this idea very eloquently:

It is very satisfactory to see that the Eisteddfod is being held in rural districts, the home of the Welsh language, where it can feed on the cream of the meadows and fields instead of the margarine of present-day civilisation. In the towns, too, the language is kept alive, but in the rural areas it is like a tree planted by the rivers of water.<sup>135</sup>

His metaphorical use of geography was essentially nostalgic, and emphasised the natural, essential identity assigned to traditional Welsh culture. These were aspects of Wales that were perceived as threatened by modernity.

This was a trend that continued throughout the century, as evinced by similar patterns of Eisteddfodic discourse. Indeed, a brief discussion of the discourse at a later

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> “Real Significance Of The Eisteddfod – It Preserves For Wales Her Own Soul – Guardian Of National Religion, Poetry And Music”, Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> *North Wales Weekly News*, 12 August 1937, 10.

rurally-situated Eisteddfod will help to emphasise the strength and continuity of the broader discourse. Despite the fact that rural Bala was arguably slow in acclimatising to the twentieth century, as Pauline Phillips said, “it would be safe to say that the twentieth century had, by the early sixties, reached into the heart of Montgomeryshire.”<sup>136</sup> With the increasing influence of radio, television, and other aspects of a mass-media-driven culture, as well as the “foreign” influences from the main industry of tourism, the area was increasingly meeting the modern world. With modernity came fears about the preservation of a “native” Welsh culture. The holding of the Eisteddfod in a rural location, then, was akin to resistance to the anglicising forces of modernisation and a culture driven by mass media. It would preserve the professed quaintness and essential Welshness of the *gwerin*. Armon Jones noted his own personal reaction to the Eisteddfod:

The National Eisteddfod has given me the great privilege of cultural, linguistic and spiritual enlargement. Each year I come away feeling that something deep inside me has been re-charged with qualities of infinite value that are never engendered amid the hurly-burly of ordinary life. When I worked over the border in England, visiting the Eisteddfod was much more than a return to Wales; it was a return to all that Wales means to me and thousands like me.<sup>137</sup>

The location of the Eisteddfod in the region was seen as a way of using the remaining Welshness of the area to reinvigorate the Welshness of the Eisteddfod. Emrys Roberts stated:

If there is any place in the world wealthy in the traditions of its nation then Bala is that place. You could ask why should the Eisteddfod come here where all the Welsh things are flourishing

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<sup>136</sup> Pauline Phillips, *A View of Old Montgomeryshire* (Swansea: Christopher Davies (Publishers) Ltd, 1977), 192.

<sup>137</sup> Armon Jones, *Liverpool Daily Post*, Tuesday 15 August 1967, 5.

and when possibly there is more for the festival to do in other more Anglicised areas. ... We must remember that now and again the cup must be taken back to the well to be refilled.<sup>138</sup>

Thus, as in earlier years, the Bala Eisteddfod was seen as a way of preserving the Welshness of an extant Welsh area, in the face of encroaching modernisation, but the reverse was also true: the Eisteddfod was reinvigorated by its return to the “*cefn gwlad*”.

Modernity could not be ignored by those that attended and organised the Eisteddfod in 1937. No matter how much they emphasised the traditional and rural aspects of the festival that year, it was modernity and its related “improvements” that enabled the Machynlleth National Eisteddfod to be a success. One of the primary arguments against smaller settings was the financial hardships that the Eisteddfod imposed on an area, and whether or not such smaller areas offered the population base for financial support. The National Eisteddfod relied heavily on local support and sponsorship for each year’s survival and success. Much was made of Machynlleth’s successful hosting of the Eisteddfod in 1937. It was the smallest locality to host the festival to date and proved that small size was not an unbearable burden for the national festival.<sup>139</sup> The *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald* reported: “These small places having made a success of the Eisteddfod.”<sup>140</sup> In fact, Machynlleth’s success was used and pushed forward as motivation for other, similarly small locations to bid to host the festival. Councillor J. Gordon Jones said: “This should be a spur to other small places to

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<sup>138</sup> Mr Emrys Roberts, in *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 1967, 4.

<sup>139</sup> *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 6 August 1937, 7.

<sup>140</sup> “M.A.T.”, *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald*, Friday 13 August 1937, 6.

invite the Eisteddfod to their midst. ... [They] would be ideal places in which to stage the national festival.”<sup>141</sup>

### A United North and South Wales

One of the more interesting arguments voiced on the eisteddfodic platforms in 1937 was related to the need for an arterial road joining North and South Wales, thus further uniting the principality. In “The Land of Dyfi”, Iorwerth Peate emphasised the role of Machynlleth as dividing North and South Wales: “a barrier and a boundary between north and south, a fortress against the east and a haven from it”.<sup>142</sup> Although he discusses the town’s role as an historical defence against Englishness, the same divisive characteristic was twisted as support for the need for an arterial road to unify Wales, across geographic regions. In a similarly paradoxical manner, the concept of the road was essentially modern, and would help to modernize Wales, thus preserving its unique - traditional - Welshness. According to Prys Gruffudd, the policy was frequently advocated throughout the century as a calculated means of shifting Wales’ geographical orientation away from England and physically uniting the nation.<sup>143</sup> Further, by crossing through the centre of Wales, it would “tap the nation’s cultural heartland”.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Councillor J. Gordon Jones, chairman of the Penillyn Rural Council, in the *Liverpool Daily Post*, Saturday 12 August 1967, 3.

<sup>142</sup> Iorwerth C. Peate, *Rhaglen Destunau Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Frenhinol Cymru Machynlleth Awst 1937*, 25.

<sup>143</sup> Plaid Cymru was a particular advocate of the plan in the 1930s. Prys Gruffudd, “Remaking Wales: nation-building and the geographical imagination, 1925-1950”, *Political Geography* 14:3 (1995), 232-236.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

In his presidential speech Sir Robert Webber suggested a “great arterial road linking up North and South Wales”.<sup>145</sup> The idea of unifying Wales as a nation was central to Sir Robert’s scheme. The road would help people to travel quicker from one end of the country to the other, enabling everyone to enjoy fully and utilise all Wales had to offer. More importantly, by providing employment for workless miners, the road would stem migration from Wales across the border. An editorial in the *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald* advocated the road as a way of creating a “United North and South”.<sup>146</sup>

How to bring North and South Wales nearer to each other is a matter which has been discussed for many years. The North and South Wales people are largely strangers, though living in the same country, due to the inaccessibility of the one part from the other.<sup>147</sup>

The editorial continued by emphasising the Eisteddfod’s role in the process:

I should like to think that the Eisteddfod would support an effort to get us a real arterial road of the kind. You have got so many good things in North Wales that we in the South would appreciate them if we could get here a little quicker. Why not a first-class road through the centre of Wales?<sup>148</sup>

Transportation was a problem in Wales for much of the century, and presented problems when considering the location of the National Eisteddfod.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> “I should like to think that the Eisteddfod would support an effort to get us a real arterial road of this kind. You have got so many good things in North Wales that we in the South would appreciate them if we could get here a little quicker. Why not a first-class road through the centre of Wales? There is any amount of unemployed labour in some of the mining valleys – men who know how to use the pick and shovel. Why not find employment for these men which, at the same time, would be of real value to the country? There is plenty of cheap money, and such a scheme would help to prevent migrations from Wales. Thousands of young men are crossing the border every month.” *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 14 August 1937, 5.

<sup>146</sup> Editorial, *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald*, Friday 13 August 1937, 6.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> The editorial continued: “It could also be said that the people of South Wales had so many good things that the inhabitants of the North would appreciate them if they could get to the South a little quicker.” *Ibid.*

The Eisteddfod provided the perfect platform on which to launch such a scheme because one of the primary purposes of the festival, as professed by many presidents and other notable Eisteddfodwyr, was unity: “It can truly be claimed that no other factor in our national life can cement a firmer friendship between the people of Wales.”<sup>150</sup> More particularly, according to “Elfed”, “the Eisteddfod was the best medium to bring Welshmen together from all parts of the world”.<sup>151</sup> In such a context, Machynlleth was an ideal location for the Eisteddfod because it was situated on the traditional boundary between two regions: “the Eisteddfod in Mid-Wales united all.”<sup>152</sup> The Archbishop of Wales, Dr C. A. H. Green, agreed: “Machynlleth was well-placed for the National Eisteddfod, standing on the confines of North and South Wales.”<sup>153</sup> The perceived disunity in modern Wales was a threat to the nation, but more specifically, a threat to the Eisteddfod. Indeed, if the Eisteddfod was the primary national unifier, it needed help to maintain that status in the face of modernity and the related demographic changes. A reporter in the *Cardiff Times* commented: “I wonder what is going to happen to this great institution, the Eisteddfod, if the stream of migration is to continue.”<sup>154</sup>

Indeed, external changes in transport in Wales were nullifying another hurdle in the path of smaller, rural settings for the Eisteddfod during this period. Small areas were often remote, with little to offer locally by means of accommodation or board. Up until the early-mid twentieth century, Eisteddfodwyr relied upon local hospitality for the Eisteddfod week. Transportation around Wales had never been particularly quick or

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<sup>150</sup> “Eisteddfodwr”, *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 14 August 1937, 1.

<sup>151</sup> *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald*, Friday 6 August 1937, 10.

<sup>152</sup> *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 13 August 1937, 8.

<sup>153</sup> *North Wales Weekly News*, Thursday 12 August 1937, 10.

<sup>154</sup> *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 14 August 1937, 5.

easy, making daily commuting to and from the festival difficult if one was staying more than a few miles away. The railways in Wales had enabled significant internal movement around the nation, by the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>155</sup> By the 1920s and 1930s, the rail network was being supplemented by autobuses and personal automobiles, making it possible for Eisteddfodwyr to travel further each day, and stay farther away from the *Maes* – enlarging the area which could “host” the Eisteddfod.<sup>156</sup>

By the twentieth century the situation was improving and, as transport improved, the ability to hold the eisteddfod in smaller centres of population became more feasible. The

*Western Mail* remarked that:

The vast improvements in road transport have solved automatically the problem of accommodation for the thousands of visitors who make the National Eisteddfod their Mecca year after year. It is no longer necessary for the ardent Eisteddfodwyr to live in the chosen town. Villages far or near can accommodate them. If people had to rely on the railway communications, which are still inadequate and antiquated, the difficulties of holding the festival in rural Wales would probably prove insurmountable, but the motor-car and the charabanc have opened out the whole of Wales and all that remains now is to make that highway between North and south Wales which was advocated on Saturday and which would unquestionably prove a great unifying influence – as great as the National Eisteddfod itself.<sup>157</sup>

Similarly, the *North Wales Weekly News* declared: “Whatever arguments were formerly adduced against the National Eisteddfod risking success in one of the lesser centres of

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<sup>155</sup> See Dot Jones, “The Coming of the Railways and Language Change in North Wales 1850-1900”, in Geraint H. Jenkins, ed., *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains 1801-1911* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 131-150.

<sup>156</sup> The “vast increase in passenger journeys by road ... deprived the railways of much of their shorter-distance passenger traffic” by this period. Also: “The sale of cheaper, small saloon models in the early 1930s increased the motor car’s popularity.” Theo Barker and Dorian Gerhold, *The Rise and Rise of Road Transport 1700-1990* (London: Macmillan, 1993), 89-91. Also, private cars on the road increased from 10,000 in 1918 to just over 2 million in 1939. Retail price of cars fell in real terms; by 1936 the average price stood at 49.8 per cent of the 1924 level. Sean O’Connell, *The Car in British Society: Class, Gender and Modernity 1896-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

population – and such arguments had already lost force by reason of the extension of transport facilities.”<sup>158</sup> For example, in 1937 it was pointed out that 20,000 Eisteddfodwyr had come from South Wales to the Eisteddfod by railway.<sup>159</sup>

In one way at least, then, Wales and the Eisteddfod benefited from modernity as well as fighting against it. The paradox is that modern transport and communications enabled more Welsh people, around the world, to participate in this “traditional” folk festival. This shift transformed Welsh life, rendering Wales accessible to its own population. However, by opening up Wales to the Welsh (and others), it enabled the existence of holiday homes and an increased seasonal (“foreign”) migration into the Welsh heartlands. It also created a more mobile work culture. People could travel farther to work, and live farther away from cities and towns. This irony was at the crux of twentieth century Eisteddfodic discourse.<sup>160</sup>

Thus, the resident population was no longer vital to the success of the Eisteddfod, making it feasible to hold the festival anywhere in Wales where there was enough support. The *North Wales Weekly News* commented that the “great festival of the year in Wales is not dependant upon a resident or even what is known as a visiting population for its success; and we may see impetus given to the suggestion that Wales would be the richer if this moveable feast, as time and occasion arose, visited the rural areas”.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Monday 9 August 1937, 3.

<sup>158</sup> “Notes and Comments”, *North Wales Weekly News*, Thursday 12 August 1937, 6.

<sup>159</sup> Dr J. C. Ashton in *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 13 August 1937, 8.

<sup>160</sup> In fact, by 1967, the rural areas of Wales were under a threat from a revolution in modern transportation: half of all Welsh households owned a car. “Outside the home, the motor car was second only to the contraceptive pill in its impact on Welsh society.” Chris Williams, 2000, 224.



## Industrial Wales

Despite the continuous emphasis on a rural, essential Welshness based in the *gwerin*, concepts of Welshness were not limited to rural smallness. Many very successful Eisteddfodau, both ideologically and financially, have been held in urbanised areas. For example, Carmarthen in 1911 was a small town with an industrial economic base, yet “its geographical position is all that can be desired”.<sup>162</sup> Certainly, industrial areas were a popular choice for Eisteddfodau throughout the century. Cardiff and Swansea both had repeated success as a host location, as did Llanelli. In fact, it was often to these larger areas that the Eisteddfod returned time and time again. The choice of urbanised areas was both practical – they offered a solid population base and infrastructure that could handle the Eisteddfod – and ideological – quite often industrial areas were deemed very “Welsh”.

Despite the advances and benefits from modernisation, such as improved public and personal transport, the primary drawback to hosting the Eisteddfod in small towns and villages remained financial. For a small area to become the cultural “capital” of Wales for the year, it meant a “heavy load of responsibility” and a significant financial burden.<sup>163</sup> Without the broad population base of larger industrial communities, smaller areas had difficulty in raising the local funds necessary to host the festival. The discourse in Cardiff in 1960 was representative of worries about a bias towards larger towns as Eisteddfodic sites:

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<sup>161</sup> “Notes and Comments”, *North Wales Weekly News*, Thursday 12 August 1937, 6.

<sup>162</sup> Ceitho Davies, Letters from Readers, *Western Mail*, 1 August 1911, 3. “Some 80 or 90 years ago Carmarthen was the largest town in S. Wales, and although to-day there are younger and larger towns, there is no more fitting place where the Eisteddfod could be held than in Carmarthen, which is one of the great centres of what we Welshmen know as Welsh Wales.” Sir Owen Philipps, president on Thursday, *The Welshman*, 18 August 1911, 6.

This year the cost is estimated to be a record £55,000. No wonder some of Wales's smaller towns have often debated long before inviting the Eisteddfod. ... [L]ast year, the big Appeal Fund is under way, aiming at eventually reducing the annual financial burden so that the Eisteddfod can preserve its wholly peripatetic nature.<sup>164</sup>

The establishment of a financial fund to help smaller areas host the festival was partly the result of the dearth of applicants. Some years, particularly in the 1950s, saw few if any towns apply to host the festival. The fund did not, however, entirely erase the financial worries of the festival. Throughout much of the second half of the century, rural areas struggled to host the festival and financial reform was one of the dominant themes at the Eisteddfod. The *Liverpool Daily Post* complained in 1967 that: "It is a matter largely of sparse population and of the ever-rising costs. Inevitably when a small town in rural North Wales invites the Eisteddfod it has to seek the support of the whole county."<sup>165</sup> This is not to say, however, that these rural Eisteddfodau were not successful. As has been discussed with reference to 1937, changes were occurring that altered the ways in which people visited the festival, and thus the ability of small areas to host it. Rather, as said by Dr Parry in 1899 (and noted in 1960), "the concentration of population in the industrial age was the key to the form of the present-day Eisteddfod".<sup>166</sup> It was these larger areas that supplied the bulk of Eisteddfodwyr.

Llanelli was an industrial town throughout the twentieth century. The remnants of its industrial heritage were evident at the 2000 Eisteddfod. *The Rough Guide to Wales* in 2000 was not flattering in its description of Llanelli: it was full of "monotonous streets",

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<sup>163</sup> *South Wales Evening Post*, Saturday 5 August 1944, 4.

<sup>164</sup> *Western Mail*, Monday 1 August 1960, 6.

<sup>165</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, Tuesday 8 August 1967, 3.

<sup>166</sup> *Western Mail*, Tuesday 2 August 1960, 9.

with “little to distinguish it” from any other town in Wales.<sup>167</sup> “It’s a downbeat town of refineries and the dominant ... breweries, famous for its beer and its rugby. If neither appeal, there’s little to keep you here.”<sup>168</sup> Importantly, however, they noted that Llanelli “marks the informal border between anglicised South East Wales and *Y Fro*, where the native language frequently could be heard in everyday conversation.”<sup>169</sup> In fact, 31.55 per cent of the area’s population were Welsh speakers in 1991.<sup>170</sup> This is compared to 20.52 per cent of the population throughout Wales. Arguably then, Llanelli was more “Welsh” than many other areas in Wales. Although it was perhaps not typical of the “industrial” Welsh identity of the late twentieth century, in that it remained a significantly Welsh-speaking population, many of the hallmarks of its identity, such as male voice choirs, rugby and heavy industry, were hallmarks of the broader “industrial” identity often attributed to what Balsom labelled “Welsh” Wales.

There were a wide variety of attractions in the Llanelli area that were marketed as an advantage to the region – not only for the Eisteddfod in 2000, but as a potential semi-permanent site for the festival. Between them, they emphasised various aspects of Welshness, both old and new. Nonconformity was perhaps one of the stronger, older aspects of the town’s identity. The connection between Llanelli and nonconformity was historically strong. Nonconformity came to South Wales at the same time as industrialisation: “First came the Industrial Revolution, closely followed by a religious revival fired by John Wesley.”<sup>171</sup> In the height of Llanelli’s industrial past, the town was

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<sup>167</sup> Mike Parker and Paul Whitfield, *Wales: The Rough Guide* (London: Rough Guides Ltd., 1997), 136.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> There were 33,483 out of a total population of 74,698 people. This is down significantly from 1991 when 44.8 per cent spoke Welsh.

<sup>171</sup> Colin Hughes, Eisteddfod Supplement *Western Mail*, Friday 4 August 2000, 3.

“a bastion of nonconformity”.<sup>172</sup> The Archdruid “Meirion” drew further connections between nonconformity and the strong Eisteddfodic traditions in the town. He labelled Llanelli’s chapels “bard factories”.<sup>173</sup> Nonconformity was one of the strongest features of the “traditional”, nineteenth-century idea of Welshness. By emphasising the role of nonconformity in the town’s past, Llanelli was connecting itself with a similar sense of Welshness. By the time the National Eisteddfod visited Llanelli in 2000, however, the power and strength of nonconformity had dwindled. This was paralleled by a loss of influence of the Christian church generally throughout Wales. Although parts of Carmarthen remained strongly nonconformist, the chapels did not have the influence they once had.<sup>174</sup> By the 1980s, only an eighth of the Welsh population attended church regularly; of this proportion, roughly 40 per cent were members of nonconformist denominations. As Chris Williams says: “Church [or chapel] was somewhere one was more likely to visit to get married, have a child christened, or bury a relative than to visit for purposes of worship on a regular basis.”<sup>175</sup>

A contrasting version of Welshness emerged in the South from the late nineteenth century. During this period there was a shift in the focus of cultural identity from nonconformity to rugby. Gareth Williams asserts that the Welsh nation was “re-born” in the later part of the century, politically, educationally, and economically, as a new sense

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<sup>172</sup> Colin Hughes, Eisteddfod Supplement *Western Mail*, Friday 4 August 2000, 4.

<sup>173</sup> “It happened to be that you had in Llanelli, over the years, some very big chapels, holding congregations of well over 1,000, and they attracted, I believe people of some renown in the literary field. This, in turn, may have created some competition between the chapels in the sense that if one had a chaired Bard then the others made a determined effort to follow suit.” Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> “By the late 1970s only Merioneth, Anglesey and Caernarfonshire, ... Cardiganshire, and western Carmarthenshire were still enforcing the Sunday closure of public houses. Interestingly, this area roughly coincided with those parliamentary constituencies with a Welsh-speaking population of over 50 per cent.” Chris Williams, 2000, 229.

of “Welshness” was asserted.<sup>176</sup> Rugby football quickly gained popularity across class lines in the industrialised areas of southern Wales. According to Gareth Williams, in Wales “rugby was the game of the masses and classes, of a democracy, which increasingly provided a focus for national pride and expression”.<sup>177</sup> Even “Morien” commented on the unifying nature of the game in 1902: “What could have brought such a multitude together in Wales but an International match?”<sup>178</sup>

Thus, rugby emerged in the late nineteenth century as a “challenge to the counter culture which the chapels had created to replace the old traditional folk culture” in Wales.<sup>179</sup> However, the culture of Rugby had taken hold in certain regions of Wales much more so than in others. For much of the twentieth century, the rugby clubs in Wales were focused in the English-speaking areas between Llanelli and Newport; they were not generally located in the *Fro*. Perhaps rugby was not so important in Welsh-speaking areas as in non-Welsh-speaking areas because they had an alternative basis for group identity. Therefore, to label it a feature of a *national* identity is to make a rather tenuous connection. The relative importance of rugby as a signifier of Welshness was important

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<sup>175</sup> Nonconformist denominations combined accounted for forty percent of these church-goers. (Church of Wales was 25per cent, Roman Catholic was close behind.) Chris Williams, 2000, 228.

<sup>176</sup> Gareth Williams, 1991, 170.

<sup>177</sup> In fact, by the turn of the twentieth century, rugby had “become the national game more through geographical and industrial factors than any ethnic or cultural affinity”. Ibid., 170, 169.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>179</sup> “The new football clubs met in the public houses, and the chapel leaders of the closing years of the century had forgotten how indebted their forebears had been to the taverns in whose ‘long rooms’ many of the congregations in the industrial valleys had met before building their own meeting houses.” Trevor M. Owen, *A Pocket Guide to the Customs and Traditions of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), 116-117, 115.

in this context because it emphasised the multiple signifiers of identity present in Llanelli, and thus Wales, that were being celebrated through the Eisteddfod.<sup>180</sup>

Despite its regional basis of popularity, by the end of the twentieth century rugby had become the Welsh national game. Chris Williams says: “In terms of sport, rugby union enhanced its status as the *national* game. The great success and attractive play of the team of the 1960s and 1970s in particular, consolidated the fifteen man code’s position at the heart of what, for many people, Welshness meant.”<sup>181</sup> Moreover, by 2000 the town of Llanelli was synonymous with Welsh rugby. “*Sosban Fach*”, the song of the Scarlets, and rooted in Llanelli’s industrial past in tin-plate, had become anthemic of rugby generally and a national song.<sup>182</sup>

Llanelli in 2000 was proud of this dominant feature in its recent past. The town was well known for its rugby club.<sup>183</sup> Many of the celebrated Eisteddfodwyr of 2000 were former rugby players: Ray Gravell, Delme Thomas, and Rupert Moon. Ironically, Moon is not Welsh, but rather “emigrated” to Wales from England. There was a link on the BBC Wales Eisteddfod website to the 1972 victory over the New Zealand “All Blacks”, drawing a direct link to the importance of rugby in the area’s history.<sup>184</sup> The switch in focal points for the town from nonconformity to rugby was emblematic of the changing identity of Llanelli and indicative of broader shifts in contemporary Welsh culture.

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<sup>180</sup> Ironically, perhaps, one of the other key features of Llanelli in 2000 was the Felinfoel Brewery, notable because of the long tradition of family ownership, but contradictory to the temperate nature of the festival. John Edwards, *Llanelli: Story of a Town* (Derby: Breedon Books Publishing, 2001), 165.

<sup>181</sup> Chris Williams, 2000, 226.

<sup>182</sup> “*Sosban Fach*” was written for an Eisteddfod competition in the nineteenth century.

<sup>183</sup> Llanelli RFC trained on the *Maes* in 2000. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/wales/837585.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/837585.stm)

<sup>184</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/wales/843268.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/843268.stm)

In an age of mass-media culture and an increasingly powerful heritage industry, industrial Wales could choose what image it presented to the world and to itself.<sup>185</sup> This image was not necessarily reflective of reality, but was essentially a marketable identity; it was what certain people in Wales and the world wanted to hear and see. The sense of a constructed self-identity was not new to the Eisteddfod in 2000, but could be seen throughout its modern history. It could be seen in the discussions of the folksy past at Machynlleth and Bala, and the celebrations of Welsh industrialism and modernity in Cardiff as much as Llanelli. In the aftermath of industrial decline, the brighter spots in Llanelli's history were cultural and social: the strength of nonconformity in the area, the Llanelli Rugby Football Club, and the Eisteddfodic tradition of the area. By the 1980s, for example, unemployment was running at approximately 20 per cent; in 1999 it was approximately 6 per cent.<sup>186</sup> However, the stream of rugby victories from the 1970s had been mythologized to the degree that they became the dominant feature of Llanelli's contemporary identity.

The discourse resulting from Eisteddfodau in industrial locations frequently drew careful links between an industrial past and other, related, traits that contributed to a sense of Welshness. Importantly, these were often characteristics that were separate from any immediate sense of a region's rural or industrial nature. Another example of such an emphasis can be found in the discussions of the role of the Welsh language in Llanelli. When Llanelli was vetted as the "ideal" host, language was represented as a key aspect of the town's identity. In fact, it was precisely the apparently unique combination of

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<sup>185</sup> See John R. Gould and Stephen V. Ward, eds, *Place Promotion: the use of publicity and marketing to sell towns and regions* (Chichester: Wiley, 1994).

<sup>186</sup> Denis Balsom, ed., *Wales Yearbook 2000* (Cardiff: HTV, 1999), 271.

industrial and “Welsh” features that made the town a good location. According to Huw Edwards, “Llanelli is an ideal venue – it is the biggest Welsh-speaking industrial town in Wales and has a unique platform for the festivities. To have held the Eisteddfod there four times says a lot about the cultural make-up of the place.”<sup>187</sup> In Balsom’s terms, it was something of a bridge between “Welsh” Wales and *Y Fro*. Indeed, the combination of a Welsh-speaking industrial community was “a very rare combination in modern Wales”.<sup>188</sup> For Welsh speakers and Eisteddfodwyr, by 2000, the Welsh language had become shorthand for Welsh culture and, indeed, Welsh identity. Although one could be Welsh without speaking the language, if one spoke it, one “belonged” to the Welsh national community. A more detailed discussion of this association will follow in chapter six. For now it is fair to say that the strength of the language, and of people’s identification with it, situated Llanelli, like Caernarfon, in the linguistic heartlands, thus assigning it a similarly culturally based spatial identity. This argument is not dissimilar to that espoused at Eisteddfodau in the rural heartlands of Wales - that those regions were so Welsh they were able to invigorate the Welsh festival.

The strength of the language in the region was remarkable considering the erosion of the language in the twentieth century, particularly in industrialised areas. Because of the industrial nature of the town, it was seen as a vital location in the fight to preserve the language. Huw Edwards referred to Llanelli’s significance to Welsh culture and language:

The town of Llanelli and the surrounding area have a crucial part to play in assuring the future of the Welsh language. If the Llanelli area were to lose its Welshness, it could prove to be a fatal blow.

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<sup>187</sup> Huw Edwards quoted by Dean Powell, *Western Mail*, Saturday 5 August 2000, 13.

<sup>188</sup> Huw Edwards quoted by Sion Donovan, *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 17 August 2000, 32.



... Llanelli is the only substantial industrial town where the Welsh language is a natural part of community life.<sup>189</sup>

The region's industrial decline was blamed for the relatively recent decline in the amount of Welsh-speakers. Llanelli had always been a strong Welsh-speaking area. Many were in no doubt that the "erosion of Llanelli's industrial base" was largely to blame for any downward trends.<sup>190</sup> Archdruid "Meirion" commented that:

All the heavy industry has vanished from Llanelli and this has already had an impact on the Welsh language and the quality of the language. ... I have heard it said that at that time Llanelli was so Welsh the Eisteddfod, which in those days was pretty Anglicised, needed Llanelli. Now, it seems, Llanelli needs the Eisteddfod.<sup>191</sup>

In fact, compared to much of Wales by the new Millennium, the self-identifying Welshness of Llanelli was still relatively strong. Llanelli was widely acclaimed as a possible semi-permanent home to the Eisteddfod. Not only were the size and accessibility of the town convenient to the *Fro* and Welsh-Wales regions of South West Wales, but also the Welshness of the town apparently was beyond reproach. Hywel Teifi Edwards voiced the popular opinion that if it "becomes too expensive for the Eisteddfod to travel around, and I hope it does not, who could doubt that Llanelli would be one of the four permanent sites".<sup>192</sup> Steve Dube of the *Western Mail* reported:

Visitors unanimously described the site, on a derelict steelworks that has become part of the Millennium Coastal Park, as one of the best ever, and a prime candidate should the Eisteddfod ever decide

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<sup>189</sup> The BBC News anchor in his presidential speech, quoted by Sion Donovan, *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 17 August 2000, 32.

<sup>190</sup> ("and, ironically, the Festival Fields where the Royal National Eisteddfod will be held, was once the site of the Dupont Steelworks, which closed in 1981...") Colin Hughes, Eisteddfod Supplement, *Western Mail*, Friday 4 August 2000, 3.

<sup>191</sup> Archdruid Meirion quoted by Colin Hughes, Eisteddfod Supplement, *Western Mail*, Friday 4 August 2000, 3.

<sup>192</sup> Hywel Teifi Edwards in the *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 17 August 2000, 41.

to restrict itself to a single site – or even one in each of the four regions of Wales.<sup>193</sup>

This discourse hints at another, prevalent strain of discourse in the late twentieth century: the future of the peripatetic and nomadic nature of the Eisteddfod. This aspect of the festival will be discussed in the following section with reference to the Caernarfon Eisteddfod of 1979. In the context of the Llanelli Eisteddfod, the discourse was important because, along with the stress given to the area's nonconformist and rugby traditions, it emphasises the perceived Welshness of the region.

### **Industrial Heritage**

There were other attributes besides language, rugby and nonconformity that made a region suitably “Welsh” and as a result an appropriate host for the national festival. Increasingly, industrialisation itself was one of them, as well as its related institutions and features. As mentioned above, industrial areas long ago had proven their ability to host very successful National Eisteddfodau. Swansea Eisteddfodau were consistently successful. In 1926, one local official went so far as to list Swansea's urban attributes as a way of delineating what was Welsh: “ ‘Swansea is a Welsh town in every sense. ... It is a large industrial and commercial County Borough and seaport, with a great variety of important industries.’ ”<sup>194</sup> Generally, however, as with the above discussion of language, industry was perceived as a secondary, catalytic aspect of Welsh culture; it had helped to

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<sup>193</sup> “There is, however, little prospect of the event ending its annual visit to different areas of Wales. Mr Roberts [director] said there is no economic advantage in a single site. Venues are already arranged up to 2008 and there is no great demand for the Eisteddfod to seek a permanent site.” Steve Dube, *Western Mail*, Monday 14 August 2000, 7.

<sup>194</sup> The official welcome to the Duke and Duchess of York, quoted in the *South Wales Daily Post*, Monday 2 August 1926, 1.

produce some of the key features that made Wales “Welsh”, but had not been itself one of those features.

By the Llanelli Eisteddfod in 2000, readers of the *Western Mail* were reminded of the area’s industrial past in such a way as to give greater emphasis to the identity-building function of the industrial nature of the area: the “boom years transformed the ‘little village’ of Llanelli into a major coal, tinsplate and choral centre.”<sup>195</sup> Further, “for a century, the Carmarthenshire town was characterised by its steelworks ... and the area was christened ‘Tinopolis’.”<sup>196</sup> Many, such as Huw Edwards, were proud of the industrial past of Llanelli.<sup>197</sup> Importantly, in the discourse of Llanelli’s history, industrialism had become a factor of its particular version of Welshness. Together with rugby, nonconformity and the linguistic tradition that made Llanelli in 2000 very “Welsh”, industrialism contributed independently to Welsh identity, making the town an ideal host to the national festival. Moreover, whereas industrial areas had often been viewed as a corrupting force in Welshness, because of the clear correlation between industrialisation and the decline of the Welsh language (and of rural folk culture) in the twentieth century, Llanelli marked a departure for concepts of Welshness. Rather than being perceived as a characteristic that hindered Welshness, industry had become one of the (positive) hallmarks of Welshness in the twenty-first century. The irony of course was that the 2000 Eisteddfod was held in a *post*-industrial Llanelli.

Certainly there were those in 2000 who believed in the continuing primacy of a rural identity for Wales. They emphasised the direct link between a rural Wales and the

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<sup>195</sup> Colin Hughes, Eisteddfod Supplement *Western Mail*, Friday 4 August 2000, 3.

<sup>196</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/wales/837585.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/837585.stm)

<sup>197</sup> Huw Edwards quoted by Sion Donovan, *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 17 August 2000, 32.

future of the language and nationhood. In fact National Farmers Union Cymru Wales President, Hugh Richards claimed: “Welsh culture is under threat because of the continuing crisis in the farming industry.”<sup>198</sup> He continued:

At the National Eisteddfod we are celebrating our Welsh culture, heritage, traditions, and language. These are values that traditional farming families hold dear. ... But it is now these cultural, social, and community functions of Welsh agriculture that are now in jeopardy. Mr Richards said the heartland of the Welsh language and culture was the rural community which depended on a viable agricultural industry.<sup>199</sup>

The dichotomy of modern, post-industrial Wales by the late twentieth century was one of displacement. The industrialisation that had supplanted the hegemonic rural culture of Wales, leading to its creation as the raw material for a modern mythic representation of social cohesion in certain parts of Welsh society, and the subsequent focus on the *gwerin* as a signifier of identity, was itself supplanted by a post-industrial economy. As noted above, as industrialism spread through Wales, it became perhaps more important to preserve that rural past of the *gwerin*. In fact, the choice of Llanelli as a location for the Eisteddfod is significant because its industrial heritage was diametrically opposed to the hegemonic idea of the *gwerin* frequently espoused at (earlier) Eisteddfodau. Thus, the emphasis on a more modern, industrial Welsh identity was a challenge to more “traditional” ideas of Welshness, and represented a break with the dominant sense of Welshness.

Arguably, by the end of the twentieth century, an Andersonian sense of discursive imagery had become important to national identity. As Colin Fletcher says:

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<sup>198</sup> Sam Burston, *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 17 August 2000, 40.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

“What matters ... is the past that is telescoped into the present.”<sup>200</sup> This shift was evidenced by the increasing attention paid to “imagined” aspects of nationhood, but more functionally by the rise of the heritage industry.<sup>201</sup> The heritage industry had become particularly important to Wales by 2000.<sup>202</sup> Traditionally, tourism had focused on scenic landscapes and features of an antiquarian history, two features Wales had in abundance.<sup>203</sup> Gradually a shift was occurring in the concepts of heritage, however, to include a focus on more recent and popular aspects of the past. By the late twentieth century there was an increasingly accepted concept of industrial heritage. In Wales, this trend has been characterised by the opening of the Rhondda Heritage Park and the “Big Pit” at Blaenafon. A parallel shift was occurring from a pre-occupation with the folksy, rural *gwerin*-based sense of Welshness, and a movement towards a new sense of Welsh identity and personhood. Again, this shift will be discussed in more detail in chapter three, in a specific discussion of the *gwerin*.

There was a duality to the emphasis placed on Llanelli’s industrial past in 2000. It was emphasised, but it was heavily romanticised. Llanelli was celebrated as central to Wales’ past, both culturally and industrially – arguably, to an extreme degree. The industrial features of the town needed to put on their best frock, sweep all the rotting industrial remnants under the rug, and be sure to leave skeletons in the closet. Whether

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<sup>200</sup> Colin Fletcher, “Regional Community and the Era of Regional Aid”, in Glyn Williams, ed., *Social and cultural Change in Contemporary Wales* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 32.

<sup>201</sup> See the discussions of the heritage industry by Robert Hewison, *The heritage industry: Britain in a climate of decline* (London: Methuen, 1987); Alan T. Peacock, ed., *Does the past have a future?: the political economy of Heritage*, (London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 1998); Robert Shannan Peckham, ed., *Rethinking heritage: cultures and politics in Europe* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003).

<sup>202</sup> Teri Brewer, “Heritage Tourism: A Mirror for Wales?”, in David Dunkerley and Andrew Thompson, eds, *Wales Today* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 150.

the presented image existed or not was increasingly irrelevant to some, in much the same way as the exact origins of the Eisteddfod. De-industrialisation, in fact, was seen as proof of the transitory role of industry in Llanelli: “De-industrialisation is a strange experience but, in historical terms, it is of little significance. The first works were planted here on green fields 200 years ago. ... Now, they have all disappeared and we are back to green fields again.”<sup>204</sup>

The Llanelli Eisteddfod’s physical site illustrates this sense of a cleaned-up history. Attempts were made to tidy it up and purify it for mass-consumption. As one of the most successful Eisteddfodau ever, much was made of its location at a “derelict steelworks”.<sup>205</sup> The *Llanelli Star* reported:

Unfortunately, with the eyes of the world focusing on the town, the eyesore Old Castle Works, string of ugly coastal pylons and other tatty features on approaches to the Eisteddfod have not been cleared in time ... [t]he pylons ... have ruined Llanelli ever since. ... A rusting dinosaur of Llanelli’s tinsplate industrial past, the Old Castle Works is ... next to the Eisteddfod and shadows the historic Gorsedd stones dominating and offending the eye of all Eisteddfod visitors from the east. It embarrasses the town.<sup>206</sup>

This “industrial eyesore” interfered with the preferred story of Wales that the Eisteddfod generally celebrated.<sup>207</sup> While industrial sites such as Blaenafon have world heritage site status, many still preferred to celebrate the Wales of folk dancing and *cerdd dant* to rock music, farmers to miners, and small villages to grimy industrial valleys. However, as evinced through their repeated references to it, the industrial past was not something that

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<sup>203</sup> See David Llewelyn Jones and Robert Smith, “Tourism and the Welsh Language in the Nineteenth Century”, in Geraint H. Jenkins, ed., *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains 1801-1911* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 151-176.

<sup>204</sup> John Edwards, 2001, 175.

<sup>205</sup> Steve Dube, *Western Mail*, Monday 14 August 2000, 7.

<sup>206</sup> *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 10 August 2000, 32.

<sup>207</sup> Colin Hughes, *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 2000, 10.

Eisteddfodwyr would, or indeed wanted to, forget. The industrial past, although part and parcel of modern Welsh identity, was something that was viewed as needing to be tidied up, but was still perfectly respectable. It was, like the majority of Balsom's "Welsh" Wales, working class; with a little spit and polish, it would be perfectly presentable. In the *Western Mail's* Eisteddfod supplement for Llanelli in 2000 there was a special extended article inviting the reader to "discover the industrial history of 'Tinopolis' in the town tour".<sup>208</sup> The "rediscovery" implied a sense of the forgotten past, but also of the (re)constructed past. The title "Tinopolis" was brandished proudly throughout the press, but it was used to represent a sanitised and romanticised version of the town's industrial past.

As such, there was a particular emphasis on the good parts of the industrial past, rather than the unpleasant. Industrial decline was mentioned but glossed over - a brief phase between the industrial "heyday" and the current "rejuvenation".<sup>209</sup> The use of the Eisteddfod site as part of the Millennium Coastal Path was meant to "raise Llanelli's profile to new heights and finally lay to rest the town's image as a place reliant on outdated heavy industries".<sup>210</sup> This revisionist and selective memory was epitomised in the official programme and list of subjects. There were two illustrations of workers in a factory and one lovely scenic photograph of the coast with views of the north Gower peninsula. The choice of the sea view was important to the new, environmentally friendly image of Llanelli.<sup>211</sup> The few references to the grimness of past industry are tempered by

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<sup>208</sup> Clive Betts, Eisteddfod Supplement, *Western Mail*, Friday 4 August 2000, 7.

<sup>209</sup> [http://news.bbc.c.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/wales/837585.stm](http://news.bbc.c.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/837585.stm)

<sup>210</sup> Park Chairman, Gerald Phillips, [http://news.bbc.c.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/wales/837585.stm](http://news.bbc.c.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/837585.stm)

<sup>211</sup> There was emphasis on the "green" aspects of the Eisteddfod, including the increase in cyclists at the event.

references to how lovely the area was in the present day. The very fact that the Llanelli coastline was becoming part of the Millennium Coastal Path was evidence of the turnaround from dirty industrial town to having an environmental preserve and wildlife refuge on the outskirts of the town. It was the latter aspect of its identity that the town chose to flaunt. Similarly, the images of the workers are old, black and white photographs, showing hard-working men – quite probably trained and skilled labourers.<sup>212</sup> It was a noble industrial past and a far cry from the pollution and mass-produced light industries that were the result and the reality in 2000.

There was a practical purpose to the choice of the site that reflected a new, environmental, trend in Wales. It was meant to “prevent the decline of the coastline” and transform the “economic landscape”.<sup>213</sup> Ironically, this environmentalism was enabled by the decline of the heavy industry in the region. The Archdruid commented: “We are standing on a piece of land that has been won back from the pollution of the old industry. Let us work to purge the air of the poisons of old and breathe the fresh air of Welsh culture.”<sup>214</sup>

Importantly, the Llanelli Eisteddfod was meant to promote the region as well. It threw the town and its newly beautified coast into the limelight, hopefully attracting positive notice and economic benefits. Councillor Gravell explained bluntly that the purpose of the Carmarthenshire County Council’s Pavilion was to “sell the County which

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<sup>212</sup> The workers pictured were labeled *tuniwr* and *dwplwy*: tin-worker and plaster. *Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru Llanelli a’r Cylch 5-12 Awst 2000: Rhestr Testunau*, 18.

<sup>213</sup> Millennium Coastal Path Park Chairman Gerald Phillips, [http://news.bbc.c.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/wales/837585.stm](http://news.bbc.c.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/837585.stm)

<sup>214</sup> Archdruid Meirion Evans, who was a minister at Jerusalem Independent Chapel in Burry Port, in the *Llanelli Star* Thursday 10 August 2000, 31.



is made so much easier when there is such natural beauty from the coast to the hills”.<sup>215</sup> Furthermore, the Eisteddfod meant that people “will be taking a second look at Llanelli, thinking ‘we may have by-passed it in the past, but we better think again’.”<sup>216</sup> Coastal park marketing manager Rory Dickinson was explicit in his interpretation of the role of the festival:

Llanelli’s Eisteddfod is being seen as a major opportunity to promote the county throughout Wales and further afield. ... [T]he council was delighted to have the Eisteddfod and wanted to make the most of the festival’s presence at the heart of the area being redeveloped. ... [The county’s stand] is a shop window for Carmarthenshire.<sup>217</sup>

As such, the site was meant to alter the post-industrial scenery and composition of the town. The BBC said that “the festival is being held at a £27.5m coastal park, built to rejuvenate the southern side of the town, which was once the region’s industrial hub.”<sup>218</sup>

By 2000 the National Eisteddfod represented the taking of an area’s image and turning it around to market that region to a larger community. In this way, it can be viewed as a facet of the larger heritage industry, which was marketing specific visions of Wales to herself and to the world. The image and ideal presented in Eisteddfodic discourse was not always the reality. The image of Llanelli in 2000 was that of a place happily recovering from a post-industrial economic decline. Industrialism was being reconstructed along a new, selective narrative of noble effort and industriousness, of past prosperity and hope for the future. The images and rhetoric presented in the discourse surrounding the Eisteddfod were not entirely separated from previous notions of identity

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<sup>215</sup> Councilor Gravell in the *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 10 August 2000, 33.

<sup>216</sup> Llanelli Millennium Coastal Park Director Gerald Phillips, *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 10 August 2000, 7.

<sup>217</sup> *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 10 August 2000, 42.

<sup>218</sup> [http://news.bbc.c.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/wales/839313.stm](http://news.bbc.c.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/839313.stm)

focussing on a predominantly rural past, but there was a shift towards a newer notion of Welsh heritage, to include the story of industrialisation in the larger narrative. Thus, the Eisteddfod in Llanelli in 2000 represented the coming full circle of Welsh culture in the twentieth century; it was an eisteddfod site in which the post-industrial heritage of Wales was reclaimed as part of the ever-expanding heritage industry.

### **The Principle of Peripatetic Nationhood**

The location of the Eisteddfod in 1979 was important not so much for the way the site itself was talked about, but because of the debate surrounding the financial health of the Eisteddfod, and the subsequent discourse about the festival's future as a peripatetic institution. This discussion occurred elsewhere in the course of the Eisteddfod's century, for example, in Llanelli in 2000. Thus, the ideological significance of location was explored in the context of two aspects of the debate: firstly, in the essential concept of mobility and where meaning was invested, in the ideological locus of the festival itself or in its various physical sites, and secondly in the specific siting of the festival in locations around Wales, and the relative merits of different locations. More so in 1979 than in any of the other focus years, the discourse of location was primarily ideological and highly political. That year saw the Eisteddfod visit Caernarfon just a decade after the investiture of the Prince of Wales, and months after the failed devolution referendum; it can be viewed in some respects as a political statement, as a spiritual reclamation of the location for Welsh Wales. Symptomatic of this distancing from a more directly geographic discourse was the focus on language and Welsh culture. For example, the Caernarfon Eisteddfod saw a renewed discussion related to the capital of Wales and whether it was

Cardiff, the political capital, or some place that was purported to be more important culturally (that is, Caernarfon).

Wales, and indeed Britain, in 1979 was in a crisis of varying natures. Economically the country was in difficulty, socially there was confusion, and nationally there was a lack of confidence.<sup>219</sup> Caernarfon was no exception. The specifics of the political situation will be discussed in a later chapter. Suffice to say in the context of location, the failed devolution vote in March 1979, compounded by the trade union militancy during the “Winter of Discontent” in 1978-79, made for a volatile political situation in Wales by the summer of 1979. Kenneth Morgan says that the failed devolution vote not only played a role in undermining the Labour government, but also “set back the cause of nationalism for many years”.<sup>220</sup> The Eisteddfod of 1979, falling just five months after the vote on St David’s Day, was accordingly full of worries about the future and role of the nation as well as the national institution, the Eisteddfod.

Gwynedd was a rural county and sparsely populated. It followed the general trend for rural areas in Wales and had a relatively high proportion of Welsh-speakers, and was thus firmly located within *Y Fro*. Accordingly, Gwynedd was perceived as part of the Welsh cultural preserve. What is more, Caernarfon was connected ideologically with the discourse of linguistic and authentic Welshness, and thus was perceived as an ideal location for the Eisteddfod in times of social, economic and cultural crises. However, the location of the 1979 National Eisteddfod was a cause of division in Wales. Rather than unify the nation, one of the established purposes of the festival, the Eisteddfod’s financial

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<sup>219</sup> For example, male unemployment in Wales virtually doubled between 1979 and 1981. Chris Williams, 2000, 223.

<sup>220</sup> Kenneth Morgan, “Wales Since 1945: Political Society”, 1995, 21.

worries and the increasingly vibrant cultural national discourse of the 1970s made Caernarfon a contested choice for the National festival.

In the late 1970s climate of crisis, Eisteddfodic discourse emphasised Wales' cultural identity over a physical one. When various locales campaigned for the privilege of hosting the National, their trump card was often the perceived extent of their Welshness. As has been demonstrated, traditionally this identity has rested in the depths of rural culture, but also, as the century progressed, in an increasingly heritage-oriented sense of industry. In this context, Caernarfon was represented to be the preserver of things Welsh. It was "still one of the most Welsh towns in Wales".<sup>221</sup> Unlike in earlier years, however, there was little reference in the discourse to the geographical situation of the region, and very little sense of physical place. Much more emphasis was placed on cultural and temporal markers of identity than spatial ones. Geraint Bowen, the then Archdruid, saw the choice of Gwynedd as the location for the national festival as significant because of such cultural markers of identity:

Our language and culture are fighting for their life in Gwynedd and in Wales in general. But if Gwynedd falls Wales loses its cultural crown forever and there will be no poet left to write the elegy [sic] for this tragedy. ... We have come to Gwynedd not only to hold this Eisteddfod and the Gorsedd but to uphold armies of men of Gwynedd in whom we have our trust, who will fight this cultural battle.<sup>222</sup>

Even the official programme was lacking illustrations that would situate the Eisteddfod geographically in the region or in history. The closest it got to a reference to the location was a discussion of the character of the local people; the chairman of the Executive

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<sup>221</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 4 August 1979, 1.

<sup>222</sup> *Western Mail*, Wednesday 8 August 1979, 4. This rhetoric was very similar to the battle rhetoric of the 1930s and will be discussed in a later chapter.

Committee, Mr I. B. Griffith, argued that “Caernarfon is a great place for a welcome... used to welcoming every stranger – especially those who respect the language and the culture of the area. ... This will be a very special welcome – a huge welcome.”<sup>223</sup> There was also reference in the programme to the cultural past of the area, with prayer meetings, singing festivals and Eisteddfodau.<sup>224</sup> Certainly, this absence of spatial markers for the Welshness of the region might have been related more to available space rather than any actual statement, intentional or otherwise, of the geographical imaginings of Caernarfon. Indeed, as the host location for the National Eisteddfod, Caernarfon was still seen as being located quite tangibly in the “heart” of Wales, but the blueprints of how that heartland was constructed as more ambiguous than in previous years. Certainly there was still an importance attached to the region. Paddy McKiernan wrote in the *Western Mail*:

You could easily be misled into thinking that the Welsh heartlands consisted of a compote of Cardiff Arms Park ... and the valleys of the Rhondda, with the jolly pitmen hymning their way in procession from coal face to pub. Not so. The hard-core, iron-rock centre of the Welsh language, Welsh rural culture, Welsh suspicion of London and everything not Celtic, is in the North, where the traffic signs not in Welsh get painted green and the windows of non-Welsh holiday homes painted black.<sup>225</sup>

Although sarcastic in tone, the above quotation expressed accurately the sentiments of many in Wales who felt that there existed an “essential” Welsh culture, and that this pure cultural expression existed only in certain Welsh regions.

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<sup>223</sup> I. B. Griffith, Chairman of the Executive Committee, *Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru Caernarfon a'r Cylch Awst 4-11 1979: Y Rhaglen Swyddogol*, 295.

<sup>224</sup> However, there is a grim note of foreboding in this welcome: “Just in case this will be the last national eisteddfod for Caernarfon and Gwynedd, bring your children – bring the whole family – here in August.” This comment was most likely a reference to the poor financial situation of the Eisteddfod. *Ibid.*, 295.

<sup>225</sup> Paddy McKiernan in the *Western Mail*, Wednesday 8 August 1979, 8.

As mentioned above, as the proportion of the population that spoke Welsh decreased in the twentieth century, the importance attached to it as a signifier of identity in Wales by that population increased. Part of this change was the increasing politicisation of the language issue in the 1960s and 1970s. By the 1970s, language had become an increasingly dominant identifier of Welshness and the idea of the *gwerin* seemed to lose political significance. No small part of Gwynedd and Caernarfon's identity lay in the strength of the Welsh language in the region. A more substantial and detailed discussion of the nature of the Welsh language debate at the Eisteddfod in 1979 will follow in chapter six. For now, it is important to assert the strength of Welsh-language culture in the region as a basis for a similar sense of purity and essentialism in discourse related to Welsh culture and identity, as was located in the discourse of rural National Eisteddfodau (such as 1937).

Perhaps as a result of the political climate of the 1960s and 1970s, the historical identity of the Caernarfon region was much more explicitly celebratory of nationalistic ideals. For example, a mural commissioned in honour of the Eisteddfod's visit to the town provided a "potted look at the town's history".<sup>226</sup> The artist included a variety of scenes from a wide spectrum of political perspectives. What was interesting, and marked a departure from earlier emphasis on fairly moderate *cultural* focal points for Welsh identity, was the depiction of the members of Plaid Cymru:

Mr [Ed] Povey's brief was to depict scenes from Caernarfon's past. Among the scenes he is including are the 1969 investiture and the court case which resulted when three of Welsh nationalism's best-known supporters, Saunders Lewis, D. J. Williams and Lewis Valentine burned the bombing school at Penyberth on the Lleyrn [sic]

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<sup>226</sup> *Western Mail*, Friday 27 July 1979, 10.

Peninsula. Other scenes will come from the town's more distant past.<sup>227</sup>

Significantly, this emphasis on the history, although not dissimilar from that of previous years, marked a departure from previous discussions of the Eisteddfod's location. In no way was it grounded in a geographical discussion, but rather consisted entirely of an ideological discourse. Unlike in previous years, when the discourse of the culture of the various regions involved something more substantial, 1979 was made up of purely intangible ideas and events. That is, there was no involvement of the physical aspects of the region, even in an idealised sense. Rather, the discourse was purely focused on cultural factors and placed in an *ideological* landscape of a Welsh culture region. Interestingly, although the investiture of the Prince of Wales and the iconic castle would have provided notable ways of connecting this heritage to a sense of space, they were not used.<sup>228</sup>

This shift towards a more explicitly culturally based national identity was significant for Caernarfon – particularly as a site for the Eisteddfod. The Eisteddfod often was referred to as the roving cultural capital of Wales. For example, David Hughes declared in the *Western Mail* during Eisteddfod week that: “Yesterday morning a slightly soggy field on the edge of Caernarfon became the capital of Welsh-speaking Wales. It will remain so for a week.”<sup>229</sup> Indeed, in 1979 Caernarfon used its (political) identity as one of the last substantial Welsh-speaking areas, as well as its long historic tradition, to nominate itself as a more permanent, if informal, cultural capital of Wales. As the *Western Mail* reported, “Caernarfon makes a further claim today to be the capital of

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> At least in the English-language discourse.

Welsh-speaking Wales with the opening of the 1979 National Eisteddfod.”<sup>230</sup> Being the cultural capital was notably different from being the political capital. The title of political capital was an honour that was bestowed on Cardiff a generation earlier after decades of debate and indecision. During that debate, Caernarfon had also been considered and often as the preferable choice.<sup>231</sup> The concept of a political capital was grounded in civic institutions and, above all, a sense of space and place. A cultural capital, however, was grounded in the more abstract and fluid forms of culture.<sup>232</sup>

Caernarfon’s claim to be the cultural capital of all of Wales was based in a pre-existing identity as the unofficial capital of Welsh-speaking Wales. But it was also based on a convenient manipulation of the siting of the National Eisteddfod, the itinerant cultural capital, in the town. Claimants to this title borrowed the Eisteddfod’s extant identity as the cultural capital of the nation to emphasise Caernarfon’s own claims as a more permanent focal point for Welsh culture. The Eisteddfod was a marker of the language-based sense of Welshness of the 1970s and the Caernarfon National Eisteddfod was perceived as proof of this identity. However, Caernarfon was making a claim over *all* of Wales, albeit based in an identity that belonged to a significant minority of the Welsh population. A contemporary article in *Curiad* labelled Caernarfon the “true capital of Wales” saying that it was “the most Welsh town in Wales”.<sup>233</sup> Clive Betts agreed: “With 87 per cent of its inhabitants speaking Welsh at the last census,

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<sup>229</sup> David Hughes, *Western Mail*, Tuesday 7 August 1979, 4.

<sup>230</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 4 August 1979, 1.

<sup>231</sup> (“In 1924, it was considered by many councils in Wales a better choice for the capital of all Wales than Cardiff, which was eventually proclaimed in 1955.”) Clive Betts, Eisteddfod Supplement, *Western Mail*, Saturday 4 August 1979, 1.

<sup>232</sup> Compared to financial “capital”, cultural “capital” refers to intangibles.

<sup>233</sup> Quoted by Clive Betts, Eisteddfod Supplement, *Western Mail*, Saturday 4 August 1979, 1.



Caernarfon remains one of the most Welsh towns in Wales.”<sup>234</sup> Significantly, this “Welshness” was based in linguistic ability. Again, there is no indication of any other signifier of identity.

There was in fact an informal bidding war to be named the cultural capital of Wales. Several towns in Wales were competing for the honour of being named the most “Welsh” town in the nation. Clive Betts discussed the competition:

In the chapels and pubs, Welsh-speakers are carefully weighing the merits, or otherwise, of the contenders. ... Judging is on the basis of Welshness, on the strength of the language in the town and its environs, and on the presence of institutions using Welsh.<sup>235</sup>

Caernarfon’s claim was strong, and it was favoured by many including Betts. This discussion of Caernarfon’s claim to be the cultural capital of Wales was noticeably different, however, from the overtly functional discourse that dominated the 1979 Eisteddfod: the financial future of the festival and the practicality of its peripatetic nature.

### **The Practicality of the Peripatetic Nature**

Despite the dislocation of the Eisteddfodic discourse from a sense of geographic space and place, 1979 witnessed one of the more explicit discussions of the physical nature of the festival – its peripatetic nature. It provided one of the more interesting discussions in 1979, and was one of the few that connected the festival to a sense of location. The peripatetic nature was implicitly connected to the idea of the emergence of an informal,

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> “First to be eliminated, in the minds of many, is Bangor. It houses a Welsh-language production centre for the BBC and a university college (criticised by nationalists for taking too little notice of Welsh). But only 53 per cent of the population spoke Welsh in 1971, and fewer by now. How about Aberystwyth? Home of the national Library – where a Welsh-only rule operates for many jobs – its central position has attracted the Welsh Books Council and Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, and it was favoured home for the

permanent cultural capital. The National Eisteddfod was meant to be the permanently roving cultural capital for all of Wales, visiting every corner of the land, and representing its entire population. However, by 1979 this ideal was far from reality. As has been said, although the festival still may have visited a wide variety of locales around Wales, the people who attended were an increasingly small minority.<sup>236</sup> Moreover, by 1979, the very nature and purpose of the Eisteddfod's annual migration(s) was coming under criticism as well.

Arguably, the purpose of the itinerant nature of the Eisteddfod had been understood to be drawing the regions of Wales together as a nation. However, its annual alternating journey between the North and the South meant that parts of Wales every year were excluded, either by choice or necessity.<sup>237</sup> As Lord Windsor said in 1899: "There was sometimes a friendly rivalry between the northern and southern portions of the Principality."<sup>238</sup> Particularly early in the century, before improvements in transportation enabled more people to come to the Eisteddfod from farther afield and with less effort and expenditure, it was not uncommon to see a local bias in competitions – particularly in the bigger ones, such as the choral features. A contemporary report of the Swansea Eisteddfod in 1926 commented: "As usual, choirs from North Wales are conspicuous by their absence."<sup>239</sup> Even as late as the 1960s, there was a strong local presence in the

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permanent site for the National Eisteddfod (whose council increasingly meets in the town). But even fewer people spoke Welsh in 1971 – 45 per cent." Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> This statement is based on conversations with (current) Eisteddfod officials and inferences from newspaper discourse.

<sup>237</sup> This was due to transportation systems, finances, et cetera.

<sup>238</sup> Lord Windsor's presidential speech in *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 5.

<sup>239</sup> From a forecast of prospects for the choral entries at the Swansea National Eisteddfod, by John M. Morgan ("Ap Rambler"), in the current issue of "The Druid", quoted in *South Wales Daily Post*, Thursday 29 July 1926, 11.

competitors and award-winners.<sup>240</sup> Thus, although a “national” festival, there was always a strongly local aspect to the event. Moreover, it was difficult to bridge the regional gap(s) between North and South, East and West, et cetera, to present a unified nation.<sup>241</sup> This regional disjunction was evinced in the earlier discussions about the North-South Road.

By the 1970s, many felt that the Eisteddfod had no need to be constantly moving around Wales but, rather, should be settled in an appropriately cultured location – such as Caernarfon. Emrys Roberts said it was “time to restore Caernarfon to its ancient place in the Welsh scene. ... A crisis and an opportunity have come together in Welsh history”.<sup>242</sup> The crisis was financial – that of a lack of funds in an economically troubled time; the (perceived) opportunity was to unify Wales, using the Eisteddfod as a tool. Certainly, the monetary concerns had always been an issue of the Eisteddfod. As demonstrated earlier in the chapter, the choice of location, whether it be rural or urban, small or large, had always depended on the locale’s ability to sponsor the festival. However, the universally bad economic climate in Britain in the 1970s meant that the problem was bigger than a mere choice of location, and that there was little hope for respite. The question was no longer “where” it should roam, but “how” it would continue.

When compounded by the financial crisis that the Eisteddfod was experiencing, the discussion on whether or not the festival should have a permanent home became critical

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<sup>240</sup> “Choirs, bands and individual competitors from Gwynedd have been prominent in the competitions at the National Eisteddfod at Bala this week.” *The Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald and North Wales Observer*, Friday 11 August 1967, 12. “Nearly half the literary prizes awarded yesterday were won by people living in the county.” *Liverpool Daily Post*, Tuesday 8 August 1967, 7

<sup>241</sup> “It was quite a step from Caernarfon to Caerphilly, but the two places were in Wales and belonged to the same country.” Archbishop Dr John Morgan in the *Western Mail*, Thursday 10 August 1950, 3.

<sup>242</sup> Emrys Roberts quoted in “Reports by David G. Rosser, David Hewitt, Clive Betts, Goronwy Powell”, *Western Mail*, Monday 6 August 1979, 5.

and heated. For example, the Eisteddfod's finance chairman Mr Emrys Evans called the decision to continue as a peripatetic institution "totally irresponsible".<sup>243</sup> The *Western Mail* agreed with Evans:

Moving the Eisteddfod from north to south and back again is a practice for which many good reasons have been advanced. It is also a practice which creates nearly one third of the festival's annual bill, and which prevents the Eisteddfod amassing extra revenue through hiring out its home to other organisations during the year. The Eisteddfod must accept that it can no longer afford a vagrant existence.<sup>244</sup>

Visiting the Eisteddfod was an expensive undertaking, and one that seemed to be becoming less popular with the Welsh population. As David Hughes commented in the *Western Mail*, "the dedicated Eisteddfodwyr, the gourmands in the flock of culture vultures that has settled here, will find the week setting them back by £38.45. These are expensive pleasures."<sup>245</sup> Furthermore, with the increased viewing time and improved quality of television coverage of the Eisteddfod, it seemed that by 1979 people were staying at home to watch the festival on television, rather than experience it in a participatory way. Only 16 per cent of the Welsh-speaking population attended the festival during the week.<sup>246</sup>

Despite the gloomy financial situation, however, many in the Eisteddfod organisation, as well as Eisteddfodwyr, felt that the festival should maintain its roaming nature. Mr Osian Jones declared: "The decision that the festival should continue moving

<sup>243</sup> *Western Mail*, Wednesday 8 August 1979, 4.

<sup>244</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Monday 13 August 1979, 8.

<sup>245</sup> David Hughes, *Western Mail*, Tuesday 7 August 1979, 4.

<sup>246</sup> "BBC and ITV could soon be faced with demands to increase the fee they pay to cover the National Eisteddfod because of the number of people they are keeping away from the festival by all-day live broadcasting from the field. ... [The Deloitte and Touche] report adds, 'It would be expected that the TV fees relate to the coverage expected by the remaining 84 per cent of Welsh-speakers, plus transmission to other parts of the United Kingdom and Overseas.'" *Western Mail*, Friday 10 August 1979, 4.



around Wales will greatly increase my work-load. But it is a decision with which I totally agree.”<sup>247</sup> Similarly, Emrys Roberts said that despite his support for Caernarfon’s pre-eminence as the cultural capital of Welsh Wales, he “was not arguing for a permanent site”.<sup>248</sup> According to Huw Edwards: “To fulfil its aims as a cultural festival it must have the resources to experiment and innovate, but with most of this expenditure going really on nuts and bolts and in a fight for survival, the scope for this is limited.”<sup>249</sup> But Elwyn Jones was most eloquent: “It is our ‘national madness’ which prescribes that the Eisteddfod should continue to travel though it will bankrupt itself in the process.”<sup>250</sup> Thus, solutions to the financial difficulties of the national festival were debated throughout the week, and beyond.

In fact, the future of the Eisteddfod was in jeopardy. David Hughes said: “Its financial future is fraught.”<sup>251</sup> It was the contentious migratory nature of the festival that was making it such “a vastly expensive undertaking” and afflicting the festival with “the deep uncertainty”.<sup>252</sup> By the late 1970s the Eisteddfod was having difficulty in attracting bids from potential hosts, as few areas could afford to host such a big undertaking. In a highly publicised move, the accountancy firm of Deloitte Haskins and Sells, UK was asked to audit the Eisteddfod Association in the autumn of 1979. But perhaps the financial crisis, specifically as related to the organisation of the Eisteddfod, was merely a convenient scapegoat for declining popularity. This lack of enthusiasm is a stark contrast

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<sup>247</sup> Mr Osian Jones, the northern organiser for the Eisteddfod, in the *Western Mail*, Tuesday 31 July 1979, 3

<sup>248</sup> Emrys Roberts quoted in “Reports by David G. Rosser, David Hewitt, Clive Betts, Goronwy Powell”, *Western Mail*, Monday 6 August 1979, 5.

<sup>249</sup> *Western Mail*, Wednesday 8 August 1979, 4.

<sup>250</sup> Elwyn Jones, *Western Mail*, Tuesday 14 August 1979, 6.

<sup>251</sup> David Hughes, *Western Mail*, Tuesday 7 August 1979, 4.

<sup>252</sup> David Hughes, *Western Mail*, Thursday 9 August 1979, 2, 4.

to the earlier years of the festival when one of the most entertaining events of the week was the meeting at which various local representatives competed for the honour of hosting the next National. In 1950, for example, the campaign for the next year's festival began mid-way through the current Eisteddfod: "The 'perpetual motion' of the Eisteddfod was apparent yesterday when before the halfway stage of this year's festival had been reached an invitation was extended to eisteddfodwyr to travel north next year to the Llanrwst 'National.'"<sup>253</sup> More notably, in Swansea in 1926, it was noted that, "as usual the selection of venue for the next National Eisteddfod in South Wales ... roused marked popular interest."<sup>254</sup> By 1979, however, the press reported that

There is still no invitation forthcoming from any town offering a site for the 1982 Eisteddfod in South Wales - and there ought to be by now. ... Yet there are few here who believe that the Eisteddfod has no future, even if that future can be assured only if it sheds its shed, gets rid of its most bulky trapping, the pavilion.<sup>255</sup>

It is significant that even in the darkest years of economic difficulty during the inter-war years, there was enough popular support to maintain this tense competition for the honour. Moreover, since the reorganisation of the National Eisteddfod Association in 1979, the festivals were planned years in advance. Although there is not competition *per se*, there was marked interest by areas all over Wales and beyond.<sup>256</sup> Thus, it was necessary to look elsewhere to fully explain this decreasing enthusiasm for the Eisteddfod.<sup>257</sup>

The divide between North and South was increasingly stressed in 1979, as evidenced by this debate on the financial future and the migratory nature of the festival.

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<sup>253</sup> *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1959, 4.

<sup>254</sup> *South Wales Daily Post*, Thursday 5 August 1926, 5.

<sup>255</sup> David Hughes, *Western Mail*, Tuesday 7 August 1979, 4.

<sup>256</sup> For example, in 2002 Liverpool expressed interest in hosting the festival.

<sup>257</sup> Possible causes might include the spread of popular culture, notably television and film, as well as the increased availability of inexpensive foreign travel (lessening domestic holiday travel throughout Britain).

Connected to the debate regarding the “cultural capital” of Wales, many argued that the North was separated geographically and culturally from the South. Although generally there was little or no hostility in the discourse, there was a growing sense of division. This divide was not entirely unlike the cultural divide that was discussed a generation or two earlier between rural and industrial Wales. However, the change by the 1970s towards a linguistically based culture rather than a geographic sense of location meant that the divide was consequently based around language regions rather than purely physical ones. Certainly, because of the population density of the region, there were numerically more Welsh speakers in the South, but South Wales was not the “heart” of Welsh-speaking Wales; that remained in the northern and western regions of Wales.<sup>258</sup> Although not based on a North-South divide, Balsom’s model conveniently emphasises the spatial division among Wales’ ideologically constructed culture regions in 1979.

The critical point in the festival’s financial difficulty was located in this shift towards a language-based identity, and was focused on the Welsh language policy of the Eisteddfod. The Eisteddfod was a vital component of the language-based culture as a key signifier of that culture. Cledwyn Hughes said that North Wales “did not resent the fact that the capital city’s institutions and the national library were far away, but people in South Wales enjoying those facilities should realise the Eisteddfod meant something important to the people in the North”.<sup>259</sup> Importantly, the Eisteddfod was no longer a

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<sup>258</sup> In the 1971 census, 11.8 per cent of Glamorgan spoke Welsh; whereas 82.0 per cent of Caernarfonshire and 73.5 per cent of Merionethshire spoke Welsh. These figures fell slightly by 1981, but remained relatively proportionate. John Aitchison and Harold Carter, 2000, 51.

<sup>259</sup> Former Anglesey MP, Mr Cledwyn Hughes, quoted by Goronwy Powell, *Western Mail*, Saturday 11 August 1979, 1.

representative of and preserver of a sense of a rural Welsh folk identity but, rather, more-particularly of the language.

Interestingly, although Hughes tacitly acknowledged the cultural division around the language, he emphasised that the Welsh language culture did in fact belong to everyone in Wales: “The crisis facing Wales’ language and culture is now too great to make any sacrifice of that kind. ... Whether we speak Welsh or not, the language belongs to the whole of Wales, as much to Gwent as to Anglesey.”<sup>260</sup> Yet, the linguistically-based cultural divide grew as controversy over Eisteddfodic locations continued. One possible solution to the financial crisis was to give the Eisteddfod money from public rates. Although a relatively small amount was needed to help the festival and keep it alive, Hughes was sceptical of the popularity and success of such an allotment. Referring to the related edict that consequently would allow English to be spoken at the festival, he warned: “any conditions which accompanied civic grants would have to be rejected because they would be aimed at ending the Welsh-only rule.”<sup>261</sup> Such a move to have all Welsh local authorities, regardless of the relative strength of the Welsh language therein, contribute towards what was increasingly seen as a marginalized festival for a minority culture, was perceived as putting another log on the fire of Welsh disunity - particularly in the period around the failed devolution vote.

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> In order for public funds to be spent on the festival, the festival would need to be inclusive of everyone. The Welsh-only rule was seen by some councils as contradictory to this goal. Speech at customary Eisteddfod Council lunch for the 40 or 45 local authorities which support the festival, quoted by Goronwy Powell, *Western Mail*, Saturday 11 August 1979, 1.



There was significant emphasis on the uniqueness of the Eisteddfod itself, as an institution, in attempts to gain support for its future, both financially and popularly. The president of the Eisteddfod Court, Sir Alun Talfan Davies said that:

The problem today is whether the Eisteddfod will survive as we know it. I know of no other nation that would even contemplate allowing such a unique institution to fall away and decay. ... If it fails then we face the danger of becoming just an adjunct of England, like Cornwall or Cumbria.<sup>262</sup>

To maintain its uniqueness, Wales needed to preserve the Eisteddfod. According to Davies, certainly a partisan supporter of the cause, the responsibility for that preservation did not rest merely with the Welsh-speaking minority: "If the festival fails, it will be the failure of every Welsh man and woman. The sacrifices of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century quarrymen to ensure there was a festival and a university in North Wales were far greater than those asked of local authorities today."<sup>263</sup> In his view, the Eisteddfod belonged to everyone in Wales, regardless of linguistic ability or geographic location. Similarly, everyone in Wales should be proud of this "national madness". Indeed, a similar yet wholly different move was the establishment of the National Eisteddfod as a Registered Charity in 1963. This was based on the principle of linguistic and cultural preservation. Not only would the registration enable the festival to save money and preserve its language, but it meant that the Eisteddfod was trading on its identity as an important institution past its sell-by date and in need of help. It also meant that the Eisteddfod was admitting that one of the primary purposes of the festival was to preserve a threatened culture. Although this idea had been in existence since the interwar years and the crisis of "modernity", in ideological terms this formal move was

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<sup>262</sup> Sir Alun Talfan Davies quoted by Goronwy Powell, *Western Mail*, Saturday 11 August 1979, 1.

significant. Arguably, it meant that the Eisteddfod was not the same living, vibrant, *representative* institution it was a century earlier. It should not be forgotten, however, that these debates came about in a year in which the national festival was held in one of the strongholds of the Welsh-language culture and identity. Today, as Wales enters the twenty-first century, the National Eisteddfod continues to struggle with balancing its cultural agenda and its financial health. The irony of its cultural uniqueness is that the Eisteddfod is too unique for its own good.

Although Eisteddfodau have been held outside of *Y Fro Gymraeg* in other of the culture regions of Wales, one of the most powerful debates in 1979 – and indeed, today – has been to what extent the Eisteddfod is merely a part of *Y Fro*, travelling around Wales to different geographic sites, but really part of a specific cultural location and identity. Unfortunately, it is not one that has been resolved. The Eisteddfod continues to migrate around Wales, taking with it its particular identities.

## Conclusions

People's landscapes ... will operate on very different temporal scales, engaging with the past and with the future in many different ways. Even in the most scientific of Western worlds, past and future will be mythologized. Sometimes the engagement will be very conscious – a way of laying claims, of justifying and legitimating a particular place in the world – sometimes almost unconscious.<sup>264</sup>

As Barbara Bender says in her discussion of landscape, location must be put into context: "The way in which people ... understand and engage with their worlds will depend upon the specific time and place and historical conditions. It will depend upon

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

their gender, age, class, caste, and on their social and economic situation.”<sup>265</sup> It is not merely a fixed, static entity, but rather is an ideological construct whose meaning is open to interpretation. Location and landscapes are used to legitimate particular aspects of society. When located within a cultural and historical context, these ideas take political and cultural meaning. In this way, the various landscapes of Wales have been used to construct and justify various aspects of Welsh identity. This practice was reflected in Eisteddfodic discourse throughout the twentieth century. As physical and ideological landscapes changed, so did ideas of Welshness.

There are some general themes that have emerged through the study of the location of the National Eisteddfod. The first idea to arise out of this chapter was the perceived nature and purpose of the peripatetic nature of the Eisteddfod. Although periodically discussion would arise regarding the structure of the Eisteddfod and whether or not it ought to be held at a permanent site, there was an essential identity assigned to the nomadic nature of the festival. It demonstrated the alleged inclusive nature of Wales and Welshness, despite increasing evidence to the contrary. The related discourse provided an interesting delineation of ideas regarding the role of Wales and its geography in the construction of its identity. Further, it demonstrated changing ideas in relation to location as a signifier of identity, and an inclusion of cultural concepts of location as much as physical notions of space and place.

The second key resulting theme was the categorisation of three basic “models” of location, and subsequently, of Welshness: rural Wales, industrialized Wales, and urban/Metropolitan Wales. Each of these models was assigned a cultural identity that

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<sup>264</sup> Barbara Bender, 1993, 2.

was intrinsically connected to the particular region, and was fundamental in defining the boundaries of the ideological landscape. There have been many models for culture regions in Wales in the twentieth century. Although the specifics of the regions varied, most focus on a core cultural zone that is more “essential” and intensely Welsh. This idea of a central, core cultural zone is particularly appropriate in the context of the twentieth century because of its frequent focus on the role of language therein. Indeed, throughout the century, language was not separate from discussions of space and place; it became part of the landscape metaphor in Welsh culture. Associated with a sense of purity and essentialism, language became a key signifier of Welshness in the twentieth century. Importantly, because there were multiple versions of Welshness on offer, often with one “real” or pure form, these models were also essentially contradictory to the perceived inclusive nature of the festival.

A third theme to emerge from this discourse, as a result of the development of these models of Welshness, was the juxtaposition of certain elements of Welshness: the “traditional” and the “modern”. One of the dominant geographical metaphors to Welsh identity has been the rural idyll, as associated with the mythological identity of the *gwerin*, and its intrinsic purity and essentialism, but also its basis in a perceived “traditional” Welsh past. Conversely, the sense of Welshness that arose out of the siting of the Eisteddfod in industrial areas was more modern. The contrast was evident throughout the century, but was more powerful as Wales became an increasingly modern nation. Conversely, it became more complicated as industry was increasingly considered part of Wales’ heritage. Further, the resulting tension became more pronounced and

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

more poignant given the demographic shifts of the twentieth century, as the rural areas were depopulated in favour of industrialised, urban areas. This theme predominates throughout the Eisteddfodic discourse in the twentieth century.

The ideological constructs formulated through concepts of Welsh landscape were in part created through the discourse surrounding the Eisteddfod. The related images were particular to specific moments in time in recent Welsh history. Because of their nature as a dialectical construct, they constituted part of the performed identity of Welshness at each of these moments. The ways in which they were imagined and presented in this discourse reflected various aspects of Welshness. Similarly, these geographic constructs delineated the ideological blueprint for subsequent discussions of identity. They become the ritualistic stage for the performance of Welshness at the National Eisteddfod.

## Chapter Three

### People, Performers and Identities

Blisters indeed, is an Eisteddfod ailment. To see everything in this more than usually spacious set-up, you can walk miles. ... My own feet wedi conko; my muscles wedi crampo. But there, it's all part of being a true Cymro.<sup>1</sup>

The Welsh people, walking around the Eisteddfod field, played a vital role in the construction of their identity. Nationalism can only be understood in terms of dominant notions of personhood – *cultural* identities that are ideologically constructed by individuals, and assumed by groups.<sup>2</sup> Twentieth-century Welshness was based in more than geographic boundaries. This is especially true in the case of Wales, where the traditional lack of a state structure has meant that the basis for Welsh society and identity has been forced into abstract areas. Having discussed the symbolic importance of the Eisteddfod's location in setting the scene for the performance of identity, it is necessary to now turn to the people and to discuss the actors: who the Eisteddfodwyr were and how they perceived themselves and what were the roles they acted out in the construction of their identities. These factors and related discourses were part of the performance of identity at the Eisteddfod. Each shaped what it meant to be Welsh in twentieth-century Wales.

This chapter will look at significant groups of Eisteddfodwyr in the twentieth century to explore the various relevant concepts of Welshness they expressed, and the different conceptions about the content and character of Welsh identity. Throughout the century, there were particular ideas associated with Eisteddfodwyr that had significant

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<sup>1</sup> Jill Forwood, *South Wales Evening Post*, Friday 5 August 1960, 6.

impact on the ways in which Welshness was perceived and interpreted. Most powerful was perhaps the myth of the *gwerin*, the iconic Welsh folk people. Through the discourse of the *gwerin*, particularly through the rhetorical construction of various Eisteddfodwyr in the pattern of this fictional identity, Welshness has been demarcated through the discourse of the Eisteddfod. There have also been certain alterations and adaptations in the idea of the *gwerin* to keep up with the changes faced by Wales and the Eisteddfod. However, the core identity has remained constant and central to the idea of Welshness associated with the Eisteddfod.

Similarly influential has been the discourse related to the various members of the (Celtic) Welsh diaspora: representatives of other Celtic nations who converged at the Pan-Celtic Eisteddfod of 1899, various groups of international visitors, and members of the “Exiles” community who have continued to “return home” to Wales throughout the century. In the early years of the century the Pan-Celtic movement was strong and a sense of Celtic identity pervaded at the Eisteddfod. For much of the century, also, the Welsh diaspora maintained strong connections to the “homeland”, providing a group that was at once the same and different, Welsh and foreign. As such, they provided a unique lens through which to examine concepts of Welshness. The international visitors who assembled at the Eisteddfod during the Second World War presented an interesting interchange on the role of Wales in Britain and the world at that time. Each of these groups has in common the bringing of an international element to the Eisteddfod and to Wales, while problematising and questioning Welsh identity. Further, they led to the examination of concepts of Welshness within the confines of Britishness. As with any

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<sup>2</sup> Carol Trosset, 1993, 6.

community or group, the Eisteddfod-going Welsh in the twentieth century defined themselves against themselves and against “Others”.

This chapter will first examine the concept of the *gwerin*, discussing both its core elements and some representative figures. The second half of the chapter is divided into three sections: the first discusses the Pan-Celtic movement and the Eisteddfod of 1899 and the role of a Celtic identity in a sense of Welsh identity; the second discusses the international element introduced at the 1944 Eisteddfod and the role of Britain and Empire in notions of Welshness; the third discusses the role of the Welsh diaspora, or the “Exiles” community, in constructing Welshness at the Eisteddfod.

### The Gwerin – A Model of Welshness

Not only in village and small-town Wales, but in whole areas of industrial society, the concept of the *gwerin* seemed capable of infinite extension and indeed institutionalisation. The *gwerin* was the natural form for a Welsh polity. ... The styles of this *gwerin* have in fact become, or at least were until very recently, Welsh national styles. The apocryphal Welsh brain surgeon and Welsh bricklayer meeting in London, to this day, immediately constitute a small conspiracy, democratic in manner; a populist discourse is *de rigueur*.<sup>3</sup>

As Gwyn Williams argues in the above quotation, the idea of the *gwerin* provided one of the most popular and most powerful identifying images for Welshness throughout the twentieth century. The *gwerin*, as an ideological representation of a mythical Welsh folk people, had evolved by the late nineteenth century into a respectable feature of Welsh *Cymru Fydd* Liberalism.<sup>4</sup> Just as Welsh Liberalism during

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<sup>3</sup> Gwyn A. Williams, 1985, 238.

<sup>4</sup> See for example, Prys Morgan, “Keeping the Legends Alive”, in Tony Curtis, ed., *Wales: The Imagined Nation* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1986); *ibid.*, “The *gwerin* of Wales – Myth or Reality”, 1986, 134-152.



this period was increasingly emphasising a degree of Welsh cultural autonomy, the ideology of the *gwerin* separated the Welsh nation from the Anglo-Welsh gentry and Anglicans – the cultural “invaders”. Further, it emphasised a sense of Welshness that was independent from comparisons to external “Others”. In this way, during the Liberal Ascendancy a distinct Welsh “nation” was stressed concurrently through a political agenda and an independent cultural myth of identity.

By the early years of the twentieth century, the idea of the *gwerin* – the common people of Wales - was turned into a form of propaganda for Welsh cultural and political autonomy. The myth was fostered by a number of Welsh writers and academics during this period. Men like Sir Owen M. Edwards and, later, W. J. Gruffydd, made popular the idea of a society of poor, upstanding, religious and cultured Welsh peasantry.<sup>5</sup> These men were not themselves members of the peasant and working classes that composed the *gwerin*, but were members of the emerging literary middle classes in Wales. Because this group was composed of professional men such as academics and ministers, it helped establish a Welsh-language educational and administrative structure, as well as a body of communal cultural knowledge. Yet, the romantic idealism of their writings cannot by itself explain the continued resonance of the *gwerin*. Indeed, most working people, the majority of Welsh people, probably were focused on other, less-intellectual symbols of nationhood and identity: music, religion and sport.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps part of the myth’s popularity among segments of the Welsh population can be traced to the social and economic upheavals that were occurring in Wales at the time. Mass industrialisation and emigration were changing the nature of Welsh

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<sup>5</sup> Prys Morgan, “The Character of Welsh Society”, in David Thomas, ed., *Wales: A New Study* (London: David and Charles, 1977), 285-286.

communities and life, thrusting Wales into a modern, industrial world. As was mentioned in chapter two, that sudden change brought uncertainty, and a desire to reclaim a sense of security through the past. The idea of the *gwerin* was symbolic of a past that would never be again, but it was also representative of a sense of community that appealed to people in Wales. Therein lay the myth's popularity.

Essentially nostalgic in ideological make-up, the *gwerin* thus became firmly rooted as part of a myth of Welsh identity that continued to exert its hegemonic influence on Welsh culture a century later. The question of whether or not the *gwerin* ever actually existed is largely immaterial; the myth has become more powerful than reality. It is perhaps less important to determine whether or not this mythical people ever existed, and more so to discover the ways in which Welsh people chose to represent themselves discursively in the manner of this mythical *gwerin*. In the discourse surrounding the Eisteddfod during the course of the twentieth century, there was a pattern of modelling various important Welsh people and Eisteddfodwyr around the *gwerin* paradigm. The following section will use these examples to clarify the discourse on the *gwerin* and the ways in which it contributed to a sense of Welshness at the Eisteddfod. Moreover, it will use case studies of individual Eisteddfodwyr to demonstrate the changing nature of the concept of the *gwerin* throughout the period.

In 1911 the myth was at its height. Significantly, the subject of the winning crown poem at the Eisteddfod was "*Gwerin Cymru*", penned by "Crwys". Although the idea of the *gwerin* in his poem was based in a rural peasantry and heavily romanticised ideal of Welsh society, Crwys Williams came from a craftsman's family in a coal-

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<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Morgan, 1981, 132.

mining village near Swansea.<sup>7</sup> His poem idealised the rural peasantry as being the true Welsh people. As Prys Morgan says in his article on the *gwerin* of Wales, this celebration of the pastoral was not uncommon in Europe at the turn of the century.<sup>8</sup> More specifically, it was very popular in the literary culture of contemporary Wales in this “Edwardian High Noon”.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, “Crwys” included in his *gwerin* the whole of what he defined as the “Welsh” people, that is, the middle and lower classes who lived in rural Wales. In his view, the Anglican ruling classes were not truly Welsh, nor were the industrial working classes. They were immigrants and invaders, traitors or turncoats, whereas the true people of Wales were those who had been in Wales since time immemorial, and continued to propagate particular “Welsh” values and ways. In a similar way, the Eisteddfod also was representative of an ageless Welshness. “Ceithio” wrote in the *Western Mail*:

No one knew the date of its birth except Morien, but we did know that the Eisteddfod was born before the foundations of the oldest of our Welsh castles were laid, and whilst they were crumbling into dust in the hand of Time, the Eisteddfod looked to-day as if she were born that week; she looked, in fact, as young and fair as the Welsh maid.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the industrial and social upheavals of the period, the poem proved very popular. “Judex” agreed with the *Western Mail* that: “It is said by some whose judgement cannot be questioned that his Pryddest, ‘Gwerin Cymru’, is a perfect gem in its way. We really believe that it is one of the finest things ever produced at a Welsh eisteddfod.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Prys Morgan, 1986, 136. See Appendix Four.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Morgan, 1981, 131.

<sup>10</sup> “Ceithio”, *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1911, 6.

<sup>11</sup> “Judex”, *Welshman*, 18 August 1911, 6.

Importantly, the rural ideal was particularly well formulated around an idea of insiders and outsiders.<sup>12</sup> As Eric Hirsch says:

On the one hand there are the social and economic opportunities of the town (hard labour and material rewards) and on the other hand there is the country, offering the possibilities of an Arcadian, idyllic existence. ...There is a relationship here between an ordinary, workaday life and an ideal, imagined existence, vaguely connected to, but still separate from, that of the everyday.<sup>13</sup>

There was evident a separation of an idealised rural identity from a demonised industrial one.

There were other attributes to the *gwerin*, beyond an essential rurality: its members were also conceived to be democratic, hard working, nonconformist and faithful to Welsh culture, working to promote and preserve it. Above all, they were the guardians of Welshness.<sup>14</sup>

### **A Common People**

Whether consciously or not, the Eisteddfodwyr constructed themselves analogously to the lines of “Crwys” poem. The media rhetoric was replete with subtle comparisons and descriptive allusions, likening the Eisteddfodwyr to the mythical *gwerin*. First and foremost, the Eisteddfodwyr were “common”, the salt of the earth. This description was not intended in any derogatory sense. Rather, it was a positive attribute that many Eisteddfodwyr cherished. It meant that they were part of the democratic masses of

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<sup>12</sup> Raymond Williams’ distinction between “insiders” who “live” their landscape and “outsiders” who “entertain an objectified concept of it”, is very useful in this discussion. The outsiders’ ideas dwell in Romanticism. Their focus on an ideal, if imaginary, world is expressed through imagery and metaphor.

<sup>13</sup> “This, after all, is what is achieved in the idealised world of the painted representation; the painted picture allows us to discern this within the painting itself and/or in the relationship between the viewer of the painting and the painted representation... however, social life can never achieve the timelessness of a painting, although ... this is often what is striven for in particular cultural contexts.” Eric Hirsch, 1995, 2-3.

Wales. In 1899 the *Western Mail* claimed that: "So far as possible, it is a national gathering, representative men from all classes of the community having a hand in it."<sup>15</sup>

The sentiment was the same in 2000. Mr Bowen declared: "People are proud of their Welsh heritage, there is no snobbishness or elitism."<sup>16</sup> The Welsh were proud to proclaim their alleged classless nature, and the Eisteddfod apparently provided the perfect medium through which to do it, due to the festival's own perceived egalitarian nature: "The Eisteddfod is a democratic institution for the encouragement of democratic art."<sup>17</sup> According to the *Western Mail* in 1899, Sir Marchant Williams felt similarly about the Eisteddfod. When he was standing on the platform,

he was standing face to face with the nation itself, for before him were Welshmen from all parts of the world, of all creeds and sects, grades and positions, and his message to them was to cling to the Eisteddfod, to be loyal and proud of it, for it was the finest national institution in the world – it preserved the Welsh language, it encouraged literature, it perfected and widened the outlook of our musicians, it killed social narrowness, it taught us that true charity and brotherhood was immeasurably more valuable than sectarian distinctions, and that true nationality was wider and deeper than distinctions of party.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, the fraternal openness of the National Eisteddfod was seen to be equally as important as the festival's other aims of promoting Welsh culture. Moreover, the classless nature of Welsh people was as important a signifier of identity as their reputed literary and musical talents.

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<sup>14</sup> Prys Morgan, "The gwerin of Wales – Myth or Reality", 1986, 144.

<sup>15</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Tuesday 18 July 1899, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Bowen quoted by Colin Hughes, Eisteddfod Supplement, *Western Mail*, Friday 4 August 2000, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Saturday 12 August 1911, 3.

<sup>18</sup> "Ceitho", *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1911, 6.

The winners of various Eisteddfodic competitions were celebrated for their equal status and the apparent unrestricted nature of competition. “Judex” applauded the working-class victories in Cardiff as signs of the open nature of Welsh culture:

One thing that deserves to be strongly emphasised was the thoroughly democratic character of the results and the winning competitors. The chaired bard who carried off the prize ... was Gwilym Ceiriog, a butter merchant from Llangollen, and the crowned bard is a man who started life as a collier.<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, newspaper reports of Eisteddfodic victories constantly stressed any hint of normalcy. Farmers and shepherds were particularly attractive to proponents of the *gwerin* myth as they fitted easily into the model of the rural idyll. When they won competitions at the Eisteddfod, they were characterised as emblematic of the essential democracy of the Welsh people. In 1911, the *South Wales Daily Post* said “nothing was so illustrative of the democratic basis of the Eisteddfod” as the ceremony of the crowning of the Bard in a similar manner:

On the announcement of the winner’s *nom de plume* an unpretentious individual among the audience stood on his feet, modestly trying to ignore the loud cheers that greeted him. Down into the audience went the bards and almost dragged this man to the platform. There he stood, in the middle of the picturesque circle of bards, and the many other distinguished people on the platform, for the moment the greatest of them all. A plainly dressed, ordinary looking Welshman, suddenly plucked from the great crowd in the auditorium and elevated into fame! It was a remarkable scene. All present were there to do homage to this king of verse – the Archdruids in their imposing robes, the venerable bards, the famous Welshmen standing around, and the thousands of others less well known who crowded the pavilion.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The “winners of this brilliant victory [the male voice competition] consisted of young farmers and hands employed in factories”. “Judex”, *Welshman*, 18 August 1911, 6.

<sup>20</sup> *South Wales Daily Post*, Thursday 10 August 1911, 1. For much of the early part of the century, the *South Wales Daily Post* was politically conservative, but, like the *Western Mail*, supportive in varying degrees of Welsh cultural identity and the language. By the post-war period it had become an evening paper, but remained conservative. While supportive of the language, its tone was slightly reserved and it was uncritical of English. Its attitude was similar to that of the *Western Mail*.

Significantly, the emphasis was as much on the character of the winner as on the talent he demonstrated in his efforts. Here was a common man, made “king” through his talents rather than through any hereditary or political battles. Moreover, his very reticence emphasised his modesty and the idea that anyone could be in his shoes. This was the true essence of the Eisteddfodic view of Wales.

There has been no better example of this cult of the common-man-cum-poet than in 1926 when the winner of the Crown poem prize was the Rev. D. Emrys James, the “vagabond poet-preacher of Wales”.<sup>21</sup> He was the son of a minister, and after leaving the army had roamed Wales writing poetry. He “wandered from place to place, always out of the public eye, emerging only on the occasions of important eisteddfodau”.<sup>22</sup> Although he had won the chair before, the Rev. James was the epitome of shyness, and needed to be led, blushing and reluctant, up to the platform.<sup>23</sup> It was implied by the press that his victory in 1926 was remarkable not because of the quality of his poetry and his allegedly innate talent, but for his personality: “The Swansea crown will long be remembered [for] the winner, who is as his nom-de-plume suggests, a tramp-poet.”<sup>24</sup> James represented the preacher-poet ideal of the Eisteddfod. He was a man moved by two things: God and poetry. The centrality of both of these things to a particular Welsh identity made the “vagabond poet” an inherently Welsh concept. A similar situation was presented in the discourse of 1911, when the native talent of the competitor was emphasised to construct him as part of the ordinary *gwerin*. The *Western Mail* commented:

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<sup>21</sup> *South Wales Daily Post*, Tuesday 3 August 1926, 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Western Mail*, Wednesday 4 August 1926, 8.

<sup>23</sup> “Our Special Correspondent”, *Western Mail*, Friday 6 August 1926, 9.

<sup>24</sup> *South Wales Daily Post*, Tuesday 3 August 1926, 1.

It has been a matter of comment for months past that the subject selected for the chair ode was a difficult one, and it is, therefore, the more surprising that the best composition sent in was from the pen of a man who claims no measure of education, but had only a native love of poetry to assist him in his congenial task. Mr William Roberts is a dairyman at Llangollen.<sup>25</sup>

The fact that Mr Roberts was largely uneducated, and was “much older than the generality of successful aspirants for the national chair”, was further proof of his membership into this Welsh fraternity of the Common Man.<sup>26</sup> Unlike the educated literary elite that dominated much of (non-“Welsh”) culture, he had been to school only briefly and for years worked as a farm servant in various parts of north Wales before going into business as a dairyman.

Indeed, implicit in the discourse of the essential, commonplace character of the *gwerinol* Eisteddfodwyr was the amateur status of their competitive nature. In Cardiff in 1899, there was a prolonged epistolary debate about the membership of competitive choirs and their amateur status. In one of the letters to the Editor of the *Western Mail*, a conductor defended his choir’s amateur status:

the whole of our choir, numbering fully 200 voices, is made up of [local] ladies and gentlemen, residents of the town. Compare this, sir, with the professionals from the Welsh Ladies’ Choir and from Llanelly, some of whom we have paid fees for and engaged to sing as soloists in our winter concerts. ... You will thus observe at a glance the unfairness of a choir, such as this, made up out of such a wide area, being pitted against local choirs. ... [W]e are proud to say that we have never, in all our experience, paid a penny to any member of our choir as a fee for services rendered, and are not doing so in this competition.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> “Our Own Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1911, 5.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Fred Jones, Conductor Newport Choral Union, Letter to the Editor, *Western Mail*, Tuesday 11 July 1899, 6.



The amateur status of Eisteddfodic competitions furthered the idea of fairness at the festival. Although there were monetary prizes awarded to winners, the Eisteddfodic discourse underplayed the importance of prizes to competitors and emphasised that the driving force behind the festival was a desire for personal glory and to do one's best – letting the proverbial best man win.<sup>28</sup> The debate about the amateur status of the choral competitions reached a new level when the issue of profits was raised in relation to the Male Voice Choir competition in 2000. The larger, more famous choirs were not competing in the Eisteddfod because the competitive musical selection was in contrast to their more marketable set pieces. The great Male choirs, “arguably the originators of the image of Wales as the Land of Song”, were reluctant to waste their time learning complicated Eisteddfodic pieces that were not generally popular.<sup>29</sup> Dean Powell reported in the *Western Mail*:

The outburst follows years of tension between the Eisteddfod and the choral giants of Wales, which began when the main players ... stopped competing, largely because the intricate test pieces were rendered useless after a competition due to their complexity. Cynics also feel that the choirs would lose out on record promotions and tours if they lost to a rival in the Eisteddfod marquee. ... Treorchy chairman Roger Morse defended. ‘If you ask me whether I want to spend months learning a heavy piece of music that audiences will hate, or make a record and undertake a tour abroad at the same time, I know which one I’ll go for.’<sup>30</sup>

This disinclination perhaps suggested a shift among the general Welsh population away from the ideals traditionally espoused by the Eisteddfod, and of changing ideas of popular music. However, the separation of the main money-making, professional, choirs from the Eisteddfod highlighted the amateur nature of the festival.

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<sup>28</sup> Certainly the amount of the cash prizes has decreased in relative terms throughout the century.

<sup>29</sup> Dean Powell, *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 2000, 12.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

The popularity of the Eisteddfod among the masses of Wales was another aspect interpreted as proof of the democratic nature of the Eisteddfod and the *gwerin*. The people of Wales attended the Eisteddfod for love of music and poetry.<sup>31</sup> Everyone in Wales could enjoy the talents and other offerings displayed at their national festival. The attendance figures in the pavilion were testament to that fact. By mid-day in Carmarthen in 1911 “the spacious pavilion was well-filled by an enthusiastic crowd, which by the afternoon had increased to such large proportions as to create a record attendance for the closing day of the Eisteddfod”.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, in 1926, the fine weather in Swansea also made for record audiences. The *South Wales Daily Post* reported “records broken” well before the appearance of the main draws: Ramsay MacDonald and the chief male voice choir competition.<sup>33</sup> These attendance rates in 1926 were even more remarkable because of the contemporary economic depression. According to the *South Wales Daily Post*, workers were using “Hoarded Bradburys” to pay for their annual “pilgrimage” to the Welsh cultural Mecca. Mr Williams noted in the *South Wales Daily Post* that: “The amazing feature of the Eisteddfod ... was the ease with which money was spent for admittance. With all the reported poverty that was said to exist in the country.”<sup>34</sup> These devout Eisteddfodwyr saved and sacrificed to come to the Eisteddfod as their annual holiday. As such, they wanted to enjoy it to the full. As the *Western Mail* reported, they did:

Whatever be the maximum limit of the pavilion’s accommodation, it was fully occupied on Wednesday afternoon, when the chief choral competition was staged. Only the soulless

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<sup>31</sup> As shall be demonstrated in subsequent chapters, any sense of societal cultural improvement was typically espoused by the elites.

<sup>32</sup> “Our Own Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Saturday 12 August 1911, 7.

<sup>33</sup> *South Wales Daily Post*, Saturday 7 August 1926, 1.

<sup>34</sup> Mr Williams in the *South Wales Daily Post*, Monday 9 August 1926, 5.

could fail to be stirred by such a spectacle – 18,000 faces set in rapt attention for four hours [as the choirs sang].<sup>35</sup>

In 2000 a similar comparison was made between attendance at the festival and the disadvantages related to it. Dean Powell remarked: “The very mention of the word Eisteddfod can conjure up images of rain, mud, and transportation problems that nightmares are made of, but still we attend this mecca of Welsh culture in our thousands.”<sup>36</sup> The popularity of the festival, despite such nightmarish problems, emphasised the Eisteddfod’s apparent universal appeal.

Although the good seats in the pavilion may have been filled by members of the middle and upper classes of Wales – those who could afford the higher ticket prices, the majority of Eisteddfodwyr were content to sit in the cheap seats or even to listen outside. In fact, as was often the case, the cheap seats were the ones that were most popular: in 1911 there was “a small attendance at the pavilion when the Mayor formally declared the Eisteddfod open, only a few people being in the reserved seats. The cheap spaces at the back were better filled.”<sup>37</sup> In 1926 the biggest attendance was “in the cheap seats”.<sup>38</sup> There was often also a substantial crowd gathered outside the pavilion, listening intently, but with little money in their pockets to afford the better seats inside. These were the “common people” of Wales; they were not wealthy, and had not had the benefits of a formal education as such, but comprised a keen and eager audience for this cultural festival. Thus, enjoyment of the arts in Wales, particularly through the great cultural festival of the people, was democratic.

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<sup>35</sup> *Western Mail*, Thursday 5 August 1926, 7.

<sup>36</sup> “Westgate’s National Eisteddfod with Dean Powell”, *Western Mail*, Saturday 12 August 2000, 11.

<sup>37</sup> “Our Own Correspondent”, *South Wales Daily Post*, Monday 7 August 1911, 6.

<sup>38</sup> *South Wales Daily Post*, Monday 9 August 1926, 1.

The audience was enthusiastic inside the pavilion as well and usually universally supportive of winners regardless of place of origin. The *South Wales Daily Post* reported that the crowning song was sung “with great fervour, the audience rising as one man to greet the victor, and to give him a rousing cheer”.<sup>39</sup> The support was perceived as evidence not only of the Welsh people’s appreciation for artistic talent, but of their sense of democratic fairness that they would applaud based on merit. Indeed, when an English choir competed against a Welsh one in 1911, the press reported on the audience’s good sportsmanship: “there was scarcely any need for Penar to appeal for ‘chwarae teg i’r Sais’.”<sup>40</sup>

This democratic and unprejudiced support for talent was certainly not always evident, however. In 1926, when an American choir won the main male voice competition there was a certain amount of criticism of the overly organised and rehearsed nature of the victors’ performance. The *Western Mail* was frank in expressing a perceived popular preference towards a Welsh victory: “naturally they would have preferred a Welsh choir to win.”<sup>41</sup> Moreover, it argued that “Cleveland lacks, in the feeling of Welshmen, the spirit of deep enthusiasm that has been the great characteristic of all Welsh choral singing – the power to move and inspire masses as distinct from the power to please adjudicators.”<sup>42</sup> The criticism of the American victors challenged the notion that the Welsh *gwerinol* Eisteddfodwyr were truly democratic and interested in “fair play”. It also introduced the concept of an innate Welsh talent that will be discussed shortly in reference to the international aspects of the festival.

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<sup>39</sup> *Welshman*, Friday 11 August 1911, 5.

<sup>40</sup> (“THE STOLID SAXON: Or it might have been the English ‘phlegm’ in evidence.”) The Rev. Penar Griffiths, quoted by, “Our special representative”, *South Wales Daily Post*, Wednesday 9 August 1911, 1.

<sup>41</sup> “Our Special Correspondent”, *Western Mail*, Monday 9 August 1926, 8.

Certainly, the spirit of competition was strongly evident at the Eisteddfod. Importantly, this competitive spirit was portrayed as a positive attribute of the festival, encouraging musical excellence. In Cardiff in 1899 Sir F. Bridge said that: "It is the spirit of rivalry that prompts one choir to be the victor over all others, but the spirit of rivalry fostered by the Eisteddfod creates a love of music, for the rivalry is in the production of that music, and without the music they would have nothing to rival each other in."<sup>43</sup> In 1944 "Crwys" echoed his words: he suggested an "epic competition in every department at the National Eisteddfod quinquennially. ... Their defeat might be a greater stimulus than a legendary fame. ... That would mean the cancelling of standards that had outlived their merits, but it would be all to the good."<sup>44</sup> They felt that the Eisteddfod was the institution responsible for the transmission and proliferation of certain traits within Wales, through its competitive nature.

Indeed, the newspaper reports often used the rhetoric of battle, particularly in the early years of the century, which furthered the spirit of competition. The *South Wales Echo* reported that many musical enthusiasts were anticipating "the fray" of competitions.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, "The Man About Town" declared that the choirs were "'booming' the Eisteddfod, eager to fight the battle with pens in the newspapers, as well as in the Eisteddfod arena with voices, and at the battle of the giants for the 'chief prize'."<sup>46</sup> The rhetoric continued throughout the century. In 1937, for example,

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<sup>42</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Monday 9 August 1926, 6.

<sup>43</sup> Sir F. Bridge in the *Western Mail*, Saturday 22 July 1899, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Archdruid "Crwys" quoted by "Our Own Reporters", *Western Mail*, Thursday 10 August 1944, 4.

<sup>45</sup> "The Man About Town", *South Wales Echo*, Tuesday 11 July 1899, 2. This rhetoric was also evident, for example, in 1937: "Dr Lloyd Owen, Criccieth ... returned to the fray." (*The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 6 August 1937, 5).

<sup>46</sup> "The Man About Town", *South Wales Echo*, Friday 14 July 1899, 2.

“Eisteddfodwyr” commented that “We shall all live to fight another day.”<sup>47</sup> And, in 1944, when certainly there was much talk of battle, the *South Wales Evening Post* remarked: “We seemed a long way from the great battlefields of the male voice days of the past.”<sup>48</sup> Further, in 2000 the *Llanelli Star* used similar language to describe the competitions at the Eisteddfod: “on the *Maes* bardic battles for literary prize chairs have waged this week at the National Eisteddfod.”<sup>49</sup> Alex Wynne in the *Western Mail* also referred to “popular choral battles”.<sup>50</sup> By stressing the competitive nature of the festival, through the rhetoric of battle, the discourse was constructing an ideology of the Eisteddfod as a place of struggle and competition, but of chivalry and fairness.

Nevertheless, the concept of “fair play” remained part of the hegemonic discourse of the *gwerin* at the Eisteddfod throughout the century. The notion that the Eisteddfod was being corrupted by a deceitful capitalist spirit was condemned in the press as non-Welsh and un-Eisteddfodic. There was something of a minor scandal in 1911 regarding accommodation of visitors to Carmarthen for the Eisteddfod. The *South Wales Daily Post* disclosed that Eisteddfod officials condemned a plot against foreign visitors to the festival, and emphasised that: “as has been testified by applicants during the past few [days] the charges made at Carmarthen are extremely fair.”<sup>51</sup> E. Ungoad Thomas wrote into the *Welshman* in 1911 to complain that:

High prices will be unworthy of the National Eisteddfod and bring the historic [host] town to ridicule and disgrace. Extra money as the result of excessive charges will soon be exhausted,

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<sup>47</sup> ‘Eisteddfodwr’, *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 14 August 1937, 1.

<sup>48</sup> *South Wales Evening Post*, Thursday 10 August 1944, 3.

<sup>49</sup> *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 10 August 2000, 8.

<sup>50</sup> Alex Wynne, *Western Mail*, Tuesday 1 August 2000, 8.

<sup>51</sup> Unknown, quoted by “Our Own Correspondent”, *South Wales Daily Post*, Monday 7 August 1911, 1.

but the stain on the fair name of Carmarthen will always remain, to the serious disadvantage of the town.<sup>52</sup>

Beyond concerns for the reputation of the town lay an apparently genuine concern for the reputation of Wales and for the pocketbooks of visitors to the Eisteddfod. In a similar letter, E. Ungeod Thomas criticized the dishonest people in charge of the plan, while applauding those who upheld what he saw as the true (honest) character of Wales and the essence of the Eisteddfod:

It is cheering to those who invited the Eisteddfod to the town, and who worked to make it a success, to know that several townspeople were sufficiently Welsh in spirit and aspiration to exercise liberality and generosity towards visitors, while some who entertained strangers did it at a moderate and satisfactory price, and the visitors left with happy recollections of their visit. On the other hand, many visitors, and amongst them some Americans, were wickedly 'bled'. 'Bills' I have seen are astounding, and betray a serious lack of conscience. Evidently, several residents in this town are utter strangers to the spirit and meaning of the National Eisteddfod.'<sup>53</sup>

Thus, the alleged truthful nature of Welsh people and Eisteddfodwyr prevented them from mistreating their fellow men and women. Unity and familial empathy were the essence of Welshness – at least among these “Common People”. Dishonesty and the fostering of difference were perceived as un-Welsh because they went against the dominant ideology of egalitarianism. The *gwerin*-Welsh were democratic in their dealings with each other and with “Others”, regardless of social class, national background or other affiliation.

Out of this sense of egalitarian fair play and the cult of the Common Man came a myth of classlessness. Importantly, this sense of social equality and brotherhood extended beyond socio-economic class; during Eisteddfod week it ostensibly carried

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<sup>52</sup> E. Ungeod Thomas, “Correspondence”, *Welshman*, Friday 4 August 1911, 8.

over to party politics as well. The *Welshman* proudly declared in 1911 that “though there may have been differences of opinion ... on the ‘great essentials’ all were willing to sink personal differences, and to work together for the common weal”.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, “the local officials have sunk all party prejudices and have united heartily for the common cause of the ‘national’.”<sup>55</sup> A letter to the *Western Mail* was eloquent on this apparent cessation of partisan hostilities:

It is not the Gorsedd sword alone that it buries in its sheath – religious and political strife ceases to be. They call a truce in the scene where patriotic zeal holds sway. Here is only the friendly rivalry of the nation’s best minstrels. ... As parsons and preachers greeted one another in the capacity of ancient Welsh eisteddfodwyr, one saw in this mutual recognition of common national interests a prophecy of more united times to come. With the Eisteddfod spirit upon one there comes the flooding desire to see all sectional bickerings relegated to a forgotten past.<sup>56</sup>

However, as with the other factors, this aspect of the myth of the *gwerin* was not always uncomplicated or uncontested. Indeed, the extant Liberal hegemony in Wales and the myth of the *gwerin* were being challenged in 1911 by a series of labour disputes. Labour issues were becoming an increasingly controversial and volatile issue in the Principality. The Labour Party gained popular support in the early years of the century, eroding that of the Liberal Party. Moreover, during the years immediately leading up to the First World War there was industrial militancy and a series of disturbances across Wales.<sup>57</sup> In the summer of 1911, troops shot and killed railway workers on strike in Llanelli. This period saw a shift from the late-Victorian and Edwardian identification with Liberalism,

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<sup>53</sup> Letter to the Editor, *Welshman*, Friday 18 August 1911, 6.

<sup>54</sup> *Welshman*, 11 August 1911, 6.

<sup>55</sup> “Our Special Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 1911, 5.

<sup>56</sup> E. N. J. from Haverfordwest, in *Western Mail*, Wednesday 9 August 1911, 6.

<sup>57</sup> There were a series of strikes and labour riots, in Tonypandy and Llanelli, and race riots in Cardiff and the valleys. There was also a moderate level of suffragist agitation. Kenneth Morgan, 1981, 137-139, 145-149.



and a Liberalism which embraced both owners and workers, towards a new identification with Labour that would dominate for much of the twentieth century.

More important to a discussion of early twentieth-century Wales, however, was the impact that these labour conflicts had on Welsh identity and the ways in which they were evident in Eisteddfodic discourse. The Eisteddfod was always a particularly political place and a site of varying levels of political discourse. Particularly in this highly politicised time, the Eisteddfod was often a platform for political debate – even if it was discouraged. Even the celebrated speeches of David Lloyd George were overtly political, discussing everything from War in Europe to welfare. In this context, the proclamations of unity at the Eisteddfod were particularly interesting.

As a result of the changing political nature of Welsh society, there were subtle changes in the discourse of the *gwerin*, as its boundaries began to shift to include the industrial working classes. According to Gwyn Williams:

A great deal of [the *gwerin*'s] style was simply taken over, lock, stock, and barrel, by that other archetype which succeeded it, the *Welsh working class*, normally English-speaking and normally referring only to south Wales. ... However remote this *working class* was and is from the *gwerin*, however indifferent or hostile it may be to the Welsh language, it has shared many of its populist attributes. A *working-class* community could nurture a similar sort of internal commonalty, could critically assimilate an Aneurin Bevan precisely as its predecessor did a great preacher. ... The term *working class* is used by spokespersons in the last days of Welsh Labour precisely as the term *gwerin* was used in the last days of Welsh Liberalism.<sup>58</sup>

In this way, a newer myth was constructed to replace an older myth, or to update it. The “working class” idea was built upon the foundations of the *gwerin* and, for the purposes of this discussion, is not significantly different. Regardless of the label, they were

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<sup>58</sup> Gwyn A. Williams, 1985, 237-239.

formed out of the same core identity. The similarities and borrowings between the two figurative groups further propagated this core set of beliefs about Welshness into the twenty-first century; this will be demonstrated shortly in respect to contemporary Welsh celebrities. In this context, the emphasis on class politics in Wales contested the myth of the classless nature of the Welsh people.

Thus, the idea of classlessness and non-sectarianism was never more than a myth in the twentieth century. An interesting adjunct to this debate occurred with the publication in 1938 of “The Lore of the People: Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru”, by the Communist Party of Great Britain. Relying upon an extant identity of the communal nature of the Eisteddfod, the pamphlet emphasised the common (*gwerinol*) nature of the festival as representative of Welsh people:

It is a truly national and democratic institution. National in the widest sense, for in the Eisteddfod field and on the Eisteddfod platform, national elements of all kinds intermix, and Welshmen of all parties and sects gather together in friendly emulation to enrich the national culture. Democratic, for it ... has been built up by the efforts and sacrifices of the common people of Wales.<sup>59</sup>

Similarly, the establishment of a new ‘Gwerin’ movement by Bangor University College students in 1937, and discussed at the Machynlleth Eisteddfod, displayed a shift from rural to industrial workers, and the subsequent implicit political shifts. It established overt links to Socialism and political nationalism, two contrasting and controversial political ideologies.<sup>60</sup> The Rev. Alban Davies, a congregational minister from the Rhondda, alleged that, Socialism was the “greatest enemy of Welsh culture and

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<sup>59</sup> R. Williams, *The Lore of the People: Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru* (Cardiff: Cymric Federation Press and the South and North Wales Districts of the Communist Party, 1938), 3.

<sup>60</sup> According to the *Western Mail*, the “object of this new movement is to effect co-operation between Socialism and Welsh Nationalism”. “Our Own Correspondent”, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 11 August 1937, 8.

autonomy”.<sup>61</sup> Mr H. Gwynne Jones, one of the movement’s founders, denied that the movement was intended to cause dissension in the party: it was a movement “embracing members both of the Welsh Nationalist and the Socialist party. It aimed at a Socialist autonomous Wales.”<sup>62</sup> From the beginning, however, there was controversy between the Nationalists, the Socialists, and various other politically affiliated groups, which undermined any sense of the non-sectarian, unified nature of the *gwerin*. Through this discourse, it is evident that the Eisteddfod has never been exempt from political discourse. In fact, as one of the oldest national institutions and components of Welsh civil society, it has often been the forum for public debate.

The idea that the National Eisteddfod was beyond party politics continued throughout the century, despite the increased politicisation of the festival as a Welsh-language cultural event in an era of language-based nationalistic political discourse. For example, the management of the newly established *Maes B* in the late 1990s by *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg* was criticised as too overtly political for the Eisteddfod. For many, however, this increased level of political debate on the *Maes* was acceptable because, unlike party-political debate, it was nationalistic, and primarily in support of the Welsh language. Extremes and radicalism were discouraged, but a moderate level of cultural nationalism was fostered throughout the century at the Eisteddfod. This discourse will be explored further in chapter six.

Connected to the increasingly working-class nature of the *gwerin* was their alleged industrious and diligent national character; the *gwerin* worked tirelessly for the

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<sup>61</sup> “Our Own Correspondent”, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 11 August 1937, 8.

<sup>62</sup> “‘Gwerin’ disagreed with the Welsh Nationalist Party only on the point of economic policy. He and his colleagues meant to work amicably for the adoption by the Welsh Nationalist Party of a Socialist economic policy.” *Western Mail*, Thursday 12 August 1937, 8.

common weal. There were numerous examples in Eisteddfodic discourse of local people working seemingly tirelessly for the benefit of the national festival. For example, from boy scouts to committee members, the Carmarthen community joined together to toil for the benefit of Welsh culture at the 1911 Eisteddfod. The “Special Reporter” in the *Western Mail* hailed the Rev. J. R. Walters, vicar of St David’s and chairman of the executive committee, who as an “ardent Welshman and Cymmrodor ... has worked like a Trojan during the past months”.<sup>63</sup> The hard work was not confined to the organisational aspects of the festival. The activities of the ladies of the region not only enabled the smooth and artistic administration of the festival, but also the preservation of a strict budget: “The whole of the inside of the Pavilion was done by twenty or thirty Carmarthen ladies, who devoted three weeks to the business. ... Thanks to their skill and industry, the whole of the interior decoration cost only about £20.”<sup>64</sup> Mr D. L. Thomas, chairman of the Local Executive Committee in Llandybïe, similarly was praised for his “unremitting” work towards the National.<sup>65</sup> The spirit that urged all “truly Welsh” Eisteddfodwyr to contribute towards the workings of the Eisteddfod also was evident in among the general population. The *Western Mail* reported that Eisteddfodwyr “praised the work of the local Eisteddfod Committee, the caterers – no one went short of food – the housewives who threw open their homes to the visitors, and, above all, the police, who include many ‘specials’ from surrounding villages.”<sup>66</sup> The idea of local people joining together to work to hold their National Eisteddfod was powerful. Not only did it

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<sup>63</sup> “Our Special Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 1911, 5.

<sup>64</sup> “Judex”, *Welshman*, 18 August 1911, 6.

<sup>65</sup> “The Man About The Valley”, “The Watchman,” *The Amman Valley Chronicle and East Carmarthen News*, Thursday 10 August 1944, 2.

<sup>66</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 12 August 1944, 3.

enforce the idea of Welsh solidarity and classlessness, but it also meant that these people were working for the good of Welsh culture and Welsh people.

### **The Guardians of Welsh Culture**

This industriousness and diligence was not limited to the Eisteddfod. Rather the dedication these Eisteddfodwyr demonstrated for their national festival was representative of their commitment and devotion for things “Welsh”. Indeed, if the Eisteddfod was perceived to be representative of Welsh culture in its purest form, then Eisteddfodwyr supported the competitions and various other aspects of the festival as a manifestation of their support for the Welsh nation and Welsh culture. Their apparent enthusiastic reverence for the Welsh national festival was remarkable in 1911. “Our Special Representative” noted in the *South Wales Daily Post* that: “Everyone in that choir watched the conductor as if he were about to announce the secret of perpetual life.”<sup>67</sup> Similarly, the *Western Mail*’s “Own Reporter” claimed that “every year the festival appeals more deeply to the Welsh people”.<sup>68</sup> This passion was especially evident in relation to particularly Welsh aspects of the Eisteddfod. It was reported that “One of the most stirring moments during the whole day was when the great audience and the visitors stood and sang together with a fervour that made our blood tingle: ‘Hen Wlad fy Nhadau’.”<sup>69</sup> The same passionate spirit was evident over half a century later at Bala. The chairman of the local Executive Committee, Alderman Tom Jones, stressed the “cultural and spiritual success” of the Eisteddfod that year: “the eager enthusiasm shown throughout the area had ensured its success and proved a great inspiration to the

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<sup>67</sup> “Our special representative”, *South Wales Daily Post*, Wednesday 9 August 1911, 1.

<sup>68</sup> “Our Own Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 10 August 1911, 5.

county.”<sup>70</sup> These expressions of enthusiasm exhibited an evident support for all aspects of Welsh culture, particularly as associated with the Eisteddfod.

The Welsh culture on show on the *Maes* was a specific version of it: the Eisteddfod culture of traditional poetry, song and literature, nonconformity and temperance, and the *gwerin*. Yet, in Eisteddfodic discourse the festival was characterized as the embodiment of *Welshness*. Indeed, the rhetoric used to describe the response of the Eisteddfod audiences repeatedly used terms such as “Welsh” to describe their behaviour. In 1911 certain competitors’ “entry on the stage was the signal for a right royal Welsh ovation, which was loud and prolonged”.<sup>71</sup> The repetitive use of the term “Welsh” as a descriptive drove the nail of Welshness into the structure of the festival. For example, the *South Wales Evening Post* wrote: “A group of people collected on the field and sang well-loved and well-known *Welsh* hymns and airs with typical *Welsh* hwyl.”<sup>72</sup> In this way, the press was constructing a Welsh identity explicitly around the Eisteddfod and its competitions.

The Eisteddfodwyr that were celebrated in Eisteddfodic discourse shared another trait that made them particularly Welsh: they were Welsh-speaking. To be part of this essential Welsh common people, one must be a *Cymro* or *Cymraes*. Whether it was viewed as good or bad, it was accepted that the English ruling classes had brought their language to Wales as a form of cultural imperialism. However, the ascendancy of the English language did not mean that it was imposed forcefully. Rather, the cultural imperative associated with the English language in the wake of the Blue Books crisis in

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<sup>69</sup> *South Wales Daily Post*, Thursday 10 August 1911, 1.

<sup>70</sup> *Western Mail*, Monday 14 August 1967, 3.

<sup>71</sup> *Welshman*, Friday 11 August 1911, 7.

<sup>72</sup> Geoffrey Thomas, *South Wales Evening Post*, Saturday 6 August 1960, 1.

the nineteenth century was a subtle form of the dominance of Anglo-British imperial culture.<sup>73</sup>

In the increasingly English-dominated world, the Eisteddfod was a place for the Welsh language and, as such, a place for the corresponding version of Welshness. As shall be demonstrated shortly, Lloyd George was for many the epitome of the *Cymro*. This designation was due in no small part to his affinity for the Welsh language. In Parliament Lloyd George may have spoken English, but on the Eisteddfod platform, he spoke Welsh – at least partially. The *Western Mail* reported:

The shouting died away and Mr Lloyd George began in Welsh. When he attempted, as is his wont, to turn off into English shouts came from all parts of the pavilion demanding only Welsh. With characteristic humour and adaptability he immediately ordered an impromptu census of the audience. All who understood Welsh were requested to show hands. A great forest of arms shot into the air. Probably nine-tenths of the audience declared for Welsh. It was certainly an impressive demonstration of the overwhelmingly Welsh character of an Eisteddfod audience. But when those who could understand only English – whose education, as Mr Lloyd George put it, had been neglected – put up their hands they were seen to be a minority large enough to be treated with respect. For the rest of his speech the audience were content to hear Mr Lloyd George in English.<sup>74</sup>

There was some criticism for Lloyd George's political appeasement of non-Welsh speakers: "The Nationalists will note with a sigh that that greatest of Celts paid only lip-service to the ancient tongue. His Welsh sentences were little more than a preamble to a witty disquisition founded upon the itinerary of that Norman, Giraldus, who is known as

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<sup>73</sup> See for example John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Of revelation and revolution. Volume 1, Christianity, colonialism and consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: the Celtic fringe in British national development, 1536-1966* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975).

<sup>74</sup> "Our Special Correspondent", *Western Mail*, Friday 6 August 1926, 9.

the Welshman.”<sup>75</sup> His critics emphasised the importance assigned to the Welsh language particularly at the Eisteddfod. He was perceived by some as having “sold out”, abandoning his language and thus much of his Welshness, if it was necessary or suited him.

### Lloyd George

David Lloyd George was not revered as the epitome of the *gwerin* by everyone. However, for much of this period, he was not only a prominent Eisteddfodwr, but also one of the great proponents of the ideals of the *gwerin*. His Eisteddfodic oratory was replete with the ideological constructions of Welshness and the *gwerin*. Moreover, he frequently was constructed as representative of the myth. Although gaining international renown as a politician and statesman, according to the myth that surrounded him and his persona, he remained a good “Welsh” man. Born in Manchester, but raised deep within the heart of Welsh-speaking Wales in Caernarfonshire, Lloyd George trained as a solicitor before standing for Parliament. He gained a reputation in London for radical policies and social reform. According to the rhetorical model of the *gwerin*, Lloyd George was perceived as being true to his Welsh roots through his political beliefs and practices. To many at the Eisteddfod and in Wales, he symbolised the *gwerin*, perhaps even more because he had made a success of himself, working hard and without losing the cultural principles on which the Welsh *gwerin* was based. Ironically, however, in the peculiar way of a folk festival, Lloyd George became celebrated for being ordinary. The *South Wales Daily Post* claimed that: “A generation or more ago it was regarded as the inalienable right of the reigning Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, the ‘Prince in Wales’, to

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<sup>75</sup> Editorial, *South Wales Daily Post*, Friday 6 August 1926, 6.



preside on the chairing day at the National Eisteddfod. During the last 20 years it has become the privilege of Mr Lloyd George.”<sup>76</sup>

The days on which Lloyd George visited the Eisteddfod were among the most popular and heavily attended. The *Western Mail* reported that, on one such Thursday, a “record attendance is expected”.<sup>77</sup> Certainly, Thursday was also the day of the chairing ceremony in 1911, and it is not possible to attribute the record attendance figures solely to one individual. In fact, although also mentioning the visit, the *Welshman* was rather less enthusiastic.<sup>78</sup> Generally however, the newspaper accounts reported genuine enthusiasm for Lloyd George. When Lloyd George did not come to the national festival, the disappointment was correspondingly evident: “great disappointment was experienced when it was known that the distinguished Welsh Statesman would not be able to be present.”<sup>79</sup>

Furthermore, the Thursday visits of Lloyd George to the Eisteddfod were a regular fixture of the festival for many years. Even several years after his death, the *Western Mail* was claiming that: “Among Eisteddfod followers Thursday will always be known as ‘Lloyd George’s Day’.”<sup>80</sup> “Clydach”, in introducing the president, said:

there were two things which they were certain to hear once a year, namely, the cuckoo and Mr Lloyd George (loud laughter). One of the newspapers had recorded during the week that Mr Lloyd George had presided for twenty years at the National Eisteddfod, and he introduced him not as a politician – for politics were taboo – but as a man who loved his country and its greatest institution, the Eisteddfod.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>76</sup> “Our Post Bag”, *South Wales Daily Post*, Thursday 5 August 1926, 6.

<sup>77</sup> “Our Own Correspondent”, *South Wales Daily Post*, Monday 7 August 1911, 1.

<sup>78</sup> *Welshman*, Friday 11 August 1911, 6.

<sup>79</sup> *Welshman*, Friday 18 August 1911, 6.

<sup>80</sup> *Western Mail*, Friday 5 August 1960, 4.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted by “Our Special Correspondent”, *Western Mail*, Friday 6 August 1926, 9.

So great was the “cult of celebrity” surrounding Lloyd George, however, that members of his family were used as dummies – as surrogate representations of the real thing:

When he stated that Mr Lloyd George’s Parliamentary duties absolutely prevented him attending there was a general sense of disappointment, which Llew Tegid said would be somewhat modified by the fact that the Chancellor’s daughter, Miss Olwen George, was present.<sup>82</sup>

The immense popularity surrounding Lloyd George was akin to the reverence given to the Royal family when they visited, or to the winners of the competitions. Although there were undoubtedly those who did not subscribe to the Lloyd George “fan club”, the public discourse was so overwhelmingly supportive of the man that it was remarkable.

Certainly “DLG”, as he was called, was a great orator and this helped increase and maintain his popularity at the Eisteddfod throughout the years. He was “at his best” when on stage, championing the Welsh people.<sup>83</sup> His speeches were very popular among the Eisteddfodwyr; they were full of self-adulatory rhetoric intended to make the Welsh feel good about their culture’s past and future. Not only did he know what the audience wanted to hear, but he could speak with skill and talent that many were eager to claim as Welsh. According to the *Western Mail* in 1926:

No presidential addresses at the National Eisteddfod are more effective than those given usually on the chairing day by Mr Lloyd George. ... Mr Lloyd George’s eisteddfod addresses are always marked by relevance, perfect appropriateness, charm of language, and by helpful suggestiveness.<sup>84</sup>

The following week, the *Western Mail* reported that Lloyd George “struck a happy and characteristic note in his address at the National Eisteddfod. He pleaded, as many patriotic Welsh people have done before him, for the maintenance and fullest

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<sup>82</sup> “Our Own Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1911, 5.

<sup>83</sup> *Western Mail*, Friday 23 July 1926, 6.

development of national characteristics.”<sup>85</sup> In fact, most media reports of “DLG” were exceptionally positive and explicitly enthusiastic of his ideas of what Wales was and what Wales could be. Lloyd George worked for Wales in his own unique way by rousing public support and enthusiasm for things that he deemed were Welsh. His rhetoric significantly contributed towards the construction and maintenance of the myth of the *gwerin* well into the twentieth century. He often focused on various aspects of Wales’ past – such as Giraldus Cambrensis, and used the repetition of key words such as “gwerin” and “Welsh” to reiterate and emphasise what he perceived as Welsh. Further, his speech in 1926 that focused largely on Giraldus and the “ancient” characteristics of the Welsh people reinforced many aspects of the myth, such as musicality and democracy:

Mr Lloyd George’s point was that in Wales democracy and culture have always gone hand in hand to a pre-eminent degree and that there was ever nursed in our sparse population scattered over lonely hillsides a flame of devotion to poetry and song that pointed to a soul and a mind far superior to the rude environment of material things in which they were housed.<sup>86</sup>

Undoubtedly, Lloyd George was an ardent advocate of the Welsh culture he worked hard to promote. His support of the Eisteddfod itself was emblematic of his defence of Wales and of things (he deemed to be) Welsh. The same speech in 1926 also paid tribute to the national cultural festival as preserver of that part of Wales: Although there had been a time when it had been “a thing almost to laugh at”,

The Eisteddfod had developed to one of the most striking institutions in the British Isles; it was now a great dignified majestic assembly, moving along from day to day for a whole week, with great crowded assemblies gathering to listen to

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Friday 6 August 1926, 6.

<sup>86</sup> Editorial, *South Wales Daily Post*, Friday 6 August 1926, 6.

beautiful music and to stories of great literature. The Eisteddfod would go on, it would become a great institution to the art of Wales as well as to its literature. It would form a stimulus to Wales, not merely to hear beautiful voices, but to make the Welsh masters in music and in art. They were at the beginning.<sup>87</sup>

Lloyd George saw the Eisteddfod as central to the preservation of the “true” Welsh culture, the democratic and artistic culture that belonged to the *gwerin*. The overt romanticism of his language and tone further promoted these ideas.

Indeed, Lloyd George’s idea of what was Welsh was heavily rooted in the same Welsh Liberal ideology that propagated the *gwerin*: an ancient continuous culture of good, earnest and hard-working people. His choice in 1926 to speak of Giraldus of Wales was significant. Not only did it afford him an opportunity to expand on the glories of Welsh culture, but also, by focusing on antiquity, he was able to allude to the primeval nature of Wales and to the perceived historical continuity and “tradition”. He contrasted Wales in 1926 to Wales in the thirteenth century:

Giraldus found a cultured democracy, a music-loving peasantry with a harp in every cottage. His itinerary proved that the Eisteddfod with its varied interests, did not represent something that was merely transitional in Welsh life, but the genius of the people, something permanent and instinctive rooted in the intelligence and heart of the Welsh nation. ... [He] described also the indomitable bravery of the Welsh fighting for the liberty and independence of their native land.<sup>88</sup>

This rhetoric contributed to the idea of the *gwerinol* Welsh as being something eternal and essential, existing from time immemorial and representing something that was somehow more Welsh than the invading influences of modern, anglicised culture.

The attributes propagated by Lloyd George were comparable to those catalogued by other contemporary observers of Welsh culture and society and those who espoused

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<sup>87</sup> Lloyd George quoted in the *South Wales Daily Post*, Friday 6 August 1926, 11.

the myth of the *gwerin*. Certainly he personally represented what he promoted in his grand speeches: an earnest, diligent support for all things Welsh – within the limits of his political office. What Lloyd George added to this popular idea of the *gwerin* was an overtly political patriotism and form of cultural nationalism. This nationalism was inherently linked to Welsh-language culture. He often spoke of his love of country and language. In 1926 he said, in Welsh:

I have no doubt you all love the country greatly, but I would like to remind old and young Welshmen that there is not the same patriotism in Wales as there existed in my young days. ... You must revive the love of country, ... the great love of Wales that will be a great influence in its education, its industrial life, its cultured democracy, its literature, poetry, and music, and go towards the uplifting of its people to the greatest and most prosperous heights.<sup>89</sup>

In other words, although linked to the past and the myth of the *gwerin*, Lloyd George's version of Welsh patriotism supported an active intervention to preserve and promote Welsh-language culture.

### **Hedd Wyn**

The discourse surrounding Hedd Wyn provided another widely recognised example of the ways in which the myth of the *gwerin* was shaped to fit the Eisteddfodic mould, and vice versa. Hedd Wyn, or Ellis Evans, was the posthumous winner of the famous “Black Chair” of Birkenhead in 1917. He was titled the “shepherd poet” from Trawsfynydd, and in the years since his death has come to represent the epitome of the Eisteddfod poet. The story of Hedd Wyn has been retold countless times in the press, particularly whenever the Eisteddfod returns to that area of Wales. The “cult” surrounding Hedd

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<sup>88</sup> “Our Special Correspondent”, *Western Mail*, Friday 6 August 1926, 9.

Wyn has extended far beyond the boundaries of the *Maes*; he became the posthumous figurehead of modern Welsh poetry and poets

In a similar way to the contemporary construction of film stars as celebrities, Hedd Wyn became the personification of particular personality traits in Wales, and consequently, of a *gwerinol* ideal.<sup>90</sup> Certainly, the mass media through which the myth was enabled existed before Hedd Wyn's rise to fame.<sup>91</sup> However, the marriage of the modern media and communications industries in the years after the First World War provided a remarkable period in the "cult" of celebrity. In the era of the modern film star, image became as important as reality, if not more. There was a sort of deification of Hedd Wyn, as representative of Welsh poets, which increased the mythical status of both the National Eisteddfod and the *gwerin*.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, as witnessed with "DLG", the convergence of the "cult of the celebrity" and the "cult of the common man" proved a highly ironic moment in the construction of Welshness.

Hedd Wyn's popularity lay as much in the image constructed around him as in the reality - in "the glamour of his rise from rustic obscurity".<sup>93</sup> A pacifist and a poet, he was likened to a character in a Greek tragedy and compared to the best poets in twentieth century Wales.<sup>94</sup> In fact, Hedd Wyn's tragic death enabled his elevation to

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<sup>89</sup> *Western Mail*, Friday 6 August 1926, 9.

<sup>90</sup> Samantha Barbas, *Movie Crazy: Fans, Stars, and the Cult of Celebrity* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 35-58.

<sup>91</sup> The Welsh press was remarkably active in the nineteenth century. See Aled Jones, *Press, Politics and Society: A History of Journalism in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993).

<sup>92</sup> Irving J. Rein, Philip Kotler, and Martin R. Stoller, *High Visibility* (Oxford: Heinemann Professional Publishing, 1987), 162.

<sup>93</sup> Haydn Davies, unknown newspaper, 15 September 1934, 13 – NLW D. R. Davies Papers (51).

<sup>94</sup> "Welsh Graduate" and "Welsh Pilgrimage to Soldier Poet's Grave: National Drama of Hedd Wyn" unknown newspaper from 3 April 1934, 11 – NLW D. R. Davies Papers (51).

legendary status.<sup>95</sup> An inscription at his grave summarised the way in which Ellis Evans, as Hedd Wyn, came to represent the *gwerin* poet: “How could a simple shepherd, with but simple elementary school education, have written such a masterpiece?”<sup>96</sup> The very preference of using his bardic name over his given name was significant, as it demonstrated what characteristics were “remembered”. Indeed, a romantic image of him roaming the “lonely” hills of Merionethshire became a popular vision of a Wales that was dying. Merionethshire remained in the Welsh-language heartland. However, the percentages of Welsh speakers had been decreasing appreciably throughout the century as a result of a combination of outwards migration of native speakers and inwards migration of English speakers. The ensuing cultural crisis added emphasis to the celebration of the shepherd poet. Moreover, Hedd Wyn represented the democratic nature of the Eisteddfod precisely because he was a lay poet, and not a member of the literary elite.

A pilgrimage to the battlefield in Belgium where he died was organised in 1934 and 1935, prompting discourse in the press and reiteration of the myth. Furthermore, in 1967, at the Bala Eisteddfod, the fiftieth anniversary of Hedd Wyn’s victory was commemorated at the Eisteddfod. Although he was not honoured in the same way as Welsh statesmen and various cultural figures, by being the subject of the *Awdl* for example, the anniversary of his death was the subject of much discourse on the stage and in the stands. In fact, there was criticism of the Eisteddfod Council’s decision to not

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<sup>95</sup> In fact, a critically-acclaimed biographical film was released in 1992. Irving J, Rein, Philip Kotler and Martin R. Stoller, 1987, 173-175.

<sup>96</sup> Haydn Davies, unknown newspaper, 15 September 1934, 13 – NLW D.R. Davies Papers (51).

honour the poet in the standard Eisteddfodic manner.<sup>97</sup> Certainly, Hedd Wyn was not celebrated on the same level or in the same way as men such as Gladstone, Lloyd George or Giraldus Cambresis – all of whom had been competitive subjects at the Eisteddfod. However, he was celebrated in a different way, by becoming a symbol of the Welsh poet, and was mythologized just as powerfully in the Eisteddfodwyr’s imaginations.

Hedd Wyn lived and wrote and competed in eisteddfodau during a period before the horrors of war and modernity had fully penetrated into the depths of Wales. The continuing growth of the modern media emphasis on the celebrity during and after his life promoted the celebration of the poet as a cultural hero and icon. In this way, the cult of celebrity surrounding the poet was an evocative reference in our post-modern world of the strength of myths and ideas. Every time the story was retold, it grew in strength and influence. The same was true of the myth of the *gwerin*.

### **The *Gwerin* of the Twenty-first Century**

The 2000 National Eisteddfod in Llanelli saw two men discussed in similar ways to what was demonstrated in the early part of the twentieth century. Both of these men were represented discursively as members of this imaginary community of the *gwerin*. However, the *gwerin* to which they belonged was not exactly that of Lloyd George or Hedd Wyn or the Eisteddfodwyr of generations ago. Not only had the use of rhetoric and discourse altered during the course of the century, but also, as mentioned previously, the expansion of “modernity” and subsequent changes in Welsh culture had begotten subtle

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<sup>97</sup> The poet Mr Emrys Roberts, a relative of Hedd Wyn, quoted by Michael Lloyd-Williams in the *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1967, 1.



changes to the ideological composition of the mythical group's identity. For example, concepts of the *gwerin* were less based in a rural idyll and more in a modern (industrial) working-class idea. Moreover, the rhetorical discourse was less explicit. By the end of the twentieth century, there were much fewer references to the *gwerin* as such. However, certain Eisteddfodwyr were celebrated discursively in similar ways to their precursors earlier in the century. Although they were less tied to nonconformity and antiquity, they were still hard-working, democratic and Welsh-speaking.

Certainly there were facets of the *gwerin* that perhaps had become antiquated by 2000. Likewise, there were necessary adaptations to the concept to make it applicable to contemporary late-twentieth-century society. For example, the power of nonconformity, and religion generally, had declined in Wales, making it less central to the lives of Welsh people. In 1911, the religiosity of Eisteddfodwyr was not something that was often explicitly commented on. However, it was often implicitly central to the identity of the *gwerinol* Eisteddfodwyr. The fact that many of the competitors and organisers were nonconformist ministers and preachers was in itself a powerful statement of their overall character. Moreover, the presence of hymns in the Gorsedd and Eisteddfodic ceremonies, the addition of the *Cymanfa Ganu* to the Eisteddfod during this period (interestingly, suggested by Lloyd George), and the frequent selection of religious music as competitive pieces, were further testimony to the religious aspects of the Eisteddfod. The only time in 1911 that the press mentioned anything directly linked to religion was as a casual, almost superficial, comment in an article on the general Eisteddfodic happenings: "Carmarthen people are, of course, good Christians."<sup>98</sup> Yet the nonconformist character of the *gwerin* was important at that time because it was an

aspect of Welsh culture that was seen to be distinct from the Anglican, Anglo-Welsh gentry. Furthermore, the fellowship that was central to many nonconforming faiths was analogous to the assumed classlessness of the *gwerin*. By the end of the twentieth century, however, many of these “religious” aspects of the Eisteddfod had become iconic representations of Welshness. They became secularised to such a degree that many Welsh people would sing “*Sosban Fach*” in the same manner as “*Cwm Rhondda*”.<sup>99</sup>

Huw Edwards was representative of this altered mythical *gwerin* identity at the turn of the twenty-first century. Although not literally compared to the *gwerin*, he was popularly perceived to be an advocate of the ideals embodied by the myth: he was described in the press as industrious, conscientious and Welsh-speaking - and supportive of Welsh-language culture. Just as the power of nonconformity and religion declined during the twentieth century, so did rigid class distinctions. Socio-economic divisions had become much more fluid, making the appeal of a classless society perhaps less vivid and affecting. However, the idea of democracy was still powerful in Wales in 2000, and evocative of a myth of a classless *gwerin*.

Edwards was rhetorically constructed as supportive of this classlessness. For example, he said in interviews that he supported making news coverage more accessible to everyone.<sup>100</sup> Similarly, his story of progression from casual presenter at a local radio station to becoming the main BBC newsreader had all the makings of a personal myth, akin to Hedd Wyn and Lloyd George. Although from a solidly middle-class background,

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<sup>98</sup> “Our Special Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 1911, 5.

<sup>99</sup> This is certainly the case at an international rugby match, where hymns have come to be much more nationalistic and less (strictly) religious.

<sup>100</sup> <http://www.cf.ac.uk/suon/gair/newsarticle.php?ArtID=45>.

he worked his way to national renown and celebrity. His very modesty regarding his achievements had enhanced public perception of his unaffected *gwerinol* nature. He worked his way up the ladder of journalism very quickly after leaving university, but did not forget various charitable causes; charities that fit in to the *gwerin* model: literacy campaigns, and the Welsh language.<sup>101</sup> Most explicitly and importantly, as the IPR Cymru website declared, Huw Edwards promoted “a positive image of Wales”.<sup>102</sup>

Edwards’ relationship with the Eisteddfod was, according to his own accounts, not typical for a *Cymro*. For example, he “was never one of the typical Welsh-speaking children forced into competing in every event year in year out”.<sup>103</sup> And he never developed his sister’s love of camping on the Eisteddfod field to be close to the competitions and the social action of the week. “I remember seeing her a couple of times in her little tent with a crowd of friends in a sea of mud, and I never really understood where the fun was in that. Camping at an Eisteddfod is my idea of hell.”<sup>104</sup> In this way he separated himself from membership of the “homely” family circle of Eisteddfodwyr. However, his disavowal was not comprehensive; he saw the Eisteddfod as a place of reunion. “Living and working in London, it’s hard to keep in touch with friends and colleagues back in Wales, and the Eisteddfod is the only place I can go and meet them and catch up with them.”<sup>105</sup> Indeed, Edwards was a fixture of the Llanelli Eisteddfod in 2000. He participated, through both the BBC’s coverage of the festival and the

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/2636169.stm>,  
<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/campaign/champions2001/huwedwards.html>,  
<http://www.ipr.org.uk/groups/reggroups/wales-news.html>.

<sup>102</sup> This is according to IPR Cymru Wales, who honoured Edwards as Communicator of the Year in 2002. Previous recipients have included Bryn Terfel, Anthony Hopkins, and Aled Jones.

<http://www.ipr.org.uk/groups/reggroups/wales-news.htm>.

<sup>103</sup> Dean Powell, *Western Mail*, Saturday 5 August 2000, 13.

<sup>104</sup> TV/Radio guide, Magazine, *Western Mail*, Saturday 5 August 2000, 21.

<sup>105</sup> *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 3 August 2000, 34.

Eisteddfod itself. The *Western Mail* reported that he was “actively involved in the ceremonies this year. He has been asked to be a president of the Day and will be delivering a speech to the assembled throng on the Wednesday of the Eisteddfod ... [and he] is a member of two Eisteddfod Committees.”<sup>106</sup> This involvement proved equally Edwards’ devotion to the festival and the festival’s devotion to Edwards and the ideals he embodied.

Indeed, Edwards proved his membership to the mythical *gwerin* of the twenty-first century through his hard work in support of Welsh culture. He was celebrated in Wales, after becoming the BBC National newsreader in 1999, for his refusal to tone down his Welsh accent. More recently, his appointment to the ten o’clock news was made under speculation of a desire to attract a “more multicultural audience”.<sup>107</sup> His maintenance of his accent made him extremely popular among communities in Welsh-speaking Wales, and in the resulting furore he was venerated as a true *Cymro*. The press accounts around the Eisteddfod in 2000 continued the adulation of Edwards: “Mr Edwards’s high-profile job ... and his audible and unapologetic Welshness made him a natural and popular choice as president and he was greeted enthusiastically by the audience.”<sup>108</sup> Dean Powell in the *Western Mail* was particularly enthusiastic about Edwards’ involvement with the Eisteddfod:

Edwards has tenaciously held on to his accent in an environment that once forced his Welsh peers to alter theirs. ... The Eisteddfod Committee couldn’t have chosen a better candidate than this new Welsh icon, whose finest hour was undoubtedly his steering of the Assembly elections for BBC Wales last year. After all, with his father, Professor Hywel Teifi Edwards, retired head of the

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<sup>106</sup> TV/Radio guide, Magazine, *Western Mail*, Saturday 5 August 2000, 21.

<sup>107</sup> “and younger female viewers” BBC News website (20 January 2003) - [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/tv\\_and\\_radio/2676079.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/tv_and_radio/2676079.stm).

<sup>108</sup> Steve Dube, *Western Mail*, Thursday 10 August 2000, 11.

Welsh department at the University of Wales, Swansea, recognised as the king of the Eisteddfod institution, then surely ‘Prince Huw’ should be allowed more of a role to play.<sup>109</sup>

Interestingly, Powell stressed Edwards’ pedigree as well as his own actions in support of Welsh culture.

Edwards chaired a debate on the *Maes* in Llanelli “over whether Wales was losing its musical culture” and used his presidential speech to plead for the preservation of the Welsh school in London.<sup>110</sup> These two facets of his participation are important because they are evidence of his support for “traditional” aspects of Welsh culture. Edward’s choice of topics for his speech, of focusing on the London Welsh School, was particularly significant as it explicitly demonstrated his desire to preserve the Welsh language, as well as emphasising his own personal links to the diaspora. According to Edwards, the Welsh School in London was “the only school outside Wales that offers education through the medium of Welsh.”<sup>111</sup> His choice of topic was apparently a “safe issue” in that it was universally popular among his fellow Eisteddfodwyr – as supporters of Welsh-language culture.<sup>112</sup> In this way, he was unlikely to divide the audience’s support, and was able to maintain a high level of popularity. Edwards “paid tribute to the school’s exemplary work over the past 40 years and described it as ‘the most important Welsh establishment on the other side of Offa’s Dyke’.”<sup>113</sup>

Importantly, despite his views in favour of Welsh culture, Edwards avoided political confrontations and bringing party politics onto the *Maes* in particular. He was

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<sup>109</sup> Dean Powell, *Western Mail*, Saturday 5 August 2000, 13.

<sup>110</sup> Dean Powell, *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 2000, 12.

<sup>111</sup> Sion Donovan, *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 17 August 2000, 32.

<sup>112</sup> By 2000, the Eisteddfod had become an expressly Welsh-language institution, and Eisteddfodwyr generally necessarily would have needed to support the language. Steve Dube, *Western Mail*, Thursday 10 August 2000, 11.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

noncommittal when asked about a recent confrontation between a Welsh politician and a political correspondent in a television interview.<sup>114</sup> Edwards' unbroken and outspoken support for the Welsh nation was remarkable even among Eisteddfodwyr. He maintained a steady, cultural – but still very political – degree of support for the language and Welsh-language culture. He emphasised the Welshness of the Llanelli region and stressed the vitality of the reciprocal relationship between Llanelli Welsh culture and language:

The town of Llanelli and the surrounding area have a crucial part to play in assuring the future of the Welsh language. If the Llanelli area were to lose its Welshness, it could prove to be a fatal blow. ... Llanelli is the only substantial industrial town where the Welsh language is a natural part of community life.<sup>115</sup>

Similarly, his support of the community in which he was raised was clear: “I am very proud to have been raised in an industrial community – and a Welsh-speaking community at that – a very rare combination in modern Wales.”<sup>116</sup> Thus, Huw Edwards embodied the modified and modernized attributes of the *gwerin* of the end of the twentieth century.

Ray Gravell, the rugby star, was another local boy who was constructed through Eisteddfodic discourse in 2000 as representative of the modern-day *gwerin*. “Grav”, as he is called, played rugby for Llanelli and Wales in the 1970s and 1980s. After his retirement from professional sport he remained active in the public eye by becoming a presenter on television and radio, as well as active in several charities. More importantly, perhaps, and more relevant to this discussion, Gravell had become an active

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<sup>114</sup> Although he avoided any explicit political discussion, he “expressed sympathy with Mr [Rhodri] Morgan’s [statement] that: ‘It doesn’t matter what people around Hampstead dinner tables think about us. We should be self-confident in our identity.’” Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Sion Donovan, *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 17 August 2000, 32.

campaigner for the Welsh language. For example, he was regularly a sports commentator and presenter on S4C. Further, in 2001 he helped produce the first Welsh-language sports science textbook.<sup>117</sup> In these ways, then, Gravell continued to be active in the Welsh-language public sphere for more than three decades. As a result, he has become a popular icon of Modern Wales for many people.

He was inducted into the Gorsedd at Machynlleth in 1981 for “*balchder*”, or the pride he brought to Wales and the Welsh as a popular, Welsh-speaking rugby international. The official programme described the reasons for his induction as follows: “A Rugby player of national distinction. Always avowing his Welshness, by promoting Welsh language movements.”<sup>118</sup> He became sword bearer (*Ceidwad y Cledd*) in 1997 and was labelled by Huw Llywelyn Davies as “un o sêr yr Orsedd (one of the stars of the Gorsedd)”.<sup>119</sup> It is remarkable that Gravell was representative of a new Eisteddfodwr. Unlike the preacher-poet model that dominated the early years of the twentieth century, Gravell was a figure plucked out of popular culture, a sports star similarly representative of Welsh language culture but of different Welsh national institutions.

The press coverage of the 2000 Eisteddfod emphasised Gravell’s close ties to the area, particularly as it highlighted his links to Welsh-language culture in Wales. The *Western Mail* emphasised his continued participation in the Llanelli Rugby Football Club as validation of his more general activities in support of Welsh culture:

Gravell is still heavily involved in the club and his love of the club and Llanelli is obvious from the excitement in his eyes and

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> <http://www.aber.ac.uk/aberonline/uwa6301.html>, <http://www.webswonder.co.uk/sorop/news/30-04-00.shtml>

<sup>118</sup> (“Chwaraewr rygbi o fri cenedlaethol. Y mae bob amser yn arddel ei gymreictod, gan hyrwyddo mudiadau Cymraeg”) *Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Frenhinol Cymru Maldwyn a’i Chyffiniau (Machynlleth) 1981 Y Rhaglen Swyddogol* (Llandybïe: Gwasg Salesbury Cyf., 1981), 290.

<sup>119</sup> Huw Llywelyn Davies, “Grav”, in *Rhwng Ffrindiau: Cylchgrawn Ffrindiau’r Eisteddfod 5* (2000), 10.

the expressions on his face when he mentions the National Eisteddfod at Llanelli. 'This part of the world is my home,' he said. 'I played for Llanelli, I worked in Llanelli and now the Eisteddfod has come to Llanelli. It is an awe-inspiring feeling.'<sup>120</sup>

Gravell was a local boy, born in Kidwelly, he was the son of a coal miner from a Carmarthenshire village Mynydd-y-Garreg, and had an upbringing that was very much working-class. Furthermore, he had been centred professionally and personally in South West Wales since the early 1970s. He had close links to one of Wales' strongest "Welsh" communities. His love of this very "Welsh" part of Wales gave him implicit membership into that community.

Further, Gravell's outspoken patriotism was renowned. Carwyn James said of him in 1983: "Gravell is passionately Welsh. Llywelyn, the last real Prince of Wales, died in 1282, but spiritually Gravell belongs to his army and will tell you so as proudly as he wears his Plaid Cymru badge."<sup>121</sup> Similarly, at the Llanelli Eisteddfod in 2000 Gravell's continuous and dynamic involvement in Welsh-language culture was stressed. In the official magazine of the Eisteddfod, *Ffrindiau*, an article on Gravell was begun by listing mementos that decorated Gravell's home:

A portrait of Owain Glyndwr; a picture of Carwyn James having his audience with Pope John Paul in the Vatican; a hand-carved Celtic cross; a commemorative plate from the prodigious Welsh rugby team of the '70s winning the Triple Crown three times in a row; and two pieces of Welsh language poetry have been framed; they have 'Language' from the work of T. Glynne Davies and the famous quotation from Saunders Lewis' masterpiece *Buchedd Garmon* 'A vineyard given unto my care is Wales my country'.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>120</sup> *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 2000, 11.

<sup>121</sup> Carwyn James (nationalist, journalist, played for Llanelli and Wales, coached British Lions in 1971), "On Rugby" *Guardian*, c. 1983 (Taken from the back cover of Carwyn Jones' biography, Alun Richards, *Carwyn: A Personal Memoir* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1984).

<sup>122</sup> "Portread o Owain Glyndwr; darlun o Carwyn James yn cael ei anrhydeddu gan y Pab John Paul yn y Fatican; croes Geltaidd wedi ei cherfio'n gain; plat i gofnodi camp aruthrol tîm rygbi Cymru'r 70'au yn ennill y Goron Driphlyg dri thymor o'r bron; a dau ddam o farddoniaeth Gymraeg wedi'u fframio; Fe gant Iaith o waith T Glynne Davies a'r dyfyniad enwog o gampwaith Saunders Lewis Buchedd Garmon



These bits and pieces informed the reader of what was important to the rugby player, and ranged from sport, to religion, to Welsh heritage.

In one interview, Gravell listed among his personal heroes Dafydd Iwan and Owain Glyndŵr: “Dafydd Iwan ranks alongside Owain Glyndŵr and Gravell’s late father as his heroes and he said that he will take great pleasure in introducing the Welsh folk legend, who has decided to pack his guitar away.”<sup>123</sup> Iwan was an interesting and significant choice. He was a singer-songwriter who has been an activist “in defence of the Welsh language and culture” for the better part of three decades.<sup>124</sup> Glyndŵr was a similarly interesting choice. The Welsh media often linked Gravell to these Welsh heroes of old: “No one wore his red shirt with more obvious pride than Ray Gravell, who sent us back to the history books to read up on Owain Glyndŵr and the Welsh princes.”<sup>125</sup> This emphasis on Glyndŵr’s actions in medieval Wales emphasised Gravell’s patriotism. Thus, by naming Glyndŵr as a personal hero, Gravell further located himself in the world of Welsh-Wales and nationalism. Furthermore, the sportsman’s choice of his father grounded him as a down-to-earth, good “lad”. An overheard conversation between rugby fans sums up the prevailing public sentiment regarding “Grav”: “Ah, Ray Gravell, what a man. [He bows.]”<sup>126</sup> He was widely perceived as a good *Cymro* - a Welshman, working hard for Welsh people and culture.

The induction of these two men into the *Gorsedd* can be seen in terms of an

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‘Gwinllan a roddwyd I’m gofal yw Cymru fy Ngwlad...’, Carwyn James, quoted by Huw Llywelyn Davies, *Rhwng Ffrindiau: Cylchgrawn Ffrindiau’r Eisteddfod* 5 (2000), 10-11.

<sup>123</sup> *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 2000, 11.

<sup>124</sup> Iwan was imprisoned for his activism in 1971. Iwan was also a member of the Gwynedd Council for Plaid Cymru, and is now the party’s President. [http://www.rambles.net/iwan\\_caneuon93.html](http://www.rambles.net/iwan_caneuon93.html)

<sup>125</sup> Huw Richards, Peter Stead and Gareth Williams, eds, *Heart and Soul: the character of Welsh rugby* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), 264.

<sup>126</sup> <http://www.red-passion.com/issue36/awayfans.htm>

Andersonian sense of national symbols: Gravell and Edwards, seen by thousands on television, were symbols of Welsh national identity and nationhood in varying degrees to varying groups of people, and ingested by these viewers, subsequently enhancing their own perceived Welshness. Despite their non-traditional *gwerinol* roots, the discourse surrounding these two men was not significantly different, albeit slightly less explicit, than that surrounding Lloyd George or Hedd Wyn, or any number of other Eisteddfodwyr throughout the century, who were used as embodiments of the mythical *gwerin*. This was perhaps due to the growth of the Labour movement in the twentieth century and subsequent shifts in popular opinion, from a focus on the *gwerin* and a rural, classless society rooted in nonconformity as a myth of identity, to one centred around a predominately industrial working-class, more secularised and sophisticated, but equally democratic and “ordinary”. Certainly, the concept of the *gwerin* remained, but it became an almost antiquated term, used by academics and folklorists, and not as much of an actively identifiable concept.

It must be stressed that the idea of the *gwerin* is just that – an idea, a concept, and a myth of identity. In this way, as stated at the beginning of the chapter, it is irrelevant to this discussion whether or not there ever existed such a classless, noble rural peasantry. What is significant in this context is the nature and degree to which the rhetoric of the Eisteddfod constructed people in that particular mould. Thus, the supplanting of the idea of the *gwerin* by that of the “Welsh Working Class” in the collective Welsh consciousness was a nominal adjustment that served to emphasise the continuing importance of the myth to contemporary Welsh culture and identity. The essential tenets of this aspect of Welshness remained the same throughout the twentieth century.

### **The Diaspora: Was Wales International?**

There are present here today people from all parts of the world.  
... These facts give to this Eisteddfod an international aspect.<sup>127</sup>

The discourse surrounding the Welsh diasporic community, as evidenced at the National Eisteddfod, was indicative of several trends in the nature of Welsh identity, all of which were associated with international aspects of Welshness. The Pan-Celtic Movement highlighted a racially based sense of Welshness as defined against an English “Other”, while also emphasising certain cultural traits. The International visitors to the Eisteddfod in 1944 emphasised a more unified sense of Welshness within a British and global context. Finally, the visits “home” of the Welsh Exiles emphasised a shared racial identity, but also the development of a distinct sense of Welshness, separate from binarisms, and increasingly focused on cultural signifiers of identity. Unlike the discourse surrounding the concept of the *gwerin*, these aspects of Welsh identity were not tied explicitly to a self-contained sense of heritage, but were all based on a comparison to an “Other”. Moreover, that “Other”, and the relative ideological boundaries, changed throughout the course of the twentieth century, shifting from ones that were based in racial essentialism to those that were more culturally based.

### **Pan Celts**

The Pan-Celtic movement rose out of the nineteenth century’s fascination with an antiquarian past – the same movement that brought about the re-incarnation of the

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<sup>127</sup> Mr E. S. Griffiths, the “generous Welsh-American who made able the visit of the Cleveland [male] Voice Party” and Daily president, in the *South Wales Daily Post* Saturday 7 August 1926, 5.

Eisteddfod. Interestingly, however, despite the Eisteddfodic emphasis on culture, the Pan-Celtic movement was essentially an ethnic alliance, based in a sense of a shared racial identity. Although it celebrated Celtic culture(s), unlike the Eisteddfod, it was not a purely cultural organisation. As shall be demonstrated, in the early part of the century cultural signifiers of identity were taken as reciprocal proof of a strong racial identity; one would not exist without the other. Further, despite the decreased strength of a racialised hegemonic discourse of identity, the resulting discourse on music and literature has continued throughout the twentieth century as part of the Welsh myth of identity.

Although the first Inter-Celtic “Congress” was held at the Abergavenny Eisteddfod in 1838, they were held sporadically until the 1899 National Eisteddfod.<sup>128</sup> It was the 1899 meeting that prompted continuity within the movement. In an era when there was a lull in political nationalism in Wales, expressions of cultural nationalism were increasingly popular.<sup>129</sup> Organisations had been established in the later decades of the nineteenth century to promote Celtic cultures and languages. In fact, it was the linguistic links that gave many of these groups relevance, and therefore helped to define their membership and aims.<sup>130</sup> Festivals similar to the eisteddfod were created throughout the Celtic nations to emphasise these cultural aims. However, the very nature of a Pan-Celtic gathering in 1899 suggested that, in its origins and essence, the

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<sup>128</sup> It was nearly thirty years before a second meeting was held in Brittany, and another thirty until the next meeting at the 1899 National Eisteddfod. See Marion Löffler, *A book of Mad Celts: John Wickens and the Celtic Congress of Caernarfon 1904* (Llandysul: Gomer, 2000); <http://thecapitalscot.com/pastfeatures/pancelt.html> for “Pan-Celticism” by dhopcroft; and <http://www.evertype.com/celtcong/cc-hist-mellis.html> for “A short history of the Celtic Congress” by Mari Ellis.

<sup>129</sup> Marian Löffler, 2000, 22.

<sup>130</sup> <http://thecapitalscot.com/pastfeatures/pancelt.html> for “Pan-Celticism” by dhopcroft.

Eisteddfod was about the expression of a particular *Celtic* identity, and this identity was centred as much around blood as by culture.

Indeed, the Pan-Celtic Eisteddfod frequently was compared to a family gathering. Newspapers competed with their rather grand allusions to family life. “The Man About Town” in the *South Wales Echo* referred to the Pan-Celtic visitors as “the whole Celtic family”.<sup>131</sup> Meanwhile, “Awstin” in the *Western Mail* said that: “The children of one family came together for the great festival of the Celtic race. (Applause.) They had had relatives with them before, but their brethren were here now. (Applause.)”<sup>132</sup> The Celtic delegates to the Eisteddfod used similar metaphors: Count Plunkett of Ireland said “one touch of nature bound the whole Celtic race in one family. (Cheers.) They ... had many things in common, and the same fervour dominated them to keep the National ideas alive. (Cheers.)”<sup>133</sup> Similarly, an Editorial in the *Western Mail* soliloquised: “From these places – those scattered homes of the Celts – representatives appear now among us, to whom the Celts of Wales extend the hand of kinship and friendship.”<sup>134</sup>

More specifically, this familial relationship was described as a brotherhood of Celtic nations, a “bardic fraternity” and a “cordial brotherhood”.<sup>135</sup> Mr Edward Thomas (“Cochfarf”) said, “the Eisteddfod will be attended by Celtic brethren.”<sup>136</sup> The Rev. Elvet Lewis said that the motto of the movement “should be ‘Fraternity’. ... We are now meeting in one united body, representing various nationalities, ‘Heb neb yn tynu’n

<sup>131</sup> “The Man About Town”, *South Wales Echo*, Tuesday 11 July 1899, 2.

<sup>132</sup> “Awstin”, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 5.

<sup>133</sup> Count Plunkett, president Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language, at the farewell breakfast, in the *Western Mail*, Monday 24 July 1899, 6.

<sup>134</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Tuesday 18 July 1899, 5.

<sup>135</sup> “Golos”, *Western Mail*, Friday 14 July 1899, 6; “Awstin”, *Western Mail*, Friday 21 July 1899, 5.

<sup>136</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 8 July 1899, 6.

groes.’ (Applause.)”<sup>137</sup> Mr Fournier of Brittany described the Irish and the Welsh as “children of the same mother”.<sup>138</sup>

This family metaphor was extended to include other expressions of fellowship and unity, while maintaining the individuality so important to the continuity of the Pan-Celtic movement. There were still differences between these groups, although they were rather less pronounced than those between Saxon and Celt.<sup>139</sup> For example, “Awstin” referred to one of the French delegates as having “almost become a naturalised Welshman”.<sup>140</sup> Thus, they were perhaps members of the same family, but they remained individuals.

A poem written and published in the *Western Mail* specifically in honour of the Eisteddfod provided a clear indication of the sense of Celtic communality that was promoted in Cardiff:

Oh! Brothers sundered far apart  
 By leagues of land and ocean,  
 We still are one in mind and heart,  
 Ideal and emotion.  
 And with the office of Brotherhood,  
 Which time shall stifle – never!  
 We’ll raise a cheer to stir the blood –  
 The Celtic race for ever! ...  
 The good old race for ever! ...  
 Let Wales take up the grand refrain,  
 And Erin roll it back again!  
 The Celtic Race for ever! ...  
 Long, long, my brothers! may ye wear  
 Your colours white and vernal –  
 The white to show the hearts ye bear,  
 The green your love fraternal...

<sup>137</sup> (“with no one contradicting”) “Elvet” in “stirring Welsh”, cited by “Awstin”, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 5.

<sup>138</sup> “Awstin”, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 5.

<sup>139</sup> The “Pan-Celtic re-union” did not construct people from Brittany, Ireland and Wales as one and the same, no matter how similar they were in comparison to their Saxon neighbours. “Awstin”, *Western Mail*, Monday 17 July 1899, 5.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

The Celtic race for ever!  
 The Grand Old race for ever!  
 Let Scottish Gael take up the strain,  
 And Breton roll it back again –  
 From earth to yonder starry plain  
 The Celtic race for ever!<sup>141</sup>

This poem delineated particular presumed Celtic traits while stressing the familial bonds uniting the Celtic nations. Moreover, it used overtly dramatic language to emphasise these characteristics. In his speech at the Eisteddfod, Lord Castletown constructed a similarly romantic image of the Celt. He described “an island once peopled throughout with a tall and finely-built race, recklessly brave and strikingly patriotic, courteous in manner, eloquent in speech, and this was the testimony of their would-be Roman conquerors”.<sup>142</sup> Not only was this Celtic identity united as one mystical and noble body against a foreign invader, but also it was based in a shared racial composition; it was based on shared blood, even if there were contrasting cultural traits. Indeed, as with the family metaphor, despite the cultural aims of the Pan-Celtic movement, there were strong discursive currents of racially based rhetoric that also contributed to a shared identity of the Celts. Just as they were constructed as individual members of one family, racially the Celts were perceived to be the same; culturally, they were variations of a theme. The Welsh acceptance and propagation of this theme was evidence of the importance of a sense of racial identity and Welshness at the turn of the century.

In fact, one of the primary themes of the early Pan-Celtic Association was the importance of bloodlines, particularly as a way of preserving the uniqueness of the

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<sup>141</sup> *The Celtic Race For Ever!* This song was written specially for the Pan-Celtic Eisteddfod, Cardiff, 1899, by Dr James Mullin, and set to music by Dr Joseph Parry, in the *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 6.

<sup>142</sup> Lord Castletown’s address as president, quoted by “Our Own Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 6.

Celtic cultures. It was felt that “racial instincts are imperishable, and survive the ravages of time and the revolutions of empire. It is this fact that lies at the bottom of this Pan-Celtic gathering.”<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, Castletown felt that Pan-Celtic gatherings should “resolve upon steps necessary for the proper safeguarding and unfolding of the racial life and characteristics of the Celtic nations”.<sup>144</sup> Disparities between the English and the Welsh were dismissed as inherent, biological differences: “that is the way of the Teuton, and the temperament of the Celt.”<sup>145</sup> The power of blood and racial traits was felt to be one of the reasons the Celtic culture had survived as it had, despite the constant invasive interaction against non-Celts. According to the abundance of newspaper reports, many Eisteddfodwyr were proud to say they were “a pure-blooded Celt, who could not trace a drop of blood of the stranger in his veins.”<sup>146</sup>

The contrast between Saxon and Celt, and therefore the English and the Welsh, subsequently was being created in the Eisteddfodic discourse of 1899. A Celtic sense of “Welshness” was being constructed explicitly in juxtaposition to a sense of “Englishness”, through a binary sense of “Otherness”.<sup>147</sup> Comparisons were constant in the media coverage of the Eisteddfod – and consistently in favour of the Celt – in the rhetorical battle for racial and cultural superiority. The Celts were the heroes of the Eisteddfod, while the Saxons were, if not the villains, certainly the anti-heroes. The *South Wales Echo*’s “Man About Town” reported:

Norman vulgarity, Saxon stolidity, Teutonic heaviness fail to understand the sweep of enthusiasm that passed over the

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<sup>143</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Tuesday 18 July 1899, 5.

<sup>144</sup> Lord Castletown’s address as president quoted by “Our Own Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 6.

<sup>145</sup> “The Man Bout Town”, *South Wales Echo*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 2.

<sup>146</sup> Mr Brendon Rogers of Dublin, in the *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 6.

<sup>147</sup> Although who was the “other” – the English or the Welsh – was changeable.



Eisteddfod yesterday. Six nationalities were present; speeches in five languages – or branches of the Celtic speech – were delivered! ...The Saxon tongue failed them completely in expressing their feelings. It was a typical Celtic meeting without restraint, and so different from the Saxon or Teutonic method with its reserve of sentiment and words. The Celt carries his feelings near the surface, whilst those of the Teuton are deep down. I do not make the comparison to show that one is better than the other; it should help some to understand the difference, for the Saxon is so apt to scoff at what he does not understand, and there are many mysteries to him in the Gorsedd and this latest development of Celtic enthusiasm.<sup>148</sup>

The Welsh and Celtic press perceived criticisms aimed against the Celts to be the result of prejudice and subject to bias. They were seen to be the result of jealousy of the various Celtic attributes or a lack of understanding of the Celtic temperament – both of which were faults on behalf of the (English) “Other”. This separation was based in a combination of cultural and racial characteristics.

In some of these debates were evident the same alleged *cultural* traits of Welshness that have formed the basis of more modern stereotypes of identity. For example, with few formal means of training Welsh talent, a myth of untrained natural ability developed over the decades. The idea that “Cymru is indeed the land of song” was part of this myth.<sup>149</sup> The Eisteddfod was a popular place to emphasise the amateur musicality of the Welsh. According to the Welsh press, who generally propagated the idea of the innate talent of the *gwerin*, all Welsh were knowledgeable and talented music-lovers. Many felt that, in their great choirs, at the Eisteddfod and elsewhere, the Welsh displayed “genius” and “the true meaning of the music”.<sup>150</sup> In 1899 there was a

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<sup>148</sup> “The Man About Town”, *South Wales Echo*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 2.

<sup>149</sup> *South Wales Daily Post*, Thursday 29 July 1926, 11.

<sup>150</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 4; *Western Mail*, Tuesday 11 July 1899, 6. In fact, there was an epistolary debate in the press regarding the amateur status of choirs competing at the Eisteddfod.

much-publicised controversy over an “applause incident” during one of the evening concerts. The result was an open debate on the musicality of the Welsh that questioned the inherency of this trait. The *Western Mail* reported that the conductors, soloists, and choristers were “Welsh workmen”, and associated with coal mining and thus amateurs:

a gifted scribe in one of the London dailies has, owing to a boiling over of Cymric enthusiasm at the performance of ‘Elijah’ on Wednesday evening, had the temerity to write in his journal that the Celts – at any rate, those of Wales – were not musical! The music of the Welsh miners on Friday ... will make him change his mind. It is always singular how slight an error on the part of a portion of a Welsh audience is enough to make our friends across the Severn attribute the mistake of a few to a defect in the entire race!<sup>151</sup>

Unlike their Saxon neighbours, the Celtic Welsh were perceived to be musical. Indeed, by 1899, the myth of Welsh musicality was well on its way to its hegemonic position in Welsh identity formation.<sup>152</sup> Its dominance continued throughout the century. Dr Walford Davies commented in 1911 that, “throughout his peregrinations in England and Wales from festival to festival he had never heard such a combination of natural utterance with discipline, skill, and innate expressiveness.”<sup>153</sup> According to the *South Wales Daily Post* in 1911,

Whatever may be said of the superiority of English choirs over Welsh there can be no question of this: That when you pick an English audience and a Welsh audience haphazard and set them singing the Cymro leaves his Saxon brother far behind in the quality of his singing.<sup>154</sup>

Similarly, in his presidential address in 1926, Walter Runciman said, “In the singing of hymns Wales had no rival. It was largely their success in singing which gave the Welsh

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<sup>151</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 22 July 1899, 4.

<sup>152</sup> Particularly amongst those inclined to favour the idea of an artistic Welsh temperament.

<sup>153</sup> “Our Own Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1911, 6.

<sup>154</sup> “Our special representative”, *South Wales Daily Post*, Wednesday 9 August 1911, 5.

their musical reputation.”<sup>155</sup> In 1960 Jill Forwood joked in the *South Wales Evening Post* that: “Some wit once said that when two Scotsmen get together, they start a bank and that two Welshmen, in similar circumstances, form a choir.”<sup>156</sup> Musical talent was seen to be part of Celtic Welshness.

Yet the assumed musicality of the Welsh was portrayed as something that was temporal and in need of defence. An anonymous correspondent to the *South Wales Echo* in 1899 derided the Welsh of the primacy of their musicality. He wrote:

When I ... recall the self-laudation in which Celtic orators have for the last four days been indulging, I see a case of opposites beyond my wit to reconcile. You Welshmen musical? Why, as a nation you don't seem to possess even the very elementary sense of respect for a great work and an illustrious composer.<sup>157</sup>

In fact, the aforementioned frequent use of the rhetoric of battle in newspaper accounts of the choral contests could be perceived as representative of a sense of insecurity about this trait, and perhaps indicative of a lack of popular acceptance of this “racial” characteristic. However, the frequent juxtaposition of the Welsh and the English choirs fostered this ideological divide between the two “races”. Similarly, the battle analogy employed in reference to the competitions furthered this division.<sup>158</sup> The use of terms such as “the fray” and “victor” propagated the analogy of a great competition between the Celts and the Saxon “invaders from beyond Offa’s Dyke”.<sup>159</sup>

There were certainly those who contested the myth - albeit with the goal of ultimately improving the musical situation in Wales. Although the late Victorian period

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<sup>155</sup> Mr Runciman, president, in the *Western Mail*, Saturday 7 August 1926, 8.

<sup>156</sup> Jill Forwood, *South Wales Evening Post*, Friday 5 August 1960, 6.

<sup>157</sup> Anonymous correspondent in the *South Wales Echo*, Friday 21 July 1899, 3.

<sup>158</sup> *South Wales Echo*, Wednesday 12 July 1899, 4.

<sup>159</sup> “The Man About Town”, *South Wales Echo*, Friday 11 July 1899, 2; Sir F. Bridge in the *Western Mail*, Saturday 22 July 1899, 5.

saw the emergence, increased popularity and relative success of the Voice Choirs in Wales, an Editorial in the *South Wales Daily Post* complained that “it is notorious that Welsh vocal technique is not on the whole upon the English competitive level, and that many of our choristers cannot read music”.<sup>160</sup> Similarly, Wyn Morris said in 1960:

Nothing disturbs me so much as the impression that an ability to perform the ‘Messiah’ and sing hymns in the bars of public-houses is enough to earn for Wales a reputation as a musical nation. There is tremendous music talent in Wales which is not being given the proper opportunity for development.<sup>161</sup>

These critics warned against complacency and advocated training rather than reliance upon a presumed natural trait. However, the hegemonic view was that there was “abundant musical talent of the same high quality all over Wales”.<sup>162</sup>

Another of the primary inherited signifiers of Celtic, and therefore Welsh, identity was a literary temperament and innate sense of taste. Lord Castletown said the people of Wales had a “love of all that was most beautiful on earth and glorious in life, of the love of home, of the tradition of their land, poetry, and song ... keeping the glory of their race alive”.<sup>163</sup> Indeed, the Welsh also were professed to be inherently talented litterateurs. Within the circle of the Eisteddfod and the Pan-Celtic movement, the Welsh were historically renowned as Bards. The literary nature of the Welsh was something that was traceable into antiquity. The myth of their special and unique literary achievement was shared throughout the Celtic “races”. The *Western Mail*’s “Own Reporter” remarked:

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<sup>160</sup> Editorial, *South Wales Daily Post*, Saturday 7 August 1926, 4.

<sup>161</sup> *Western Mail*, Tuesday 2 August 1960, 8.

<sup>162</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Monday 9 August 1937, 6.

<sup>163</sup> Lord Castletown’s address as president, quoted by “Our Own Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 6.

Knowing, as I do, the natural aptitude of the Welsh people, their quickness of apprehension, and love for learning, I look forward to a literary revival in this part of the world which should place Wales on a level with what Scotland and Ireland were at the commencement of this century.<sup>164</sup>

Admittedly, however, there was nothing particularly remarkable about contemporary Welsh literary achievements. In fact, throughout the century, the media discourse as related to the literary aspects of the Eisteddfod was quite critical of the contemporary standard of Welsh literary talent. For example, the occasion of the failure to award a crown or chair was loudly bemoaned in the press.

There also was criticism of the antiquated form that much Eisteddfodic literary competition took. While airing his opinion in a debate about the modernisation of the literary contests at the Eisteddfod, “The Man About Town” complained that competitors for the Chair “must struggle to express themselves in an old and effete form instead of hitching Pegasus to their muse and flying off fancy free”.<sup>165</sup> A commentator in the *Western Mail* agreed: “It is time Welsh bards left off rubbing continually the same ghostly string. ... But apparently that is the kind of poetry that appeals most forcibly to Welsh adjudicators.”<sup>166</sup> These criticisms were evidence of a rift between the literary and cultural elites of Wales, and another level of Eisteddfodwyr, who had perhaps more ordinary tastes. In fact, in 1926 David Lloyd George’s annual speech focused on the populist basis for the continuity of Welsh literary ability: “Poetry was always the language of the people.”<sup>167</sup> More importantly, however, these critics spoke of an evident concern over the ways in which the Eisteddfod was holding back Welsh literary talent.

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<sup>164</sup> “Our Own Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 5.

<sup>165</sup> “The Man About Town”, *South Wales Echo*, Monday 17 July 1899, 2.

<sup>166</sup> *Western Mail*, Tuesday 11 July 1899, 4.

<sup>167</sup> Lloyd George’s speech, in the *South Wales Daily Post*, Thursday 5 August 1926, 1.

Indeed, the failures in 1899 were not seen as indicative of any correlated deficiency of Welsh talent, but rather of temporary factors; they were attributed to the topics for that year's competitions, as well as social and economic circumstances. The topic of the crown poem was criticised as uninspiring, and therefore bound to produce lacklustre works. The *Western Mail* stated: "It is to the unsuitable character of the subject, and not to the lack of ability or of application on the part of Welsh poets, that yesterday's 'failure' [to award a crown prize] must be attributed."<sup>168</sup> Similarly, the implication was that once Wales was in a better situation, the writers of prose and poetry would rise again to make her proud. Importantly, this revival would be spurred on by external conditions, but would come from within the great stores of the Celtic race. As "Awstin" said:

There is in their coming also a distinct signal of the literary and national awakening of the various branches of the Celtic race. Those who come from the 'cradle of the race' ... are evidently imbued with the spirit of the revival that has during the past twenty years revolutionised Wales.<sup>169</sup>

The poeticism of the Welsh extended beyond the talent to produce great works. It was something that was perceived to be an essential part of Welshness. Even if they were not themselves competitive poets, Eisteddfodwyr were purported to enjoy poetry more than many other "races". In 1911 a correspondent in the *South Wales Daily Post* declared: "The inherent Welsh love of the muse of philology, and of literature in general is most conspicuously manifested [at the Eisteddfod]."<sup>170</sup> Thus, Welsh poetic talent and appreciation of that talent were often portrayed as traits that were inherent, and not something that truly could be learned. In 1926 an Editorial in the *South Wales Daily*

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<sup>168</sup> Editorial Comments, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 4.

<sup>169</sup> Regarding M. Fournier's speech, quoted by "Awstin", *Western Mail*, Monday 17 July 1899, 5.

*Post* said: “poets are born, not made.”<sup>171</sup> Importantly, these aspects of Welsh “national” character provided a link to the other side of the coin of Welsh identity: an increasingly culturally-defined sense of identity. Although based on a distinctly *racial* sense of a biological inheritance, these attributes were still *cultural*.

Out of the discussions of Celtic and Welsh racial identities in 1899, then, come some of the foundation stones of contemporary myths of Welsh identity: that of Welsh musicality and literary talent. Although by the end of the twentieth century the myth had been debunked slightly, thanks to the works of scholars such as Gareth Williams, Trevor Herbert and others, in some ways it had become even stronger, as it reached iconic status in Wales, on a par with rugby and sheep as new representations of Wales. The popularity of these myths remained strong among certain sectors of Welsh people, as a contributory element to a folksy, *gwerinol* identity. Indeed, the strength of Male Voice Choirs as a symbolic image of Wales by the close of the century was proof of the continued power of the myth of musicality, whereas the continued emphasis of the Eisteddfod’s primary ceremonials as revolving around literary competitions was proof of the power of the myth of the Welsh Poet.<sup>172</sup> Indeed, to realize the continued importance of these ideas in Welsh identity, one must only go into a Tourist Information office in Wales, or look at a local interest section of a bookshop, and look at the merchandise available and for sale. There are dolls in Welsh costume, illustrated books focusing on the natural beauty of

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<sup>170</sup> “Our Own Correspondent”, *South Wales Daily Post*, Monday 7 August 1911.

<sup>171</sup> Editorial, *South Wales Daily Post*, Wednesday 4 August 1926, 6.

<sup>172</sup> There was a debate on the *Maes* in 2000, chaired by Huw Edwards over whether Wales was “losing its musical culture”. There was also an informal discussion about Male Voice Choirs and the (un) marketability of traditional Eisteddfodic competitive music. Dean Powell, *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 2000, 12.

Wales, “old-fashioned” cookery books, collections of Welsh poetry, and compact discs of Male Voice Choirs.<sup>173</sup>

In this way, the Pan-Celtic Eisteddfod of 1899 constructed a uniquely Welsh cultural identity that was part of a greater *Celtic* identity. The spirit of Celtic revivalism was forward-looking; but it was equally exclusionary in its emphasis on a particular non-British identity. In this way, a useful binarism of Saxon versus Celt was constructed to locate the Welsh, with the Celt, as distinctively separate from the English and the British state. Binarisms are often used when constructing identity because dichotomous difference allow for clarity and precision, if not always accuracy, in delineating distinctive qualities. They provide an opposite “Other” against which to construct and reflect identity. The sense of fraternity so popular and so espoused at the 1899 Eisteddfod was based as much in a shared racial identity as a shared culture. As such it effectively juxtaposed the Welsh against the English, as “the Saxon and the Cymro”.

There were those at the Eisteddfod who were wary of putting too much emphasis on the Celticism of the Welsh - as the essentialist and exclusive version of a racially-based Welsh identity that separated Wales from the rest of the British state. These critics not only disavowed any sense of a binary opposition between Saxon and Celt, but also any biologically-based definition of nationhood. In particular, there was a dialogue in the *South Wales Echo* in 1899 that warned against the dangers of an anti-British jingoistic Welshness:

Whilst it is good to remember race and patriotism, it is just as well not to forget in the burst of enthusiasm that Saxon and Scot, Irish and Welsh, we are all part of that great amalgam the British nation. The Pan-Celtic revival should not be permitted to foster any spirit of parochialism or the caste of race, or draw about it a

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<sup>173</sup> <http://www.swansea.ac.uk/ssid/Research/Res%20-%20Anth.htm>



barred fence of nationalistic sentiment. Language bound the Celts together – the English tongue.<sup>174</sup>

Ironically, the reporter's opinion paralleled the increasing emphasis on the *Welsh* language as a hallmark of identity – rather, he emphasised the role of the *English* language in uniting *Britain*. “A Northcountryman” agreed with the *Echo*'s columnist:

You so accurately expressed what I thought, and felt upon reading the report of the impressive scene at the gathering of the Celtic representatives that I cannot help emphasising the very pertinent remark of yours that “Saxon and Scot, Irish and Welsh, we are all part of the great amalgam, the British nation”, and I also hope with ‘Man About Town’ that “the Pan-Celtic revival should not be permitted to foster any spirit of parochialism or the caste of race, or draw a barred fence of nationalistic sentiment”.<sup>175</sup>

Again, the “Man About Town” used his newspaper space to warn of the dangers of isolationism and ideological separation from the British State. When it was suggested that the Celtic flavour of the Eisteddfod would isolate the Welsh from the British, he responded:

I do not think it will, for I have noticed during the week all sorts of men working together for the success of the National Eisteddfod. This is as it should be, for in Cardiff we are cosmopolitan, and any attempt at *race* particularism would be fatal to progress in many branches of public life in our great and growing Cardiff.<sup>176</sup>

This emphasis on the cosmopolitan nature of Cardiff as an ideal to which to strive was interesting and links back to previous discussions about the embrace of modernity evident in discussions of Cardiff. It also links forward to mid-century discussions about an international, modern sense of Wales and Welshness, an identity that was outwards-looking and changeable.

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<sup>174</sup> “The Man About Town”, *South Wales Echo*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 2.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

Moreover, because the 1899 Cardiff Eisteddfod was a Pan-Celtic Eisteddfod, in effect, it was not a Welsh festival as such, but much more international. By the middle of the twentieth century the Pan-Celtic movement had faded in popularity, effectively dying out in the increasingly global conflicts in which Wales, as part of Britain, was involved. By the Second World War, Celticism was supplanted in importance by a new aspect of internationalism: the location of Wales within the world, simultaneously as an integral part of, but independent from, Great Britain. Thus, by the middle of the century, the “Other” was drawn from a wider and more diverse pool of applicants, increasingly problematising the use of binary oppositions in the construction of Welshness.

#### **An International Eisteddfod?**

During the war years, there was a shift in emphasis on the identity of the Eisteddfod and the festival was used as a symbol not only of Wales, but also the whole of Great Britain - and indeed, all of “free” Europe. The Eisteddfod was perceived by some, both inside and outside of Eisteddfod culture, to be representative of what was and what would be again. The delegations of Allied visitors to the Llandybie Eisteddfod in 1944 were meant to emphasise this idea, thus locating Welshness within a more explicitly international framework. John Pennant said the governments of several other nations were “eager to attend the only national folk festival in Europe that had defied the ‘blitz’ years before they turned to their own countries. They gave the village ‘National’ international significance.”<sup>177</sup>

The British Council was involved in the Eisteddfod and its representatives were given a prominent place on the platforms, along with the standard Eisteddfod Dignitaries: the members of the council and local government officials who were

traditionally the honoured guests in the pavilion.<sup>178</sup> In fact, the Eisteddfod authorities and the British Council issued the invitations to the Allied deputation jointly.<sup>179</sup> Although the festival and its constituent components were still “Welsh”, they were equally emphasised to be British. There was no ideological space in this situation for any sense of Welshness as significantly separate from Britishness. In fact, by including the international delegates, the 1944 Eisteddfod was intended to remain fully “Welsh”, but to be inclusive to the point of de-emphasising the festival’s Welshness, in favour of Britishness and a global sense of unity. In this way, the Eisteddfod would prove that Britain and Wales were united and were *both* fully functioning, despite the rigours of war.

The public success of the Eisteddfod, and its publicity, particularly as representative of the success of Wales, and thus Britain and the Allied nations, was one of the British Council’s goals during Eisteddfod week. In a speech entitled the “Culture Of Wales”, Mr Wilmott said:

one of the British Council’s purposes was to interpret to peoples not resident in Britain the culture of these islands, and therefore it was only right that the visitors should see the Eisteddfod, the only great democratic festival held here. He hoped that the ‘barbarians’ beyond the Bristol Channel would presently emulate Wales and hold a National Eisteddfod of England.<sup>180</sup>

Because Wales was ideologically constructed as part of a British whole, identified with Britain rather than independent or as part of a Celtic community, it enabled association with a broader European community. The *Western Mail* said that it “was appropriate that singers from Poland, the country first over-run by the Germans where the war

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<sup>177</sup> John Pennant, *Western Mail*, Saturday 19 August 1944, 2.

<sup>178</sup> *South Wales Evening Post*, Thursday 10 August 1944, 4.

<sup>179</sup> *The Amman Valley Chronicle and East Carmarthen News*, Thursday 3 August 1944, 1.

actually began, should five years later come to give a victory send off to the festival of this country of song".<sup>181</sup> Wales was constructed as part of a global community; it was not overtly contrasted to Britain or the world and any sense of "Otherness" was subsumed in the wartime need for unity and solidarity.<sup>182</sup> As such, the location of Wales within Britain and the world was emphasised, rather than Wales as an independent national or ethnic entity to be juxtaposed against a British "Other". Interestingly, during this time of crisis, Wales very publicly was portrayed more as one of the great democratic nations of the world than as a particularly innately musical and literary nation. The democracy of Wales had been emphasised before; it was one of the hallmarks of the allegedly classless *gwerin*. However, the difference in 1944 was that Wales was labelled as a "nation" in an international context; this provided a direct correlation to the rhetoric of the British Empire.<sup>183</sup>

The *Western Mail* referred particularly to Wales, but as a constituent part of Britain and Empire:

Llandybïe ... is this week the big hub of the Welsh universe. It is staging a programme at the National Eisteddfod, which is a triumph of foresight and organisation achieved in the most difficult circumstances. ... [V]isitors from all parts of the Principality and the Empire shall have good reason to remember the events as some of the happiest in the long annals of the festival. ... The greater the audience the more necessary it becomes to ensure that nothing falling short of the best Welsh traditions shall creep into the programme. Wales, like every other nation, has a right to be judged at her best. It is necessary, therefore, that the competitors, being in the presence of a world-

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<sup>180</sup> *South Wales Evening Post*, Thursday 10 August 1944, 4.

<sup>181</sup> "Our Own Reporters", *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 1944, 3.

<sup>182</sup> Kimberly Bernard, "The National Eisteddfod and the Evolution of the All-Welsh Rule", *The North American Journal of Welsh Studies* 3:1-2 (Winter-Spring 2003), 33-47.

<sup>183</sup> As the bringer of democracy to the world.

wide audience, seen and unseen, should rise to the level of their rare opportunity.<sup>184</sup>

Significantly these “Welsh” traditions were on view by people throughout the “Empire”. They had become an object of display, of cultural voyeurism. Similarly, the festival would be broadcast on the BBC World Service to all parts of the world, thus promoting a *Welsh* festival to *non-Welsh* peoples around the globe. The *Western Mail* again emphasised:

It is probable that more persons than ever will be initiated into the attractions, thanks to the special broadcasting facilities. The whole world of listeners is being given an exceptional opportunity to appreciate what the festival means to the Welsh people, and to hear what is being achieved in music, song, literature, and speech. The fact that tens of thousands will hear all this for the first time should be an incentive to the competitors, as it has been to the promoters.<sup>185</sup>

There was present here a markedly different attitude about Wales and Welshness compared to previous years. Welshness was something to be marketed to people around the world. Importantly, as will be demonstrated shortly, unlike the diaspora, these were “non-Welsh” people; they had no connections with Wales, cultural, racial or otherwise. In this way, the Llandybïe Eisteddfod marked the beginnings of a modern sense of a “heritage” view of Wales, as a tourist destination whose attributes went beyond the natural landscape to include a quaintly distinct culture.

Indeed, during the war years, the Welsh Eisteddfod was firmly located within the Empire. It was as if a safety net had been constructed out of part of the propaganda machine of the war. Wales was a convenient showcase, both of a successful semi-autonomous culture that was surviving the war (although national particulars, such as

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<sup>184</sup> *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 1944, 3.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

the language, were never stressed in the discourse of 1944), and of an Allied nation (or portion thereof) that was successfully battling enemy forces. Mr Wilmott praised Wales' role in the war. Importantly, once again he located Wales within Britain and the Empire.

It is a tribute to the increasing importance of Cardiff in the scheme of the British Empire ... that the British Council has decided to establish a branch in the city for men from the Dominions, the colonies, as well as Allied nationals. The Council... received its charter of incorporation as recently as 1940 in recognition of its valuable cultural propaganda in all parts of the world. It has no affinity with the sort of propaganda for which the Nazis had become notorious even before the war. Their chief aim was to establish espionage cells in all parts of the world, while pretending that their sole concern was the spread of genuine culture. The British Council exists, on the other hand, to disseminate reliable information about the British Empire, to correct gross misrepresentations regarding the constitution of the Dominions, to familiarise other peoples with the main events in our history, to help them to understand our Parliamentary system, and foster the study in all countries of our incomparable mother tongue. This does not complete the list of laudable purposes that the Council serves, but it is a sufficient indication of its high cultural value.<sup>186</sup>

Wilmott linked Wales to the democratic goals of the British Council and Empire. Unlike the Nazis the Welsh cultural festival in Llandybïe was part of this “good” propaganda, spreading the ideas of democracy and the benefits of freedom. The British Council's involvement in the Eisteddfod was as a promoter of the better attributes of British (and world) culture. The shift from one stereotype to another alluded to a different agenda in war-time Wales. Here again the “Welshness” of the Eisteddfod was played down in favour of “Britishness”.

Furthermore, the involvement of the Government, through the British Council, was a direct link to the British state, and endorsement of its policies. Mr Wilmott praised

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<sup>186</sup> Mr Wilmott in the *Western Mail*, Wednesday 9 August 1944, 2.

the state. Referring to the British Empire as “the greatest political achievement wrought by man”, he said:

We have allowed the little Englanders [sic] to disparage and misrepresent it, and the Jingoists to pretend that it stands for a crude militarism. ... And now we see that, albeit unconsciously, we have builded [sic] far better than we knew, that the poet spoke a profound interrogation when he asked: ‘what should they know of England who only England know?’<sup>187</sup>

The acceptance of the misuse of “England” – it was not criticised in the press – was remarkable considering the pre-war political climate in Wales. Although still very much a position supported by a minority, Welsh nationalism had been growing steadily in radicalism and support in the 1930s. Yet, during the war, familial rhetoric and metaphors were used to emphasise the alleged unity of Wales and Britain.

Indeed, in a similar manner to the Pan-Celtic internationalism of 1899, the Allied visitors were constructed as part of the larger Welsh “family”. Unlike in 1899, however, the visitors in 1944 were not discussed directly in the rhetoric of family, but more implicitly as part of the same body of people fighting together against the Nazis. Nevertheless, this figurative wartime family was inclusive. Mr James Griffiths, MP, who was president of the Local Committee, said that the visit of the Allied delegations was “a unique occasion which formed a link in the chain of comradeship between the Allied nations, which they all hoped would long be continued after the war”.<sup>188</sup> The spirit of brotherhood evident at the Eisteddfod was fostered by the existence of a shared enemy and the shared experiences of the war. Many expressed this hope that the international communal spirit would continue after the war. M. Karavaev, Under-Secretary at the

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

Soviet Embassy in London, for example, suggested that the model coal mine exhibited at the Eisteddfod should go on a tour of the Soviet Union.<sup>189</sup>

In this allegorical family, there was always room for one more. Due to the combination of increased publicity and the relatively small size of the host location, there was an increased demand for accommodation and amenities. The strain was noted, but it was not a worry. In fact, the hospitality of the region – which during Eisteddfod week was representative of Wales as a whole – was a point of pride that was emphasised in the press. The *Western Mail* reported that “Eisteddfodwyr Make Way For Evacuees”:

A heavy strain, therefore, is being put on all forms of accommodation. Rooms set aside for those intending to stay the week have been given up to evacuees but, despite all this, no one seems to be afraid that the difficulties cannot be overcome, and the Eisteddfod bids fair to be the happiest for some years.<sup>190</sup>

This rhetorical construction of communal action and spirit was typical of British wartime propaganda.<sup>191</sup>

More to the point, the demand for accommodation during Eisteddfod week was itself something for people in Wales (and Britain) to celebrate. It denoted the success and popularity of Welsh culture, as represented by the Eisteddfod – however necessarily international it may have been. The Welsh press ran frequent references to the foreign visitors’ enjoyment of the festival. For example, the *Western Mail* commented that Professor Chen Yuen, a member of the People’s Political Council of China,

found the festival so interesting that he begged to be allowed to stay on. Accommodation was immediately provided and the Professor, paying his first visit to Wales, stayed behind with the Welsh miners, farmers and their wives, after his international

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<sup>188</sup> “Our Own Reporters”, *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 1944, 3.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> See Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Pimlico, 1991).



friends departed. He has spent to-day listening to chief choral and other competitions and making Welsh friends. On Monday he hopes to arrive in Cardiff for a short stay.<sup>192</sup>

The implicit (and perhaps explicit) meaning to such references was that Welsh culture, although under the guise of “British”, was worthy of international renown. It is important to emphasise that despite all the rhetoric of “Britishness”, the popular understanding of the “Welshness” of the Eisteddfod was without doubt.

The visit of a West-African student to the Eisteddfod was an opportunity for Eisteddfodwyr to emphasise their openness and their acceptance of all peoples at their national festival. It was also an opportunity to problematise the notion of a British and global Welshness by throwing a proverbial spanner into the wheel. “Otherness” was relatively uncomplicated when differences were minimal and the juxtaposition binary in nature, but a distinct racial difference was an ideological hurdle the Eisteddfod sailed over cleanly. The *Western Mail* reported on the “unofficial development that delighted the Eisteddfod crowd more than anything has done for years”:

A miner came walking down the hall. Behind him came a young coloured man, obviously a student. When the audience realised that an unofficial delegate was being presented it broke into cheers even more hearty than those which had greeted the messages brought by the representatives of the nations and Empires fighting in the Allied cause. What was happening the Eisteddfod audience realised at once was an opportunity to show the traditional belief of the people of Wales in the universal brotherhood of man. ... [T]he audience soon made clear the demand that the coloured man should speak, as all the other national delegates had done. ... Then the young man came forward and spoke in Yoruba, a West African dialect. The audience understood him as much as they had understood the Polish, Norwegian, Russian and other speakers – an understanding of the spirit rather than of the mind.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 12 August 1944, 3.

<sup>193</sup> “Our Own Reporters”, *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1944, 3.

Thus, Eisteddfodwyr in the pavilion welcomed everyone to their festival. Headlines in the newspapers proudly proclaimed: “No Colour Bar at the Eisteddfod.”<sup>194</sup> Yet in this context of inclusiveness, “Cynan’s” “translation [of the young man’s speech] ... using poetic license!” was ironic.<sup>195</sup> In his improvised speech of welcome he emphasised the colour of the young man: “He has come here in the colour of an anthracite miner at work.”<sup>196</sup> Although not seen as problematic, the racial difference was noted.

What the African student actually said was unknown and unimportant in the light of the creative translation provided by the Archdruid. The audience in the pavilion and in the press were told that:

He was sorry to have missed the Gorsedd, but he believed he had seen some of you before – looking for gold in West Africa.’ (Laughter.) ‘He hopes to be here next year again.’ Everyone accepted the translation at its face value.<sup>197</sup>

Ironically, “Cynan” did not in fact translate the speeches immediately and impromptu. Rather, they were provided to the Eisteddfod Council in advance to be translated. The appearance of “live” translation was part of “Cynan’s” performance on the platform.<sup>198</sup>

The young African’s active interest in the Eisteddfod was emphasised by the press: “The young coloured man, Mr G. T. Roberts ... was anxious to compare festivals in this country with those in his own.”<sup>199</sup> He wrote to the *South Wales Evening Post* asking for information concerning the Eisteddfod: “apparently he made good use of the

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid. “CRWYS TO THE RESCUE: But it was a more acute problem for Cynan, who had supplied an instant translation of the previous speeches, including one of the American delegate. The audience, sensing a slightly embarrassing position, broke into a roar of laughter. ‘You really must not expect too much from Cynan,’ said Crwys. ‘He wants a week’s notice before he can translate in this case. I will help him out with the translation of what this young man said.’

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> These translations are kept at the NLW (Selwyn Jones Papers, box 57).

<sup>199</sup> “Our Own Reporters”, *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1944, 3.

material supplied, since he appeared on the stage at his first Eisteddfod and in such distinguished company.”<sup>200</sup> In effect, he was constructed as a typical Eisteddfodwr - a person that the audience could and would sympathise with. His interest, as representative of all the international visitors, validated the cultural merits of the Eisteddfod.

Importantly, however, despite the construction of the African visitor as an average Eisteddfodwr, the sense of inclusiveness was not extended to a sense of *Welshness*. Rather, all of the foreign visitors to Llandybie were welcomed into the Eisteddfod family, but not as immediate, blood relatives. They were more analogous to second cousins. Thus, despite the rhetoric of unity with both Britain and the World, there was still a sense of Welshness as something separate and distinct. A particular Welsh identity was not entirely subsumed in the stresses and strains of war. Moreover, it was becoming increasingly problematic as an ever-changing world meant that new ideas and ingredients were being thrown into the mixing bowl of Welshness. However, just as Wales was increasingly finding its feet in the discourse of the Pan-Celtic movement, the discussions surrounding the “International” Eisteddfod in 1944 demonstrated the recognition that a degree of unity to Britain and the World, both ideologically and politically, was imperative to Wales’ future.<sup>201</sup>

### **The Welsh in Exile**

Another international movement that was gathering momentum and growing in popularity during the twentieth century was that of the “Exiles” and the Welsh diaspora.

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<sup>200</sup> “D.H.I.P.”, *South Wales Evening Post*, Friday 11 August 1944, 3.

The twentieth century was a trying time for Welsh identity. The language declined significantly, globalising cultural forces altered the composition of Welsh communities and lifestyles, and there were significant population shifts that had altered the nation's demographics. Indeed, during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, mass emigration from Wales occurred as a result of various socio-economic factors. Eisteddfod week became a sort of family reunion among members of the Welsh diaspora as many emigrants chose that week to return to Wales. As a result, the celebration of the "Exiles" became one of the more popular events at the Eisteddfod.

The idea of "homecoming" and a family metaphor were prevalent in the discourse of the "Exiles" during this period, and contributed to the construction of the Welsh diaspora that resulted from the movement back and forth between real and ideological spaces during Eisteddfod week. By 1926, relatively cheap transatlantic travel had enabled many "Exiles" to return to Wales for the first time, particularly from North America, but also from farther afield. Certainly the Eisteddfod of 1926 fell at a turning point in Welsh history, as Wales shifted from the Victorian Age of Empire to a newer more modern Wales.

In fact, the discourse surrounding the Welsh diasporic community, as evidenced at the National Eisteddfod that year, was indicative of several trends in the nature of Welsh identity, some on their way in while others on their way out: for example, the Victorian era's Pan-Celtic Movement highlighted a racially based sense of Welshness, while to a lesser degree emphasising certain cultural traits; the various groups of international visitors to the Eisteddfod in the twentieth century emphasised a more

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<sup>201</sup> Certainly, this unity was evidenced through the International Eisteddfod at Llangollen, established just a few years later.

unified sense of Welshness within a British and global context; and, finally, the visits “home” of the Welsh Exiles emphasised a shared racial identity, but also the development of a distinct sense of Welshness, separate from binarisms, and increasingly focused on cultural signifiers of identity. As shall be demonstrated, unlike the hegemonic discourse of the *gwerin* during that period, these aspects of Welsh identity were not tied explicitly to a self-contained sense of heritage, but were all based on a comparison with an “Other”. Moreover, that “Other”, and the relative ideological boundaries, changed throughout the course of the twentieth century, shifting from ones that were based in racial essentialism to those that were more culturally based.

The Welsh diaspora, or the “Welsh in Exile”, was an international movement that was gathering momentum and growing in popularity during the twentieth century. “The Welsh in Exile” were those Welsh nationals who had emigrated during times of economic difficulty to make a better life for themselves. A trend was emerging, however, by the early twentieth century: the Welsh emigrants to far-flung lands around the globe were taking advantage of easier travel and returning to Wales in large numbers, particularly during Eisteddfod week, to reassert their Welshness. As Avtar Brah says, a diaspora embodies a notion of a centre or locus, a “home” from where the dispersion occurs, and evokes images of multiple journeys.<sup>202</sup> That this journey home often happened at the Eisteddfod reinforces the power of the Eisteddfod’s identity as representative of Welsh culture and identity.

Interestingly, although the celebration of the “Exiles” emphasised those who had come from the far-flung parts of the planet, many Welsh people were actually living in other parts of Britain, and had done for many centuries. It was the London Welsh who

for many years were instrumental in, and ran, the Welsh cultural institutions such as the modern Eisteddfod, the Gwyneddigion and the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion. Even Iolo's inaugural Gorsedd was held at Primrose Hill in London in 1792. As Gareth Elwyn Jones says, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries interest in Welsh culture was inspired primarily by London Welsh people, because there was no comparable urban centre in Wales.<sup>203</sup> Indeed, before the urban areas of South Wales emerged out of the industrial boom of the nineteenth century, London functioned as the "national" cultural centre for Welsh people.<sup>204</sup> It was only in the later part of the nineteenth century that similar cultural organisations began to spring up in Cardiff and elsewhere, and a sense of a self-contained Welsh cultural establishment emerged.<sup>205</sup>

The Eisteddfod was held outside of Wales four times in the twentieth century, all within the first thirty years. When it was held in England, it was held in well-recognised and established centres of Welsh expatriates: Liverpool and London. Interestingly, however, the Welsh from London (or Liverpool) were not treated as foreign in the same way as those who had emigrated farther afield. This difference was probably due to three factors. Firstly, the aforementioned primacy of the London Welsh in Welsh cultural life meant that they were not outsiders in the same way as other Welsh migrants. Secondly, the emigration to London had been continuous over an extended period of time, whereas the emigration to the far-flung corners of the globe was a more recent phenomenon, and generally was, of necessity, more permanent. Finally, and as a result of the first two

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<sup>202</sup> Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of diaspora: contesting identities* (London: Routledge, 1996), 181.

<sup>203</sup> Gareth Elwyn Jones, 1994, 53.

<sup>204</sup> Although, in fact, various "Welsh societies" began to appear all over Wales from the early nineteenth century, they were very much localized organizations. Any centralized bodies were headquartered in London.

<sup>205</sup> In fact, the National Eisteddfod Association only moved to Cardiff when its central office was established in 1979.

factors, they were not considered “exotic” in the same way as Welsh emigrants to Australia or Hong Kong.

The specific components of Welsh identity were presented in the discussions of the Exiles in the press. Their welcomes and sense of Welshness said much about the ways in which Welshness was constructed at that time. For example, some members of the audience saw Eisteddfod week as a celebration of a particular *racial* identity. In part, this was a continuation of a racially-based dichotomization of the Celts versus the Saxons. For much of British history, Wales was viewed as the “Other” compared to an Anglo-British norm. This binary sense of identity is common in colonial literature and discourse, and was used to emphasise the differences between the colonised and the colonisers. It often relied upon the idea of a “Metropole”, or colonial centre point that separated the core from the periphery, the one being defined from the “Other”. For the British Empire the centre or Metropole was London and England.

The Welsh Metropole was for much of the twentieth century the Eisteddfod. Lacking in any sense a particularly strong and well-established political and cultural capital, many in Wales relied on the Eisteddfod as the centre of the nation’s culture – and indeed, as the centre of the nation’s autonomous political discourse for much of this period.<sup>206</sup> Certainly, those who travelled back to Wales with the express purpose of making a pilgrimage to the Eisteddfod as well as visiting their family must have assigned such symbolic significance to the festival.

In the Victorian age of the British Empire, the Celtic Welsh were on the periphery of an Anglo-Saxon Empire, and constructed as an “Other”. However, by the late Victorian period, due in part to the increasing national momentum of the *Cymru*

*Fydd* movement, rather than being the “Other” to England’s centre, Wales was constructing its own identity, still based largely on a racially-defined sense of Celticism. The interpretation of that identity was remarkably *vague*. Generally, it remained focused on binary definitions of the Celt and the Saxon. By the 1920s, however, references to Welsh Celticism were increasingly rare. The *South Wales Daily Post* referred to an English choir as “the dangerous Saxons”, and the *Western Mail* discussed Welsh identity with particular reference to a broader Celtic identity: “while Welsh local habit has been expanded into Welsh national characterisation, with a wholesome vista of the Celtic affinities ... to stimulate Welsh Celtic race-consciousness, Welsh localism, so to say, has appeared.”<sup>207</sup> In this way, discourse generally focused on the ways in which the Celtic identity itself actively shaped Welshness, rather than the role played by the Saxon “Other”. Moreover, any version of a racial identity espoused during the week was particularly *Welsh*, that is, something beyond wider ideas of Celticism and the related comparison to the Saxon.<sup>208</sup> This was evidence of an increasingly more well-defined sense of “Welshness” as its own identity, rather than something that needed to be identified against a sense of “Englishness”. Thus, the Welsh stopped being the “Other” and became a national group definable in their own right.

The *Western Mail*’s Eisteddfod supplement in 1926 commended its readers, to “accept the Eisteddfod as the embodiment of something that is truly racial”.<sup>209</sup> Similarly, a poem written to commemorate the visit of the Duke and Duchess of York to

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<sup>206</sup> The political discourse of the Eisteddfod will be discussed in chapters four, five and six.

<sup>207</sup> Leigh Henry in *Western Mail*, Monday 9 August 1926, 9.

<sup>208</sup> *South Wales Daily Post*, Thursday 5 August 1926

<sup>209</sup> “... is not, however, to renounce the right of commenting upon its shortcomings.” J. O. Francis, National Eisteddfod Supplement, *Western Mail*, Saturday 31 July 1926, 1.



the Swansea Eisteddfod, published in the *Western Mail*, celebrated the Eisteddfodwyr.

Entitled "The Glory Of Our Race", it made specific reference to the Exiles:

Moved by a mighty impulse into one glorious whole,  
 And guided by the harmonies that surge from the singing soul.  
 'While from the jewelled West and South men of our kith and kin  
 Who sailed abroad for freedom's sake with glowing faith come in, ...  
 'Some speak the ancient language that rang in Druid days,  
 And some the mighty Saxon tongue, but all unite in praise  
 Of the land that is our birthright, our blazon, and our pride,  
 The land for which we fight and toil, that peerless she abide. ...  
 Yet the stream of song and poesy flows in unsullied grace,  
 A crown of radiant beauty, and the glory of our race.<sup>210</sup>

Importantly, this overtly romantic and sentimental poem linked the history of Wales with its people, creating a specific identity based in a hereditary inhabitancy of the land. Those that emigrated to foreign lands, even those who had lost the language, were still sons and daughters of Wales because they had Welsh blood, and all that it represented, running through their veins. Indeed, according to the poem, whether they spoke English or the "ancient" Welsh language, they were all one race of Welsh people.

In this climate, Swansea was seen to be an appropriate location for the festival. The official welcome to the Yorks by the Lord Mayor of Swansea stated: "Swansea is a Welsh town in every sense, and the spirit of the race is strongly imbued in its people."<sup>211</sup> Similarly, the members of the diaspora who attended the festival were lauded for their Welsh genetic make-up. The headline in the *South Wales Daily Post* informed the reader that although an American choir won, 90 per cent were of Welsh parentage.<sup>212</sup> Indeed, newspaper reports repeatedly emphasised the Welsh connections to the American visitors and competitors. G. Norman-Jones discussed that year's victorious

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<sup>210</sup> Lewis Davies ("Lewys Glyn Cynon"), "Specially composed for the Royal National Eisteddfod, Swansea, 1926," in *Western Mail*, Tuesday 3 August 1926, 6.

Male Voice Choir from Cleveland, Ohio (USA); he emphasised that their conductor was a “Welsh-born native of Port Talbot”:

With him in the choir are twenty other Welshmen, or men of pure Welsh parentage, so that it is a tribute to the Welsh love of music to find so many out of a choir of 80 to be of that race. It was due to the generosity of a Welshman, resident in America, that it was made possible to bring this choir to Wales. ... Mr Griffiths [the patron], who is also of Welsh descent, will be present at the Eisteddfod...I am sure that but for Mr Dawe ... together with his celtic temperament and vivid imagination, and for the fact that with him are about twenty other men of Welsh parentage, this choir would not be the wonderful choir it is.<sup>213</sup>

Similarly, Caerwyn said he was “sure that great audience of 20,000 people would welcome men of their own nationality from over the seas.”<sup>214</sup>

Although racial signifiers of Welsh identity were strong in 1926, they were losing the hegemonic position they had held in Welsh society. As stated above, race continued to play a part in the Welsh performance of identity, but it was based less in a Victorian sense of Celticism, and more in a sense of particularly *Welsh* blood, as spread around the world. The members of the Welsh diaspora were honoured for their shared bloodlines, but also for other factors. Emphasis in Eisteddfodic discourse was frequently on the perceived *traits* of the Celtic Welsh: “Celtic *emotion and fervour* are traditional, and they were never better exemplified than on this occasion.”<sup>215</sup>

Indeed, despite a continued significance assigned to blood and ethnic ties, there was also an increasing emphasis placed on shared cultural traits such as the language (although admittedly often focused on the lack of it). Many of the members of the

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<sup>211</sup> Official welcome to the Yorks, quoted in the *South Wales Daily Post*, Monday 2 August 1926, 1.

<sup>212</sup> *South Wales Daily Post*, Friday 6 August 1926, 1.

<sup>213</sup> Lieut.-commander G. Norman-Jones in the *Western Mail*, Tuesday 3 August 1926, 5.

<sup>214</sup> *Western Mail*, Monday 9 August 1926, 8.

<sup>215</sup> Emphasis original. *South Wales Daily Post*, Monday 26 July 1926, 8.

diaspora spoke Welsh at the Eisteddfod, and the press repeatedly commented on those instances. For example, Dr Dan Prothero, a Welsh-American musician, spoke in “his native tongue”.<sup>216</sup> Similarly, various people from around the diaspora provided a “series of delightful addresses, all impromptu, in Welsh”.<sup>217</sup> This emphasis on members of the exiled community maintaining their language marks an important turning point in Welsh identity: the implicit acknowledgement of the decline of the language, and the resulting shift towards language as a signifier of identity *over* racial signifiers. Moreover, this focus on the language contributed to an increasing acceptance of a sense of “Welshness” in its own right, just as the emphasis on what Wales *was*, rather than what Wales was *not*, implied a sense of Welshness separate from a sense of Englishness or Britishness.

The dangers to the Welsh language were more apparent in the Welsh diaspora, where it did not have the established continuous cultural heritage as it did in Wales. The visitors gave emphasis to the struggle that was occurring in Wales by discussing their own struggles with the language in the diaspora.<sup>218</sup> Language was one of the new hallmarks of identity in “Welsh” communities around the world. They may not be able to lay claim to a geographic sense of Welshness, but by maintaining the language, they could assert their Welsh identity.

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<sup>216</sup> “Our post Bag”, *South Wales Daily Post*, Monday 9 August 1926, 2.

<sup>217</sup> *South Wales Daily Post*, Saturday 7 August 1926, 1.

<sup>218</sup> The Rev. R. R. Davies, D.D., of Neath, who had recently returned to Wales after a long residence in America, spoke, for example, of “their keen anxiety to be kept in vital touch with all the big movements of the homeland [and] urged that a supreme effort be made in all places where Welsh people settled to establish classes for the teaching of the Welsh language and the fostering of the love of Welsh literature.” (*Western Mail*, Saturday 7 August 1926, 8).

### The Family Metaphor and “Coming Home”

In combination with the discourse on racial identity, the result was a strong sense of the diaspora as members of a family “coming home” to Wales at the Eisteddfod. The idea of a Welsh homeland is important on several levels. Firstly, it emphasised a sense of identity that was not tied explicitly to geographical boundaries. This broader sense of Welsh community was based on other signifiers of identity, such as the aforementioned race and language, and contributed towards the construction of a sense of Welsh *family* and kinship. Secondly, this sense of family heritage subsequently enabled the diaspora to come “home”, much like the prodigal sons and daughters of “Mam Cymru”.<sup>219</sup>

These accounts emphasised the hospitality of the Welsh. They welcomed into their national festival members of the diaspora, like long-lost relatives and friends. In fact, there was a strong sense of family and community spirit among the members of the diaspora at the Eisteddfod, and a family metaphor was often applied to these discussions. The public rhetoric was replete with images that declared the diaspora to be one family. Certainly, there were actual family reunions.<sup>220</sup> Generally, however, many of these “happy reunions” were spoken of broadly and allegorically in terms of family. The visitors were spoken of in the press as “overseas brethren” and as “brothers”.<sup>221</sup> Newspapers reported that “there were demonstrations of fraternal feelings on all sides,”

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<sup>219</sup> *Western Mail*, Monday 9 August 1926, 8.

<sup>220</sup> “Tears Of Joy – The American And His Dear Welsh Mother”, *South Wales Daily Post*, Monday 26 July 1926, 8.

<sup>221</sup> Mr L. Daniels said: “May God hasten the day when England [sic] and America will clasp hands as *brothers* in government as well as in blood.” *South Wales Daily Post*, Monday 26 July 1926, 12; Mr William Prothero in *Western Mail*, Saturday 7 August 1926, 8).

as they returned to the “land of their fathers”.<sup>222</sup> More explicitly, the welcome of the Exiles “represented the homely family touch”.<sup>223</sup>

An editorial in the *South Wales Daily Post* summed up the apparent prevailing atmosphere:

The aspect of reunion will remain long in the memory of all who have attended this Eisteddfod. Wales called to her far scattered sons and daughters, and they answered; the magic of the call to which they listened and the strength of the bond that unite them were their tunes. Take them away and Wales would lose the most dear and sacred of her spiritual possessions. All home sickness and heart sickness is in them.<sup>224</sup>

Thus, the members of the diaspora who converged on Swansea for the Eisteddfod in 1926 in unprecedented numbers were conceived, and constructed, as figurative sons and daughters of the mother Wales. Wherever they may have lived, they remained descendants of a great Welsh tradition, however it be defined, and therefore they maintained their Welshness.<sup>225</sup>

The act of coming “home” was also a key theme to the Welsh diaspora, and indeed, to the 1926 National Eisteddfod. Beginning with the American delegation’s early landing at Fishguard, warm welcomes were given to the visitors from abroad. According to the *Western Mail*: “They were accorded a hearty ‘Welcome home’ by a representative delegation of eisteddfodwyr and fellow-patriots.”<sup>226</sup> When the members

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<sup>222</sup> *South Wales Daily Post*, Friday 6 August 1926, 1; *Western Mail*, Saturday 7 August 1926, 8. Further, the *South Wales Daily Post* described the proverbial “return of the native”: “A swarm of enthusiastic Cambro-Americans intended to charter a whole liner and sail across the seas to the *land of their fathers* ... Our expatriated ex-countrymen will be able to tell their residents in Scranton, Pa., that the guys in Wales are ‘regular fellows.’ It goes to the heart, after all, to find such warmth of greeting and so unexpected a reception from sheer strangers. It suggests a wonderful affection still latent for the exiles in the old country.” Editorial, *South Wales Daily Post*, Tuesday 27 July 1926, 6.

<sup>223</sup> Editorial, *South Wales Daily Post*, Saturday 7 August 1926, 4.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> Whether that tradition be framed in terms of blood, language, etc.

<sup>226</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 26 July 1926, 7.

of the diaspora were officially welcomed during a ceremony for what were labelled the “Cymru From Overseas” at the Eisteddfod, the familial warmth continued. The *Western Mail* commented that: “The choir seats at the back of the platform were filled with Welsh men and women who have returned to their native land ... to be cheered and welcomed home. ... It has been great in music, good in literature, and soul-stirring in its expression of national enthusiasm.”<sup>227</sup>

Similarly, newspaper reports remarked on the extended periods that these members of the diaspora had spent away from Wales. Perhaps this emphasis was merely journalistic dramatics; however, the stress on long periods away also accentuated the idea of coming home. Newspapers were full of sentimental reports of reunions and “visits home”.<sup>228</sup> The *Western Mail* commented: “Some of these Welsh-Americans are paying a visit to their homeland after many years’ absence, and though their accents are American they can still talk fluent Welsh and they are deeply interested in the week’s events.”<sup>229</sup> The protracted absence of these emigrants did not mean that they were no longer Welsh. In fact, the emphasis on language was marked and significant, as it demonstrated the shift towards the use of the language as an indicator of Welshness. The reports emphasised that many of these welcomes were in Welsh: “Greetings In The Home Language.”<sup>230</sup> Clearly what it meant to belong to the “nation” stretched beyond geographic and ethnic boundaries.

Additionally, the long absence referred to in many accounts was important because it emphasised the fact that many of these “Welsh” people had never before been

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<sup>227</sup> “Our Special Correspondent”, *Western Mail*, Saturday 7 August 1926, 8.

<sup>228</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 26 July 1926, 7.

<sup>229</sup> “Our Special Correspondent”, *Western Mail*, Monday 2 August 1926, 5.

<sup>230</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 24 July 1926, 7.

to Wales – or, if they had, for many it had been a lifetime since they had left “home”.

The *Western Mail* reported that:

There were many septuagenarians who had not been across for half a century. There were some who had never before set eyes on Wales. Many were meeting relatives they had never seen before. It was really affecting to watch these Welsh-Americans eagerly scanning the throng and then make a rush as they recognised a face.<sup>231</sup>

In order to claim these visitors as Welsh, it was necessary to have other signifiers of identity that were not tied to space and place. Thus, the gradual construction of modern Welsh national identity as a mixture of racial and ethnic and cultural traits is evident here in the discourse of the Welsh diaspora. In this way, the case for Welsh national particularism was not so clearly defined in 1926. Many factors interacted to contribute to a diverse sense of Welshness. Indeed, another feature of the rhetorical construction of a Welsh homeland was the subsequent construction of an exotic “Other”. As Avtar Brah states, the notion of diaspora suggests an “us” versus “them” sense of identity, based in “Otherness”, and bipolar oppositions.<sup>232</sup> This dichotomy was not unlike the Victorian racialised emphasis on the Celt. However, unlike in the discourse of the Saxon and the Celt, identity was based as much on geographic location as blood ties.

Importantly, by the middle of the twentieth century, an ideological shift was occurring. Whereas previously Wales was constructed as the “Other” to the British centre, Wales was now also discursively constructing itself as the centre and the (“Welsh”) world the “Other” – whether this world be in Britain or spread around the globe. This shift implied that a sense of Welshness, as separate from Britishness, was now in the centre, rather than in the margins of identity discourse. A binary sense of

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<sup>231</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 26 July 1926, 7.

otherness had long been used in Welsh identity construction, juxtapositioning the Welsh against the English, but in the case of Wales and the diaspora, this binarism was problematic. Nevertheless, binary oppositions still were used in contemporary discourse to separate the Welsh at home and the Welsh abroad, simultaneously constructing them both as Welsh, but also creating one as “exotic” and one as implicitly more Welsh, because of residence in the Metropole. It marked the increasingly sophisticated sense of Welshness that was emerging in the twentieth century; an identity that was increasingly secure and conceived of in global terms.

Subsequently, the exoticism of the remote locations from which the foreign visitors came was extolled, both as a mark of how extensive the Welsh diaspora was, but also as a mark of status to Wales and the Eisteddfod that these visitors should choose to make the long journey back to the “homeland”. The diaspora’s great geographical size was emphasised in the press accounts of the actual reception of its members at the Eisteddfod, as if to prove the relative greatness of Wales. These Welsh expatriates came from a wide variety of locations around the globe. They came from areas of significant, and particularly Welsh, settlement, as well as more heterogeneous areas. The press seemed very keen on printing lists of foreign visitors and the locations from whence they came. For example, the *South Wales Daily Post* noted that they were “mostly from the United States of America”, but also from France, Russia, Ireland, India, China, Palestine, Egypt, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, Patagonia, Mexico, and Canada.<sup>233</sup> The resulting stress given to individual locations gave the visitors, and by the commutative property of their shared traits, the Welsh, a sense of global identity.

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<sup>232</sup> Avtar Brah, 1996, 182-3.

<sup>233</sup> *South Wales Daily Post*, Saturday 7 August 1926, 4.



Although the largest numbers came from North America, a sense of exoticism was applied to the other locations. For example, the arrival of the telegram from Patagonia was greeted by loud applause: "The thought that the Welsh people in such a remote land had got together and sent their greeting was pleasing to the audience, itself gathered from many lands."<sup>234</sup> Similarly, and perhaps more significantly, the Bardic Chair in 1926 was labelled as "Chinese"; it was a gift from the "Welshmen in Shanghai".<sup>235</sup> The chair had a distinctly oriental flavour which was frequently commented on: "is a remarkable piece of carving in Chinese oak, the handiwork of a Chinese artist and the gift of a little colony of Welshmen at Shanghai. Nothing like it has been seen at the Eisteddfod before."<sup>236</sup> Here the Welsh "Exiles" were constructed as members of the Metropole, in the British colonial tradition. However, the equation was not always simple or straightforward. As Jeremy Segrott says, the geographic proximity of some members of the diaspora to the Metropole means that they cannot easily be compared to members from other areas.<sup>237</sup> Thus, the American Welsh were necessarily not as exotic as other members of the diaspora who came from farther afield to the Eisteddfod.

Yet, even visitors from the less "exotic" locations were celebrated. In fact, Americans and Canadians comprised by far the majority of the members of the Exiles community. The *Western Mail* reported that: "Much has been written of the unusually large numbers of Welsh men and women from overseas – and especially from the United States of America – who are visiting this year's National Eisteddfod, at

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<sup>234</sup> "Pavilion Pars", *South Wales Daily Post*, Wednesday 4 August 1926, 7.

<sup>235</sup> *Western Mail*, Wednesday 4 August 1926, 8.

<sup>236</sup> "Our Special Correspondent", *Western Mail*, Friday 6 August 1926, 9.

Swansea.”<sup>238</sup> The ease with which these emigrants could now travel did not mitigate the excitement with which they were greeted or the drama of the situation. Nor did it lessen the importance applied to their attendance. Although they came from less of a distance, both physically and ideologically, they still represented an element of the exotic, and their presence somehow validated the existence of the Eisteddfod, and perhaps even Welsh culture. In a similar manner, the participation of local, Welsh emigrants at an American Eisteddfod was remarked upon as a great triumph of the Welsh people. The *South Wales Daily Post* reported that: “At the annual Eisteddfod held at Youngstown, Ohio, USA ... four Loughor boys won prizes.”<sup>239</sup>

Often, however, the differences between the members of the diaspora and the Welsh at “home” were not received enthusiastically or in a positive way. For many at the Eisteddfod, the Welsh Americans were too American; they were *different*. The *South Wales Daily Post* labelled them as “strangers”.<sup>240</sup> The dominance of the Americans, particularly that of the victorious Cleveland choir, was a point of disgust and controversy. It was the first time that one of the principal choral prizes had been won by an overseas choir, although English choirs had a history of doing so. The choir’s victory was described as a “stab to Welsh music-lovers” that was only made “less poignant because the successful conductor is a Welshman ... and a considerable proportion of his choir is also Welsh.”<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Jeremy Segrott, *Identity and migration: an ethnography of the Welsh in London* (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Wales Swansea, 2001), 9.

<sup>238</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 7 August 1926, 8.

<sup>239</sup> *South Wales Daily Post*, Wednesday 28 July 1926, 8.

<sup>240</sup> Editorial, *South Wales Daily Post*, Tuesday 27 July 1926, 6.

<sup>241</sup> Mr C. P. Dawe, a native of Taibach, quoted by “Our Special Correspondent”, *Western Mail*, Monday 9 August 1926, 8.

The sense that the Americans were strangers, even if distant members of the same family, tells us that the Welsh in 1926 still placed considerable emphasis on geographic factors of identity construction. They saw distinct differences between the Welsh in Wales and the Welsh abroad. Moreover, it demonstrated a different attitude towards the exiles than was demonstrated in relation to the more favourable exoticism discussed above. They were very much the "Other". Perhaps the differences would have been less evident in the press, had it not been for the string of American successes, both in the Eisteddfod and elsewhere in Europe in recent months.

America is bent upon taking as much as possible from Europe. She has captured our golf classics, she is raking in our reparations, she has made the Channel look like a little creek by sending over a young girl to swim it; and now she has proved her superiority to the best Welsh and English choirs in the art of male voice singing, in which Wales has hitherto stood head and shoulders above all the other nations.<sup>242</sup>

An anonymous piece in the *South Wales Daily Post* summed up this almost xenophobic resentment nicely: "With an American girl swimming the English Channel on Friday night, and an American choir from Cleveland, Ohio, landing winners through a sea of song at the Welsh National Eisteddfod at Swansea on Saturday afternoon, what about these 'right little tight little islands of ours'?"<sup>243</sup>

In fact, despite the prevailing rhetoric of families, there was a great deal of criticism of foreigners in 1926. Generally, much of it was in the form of good-natured grumbling, whether it was about the victory of the American choir, or about the general character of the visiting Welsh exiles. There remained, or perhaps there was an

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<sup>242</sup> "The victory of the Cleveland, USA, Choir in the chief male voice contest must of necessity create the same feeling as was created years ago, when English choirs captured the chief choral prizes." Editorial, *Western Mail*, Monday 9 August 1926, 6.

<sup>243</sup> "Our post Bag", *South Wales Daily Post*, Monday 9 August 1926, 2.

increasing amount of, separation from these “Exiles”, and the location of them as separate from the Welsh in Wales. Although they were still welcomed into the bosom of the Welsh family, more and more they were the “Other”. Additionally, the farther removed these visitors were ideologically and generationally from Wales, the more they were conceived of as different.<sup>244</sup> The inevitable differences were ridiculed, often in a congenial way, but occasionally with a degree of maliciousness or bitterness. Some of the jokes and quips on the platform were at the expense of and aimed at the large numbers of foreign visitors. Similarly, many of the newspapers’ “titbits” were anecdotes from around the *Maes*, sarcastically relating encounters with Americans. The *South Wales Daily Post* related one such “Yankee Tale”:

The ‘Cocktail’ Tongue – Horn-Rimmed Glasses, Fat Cigars And Chewing Gum: One impression quickly gained was that if the tourists have followed, or succumbed, to the dictates of American fashion, they have not forgotten their native tongue. They showed a general preference for ‘Yr Hen Iaith’. It was a striking picture. Most of the tourists wore horn-rimmed glasses, while the men were attired in the approved Yank style. There they were, with their broad rimmed hats, suits of varying hue and striking design, one moment, in American drawl calling, ‘Come here, kid; say, this some place, gee!’ ... and then drifting back to the vernacular, which they spoke excellently. ... Many chewed fat cigars, while a couple of feminine jaws wagged busily, unimpeachable evidence of the chewing gum habit. However, it was the men who looked most American. ... Although the English of the tourists was crammed with Americanisms, one could, nevertheless, detect a trace of the Welsh accent. This is not surprising, in view of the fact that they speak the vernacular so well. It was a kind of a ‘cocktail’ tongue, a mixture of good and bad, with a kick and variety that made it entertaining to listen to.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> For example, the loss of a Welsh accent was a significant marker of foreign status.

<sup>245</sup> *South Wales Daily Post*, Monday 26 July 1926, 8.

The following week, the *Post* ran a similar story in which the American character's accent was similarly stressed.<sup>246</sup> This preoccupation with the language and a stereotyped representation of American ignorance and naivety was common in contemporary newspaper reports.

In these accounts the Welsh Americans have fallen prey to a lifestyle that was not alluded to in altogether positive terms. The remnants of a Welsh accent seem to be the only saving grace for these emigrants-turned-home. Furthermore, the implied difference between the Welsh and members of the diaspora is significant because not only does it suggest that the Welsh emigrants were not perceived of as Welsh in the same way as the Welsh in Wales, but also because it reaffirms a positive sense of Welsh identity in comparison to the American, or expatriate, "Other". One newspaper account was particularly disdainful of Americans and American culture:

We are aware that the vast majority of Americans are as decent as the vast majority of British people. But it is utterly beyond dispute that in the law-abidingness the proportions who break the law are incomparably greater (minorities though they are in each case) in the states than in Britain.<sup>247</sup>

Interestingly, in the above report, the Americans were contrasted to the British, not the Welsh. They were the "Other", whereas the Welsh were located as part of the British Metropole.

The ship carrying the Welsh American contingent across the Atlantic in 1926 bore a Welsh dragon flag. Upon arrival in Swansea, this flag was presented to the city, to

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<sup>246</sup> "I have just heard the prize Eisteddfod story. One of the Scythia pilgrims met a Swansea man in Oxford-street on Monday morning, and asked where the Eisteddfod Pavilion was. 'Have you been to the Park?' Said the Swansea man. 'Yes.' 'Well, didn't you see a large building there?' 'What? That gosh-darned chicken run!' The Yank, however, was beaten at his own game, for the Swansea man answered, 'That is not a chicken run; that is the pay-box for the Australian match.'" "Impresionist", *South Wales Daily Post*, Monday 2 August 1926, 7.

<sup>247</sup> Editorial, *South Wales Daily Post*, Monday 9 August 1926, 2.

be flown over the Eisteddfod pavilion during the festival. The symbolism of diasporic unity was blatant. Despite an increasing generational distance, the links between the diaspora and Wales are still clearly evident throughout the century. In 1948 *Undeb y Cymry ar Wasgar* was formed to unite the people in Wales and the diaspora.<sup>248</sup> In February 2003, the BBC noted that St. David's Day is being recognised in certain "Welsh" areas of America, "in honour of ... links with Wales".<sup>249</sup> Ironically, despite the widespread celebration of St David's Day across the globe, a campaign to make 1 March a bank holiday in Wales failed last year.

These "Exiles", or the *Cymry ar Wasgar* as they were called, became part of a broader sense of Welshness. As James Clifford says, a diaspora's "anti-essentialist, multiply located forms are in tension with the dominant claims of the nation".<sup>250</sup> The identity of the fringe members of a diasporic community challenged notions of space and time, de-centring the identity of the Metropole. They were simultaneously the same and different, and consequently challenged extant notions of Welshness that were based in geographical and ethnic markers of identity. The Welsh diaspora was a group with multiple and complex identities that were constantly shifting between being "outsiders"

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<sup>248</sup> "Mudiad yw hwn, yn ymgorffori Undeb y Cymry ar Wasgar a sefydlwyd yn 1948, sy'n creu a chynnal dolen gydiol rhwng Cymru a phobl o drâs Gymreig a chyfeillion Cymru ym mhedwar ban y byd." [http://www.bbc.co.uk/cymru/ble\\_ar\\_y\\_we/gwybodaeth1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cymru/ble_ar_y_we/gwybodaeth1.shtml) The organisation later became "Cymru a'r Byd". Also in 1948, the International Eisteddfod was established in Llangollen.

<sup>249</sup> "Americans mark St David's Day", [www.bbc.co.uk/wales](http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales) (Tuesday, 11 February, 2003, 15:41 GMT): "The motion from Republican Senator Charles Lemmond, claimed that Pennsylvania, population 12m, had the highest concentration of Welsh people outside the UK. ... Senator Lemmond's motion in the state capital Harrisburg said: "St David's feast day is celebrated by Welshmen throughout the world." The American state a list of areas around the globe which mark the Welsh national day with official and unofficial celebrations including Patagonia in Argentina, California, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Last year, Welsh first minister Rhodri Morgan celebrated the national day in New York with the city's St David's Society.

<sup>250</sup> See James Clifford, *Routes: travel and translation in the late twentieth century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Jeremy Segrott, 2001, 19-20.

and “insiders”.<sup>251</sup> James Clifford says that “experiences of unsettlement [and] loss ... produce discrepant temporalities – broken histories that trouble the linear, progressivist narratives of nation states.”<sup>252</sup> In this way, then, the diasporic Welsh identity was in contrast to one that is based on land and location, as was discussed in chapter two. Although both have the potential to shift and change, one was based in a fixed entity while the other was constantly bumping into other signifiers and splintering off.

Further, as has been demonstrated, the Welsh diaspora challenged the extant notion of binary divisions within a diaspora. The Welsh were simultaneously the peripheral “Other” (in comparison to England/Britain), and the Centre of a Metropolitan binary. Where there is a reflexivity of identity through movement and migration, the concept of the “Other” and of binary opposition, while used in the rhetoric, is less helpful in the analysis. Brah says that “there are multiple others embedded within and across binaries, albeit one or more may be accorded priority within a given discursive formation”.<sup>253</sup> Homi Bhabha’s idea of hybridity is useful with reference to the Welsh diaspora because it allows for a fluidity of identity that is more appropriate to the reflexivity of Welsh identity.<sup>254</sup> Although used discursively to separate and indicate identity, in reality there was much borrowing of identifiable traits and a great deal of “fuzziness” of boundaries of identity.

Thus, the identity of the Welsh diaspora, of these returned “Exiles”, challenged what it meant to be Welsh in Wales. By returning home, these members of the Welsh

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<sup>251</sup> Jeremy Segrott, 2001, 9.

<sup>252</sup> James Clifford, 1997, 264

<sup>253</sup> Avtar Brah, 1996, 182-3.

<sup>254</sup> Homi Bhabha, “Culture’s In-Between” in Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gray, ed., *Questions of Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 53-60.

diaspora strengthened and extended their national and kinship ties to Wales.<sup>255</sup> Certainly, the reception given to these returning migrants was remarkable. It not only signified the close ties between individual communities in Wales, but also the strength of the Welsh identity, that it outlasted ideological and physical separation brought on by decades, or even generations, abroad. However, through their travels around the “Welsh” world, they were constructing a duality of cultures; these visitors were at once Welsh and foreign.<sup>256</sup> What has become evident through the discursive analysis of the Eisteddfod, is that ultimately, out of this fluidity and change, evolved varying senses of “Welshness” – all of which were more solidly and particularly “Welsh”.

### Conclusions

Each of these concepts has reflected a different aspect of Welshness during the twentieth century: the Celticism of the Pan-Celtic movement, the emphasis on Britishness through the International visitors to the Eisteddfod, the Welsh diaspora, and the *gwerin*. The above discussions were representative of discussions throughout the twentieth century. They contributed to the dominant threads of Welsh identity discourse and were evidence of a shift away from racial or geographic essentialism to more malleable cultural concepts of identity. Some preliminary conclusions can be made from these discussions.

Firstly, throughout the twentieth century, certain recognisable groups all identified themselves as Welsh. However, tensions existed between inclusivity and exclusivity, based on perceived racial, cultural and geographic signifiers. Secondly, these different groups each had different functions in terms of locating Welshness in the

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<sup>255</sup> John Archer Jackson, *The Irish in Britain* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), 158-160.

<sup>256</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 15.



twentieth century: the representatives of other Celtic nations situated Welshness within Pan-Celtic ideas; the international visitors of the Second World War located Wales within a broader international cultural community and emphasised Welshness as part of Britishness; and the representatives of the diaspora and the discourse on the *gwerin* both emphasised the uniqueness of *Welshness*. Thirdly, the relative importance of each of these different groups, and functions that they had in the construction of Welsh identity, changed over time due to external factors, such as war and labour issues, and internal factors, such as a gradual shift away from a racially based identity to a culturally based one. Finally, although specific aspects of Welsh identity have changed during the course of the century, the central core idea of the *gwerin* remains strong and a powerful component of Welshness in the twenty-first century.

These ideas link to work by Anthony Cohen, who emphasizes the functional role of a community in the construction of identity. A community is a group of people with something in common that distinguishes them in significant ways from members of other putative groups.<sup>257</sup> There is always similarity and difference because community is defined relatively against an "Other". The difficulty arises in an increasingly mixed society, where definitions of "Otherness" become blurred.<sup>258</sup> Further, the boundaries of a community are primarily ideological, called into being by exigencies of social interaction, around meanings assigned by individuals; they are symbolically constructed.<sup>259</sup> Homi Bhabha's discussion of the inter-active narration of nations is relevant in this context because of the fluidity involved in identity construction. Identity

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<sup>257</sup> See Anthony Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London: Tavistock Publishing Ltd., 1985), 12.

<sup>258</sup> Homi Bhabha, 1996, 4.

<sup>259</sup> Anthony Cohen, 1985, 12.

construction is reflexive and mutually constitutive of its composite elements. The boundaries of the national community are ambivalent, “ ‘containing’ thresholds of meaning that must be crossed, erased and translated in the process of cultural production.”<sup>260</sup>

Indeed, the widely accepted post-modern idea that Welshness is a created phenomenon lends itself to the connected concept that it can be performed – on “stages” such as the Eisteddfod – and that individuals (and groups) have the agency to shape their own identities. Martin Singh says that the way some people think “of their culture as encapsulated is ... discrete performances, which they could exhibit to visitors and to themselves. The performances [become] the elementary constituents of the culture and the ultimate units of observation.”<sup>261</sup>

The interaction in Wales of these notions of personhood and “Otherness”, and the ways in which the roles of various groups interacted and functioned discursively in the construction of the broader Welsh community, have been explored in this chapter. The next chapter will focus on structural aspects of the Eisteddfod and how they represented aspects of Welshness through their multifaceted performances.

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<sup>260</sup> Homi Bhabha, 1996, 4.

<sup>261</sup> Milton Singer, *When a Great Tradition Modernizes* (New York: Praeger, 1972), 71. Performance theory will be discussed later.

## Chapter Four

### Structure and the Performance of Identity through the Eisteddfod I:

#### Formal Ceremonial

The differentiation between ritualization and performance as distinct modalities of action lay in the conscious intent of performers; 'Ritualization' ... refers not to a type of event but to the attitude of consciousness with which it is carried out. ... A person submits to ritual activity in such a way as to 'remove the sovereignty of herself as agent'.<sup>1</sup>

Having established the setting and the actors, it is now necessary to discuss the actual performance of identity occurring at the Eisteddfod during the twentieth century. This chapter investigates the ritualised performances on the Eisteddfod platform. Performances are concerned with "the creation of presence ... [and] through these presences, they alter moods, social relations, bodily dispositions and states of mind".<sup>2</sup> This results in the construction of identity. There are many types of performance which were evident on the symbolic stage of the National Eisteddfod.

Returning to the above quotation from Edward Schieffelin, identity is something that is actively constructed and performed. Performance can refer to overtly ritualistic and theatrical activities, "enacted as intentional expressive productions in established local genres".<sup>3</sup> This ritualized performance is the performance of a complex sequence of symbolic acts, such as the Gorsedd ceremonials and competitions.<sup>4</sup> However,

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<sup>1</sup> Edward L. Schieffelin, "Problematizing performance", in Felicia Hughes-Freeland, ed., *Ritual, Performance, Media* (London: Routledge, 1998), 196. See also Caroline Humphrey and James Alexander Laidlaw, *The archetypal actions of ritual: an essay on ritual as action illustrated by the Jain rite of worship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 6-10.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Schieffelin, 1998, 194.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 194-195; Richard Bauman, *Story, Performance, Event* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1992), 75; Levi-Strauss defines ritual as "paralanguage". (Daniel de Coppet, "Introduction", in de Coppet, Daniel, ed., *Understanding Rituals* (London: Routledge, 1992), 1.

performance does not always consist of complicated and preconceived ritualistic performances, but can constitute so-called “ordinary” behaviours, such as participatory interaction on the *Maes*; it is an essential human characteristic in society. Schieffelin says that there “is something fundamentally performative about human being-in-the-world. ... Culture and social reality are fundamentally articulated in the world through performative activity.”<sup>5</sup> The manifold aspects of performance jointly contributed towards the construction of a particular Welsh identity at the Eisteddfod.

The difference and difficulty arises in considering performative behaviours as a result of the question of the intentionality of the performance. Performance may not be as formalised as ceremonial, but it is still *deliberate*.<sup>6</sup> However, as Schieffelin says, the differentiation between ritualization and performance as distinct modalities of action lays in the conscious intent of performers: “ ‘Ritualization’ ... refers not to a type of event but to the attitude of consciousness with which it is carried out ... [A] person submits to ritual activity in such a way as to ‘remove the sovereignty of herself as agent’.”<sup>7</sup> While this concept is problematic, particularly when considered in relation to a discussion of the agency of performers, it is a useful method of approaching the issue of the multiplicity of agents, performances and identities at an institution like the Eisteddfod. In this way, the entire Eisteddfod is a ritual carried out by the Eisteddfodwyr; their performance of identity therein being played out on different levels. Indeed, there is a different level of consciousness for those who are acting out ritualistic behaviour – whether it is a choral competition or the crowning ceremony, and those who are merely wandering the *Maes* eating ice creams and browsing through the

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<sup>5</sup> Edward Schieffelin, 1998, 195.

<sup>6</sup> James Peacock, 1990, 208; Felicia Hughes-Freeland, “Introduction”, in Felicia Hughes-Freeland, ed., *Ritual, Performance and Media* (London: Routledge, 1998), 6.

various stands. Although both are deliberate acts, one type is ordinary behaviour, while one type is being consciously *performed* for others. Yet, it can certainly be said of the Eisteddfod that:

Every act has an expressive dimension: it reveals something (and accomplishes something) about the actor and the situation. It is 'read' by other participants ... [and it] is inherently a contingent process. In some part this resides in the socio-historical circumstances in which it takes place and to which it relates.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the historical and sociological context determines the interpretation of the identity performed.

To summarise, then, whether comprised of the more formal acts that occur on Eisteddfod stages, or the less formal everyday behaviour of the Eisteddfodwyr that walk through the turnstiles, performance embodies ideology, and is thus key to understanding the expression of identities at the National Eisteddfod. The discursive and structural features of the Eisteddfod have combined to create a site of public performance and ritual that illustrates varying aspects of Welsh identities.

The remaining chapters focus on different aspects of Eisteddfodic performance. They are divided into two sections, based on the intentionality and consciousness of performance: "ritual" and routine, informal "performance". Chapter four will be a discussion of "formal" ritualistic behaviour. The discussion focuses on the ritualistic aspects of the Eisteddfod and will include the Gorsedd ceremonial and aspects of the Eisteddfod that were consciously performed, in established ritualized modes, on a public stage. It will focus particularly on those that were controversial in their performance and construction of identity. The first section will discuss the Gorsedd and some of the primary rhetorical elements that contribute to the ceremonial performance

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<sup>7</sup> Edward Schieffelin, 1998, 196; Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw, 1994, 6-10.

of the Gorsedd, mainly a sense of history and religiosity. The remainder of the chapter will discuss challenges to the Gorsedd's hegemonic control of Eisteddfodic ritual, such as the introduction of dancing and other award ceremonies.

Chapter five will discuss the "informal" behaviour of performance. The "acts" discussed in relation to this level of performance are essentially much less structured, and includes the various unofficial and casual acts on the *Maes* and the structure of the festival, from the displays on the field to discussions of alcohol and the influence of popular culture. It should enlarge upon the understanding of agency among a segment of the Welsh population, and provide a greater sense of how some people conceived of Welshness throughout the century. Chapter six discusses the performance of a political identity at the Eisteddfod, and bridges the gaps between the more formalized ritualistic political protests and the less formal discussions that constituted the remainder of performance of Welshness. Together, these chapters will discuss various aspects of the performance of identity exhibited at the Eisteddfod, to determine the boundaries of that Welshness in the twentieth century.

### **The Gorsedd and Eisteddfodic Ritual**

Last week 'Heddwch' held her Court at the Eisteddfod, attended by her hierarchy of bards robed in gorgeous apparel. These offered her a service of stately and elaborate ritual. And the display of national ritual enchanted Shon and Shan. It spoke to them of the possibility of a great Pan-Celtic life; they felt that they were standing upon the threshold of a statelier and nobler world. The magic of the Eisteddfod ritual made them forget their own jerry-built villages in the vision of the things that may be. This week Shon and Shan will meet again to demonstrate against other people's ritual. And the bards will be with them as the

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<sup>8</sup> Edward Schieffelin, 1998, 197.

unclothed and frenzied servants of war. A pitiable transformation!<sup>9</sup>

The ceremonial aspects of the National Eisteddfod referred to above were central to the images of Wales the festival portrayed to both the people of Wales and of the world, and thus key to the identity being performed therein. Certainly, strong elements of various aspects of Welshness were evident at the Eisteddfod, from choral singing to a chapel-based religious undertone. However, much of this ceremonial image was based in a sense of antiquity and Celtic heritage. As Graham Day says, the contemporary Gorsedd ceremonial was “intended to put the Welsh in touch with their most deep-seated roots”.<sup>10</sup>

It has been well established that the twentieth-century Eisteddfod, and its related Gorsedd ceremonial, was the relatively recent invention of Iolo Morganwg.<sup>11</sup> The late eighteenth century was a fertile ground, ready to be planted with creative seeds that Iolo was only too ready to provide. The era “witnessed a revival of interest in ancient bardic and druidic lore, and this helped to create an atmosphere in which Iolo’s Gorsedd appeared quite plausible and acceptable”.<sup>12</sup> He sought to provide an authentic, suitably “ancient” alternative to an increasingly industrial Wales that would assert the primacy of Welsh “traditional” culture. The result was the construction of enigmatic druidic ambassadors to Wales’ past. This was, as Hugh Kearney says, “a new Welsh past which

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<sup>9</sup> R. David, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 26 July 1899, 5.

<sup>10</sup> “As a vision, the Celticist version of Wales represents most clearly a tourist view, aimed towards outsiders...” Graham Day, *Making Sense of Wales: A Sociological Perspective* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002), 21.

<sup>11</sup> In 1792 Iolo held the first Gorsedd ceremony on Primrose Hill in London. Ironically, he used stones he had taken out of his pocket to create the “mystical” stone circle.

<sup>12</sup> See R. Paul Evans, “Mythology and Tradition”, in *The Remaking of Wales in the Eighteenth Century* Trevor Herbert and Gareth Elwyn Jones, eds, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988), 153. See also Sam Smiles, *The Image of Antiquity: Ancient Britain and The Romantic Imagination* (London: Yale University Press, 1994); Stuart Piggott, *The Druids* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), 13.

ignored the complexities of an earlier ‘British’ past”.<sup>13</sup> The resulting Gorsedd and revised Bardic tradition became one of the more popular components of the twentieth-century eisteddfodau.

The National Eisteddfod benefited as an institution from the Victorian emphasis on self-improvement and moral development. Although it faltered in the 1870s, it was firmly re-established by the 1880s, and by the turn of the century was the primary cultural institution in Wales. The Gorsedd of Bards and the Eisteddfod had been linked together since the 1819 Carmarthen Eisteddfod. As the Eisteddfod movement gained momentum in the second half of the nineteenth century, however, more concern was focused on the ceremonial attached to the cultural festival. In 1880 the National Eisteddfod Association was created to enable the festival to be held on a permanent basis, and in 1888 a parallel association was established to “regulate and improve” the Gorsedd.<sup>14</sup> Remarkably, although the nineteenth-century Eisteddfod was a bilingual institution, tending towards a predisposition for English, the *Gorsedd y Beirdd* was strongly Welsh-language.

Concern over the ceremonial aspects of the Eisteddfod was evident in the Victorian period. In Cardiff in 1883 it was commented that the Gorsedd ceremonies were held in a field adjoining the Taff Vale Railway Company’s engine shed. According to Dillwyn Miles:

A commentator remarked that it was regrettable that the Gorsedd, ‘one of the few links which bind the Eisteddfod, as we know it, to a remote and honoured past’ should have been held ‘amid such incongruous surroundings’, and complained that ‘the charm of an ancient and impressive rite was destroyed by the screeching of

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<sup>13</sup> “In so doing they were providing a Welsh equivalent of similar cultural revivals in the Scottish Lowlands and in Ireland.” And indeed, around the world. Hugh Kearney, 1980, 138.

<sup>14</sup> Prys Morgan, “Archbishops and Archdruids: Is the Most Reverend Rowan Williams a pagan?”, *The Historian* no. 76 (Winter 2002), 32.



railway locomotives on the one side and by the many hideous noises of a show-ground on the other'.<sup>15</sup>

The concern over the use of an inappropriate location bespoke an increasing interest in the ritualistic aspects of the Gorsedd and National Eisteddfod. Various ritualistic features that are now recognised as part of the Eisteddfod “institution” were implemented during this period. For example, the Grand Sword was presented to the Gorsedd in the late nineteenth century, as was the *Corn Gwlad*.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, as Prys Morgan says, another feature of the Gorsedd at this time was “the appearance from 1894 onwards of the fantastically colourful costumes and accoutrements of the Gorsedd”.<sup>17</sup> A contemporary report of the late nineteenth-century National Eisteddfod stated that the “picturesque appearance of the platform” during the chairing ceremony had been “considerably heightened since the [recent] introduction of Gorseddic robes”.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the level of ritualistic ceremonial was actively being altered during the height of late-Victorian pageantry, as the dawn of a new century approached. This associated heightened level of spectacle that marked a new epoch in the performance of identity associated with the Eisteddfod and with Wales, was evident at the Cardiff Eisteddfod in 1899.

Several factors were central to this increased ritualisation in the performance of Welsh identity in the late nineteenth century. First of all there was much emphasis on the various elements of that ceremonial, both in the press and the official discourse. These accounts were concerned particularly with any associated aspects of grandeur. They also

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<sup>15</sup> Dillwyn Miles, 1978, 65-66.

<sup>16</sup> In 1890, Mr. G. W. Taylor of the Colonial Institute intended to present the Archdruid with “a robe worthy of his high office.” The Grand Sword had already been presented by Philip Yorke of Erddig, and a *Corn Gwlad* by the Mayor of Pwllheli. *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>17</sup> Prys Morgan, 2002, 32.

emphasised a sense of the historicity of these new rituals, and a subsequent implicit emphasis on “traditions” and an impression of continuity to the past.<sup>19</sup> Although the Gorsedd was only just over a century old, and the ceremonial was still in the process of being constructed, links to the past were emphasised; this was perhaps a result of its relative newness. The discursive aspects combined in an attempt to build up the ceremonies into something more real, substantial, and “traditional”. In fact, this discursive “invention of tradition” was evident each time changes to the ritual aspects of the festival were made or suggested. The continuing discourse highlighted the ephemeral nature of Welsh traditions, and the consequent threat any alterations meant to a sense of cultural intransience and permanence.

### **A Rhetorical and Real Construction of Grandeur**

Regardless of their invented nature, the Gorsedd rituals were among the most popular of the Eisteddfodic events. Much of the newspaper space allocated to coverage of the Eisteddfod in 1899 was devoted to descriptions of the ceremonies. The *South Wales Echo* declared: “From a bardic standpoint this, with the crowning ceremony, is the piece de resistance [sic] of the week. ... The bards are already in a ferment of excitement over the event.”<sup>20</sup> When the Chair was withheld that year there was great public dismay because of the apparent lack of talent, but also because the public was “deprived” of the spectacle. “Awstin” described public sentiment in the pavilion:

As to the eisteddfod proceedings in the pavilion, one cannot help remarking that spectacular display was not wanting, for, although there was no churning ceremony. ... The ‘vacant chair’ incident

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<sup>18</sup> This had been designed by Professor Herkomer, in accordance with Iolo Morganwg’s injunction that they should be of a uniform and symbolic colour. [establishing the colour system]... The Grand Sword was also designed by Herkomer. Dillwyn Miles, 1978, 76.

<sup>19</sup> For similar discussions of contemporary ritual, see John Ellis, 1998, 391-418.

<sup>20</sup> *South Wales Echo*, Wednesday 12 July 1899, 4.

may be looked upon as depriving the audience of an imposing ceremony, but ... the standard of excellence in literary and poetic merit must not be sacrificed even for the sake of an imposing show. ... The mere fact that the crown was to be placed on the head of a representative, and of the real winner, naturally robbed the ceremony of much of its interest.<sup>21</sup>

Interestingly, very similar sentiments were echoed in Cardiff in 1960, when the Chair was again withheld:

A disappointed crowd walked quietly from a packed pavilion at the National Eisteddfod in Cardiff after the bardic chair had been withheld. ... Then slowly, with a deep feeling of disappointment, the audience stood to sing the Welsh national anthem. A ceremony which began with colour and great expectancy ended in sadness.<sup>22</sup>

Throughout the twentieth century, the ritualistic pageantry was consistently one of the biggest attractions to the National Eisteddfod. Eisteddfodic ceremonies were taken very seriously. J. M. Maclean said he was a “stranger to the Welsh people”, but he “was certainly not one of those superior persons who thought that the rites and ceremonies practised at such gatherings were all mere foolishness. (Hear, hear.)”<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the media discourse on the pageantry enhanced the pomp and grandness of the Gorsedd ceremonies, arguably increasing both their popularity and their ritualistic nature.

Grandeur and pomp were the fashion at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>24</sup> It was something about which the Eisteddfod organisers and commentators boasted. Whether the rhetoric was a marketing tool used to increase ticket sales among the newspaper-reading Welsh public, or merely a creative outlet for descriptions of the Gorsedd and Eisteddfod, it stressed the splendour and dignity of their ritualistic

<sup>21</sup> “Awstin”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 5.

<sup>22</sup> Lyn Owen Rees, *Western Mail*, Friday 5 August 1960, 4.

<sup>23</sup> “Our Own Reporters”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 5.

<sup>24</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 1983; Mark Girouard, *The return to Camelot : chivalry and the English gentleman* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1981).

aspects. An 1899 editorial in the *Western Mail* claimed that: “To-day commences what is unquestionably the grandest eisteddfodic gathering of modern times.”<sup>25</sup> Further, the sense of spectacle was increased by the use of certain rhetorical tools and styles.

In this context, the language of the actual installation of new members into the organisation of the Gorsedd was significant. In 1899, people were “invested” and “ordained” into the “Gorsedd Order”.<sup>26</sup> This rhetoric was of chivalric courtliness and religious orders, and the underlying nuances produced powerful evocations of honour and reverence for these members of the Gorsedd. The rhetoric of royalty was employed in a similar manner and to similar effect: “Lord Windsor ... stood in his white robe as a druid like King Saul among the prophets of old.”<sup>27</sup> The Archdruid Hwfa Mon was “the Czar of the Gorsedd”.<sup>28</sup> The *South Wales Echo* commented:

The opportunity was unparalleled for an effective spectacular display. ... As Archdruid, surrounded by the bards of Wales, he commands a position of unquestioned influence. He is monarch of all he surveys, his word there being none to dispute; but to preside with dignity over an international gathering of the kind witnessed to-day was manifestly a difficult thing to do.<sup>29</sup>

This sense of the Archdruid ruling with his lords (the Gorsedd) over his people (the Eisteddfodwyr) was a powerful rhetorical allusion, and consistent with the overtly pro-royalist sentiment in contemporary Britain and Wales.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, it reflected the composition of the Eisteddfod notables and elite. The composition of these Eisteddfod

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<sup>25</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Tuesday 18 July 1899, 5.

<sup>26</sup> “Lord Windsor was invested ... as ‘Ifor Morganwg’. His Lordship said that he was proud to have the honour of a Gorsedd Order bestowed upon him.” (“Awstin”, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 5); “Sir Lawrence Alma Tadema ... said that the investiture could not but be an honour for any man who lived for art. (Applause.)” (Ibid.); “Morien”, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 5.

<sup>27</sup> “Morien”, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 5.

<sup>28</sup> “Pavilion Gossip”, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 6.

<sup>29</sup> *South Wales Echo*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 4.

<sup>30</sup> For a discussion of Welsh support for the Royal family, particularly in relation to the Investiture of the Prince of Wales in 1911, see John S. Ellis, 1998 and 1996.

dignitaries in the early period of the century included many peers of the realm.<sup>31</sup> It reflected a more class-conscious society.

Related to the discursive emphasis on chivalric imagery was an employment of picturesque and majestic imagery. Similar to the ways in which courtly imagery and symbols were used to enforce a distinguished and subtly grand tone to the festival, pastoral images were used to lend a sense of drama to the Gorsedd ritual. The idea of the picturesque was popularised through the press. Indeed, the language used in relation to the Eisteddfod generally, and to the ceremonies in particular, was remarkable because of the ritualistic tone it set. The Picturesque element was fundamental to the Eisteddfod at the dawn of the twentieth century, as it had been a century earlier. The *Western Mail* warned that: "The only way to make the Eisteddfod interesting, while retaining its picturesqueness, is to uphold as much as possible its traditions and its Welsh spirit and character."<sup>32</sup> The setting for the ceremonies was described as charming, with appropriately placed architectural remains adding to the scene being created by members of the Gorsedd: "The picturesque Gorsedd of the Bards of the isle of Britain will be opened on the banks of the Taff, in one of the most beautiful parks in the country, and in sight of the ruins of the monastery of the Grey Friars."<sup>33</sup> The *South Wales Echo* echoed the evident quaintness and sense of spectacle:

To-day has been so crowded with incidents, picturesque, dramatic, and heart-inspiring that the day will long stand out in the annals of the borough as among the most remarkable in its history. ... [T]he festival inaugurated to-day is something more than a mere National Eisteddfod of the orthodox type. ... No less successful was the spectacle witnessed on the Pavilion platform in the afternoon. ... [T]here was so much that was novel and picturesque and attractive – not to say thrilling – in the ceremony

<sup>31</sup> Such as Lord Windsor, Lord Castletown, et cetera.

<sup>32</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Monday 24 July 1899, 4.

<sup>33</sup> "Golof", *Western Mail*, Wednesday 12 July 1899, 6.

of the joining of the divided sword, emblematic of the re-union of the sea-divided Celts, that in the whole of the vast assembly congregated in the Pavilion ... there was not heard a whisper of discontent.<sup>34</sup>

The media discourse also emphasised the natural world. Often the press printed the language of the ceremonies verbatim. For example, they were conducted “under the sun, the eye of light”. Further, because many of the contemporary newspaper correspondents were themselves members of the Gorsedd and Bards, the language used in the press was remarkably poetic and extravagant. For example, “Morien” wrote in the *Western Mail*: “The morrow came in splendour. The sun shone in an almost cloudless sky, and poured down dazzling sunshine, revealing the gorgeous dyes of the fields, woods, and floral riches of the month of July ... leaving nothing to be desired.”<sup>35</sup> Mrs Hemans’ aforementioned poem echoes these pastoral tones:

... where wild Nature girth herself with power:  
 They met where streams flash’d bright from rock caves.  
 They met where woods made moan o’er warriors’ graves.  
 And where the torrent’s rainbow spray was cast,  
 And where dark lakes were heaving to the blast,  
 And midst the eternal cliffs whose strength defied.  
 And the oaks breathed mysterious murmurs round.  
 There throng’d the’ inspired of yore: - on plain or height.  
 In the sun’s face, beneath the eye of light.  
 And, baring unto heaven each noble head,  
 Stood in the circle, where none else might tread.<sup>36</sup>

These picturesque images painted with words powerful visions in the minds of the readers, and propagated the idea that the Gorsedd provided a continuous link to the Druids of ancient Britain, who themselves frequently were linked to the natural world.<sup>37</sup> It was based both on the descriptions of the natural world and the sense of drama created

<sup>34</sup> *South Wales Echo*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 4.

<sup>35</sup> “Morien”, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 5.

<sup>36</sup> the Cambro-Irish poetess, Mrs. Hemans, quoted by “Awstin”, *Western Mail*, Monday 17 July 1899, 5.

rhetorically through the discourse. Indeed, the use of picturesque imagery in the newspaper accounts of the Gorsedd ceremonial added to the sense of ritualised performance. They were discursively setting the scene for the physical performance, both of the ritualised behaviour of the *Gorseddogion*, but also for the less formalized performance of identity of the majority of Eisteddfodwyr and Welsh people.

The grandeur of the Eisteddfod also was represented through the way in which it was constructed to be particularly ornate and replete with symbols of Welshness. The language used in the Gorsedd rituals was itself full of majestic allusions and descriptive terms. It is held under “the eye of light”, with the “sword of peace”. In this context, the equipment, much of it recently redesigned in the decade prior to the Cardiff Eisteddfod, was remarked upon. The *Hirlas Horn*, presented by Lord Tredegar in the 1890s, had a Japanese dragon emblem on it.<sup>38</sup> Overall, the reception was positive. The *South Wales Echo* described the ceremonies:

In both the crowning and chairing ceremonies the Archdruid and the bards will appear in their robes on the platform, the sheathed sword to be used on the occasion being the handsomely bejewelled and appropriately designed weapon which Professor Herkomer will present to the Gorsedd on the morning of Tuesday. By the way, this sword has already arrived at Cardiff and for the remainder of the week will be on view at the Cardiff Museum.<sup>39</sup>

It was significant that the recently crafted sword had already been elevated to the status of national treasure, ensuring it a home in Cardiff’s museum – what would become the National Museum of Wales in a few years time. The sword itself continued the Eisteddfodic emphasis on grand design and splendid decoration; it was described as

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<sup>37</sup> Stuart Piggott, 1968.

<sup>38</sup> *Western Mail*, Tuesday 18 July 1899, 6.

<sup>39</sup> *South Wales Echo*, Wednesday 12 July 1899, 4.

“magnificent”.<sup>40</sup> It was ornately decorated, and adorned with symbolic literary and artistic allusions:

[T]he large natural crystal set in the hilt of the sword of ceremony represented mystery. Within the crystal were drilled the three sacred bardic lines supposed to be the first attempt to write the word Jehovah, the dragon guarding them both. The handguard was of wrought steel, the dragon and handle were of copper gilt, and the scabbard being of wood was symbolical of peace. On the five bands that encircled the scabbard the following lines were embossed: ‘Y Gwir yn Erbyn y Byd’, ‘Duw a Phob Daioni’, ‘Calon Wrth Galon’, ‘A Laddo a Leddir’, ‘Iesu nad Gamwaith’.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, the Archdruid’s crown of oak leaves and acorns had “a copy of an ancient British breastplate and a crystal-headed sceptre to go with it”.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, all of the themes related to the Gorsedd and Eisteddfodic ritual were expressed in the symbolic figure of the “sword of peace”: religion, elaborate design, nature, and national emblems and an associated sense of heritage. Thus, beyond the aforementioned newspaper discourse of the ceremonial accoutrements that historicized them, the pieces themselves were fashioned and decorated in such a way as to create an idea of the elaborateness and majesty of the Gorsedd.<sup>43</sup>

The physical performance of the ceremony was itself rather grand and extravagant. The Gorsedd rituals were labelled as “meetings of great magnificence”.<sup>44</sup> The members of the Gorsedd wore ceremonial robes. Further, trumpeters, “summoning”

<sup>40</sup> *South Wales Echo*, Tuesday 18 July 1899, 4.

<sup>41</sup> [‘The truth against the world; God and all goodness; Heart to heart; He who kills shall be killed; Jesus let no oppression persist: the mottoes of the five provinces of Wales: Morgannwg and Gwent, Gwynedd, Powys, and Dyfed’] *South Wales Echo*, Tuesday 18 July 1899, 4.

<sup>42</sup> Dillwyn Miles, 1978, 76.

<sup>43</sup> The melodramatic repetition of the cry for peace (“A Oes Heddwch”) also added to the spectacle of the event. What is more, the Gorsedd procession paraded through some of the more important civic areas of Cardiff *en route* to the Gorsedd stones. “Order of Procession to the Gorsedd Circle”, programme printed by the Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales (Cardiff 1899).

<sup>44</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Tuesday 18 July 1899, 5.



the Bards from the “four corners of the land”, contributed to the atmosphere.<sup>45</sup> There were often impressive processions before and during the Eisteddfod, usually including local civic organisations and representatives. In 1899, for example, the Gorsedd Procession included mounted police, a brass band, and members of the Cardiff Corporation – as well as Eisteddfodic and Gorsedd officials. Many members of the Gorsedd and critics in the press were equally critical of the relative *lack* of attention paid to pageantry by the members of the Gorsedd. The *Western Mail* expressed disappointment in the negligence of the bards regarding their deportment and appearance: “Many of the bards, we are sorry to say, were again lax in the wearing of their complete costume.”<sup>46</sup> However, not everyone was disparaging of the *Gorseddogion*, particularly in 1899 when many of the innovations to the pomp and ceremony were still fresh and appreciated. Count Plunkett commented on the change he noticed from earlier years: “The Gorsedd impressed me very much, especially as it is now freed entirely from any grotesque element which may have originally been associated with it, such as the peculiarities of dress and so on.”<sup>47</sup> The importance attached to the appearance of these members of the Gorsedd, these representatives of the glories of Welsh culture and antiquity, demonstrated how the emphasis on ritual and ceremonial aspects of the Eisteddfod were at their peak around 1899, although certainly these issues would be revisited during the course of the following century.

In this way, and as shall be demonstrated in the following sections, the official Eisteddfodic and media discourse both used certain patterns and rhetorical tools when describing the Eisteddfod and the Gorsedd rituals to emphasise their greatness; most

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<sup>45</sup> *Gorsedd y Beirdd Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Frenhinol Cymru Maldwyn a'r Gororau 2003*, 70.

<sup>46</sup> “Our Own Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Friday 21 July 1899, 5.

noticeable were the use of historical references, religious allegory, and the construction of a majestically pastoral and picturesque ideal of the Eisteddfod. Together these images reflected the idea of the grandeur of the festival and its affiliated rites and ceremonies in the early part of the twentieth century.

### **The Historic Past**

There were several threads in the active discursive historicisation of the Eisteddfod and the associated Gorsedd ceremonial and ritual. Firstly, there was the comparison to antiquity, whether it was European, British or Welsh. The media rhetoric branded the Welsh, particularly the Eisteddfodwyr, “Briton Hyperboreans”; they were constructed as members of an ancient classical tradition.<sup>48</sup> The Eisteddfod was compared to “The Great Welsh Olympic”.<sup>49</sup> Newspaper coverage of the Cardiff Eisteddfod, particularly in the *Western Mail*, was full of classical references and allusions. Modern Wales was likened to an “Ancient Greek” civilisation. For example, the competitions in the Eisteddfod pavilion were like the “murmuring in the Cymric temple of the Muses”.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, the Eisteddfodwyr were likened to great Apollo and Olympians: “The youth of Barry Island [who won the male voice choir competition] return to-night to the island as proudly as the victor at the Olympic games returned to his native village, wearing on his head his crown of olive leaves and flowers.”<sup>51</sup> Certainly, to an extent, these classical allusions were part of the rhetorical fabric of the era and the ornate writing style common in contemporary media discourse.

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<sup>47</sup> The representative of the Irish National Literary Society, quoted in *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 6.

<sup>48</sup> “Morien”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 5.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

The majority of these allusions to the ancient world were specifically oriented towards a particularly British sense of antiquity. The discourse was packed with such references. Certainly, the employment of the term “druid” implied a connection to a primeval British identity. Mrs Felicia Hemans, an Irishwoman, wrote a poem in honour of an earlier Cardiff Eisteddfod that illustrated the themes of ancient Britain and the associated mysticism.<sup>52</sup> It was reprinted in honour of the 1899 festival:

Where met our bards of old? – The glorious throng ...  
 The crested Roman in his hour of pride;  
 And where the learned carnedd, on its lonely hill,  
 Bears silent record of the might still;  
 And where the Druids’ ancient Cromlech frown’d.<sup>53</sup>

Indeed, this sense of antiquity was often directly connected to the mysticism associated with the Ancient Druids. “Morien” wrote in the *Western Mail*: “Surely there is some witchery about the bagpipes of Caledonia and the Welsh blood contains an echo of their ancient music!”<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Mr J. M. Maclean felt moved to compare the Gorsedd ceremonies to the reproduction of prehistoric “Druidical rites and ceremonies” he had witnessed at Stonehenge:

[T]he mysterious ruined Druidic temple of prehistoric Britain appeared in silent majesty. ... We all stood amazed and almost awed at what we were hearing [birds] ascending from the graves of Druids who worshipped here long before the cities of Troy and Carthage had existence.<sup>55</sup>

Maclean’s comparison to the Druids at Stonehenge, with their own arguable claims to antiquity, was a powerful allusion to make, and aligned the Gorsedd to the same sense of

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<sup>51</sup> “Morien”, *Western Mail*, Saturday 22 July 1899, 4; “Morien”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 5.

<sup>52</sup> The Gorsedd emblem was the “Mystic Mark (Nod Cyfrin)”.

<sup>53</sup> the Cambro-Irish poetess, Mrs. Hemans, quoted by “Awstin”, *Western Mail*, Monday 17 July 1899, 5.

<sup>54</sup> “Morien”, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 5.

<sup>55</sup> Conservative MP for Cardiff and the Wednesday morning president, quoted by “Morien”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 5.

antiquity. Importantly, he labelled Eisteddfodic ritual “modern Druidism”; in so doing, he partially separated the Gorsedd from ancient times, while still maintaining connections to the essentially antediluvian Druids.<sup>56</sup>

There were repeated and frequent references to Arthur and Arthurian legends in Eisteddfodic discourse. Dillwyn Miles points out that the established nineteenth-century trend of using biblical and abstract subjects for the primary literary competitions was broken in Bangor in 1902.<sup>57</sup> However, three years earlier, references to ancient Britain already were common in popular discourse, if not in competitive areas. Arthur was considered to be representative of ancient Britons, and thus the Welsh people, who were themselves often represented as the “true” British people.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, constructing the Welsh as the heirs to Ancient British culture was a favourite contemporary Eisteddfodic undertaking. Lord Castletown’s presidential speech revered Arthur as one of the last great Celtic leaders, and the Welsh as the last of the native Britons:

Little by little, fighting valiantly – Arthur had fallen – they were driven back into the mountain fastnesses of Scotland and Wales, until, losing the name of Britain, they were henceforward known as the speakers of the strange tongue, and thus Cymru of Wales they had remained to this day. All honour to their hardy race, unconquered by the Romans, and only partially subdued by the Saxons, and their kindred of Keltdom upheld the literature of the world at the time when Rome had fallen and the traditional songs of the Welsh bards remained to reveal the inner nature of the inhabitants of the island before the dawn of history of the Christian faith.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> “Our Own Reporters”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 5.

<sup>57</sup> The subject that year was “Ymadawiad Arthur” (“The Death of Arthur”), and it was won by T. Gwynn Jones of the *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald*. Interestingly, one of the adjudicators that year was John Morris-Jones. Dillwyn Miles, 1978, 82.

<sup>58</sup> That is, they were the ancient Britons, pushed to the fringes of the British Isles, by successive waves of invaders.

<sup>59</sup> Lord Castletown’s address as president, quoted by “Our Own Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 6.

The Gorsedd sword similarly was referred to repeatedly as the “long-lost sword of Arthur”.<sup>60</sup> Although the sword was newly designed and forged, it was immediately associated with the past, through the discourse surrounding its introduction. The immediacy of these associations was important to the acceptance of the *new* sword as part of the established accoutrements of a professed *traditional* ritual, and also demonstrative of the contemporary fascination with British antiquity.

Connected to this conscious historicisation of the Eisteddfod was an emphasis on an implicit sense of continuity to the past. Repeated reference to the ancient British or Druidic past was itself a powerful statement of the perceived existence of some sort of a continuous tradition that was being manifested through the existence of *Gorsedd* ritual. Despite its modern invention, the Gorsedd was represented as something uninterruptedly part of Britain, since prehistory. Mr J. M. Maclean said, “those feelings of reverence for everything ancestral and for ancient habits and customs ... prevailed at the present day ... (Applause.)”<sup>61</sup> Mr Moore was more literal in his acceptance of the authenticity of the Gorsedd: “it is clearly a record of primitive times, as far as I have been able to learn.”<sup>62</sup>

Moreover, the Welsh people were represented as “old” and as having links to the past. Hwfa Mon was “a typical Archdruid of the olden time”.<sup>63</sup> Further, Mrs Herkomer, the wife of the man responsible for much of the artistic direction and creation of the new ceremonial equipment, was described as “Welsh ‘o waed coch cyfan’ ”.<sup>64</sup> Certainly,

<sup>60</sup> “Morien”, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 5.

<sup>61</sup> “Our Own Reporters”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 5.

<sup>62</sup> the Speaker of the House of Keys, Douglas, in *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 6.

<sup>63</sup> “Morien”, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 5.

<sup>64</sup> “Eisteddfod Gossip”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 6.

Herkomer's own "foreignness" made it important to stress his wife's Welshness.<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless, this reference to blood ties emphasised her own personal connections to a continuous thread of Welshness, through her pedigree, and was comparable to the rhetorical allusions to antiquity. A similar comparison can be made to the use of old bardic names – and indeed the reappearance of the patronymic tradition – for the members of the Gorsedd. Names such as *ap Neurin* or *Taliesin ab Iolo* constituted a deliberate reference to an earlier period.

The sense of a continuous Welsh heritage was also expressed through a visual and verbal discourse of a grand, illustrious and more recent past. In this way, the cultural history and heritage of Wales were turned into an easily accessible and popular symbolic language. These signs were not always particularly historic. For example, Eisteddfodic proceedings always ended with "Land of my Fathers" – itself an Eisteddfod entry from only forty years earlier.<sup>66</sup> Yet they were all recognisably *established* symbols of Welsh nationhood with an alleged link to the past, however vague. National emblems were employed by the Eisteddfod organisers to emphasise the traditions of the Eisteddfod and its role in Welsh culture. "Awstin" reported that the "Welsh half [of the sword] is adorned with the leek on the hinde [sic] and the dragon on the silver shield affixed to the oak handle".<sup>67</sup> Similarly, notable Welsh people and Eisteddfodwyr were depicted decoratively around the pavilion as a way of displaying cultural heroes:

Above the orchestra conspicuously displayed were a number of cartoons of a number of famous Eisteddfodwyr ... while at the opposite end of the Pavilion was a similar collection of portraits, all being the work of Ap Caledfryn. All around the interior also were displayed the names of many eminent Welshmen, this being

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<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, Herkomer was good friend of Sir Mansel Lewis, and liked to teach "working-class" folk art.

<sup>66</sup> *Western Mail*, Tuesday 18 July 1899, 6. (e.g.)

<sup>67</sup> "Awstin", *Western Mail*, Monday 17 July 1899, 5.

regarded as a tribute to the memory of the great Cymric dead at the nation's greatest festival.<sup>68</sup>

These were all signs of nationhood, and were linked together at the Eisteddfod in an attempt to present a continuous story of Welshness to the Welsh people. In this way, Welsh nationhood was being “constantly flagged”, discursively, through everyday acts and aspects of culture, to construct a conscious narrative of the Welsh past and present.<sup>69</sup>

These images of Welsh nationhood provided a setting to the staged rituals of the Eisteddfod, but were also a potentially powerful subconscious influence on the audience and contributed to the less formalised performance of identity.

The use of allusions to Arthurian Britain and the ancient Druids, as well as those to a more recent past, was an attempt to provide legitimacy to the rather recently constructed Gorsedd ceremonies and paraphernalia. These allusions were equally popular outside of the arena of the National Eisteddfod. There were medieval themes to the Pan-Celtic Congresses of the era, and there were medieval pageants held around Wales during this period.<sup>70</sup> Importantly, however, despite the constant references to the ancient world, there was a level of ambiguity surrounding the *Gorseddogion*'s and Eisteddfodwyr's acceptance of this rhetoric as truthful and representative of reality. The employment of medieval costumes elsewhere would imply that it was all a great game of make-believe, in an era fond of pomp and pageantry. R. David summarized this aspect of Eisteddfodic sentiment in 1899 well: “this week they mount their ‘time machines’ and

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<sup>68</sup> *South Wales Echo*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 4

<sup>69</sup> Michael Billig, 174.

<sup>70</sup> Notably in Cardiff. See H. T. Edwards, *Codi'r Hen Wlad yn ei Hôl 1850 – 1915* (Llandysul : Gwasg Gomer, 1989).

ride back to the eighteenth century.”<sup>71</sup> This consciousness speaks towards the extant struggle between “modernity” and “tradition”, evident at the Eisteddfod.<sup>72</sup>

There were already signs of a power struggle between the forces of “tradition” and “modernity” that could be traced back to the Victorian emphasis on progressivism. For example, there was a disagreement in 1899 between the Committee for the 1900 Liverpool Eisteddfod and the Gorsedd authorities over the subject for which “the coveted chair prize – the highest bardic honour - will henceforth be awarded”.<sup>73</sup> The Liverpool Committee wanted to “modernise” the competition by opening it to compositions of any metre, rather than the traditional limitation to alliterative metres; the Gorsedd Committee voted to maintain the established convention. The *South Wales Echo* supported their decision: “The gravity of the crisis can hardly be overestimated. The Gorsedd, very rightly, insists that existing rules must be observed until they are by constitutional means altered.”<sup>74</sup> There was also controversy in 1902 when the Bangor Committee introduced a new churning song.

The aforementioned perception that the past was discontinuous was manifested in a body of critical scholarship of the Eisteddfod and Gorsedd. In fact, by the early years of the twentieth century, scholars were beginning to question the Eisteddfod’s links to antiquity. At the turn of the century, John Morris-Jones challenged the old order of Victorian literal acceptance of the antiquity of the Gorsedd ceremonial.<sup>75</sup> Himself a chaired bard and Eisteddfod adjudicator, Professor Morris-Jones exposed the falsified antiquity of the Gorsedd. His work was heavily criticised by the *Gorseddogion* and

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<sup>71</sup> R. David, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 26 July 1899, 5.

<sup>72</sup> Ironically, despite all the importance attached to a continuous Welsh tradition and link to the past, the “Eisteddfod song” was “Cymru Fydd.” “Awstin”, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 5.

<sup>73</sup> *South Wales Echo*, Saturday 15 July 1899, 2.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*



generally throughout Wales.<sup>76</sup> There followed much debate and controversy, in journals such as *Y Brython* and *Cymru* about the nature and role of the Eisteddfod.<sup>77</sup> Further, years later, Professor G. J. Williams uncovered Iolo's creativity in inventing the Gorsedd. Importantly, however, these discoveries did nothing to lessen the popularity of the Gorsedd and their ceremonial.

### A Religious Festival?

The aforementioned discursive suggestion and construction of grandeur was further substantiated by the plentiful references to scripture and allusions to the Gorsedd as a quasi-religious body; their rituals comparable to those of the Church and Chapel.<sup>78</sup> In one of his pieces for the *Western Mail*, "Morien" explicitly compared one of the Gorsedd ceremonies to a biblical scene: "The scene at this moment, in the midst of dazzling sunshine, suggested – and I trust it is not profane to say so - the scene described in Revelation iv."<sup>79</sup> "Awstin" compared the gathering of the Celtic nations to the Pentecost: "So far as spectacular display is concerned, the eisteddfod proceedings on Wednesday cannot be compared with those of the Pan-Celtic Pentecostal opening day."<sup>80</sup> Both men were members of the Gorsedd and had strong associations with nonconformity.<sup>81</sup> Despite these discursive connections, however, they were careful to distance the Gorsedd and Eisteddfod from the Chapel and Church. Generally,

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<sup>75</sup> Few took the antiquity of the Gorsedd so seriously that they renounced Christianity in its favour. Thomas Parry, *John Morris-Jones 1864-1929* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1958), 42.

<sup>76</sup> Morris-Jones further impeached the Gorsedd for continuing to uphold their quasi-druidic ceremonies under false pretences and under an inappropriate, un-Eisteddfodic spirit. Thomas Parry, 1958, 42-43.

<sup>77</sup> In which scholars such as W. J. Gruffydd and "Henafgwr" argued their respective sides.

<sup>78</sup> "Awstin", *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 5.

<sup>79</sup> "Morien", *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 5.

<sup>80</sup> "Awstin", *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 5.

<sup>81</sup> "Awstin" wrote much of the *Western Mail's* material on the Great Revival a few years later.

discussions did not refer to specific religious bodies or denominations. In fact, one of the most explicit references was made in 1937, although with non-Christian allusions, when the “Junior Member for Treorchy” said that, for a week, “Machynlleth ... has become the Mecca of Wales.”<sup>82</sup> Further, they avoided direct comparisons between the members of the Gorsedd and God or gods. “Awstin” said that “but bards are mortals, made of common clay.”<sup>83</sup>

The specifically Christian religiosity of the National Eisteddfod also was enforced through the physical decorations in the pavilion and around the *Maes*. In 1899, the *South Wales Echo* reported on the décor of the pavilion: “The conductor’s rostrum was treated in white and blue in a Maltese Cross design.”<sup>84</sup> Similarly, the “stones of the Covenant” were used in the Gorsedd ceremonial. These emblematic representations of Christianity were symbolic of the links between the Church and Chapel and Welsh culture, in a similar way to the use of prayers and religious competitive subjects.

In this way, religion was linked to the Eisteddfod, but as something separate from the Gorsedd. A degree of spirituality was portrayed as something integral to the Welsh people and therefore their national festival, but was clearly borrowed from organised Christianity. In fact, the Gorsedd prayer was perfectly representative of the Eisteddfod’s relationship with Christianity. Its very existence, as well as the language used, emphasised the strong links between the two. The *Gweddi yr Orsedd* is overtly religious:

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<sup>82</sup> “Junior Member for Treorchy”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 5 August 1937, 5.

<sup>83</sup> “Awstin”, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 5.

<sup>84</sup> *South Wales Echo*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 4

Dyro, Dduw, dy nawdd;	(Grant, O God, thy protection
Ac yn nawdd, nerth;	And in protection, strength;
Ac yn nerth, deall;	And in strength, understanding;
Ac yn neall, gwybod;	And in understanding, knowledge;
Ac yng ngwybod, gwybod y cyfiawn;	And in knowledge, knowledge of righteousness;
Ac yng ngwybod y cyfiawn, ei garu;	And in knowledge of righteousness to love it;
Ac o garu, caru pob hanfod;	And of in loving it to love all things essential;
Ac ymhob hanfod, caru Dduw;	And in all things essential to love God;
Duw, a phob daioni.	God, and all goodness.)

The relationship between Christianity and the Eisteddfod was not unproblematic. Occasionally the discussions of the Christian nature of the National Eisteddfod were more explicit. The *Western Mail* noted the *lack* of ecclesiastical members of the Gorsedd, corroborating the sense that the Gorsedd of Bards and the still extant nonconforming hegemony in Wales were two separate entities:

Dean Howell was the only representative Welsh ecclesiastic present, and he was not asked to take part in the proceedings, owing, we are told, to want of time. ... By paying so much attention to strangers there is danger of losing sight of the distinctively Welsh character of the Eisteddfod.<sup>85</sup>

Further, although the religious nature of the Eisteddfod was not an issue by the twentieth century and the pagan connotations of bardism and druidism were not particularly controversial in 1937, they were often the subject of tongue-in-cheek bardic humour.

Archdruid J. J. Williams joked with “an audible chuckle”, that:

An old pagan like you cannot but feel far more in your element on an occasion like this than you do when you turn up at the annual assemblies of the Welsh religious bodies; for, as it is scarcely necessary to remind you, all the various rites of the Gorsedd are supposed to have come down from the ancient Druids who were such absolute pagans that they worshipped the sun.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Monday 24 July 1899, 4.

<sup>86</sup> “Junior Member for Treorchy”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 5 August 1937, 5.

Indeed, the Christian-Pagan debate was often a source of humour for Eisteddfodwyr. The ability to laugh at itself demonstrated that the early twentieth-century Eisteddfod was secure in its status as a festival with strong connections to organised religion.

The “Junior Member for Treorchy” wrote a lengthy article in the *Western Mail* in 1937. It recounted a dialogue between himself and the Archdruid, discussing the role of (Christian) religion in the National Eisteddfod of Wales entitled: “How Eisteddfod Contrasts With Religious Assemblies – Cast The Same But Play Entirely Different”.<sup>87</sup> He focused on the relationship between the bards and the chapel – epitomised by the preacher-poet ideal; “For more years that one cares to remember the greater majority of crowned and chaired bards were preachers.”<sup>88</sup> The “Junior Member for Treorchy” further asserted the connection between preachers and the Eisteddfod and Gorsedd:

[A]lthough the setting of the Eisteddfod is a *secular* one, the principal performances are very much the same at the one gathering as they are at the other. For instance, when I attended the recent assembly of the Welsh Congregational Union, I found you, with Elfed, Crwys, Dyfnallt, Wil Ifan, and other preachers to the forefront; and now, here at the Gorsedd, I again find all of you to the front.<sup>89</sup>

The Archdruid agreed and asserted the uniqueness of the preacher-poet:

[T]hough the cast is very much the same at both gatherings, the *play* is entirely different at the Gorsedd. Has it ever occurred to you that the preacher-bard is the special product of Wales? No such phenomenon is known in England. ... Such a thing would be absolutely unthinkable to the English mind. But here in Wales the preacher and the bard are alike. Eliminate the preachers from the Gorsedd and there would be nothing left but a coterie of college professors who, though they are expert in matching smooth numbers with exact rhymes, are notoriously lacking in that unction which is the very soul of all true poetry. Let me, therefore, impress upon you this fact, that though in Wales both the preacher and the bard are incarnate in the same person the two

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> “Our London Letter”, *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald*, Friday 13 August 1937, 12.

<sup>89</sup> “Junior Member for Treorchy”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 5 August 1937, 5.

roles are distinctly differentiated in the process of their respective functions.<sup>90</sup>

Thus, he linked together the two facets of the Eisteddfod, and saw the connection as unproblematic. Druidism, as represented by the Bards, was representative of poetic license and was not illustrative of paganism. The nature of the festival was perceived to be securely Christian. Moreover, it was also arguably characterized as non-denominational, in that it was not tied directly to any particular Christian sects. This confidence was interesting when contrasted to the insecurity the Victorians felt regarding the Welsh language and immorality. In fact, the Archdruid asserted that there was a “far greater measure of personal licence at the annual gathering of the Eisteddfod than would be permissible at the annual assembly of any of our Welsh religious bodies”.<sup>91</sup> Generally, the existence of discourse on the religious nature of the Eisteddfod implied the established significance given to both religion and the festival as components of Welsh identity.

This debate still was evident at the end of the century. Discussions about the religious nature of the Eisteddfod resurfaced in 2002 when the soon to be ordained Archbishop of Canterbury, then the Archbishop of Wales, Dr Rowan Williams was ordained into the Gorsedd. Despite earlier acceptance of the coexistence of quasi-druidic and religious undertones, conservative Church groups now suggested that the new Archbishop was aligning himself with a pagan organisation by being ordained into the Gorsedd. What followed were several months of discussion in the press and a renewal of controversy on the *Maes* over the nature of the Gorsedd of Bards and its relationship with Christianity. The importance of this discourse lay in the established role of the

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

Eisteddfod as a symbolic representation of Welshness, but also in the increasingly problematic role of Christianity in Wales – and, implicitly, an increasing sense of insecurity therein. Indeed, because of the declining role of the Church and Chapel in Welsh life by the end of the century, the debate over the religious nature of the Eisteddfod was perhaps more critical than it had been previously.

Critics argued that the Gorsedd was a druidic and pagan organisation, and thus wholly inappropriate for the leader of the Anglican faith. The most vocal group was the Church of England (Continuing), who issued a pamphlet at the Eisteddfod entitled “Christianity or Druidism: Archbishop or Pagan Priest?” In it, Andrew Price said that the Gorsedd ceremonies were rooted in “pagan ritual”.<sup>92</sup> Discussion forums of their website “condemned it all as a form of ‘Shintoism’.”<sup>93</sup> Even the major national newspapers were suspicious of the Gorsedd’s mystical alliances; *The Times* suggested it was a ritual that was “linked to ancient paganism”.<sup>94</sup>

Most of the critics were from particularly conservative Anglican groups. The Rev. David Banting of the “conservative Church of England evangelical group Reform” said Dr Williams should “concentrate on the celebration and promotion of the Christian faith ... rather than dabbling in other things”.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, the Reverend Angus Macleay, who was also affiliated with Reform, was doubtful of the message the new Archbishop would send to his parishioners. He told BBC Radio 4’s *Today* programme that the Church should be worried about the image Williams was promoting: “This ceremony certainly looks pagan. ... How will it help African bishops and pastors seeking to draw people away from paganism to follow Christ, when they see him involved in this sort of

<sup>92</sup> Of the conservative Church of England (Continuing), Prys Morgan, 2002, 29.

<sup>93</sup> Prys Morgan, 2002, 28.

<sup>94</sup> BBC news, Sunday 4 August 2002; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/2171775.stm>

activity?”<sup>96</sup> The comparison between the druids, and thus the people of Wales, and the “pagan” peoples of Africa, was remarkable.

Andrew Price wrote the Church of England (Continuing)’s pamphlet, published in time for the Eisteddfod in St. David’s in 2002. It lambasted the situation and criticised those who underemphasized the Archbishop’s connection with the Gorsedd:

The ceremonial admittance of the Archbishop of Wales into an order of Welsh Druids is surely a matter of great significance. However much the excuse is made that the Gorsedd of Bards is merely an expression of Welsh cultural identity, it cannot disguise the fact that the symbolism of the language and the dress is pagan rather than Christian. ... Wales was made great because of her Christian heritage. The darkness of her ancient history warrants sober reflections because of its godlessness and shame and not nostalgic re-enactment. Tragically it says much for Wales today that it bypasses her great evangelical heritage in favour of Paganism. Druidism or Paganism is diametrically opposed to the One, true living God as revealed in the Bible. A website sympathetic to Druidism candidly acknowledges that, ‘Druids worshipped a pantheon of gods and goddesses’ and the motto of one Druid group ... has the agenda, ‘Paganise mainstream religion by mainstreaming paganism.’ However in the Ten Commandments God says, ‘Thou shalt have no other gods before me.’ How can it be in the light of all this that a senior minister in the Church of Christ can be so willing to identify with a ceremony which is essentially pagan?<sup>97</sup>

The pamphlet’s reference to evangelicalism was a pointed reminder of the nonconformist tradition in Wales, as a more recent and equally powerful part of Welsh heritage. The presumption was that the power of the Chapel would suppress the power of the Druid. However, as evinced by the lack of related discourse, both have coexisted for much of the century. The group’s biannual newsletter also was critical of the Gorsedd and dubious of the asserted links to Christianity:

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<sup>95</sup> BBC news, Monday 5 August 2002; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/2172408.stm>

<sup>96</sup> He was on the steering committee of the Evangelical Reform Groups. BBC news, Monday 5 August 2002; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/2172918.stm>

The founder was the eccentric Iolo Morganwg, a Unitarian who postulated the thesis that ancient Druidism was monotheistic. ... It is likely that he had Masonic links. A large banner in the background of the recent ceremony appeared to have a symbol of the sun above a pair of dividers.<sup>98</sup>

If links to Druidism were not enough to make the Christian population of Britain doubt the Gorsedd's Christianity, further connections were alleged to Freemasonry – renowned for its own arguable links to paganism. Importantly, this criticism of Iolo was different from that of Morris-Jones and others earlier in the century, because it did not challenge the origins of the Eisteddfod's ceremonies, merely their religious undertone.

By contrast, supporters of Dr Williams' induction into the Gorsedd maintained that it was predominately a cultural establishment whose primary purpose was to further the arts in Wales. Although the Gorsedd was labelled a "mythical circle of Wales' key cultural contributors", proponents continually emphasised its cultural aims.<sup>99</sup> Dr Williams himself said that the "people of goodwill in Wales ... appreciate the Gorsedd and eisteddfod for the colour and culture which they bring to Wales' national life."<sup>100</sup> Similarly, Elfyn Llwyd, himself a member of the Gorsedd of Bards, said the Gorsedd was "simply a rather quaint induction ... for assisting the development of Welsh language and culture. It is in a way akin to a Welsh honours system but devoid of any patronage."<sup>101</sup> In a press release in response to the activities of the Church of England (Continuing), Williams emphasised this sense of an Eisteddfodic honours system. He

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<sup>97</sup> "Christianity or Druidism: Archbishop or Pagan Priest?", *Mountain Tracts* no. 4 (published/distributed at the 2002 Eisteddfod in St Davids).

<sup>98</sup> *English Churchman: A Protestant Family Newspaper* no. 7593 (Fridays Sept 6 and 13, 2000), 1.

<sup>99</sup> BBC news, Sunday 4 August 2002; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/2171775.stm>

<sup>100</sup> BBC news, Sunday 4 August 2002; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/2171775.stm>

<sup>101</sup> Plaid Cymru MP, quoted in BBC news, Monday 5 August 2002;

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/2172918.stm>



said being inducted into the Gorsedd was “one of the greatest honours which Wales can bestow on her citizens”.<sup>102</sup>

Dr Williams said that he found the insinuations of paganism “deeply offensive”.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, many *Gorseddogion* were eager to distance themselves from the negative connotations of other “druids”. The Archdruid, Dr Robyn Lewis, defended the institution: “We are not like the English druids. The Stonehenge druids are a pot-smoking crowd. Ours is a very respectable society. The ceremony is not pagan. It is quite innocent. It is a society for the furtherance of the arts in Wales, nothing more.”<sup>104</sup> The reassertion of the morals of the Gorsedd was a reaction to the attack on its alleged anti-Chapel - and therefore depraved - stance.

In fact, the Gorsedd was very much a Christian organisation – and had been throughout its modern incarnation. Dr Rowan Williams argued that: “If people had actually looked at the words of the hymns and text used they would have seen a very Christian service.”<sup>105</sup> The Gorsedd’s recorder Jâms Nicolas said any reports of links to paganism were “nonsense”. He pointed out that the Gorsedd’s ceremonies were “entirely Christian in tone”:

Christian hymns are sung [in Welsh] and prayers are made to God. A great many of those accorded the Gorsedd’s bardic honours over the years have been Christian ministers of religion from various denominations and the higher echelons of the Gorsedd are full of Ministers of Religion. Any suggestion of links between Gorsedd y Beirdd and Druidism is simply incorrect and misplaced.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Rowan Williams, cited in *English Churchman: A Protestant Family Newspaper* no. 7593 (Fridays Sept 6 and 13, 2000), 1.

<sup>103</sup> BBC news, Sunday 4 August 2002; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/2171775.stm>

<sup>104</sup> retired lawyer and judge, BBC news, Sunday 4 August 2002;

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/2171775.stm>

<sup>105</sup> Dr Rowan Williams, BBC news, Monday 5 August 2002;

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/2172918.stm>

<sup>106</sup> *English Churchman: A Protestant Family Newspaper* no. 7593 (Fridays Sept 6 and 13, 2000), 1; BBC news, Monday 5 August 2002; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/2172918.stm>.

Robyn Lewis agreed, although his emphasis was less on asserting the Gorsedd's Christianity, and more on avoiding any sort of religious connection: "The ceremony is not pagan. It's just a ceremony. We are not theistic, atheistic, pantheistic, agnostic, or anything."<sup>107</sup>

Certainly there seemed to be suggestions of paganism in the Gorsedd ceremonial. Much of the emphasis on the picturesque and natural world alluded to nature-worship. However, there were also distinct links to Christianity. Although the festival was held "under the sun, the eye of light", the Gorsedd Emblem shows: "God's character as creator, sustainer and destroyer – although modern day interpretation is that of truth, justice and love."<sup>108</sup> Thus, the Gorsedd ritual was apparently a balance between a borrowing of ancient Druidic nature-worship and contemporary non-secular Christianity. Despite the reoccurrence of controversy in 2002, the discursive paradigms were not substantially different from those in 1899 or 1937, in that they continued to focus on this debate.

### **The "Dance Incident" and Changes and Challenges to the Gorsedd**

Eisteddfod Dancing: An Innovation That Causes Different Opinions<sup>109</sup>

Indeed, despite the popularity of pomp and ritualistic pageantry among Eisteddfodwyr – or perhaps because of it – changes to the established rituals and ceremonies were often highly controversial. Eisteddfodwyr did not always accept pageantry indiscriminately, particularly when it meant changes to the time-honoured

<sup>107</sup> "He added that the Queen was a member of the Gorsedd, but 'she never turns up'." Archdruid Robin Lewis, in *The Times*, 19 July 2002, quoted in Prys Morgan, 2002, 28.

<sup>108</sup> *English Churchman: A Protestant Family Newspaper* no. 7593 (Fridays Sept 6 and 13, 2000), 1.

<sup>109</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 22 July 1899, 6.

patterns of Eisteddfodic ceremony. Any alteration marked a change in the established tradition of the festival, and a possible threat to the perceived continuity of the Eisteddfodic traditions. One of the more controversial ceremonial elements early in the century was not strictly part of the Eisteddfod proper; the “Dance Incident” caused a great deal of controversy at the Eisteddfod in 1899. In fact, the resulting furore demonstrated that difference and change were controversial at the Eisteddfod.

Dance was not part of the Eisteddfod ceremonial in 1899, but it achieved topical status and popular discursive recognition when some of the Scots Highlanders delegates to the Pan-Celtic festival danced a jig on stage in *lieu* of the Chairing ceremony. The “Dance Incident”, as it was dubbed by the press, sparked an open dialogue in the press, often heated, over the nature of the Eisteddfod and its spectacle. “Awstin” summarised the controversy for the *Western Mail*:

As to the eisteddfod proceedings in the pavilion, one cannot help remarking that spectacular display was not wanting, for, although there was no chairing ceremony, the audience were witnesses of a novel sight for an eisteddfod in the shape of a Scottish reel. ... [There are] people, who contend that such a proceeding is not compatible with the dignity of an eisteddfod, and we have not heard the last of the incident. The most pithy objection I heard stated to it was that ‘Dyfed’ and ‘Pedrog’ had by withholding the chair, made the bards dance, and, therefore, that a jig was unnecessary.<sup>110</sup>

The nature of this substitution was inherently controversial. Firstly, the impromptu dance performance emphasized the fact that the Chairing ceremony had not occurred (due to insufficient entries of satisfactory standards), and rubbed salt into the wounded Welsh literary pride. Secondly, the “dignified” ceremony had been replaced with another, physical, performance that was perceived to be inconsistent with the “higher” Eisteddfodic practices of the day. In fact, most of the criticism was either

directed at the physical nature of the performance or the perceived frivolity of the dance, and was focused around two primary points. Most obviously, it was a “traditional” Scottish dance. More profoundly for the Welsh Establishment in 1899, however, it went against the conservative element of the hegemonic nonconformist culture. Thus, the jig was “foreign”, and noticeably non-“Welsh” on two levels. Those who supported the actions of the Scots felt that it was a harmless addition to the Welsh cultural festival, particularly at the Pan-Celtic gathering, but also that it was in the nature of the Eisteddfod to be open to various aspects of different cultures, not just those that fell in line with established modes of Welsh culture.

Interestingly, critics of the dancing were denying a part of Welsh culture, and therefore heritage. They held a selective view of what parts of the Welsh past were appropriate to be remembered and preserved that was dominated by a conservative nonconformity. In fact, folk dance was, as the term implies, a part of Welsh popular culture, and had been for centuries. As Lois Blake said in her mid-century pamphlet on Folk Dance, the term is “applied to the traditional dances of the people or ‘folk’.”<sup>111</sup> Suppression came with hegemonic cultural movements, and was temporary. In 1972, Iorwerth Peate said of folk dancing in Wales:

Organized Nonconformist denominations, strongly Calvinist in theology with a strong emphasis on the need for ‘saving’ the individual soul placed a taboo on the ‘pagan foolishness’ of dancing, a taboo which has not yet completely disappeared from several rural districts in. ... Wales. It is no accident that the modern revival of folk dancing coincides with the break-up of institutional religion in this island.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> “Awstin”, *Western Mail*, Friday 21 July 1899, 5.

<sup>111</sup> Lois Blake, *Welsh Folk Dance and Costume* (Llangollen: The Gwynn Publishing Co., 1948/54), 5.

<sup>112</sup> Iorwerth C. Peate, *Tradition and Folk Life: A Welsh View* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1972), 99. Furthermore, W. S. Gwynn Williams says that “Owing to the effect of the Puritan movement among the Welsh who had not already been Anglicized by the policy of the Tudors, some modern writers have come to the conclusion that ancient Wales never had any national dances of her own. Others affirm that even if she did have national dances of her own once upon a time it is now too late

By the 1960s folk dance once again had become perceived as an integral feature of Welsh national culture – as well as the national festival. The numbers of people participating in folk dancing generally, and specifically at the Eisteddfod, were increasing.<sup>113</sup> Folk Dance first became a competitive subject at the Eisteddfod in 1933.<sup>114</sup> In 1960 the *Western Mail* remarked upon the popularity of folk dancing in Wales:

Inquiries made at the pavilion of the Welsh Folk Dance Society show that Welsh folk dancing is becoming more and more popular. A map shows the areas in Wales where folk dance groups have been formed. It seemed as if the heavy hand of Puritanism which clamped over on this form of popular expression much more heavily in Wales than it did elsewhere is now being lifted to good effect.<sup>115</sup>

Significantly, the piece comments on the effects of nonconformity on the “traditional” art. Thus, it is apparent that the perceived “Welshness” of dancing – or lack thereof – was based on a consciously constructed identity of nonconformity and Puritanical ideas.

The dance of the Scottish Highlanders in 1899 was viewed with disdain by many of the more conservative Eisteddfod dignitaries because it conflicted with the nonconformist hegemony, and subsequently violated the “high” ideals associated with that movement. “Mabon” felt that the dancing was contrary to the “higher” pursuits of

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to attempt to rescue them. ... What everyone knows no one takes the trouble to write about. The Bards were certainly interested in preserving things Welsh, but they would disdain to notice anything in the nature of popular pastimes.” But that Welsh folk dances can be traced back at least to the twelfth century – the same age as eisteddfodau. W. S. Gwynn Williams, *Welsh National Music and Dance* (London: J. Curwen & Sons Ltd., 1932), 109-110.

<sup>113</sup> “Last year at the Port Talbot and District National Eisteddfod, no clog dancers competed, but today, at least seven took part, and no one was more pleased than Mrs Lois Blake, president and one of the founder members of the Welsh folk dance society, of Marshfield, Gloucester. She told me: ‘This was very good and they were from North and South Wales. Folk dancing is more popular than ever, but I cannot promise that the standard is getting higher, and this is something that must be watched.’” Arthur Williams, *Liverpool Daily Post*, Thursday 10 August 1967, 1.

<sup>114</sup> The Welsh Folk Dance Society was established in 1949.

<sup>115</sup> Ena Kendall, *Western Mail*, Friday 5 August 1960, 4.

the Eisteddfod: “I believe in elevating the head and not the feet.”<sup>116</sup> He felt that the introduction of a non-spiritual and intellectual element was the start of the decline of the higher aims of the Eisteddfod. This was a powerful statement about the nature of hegemonic Welsh culture and the remaining Victorian moralistic goals of the National Eisteddfod. The *Western Mail* reported on “Mabon”’s criticism of the “jig incident”:

‘Mabon’, ... protested against the Eisteddfod platform being *begrimed* by the feet of anyone dancing a Highland jig. (Applause.) Some people had condemned them for singing hymns at the eisteddfod before now, but it was a thousand times better to sing hymns than to dance. If the bringing together of the Celts meant the introduction of pipers and dancers to the Eisteddfod platform, he declared it was the beginning of the decadence of the Eisteddfod (Applause, and ‘No, no.’).<sup>117</sup>

The report of his speech in the *South Wales Echo* differed slightly in language, but the tone was the same:

[He] wished to raise his voice in order to express the hope that they would not blacken the platform of their Eisteddfod with the feet of anyone dancing a Highland fling. (Hear, hear.) Personally, he believed in everything that would tend to elevate the Welsh nation, but would also condemn any introduction of a Terpsichorean character. ... Throughout the ages the Eisteddfod had been an institution to elevate the nation, but if any meeting of Celts was to be celebrated by a dance then it signalled the beginning of a disastrous end. He appealed to the leaders of the nation not to let the fair name of the Eisteddfod be sullied by such practices. He loved his fellow-countrymen and their good name... (Cheers.)<sup>118</sup>

Both reports were remarkable not just for the language they used, but also because they were evidence of the role of the reporter in shaping the tone of Eisteddfodic discourse.

Otherwise known as William Abraham, “Mabon” was well-known as a conductor of Eisteddfod choirs, the MP for Rhondda and the first president of the South Wales

<sup>116</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 22 July 1899, 6.

<sup>117</sup> “Our Own Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Friday 21 July 1899, 6.

Miners' Federation. In 1899 he was middle-aged and well-established as a leader of Welsh culture and politics.<sup>119</sup> "Mabon" felt that Celtic unity and identity were secondary to Welshness, or, more specifically, to nonconformity and the "higher" aims of life. It is interesting to note that, unlike many members of the Gorsedd, "Mabon" was not a minister, and thus his Chapel-oriented viewpoint was slightly less predictable. There seemed to be popular support for his views, as evidenced by the parenthetical audience responses included in the newspaper reports of the speeches. Moreover, "Mabon's" reassertion of the popularity of hymns stressed the continuing popularity of some elements of nonconformity in contemporary Wales.

Many of "Mabon's" fellow *Gorseddogion* agreed with his censure. "Dyfed" said: "I felt ugly (hyll) when it was on. It made me feel dismal and miserable. ... It was out of place. I did not like to see it, and I sincerely hope I may never see it again."<sup>120</sup> Enoch Davies ("Gwynfi") echoed "Mabon" when he questioned what he perceived as the lowering of principles of the national festival and the consequent degrading of the Welsh nation:

Who are to be blamed for reducing our sacred National Eisteddfod to the level of the tap-room? I should not like to say a word against the customs of any nation but as a member and a lover of the Gorsedd and the Eisteddfod I strongly protest against such a degradation of the national gathering. ... In the name of everything that is decent, in the name of Wales and her religion, I condemn in the strongest possible terms the action of those responsible for the modesty, the purity, and the elevation of our nation through the medium of the National Eisteddfod in asking such things to be carried on within [these?] precincts. Ai dyma'r

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<sup>118</sup> Response to Merthyr's invitation for next year's National Eisteddfod, *South Wales Echo*, Friday 21 July 1899, 4.

<sup>119</sup> He lived from 1842-1922.

<sup>120</sup> The *Western Mail* reported that the local secretary, Mr D. W. Evans, expressed himself in similar terms. In *Western Mail*, Saturday 22 July 1899, 6.

ffordd i godi'r hen wlad yn ei hôl? O Gwalia! O Gwalia! Where is our pride?<sup>121</sup>

Again, there is evident here a direct link to the fierce desire of the late Victorian Anglo-Welsh to prove their moral and intellectual worth to the greater British culture and society. The Eisteddfod was perceived as a defender of Welsh moral values, fighting valiantly against the debauchery of the pub and music hall. “Bethel”, otherwise known as T. Davies, wrote in a letter to the *Western Mail* that he had

always regarded the Eisteddfod as a feast of the mind, and when our Celtic brethren from the Highlands introduced their dancing custom under the auspices of the Eisteddfod, I looked upon it as a grave scandal. The majority of our executive committee voted against the singing of hymns, but some of them were willing enough to have a dancing exhibition. In the name of the Eisteddfod, I repudiate such a display on its platform.<sup>122</sup>

Importantly, his letter reiterated “Mabon’s” comparison of hymn-singing, itself apparently quite controversial at one time. Similarly, Principal Edwards, D.D., was very explicit in his delineation of the objects of the Eisteddfod and how the dance incident had contradicted those aims. He said:

I did not like the sword dance and the jig. Of course, I thought they were going to play some tunes. That would be quite in keeping with the objects of the Eisteddfod, which is intended for moral and mental advancement, and not as a place for the display of physical feats. ... [W]e in Wales must bear in mind the great aim and end of the Eisteddfod – the moral and intellectual advancement of the people.<sup>123</sup>

Thus, many opponents of the physical performance felt that such an exhibition was somehow un-“Welsh”; even “Mabon’s” complaint was in metre. On a less spiritual level, the dance also was perceived to be undignified. Again, despite frequent implicit disapproval on these grounds, “Mabon” was one of the most outspoken of these critics.

<sup>121</sup> Enoch Davies (“Gwynfi”), Letter the Editor, *Western Mail*, Monday 24 July 1899, 6.

<sup>122</sup> T. Davies (“Bethel”), Letter to the Editor, *Western Mail*, Friday 21 July 1899, 6.



“At the close [of the jig] ‘Mabon’ rushed to the platform with a leonine expression on his face, and roared an englyn.”<sup>124</sup> He criticised the jig because he felt the physical element was beneath the dignity of the festival and would “tend to bring the Eisteddfod into ridicule”.<sup>125</sup> In this way, they were reaffirming the identity of the Welsh as poets and artistic souls. Ironically, however, they were claiming traits often associated with the Celts generally, but in juxtaposition to their fellow Celts, the Highlanders.

Critics further attacked the dance incident because it was a *Scottish* dance. The inclusion of a *foreign* element in the *Welsh* national gathering was deemed by some to be irreverent. In a letter to the Editor of the *Western Mail*, Enoch Davies complained about the non-Welsh elements:

I believe that those in charge of our Eisteddfod should exercise more strict supervision over things that are thrust on our national platform, otherwise we may see our Gorsedd circle turned into a horse parade. And why not, Mr Editor, as the Englishman has as much pride in his horse racing as Scotty has in his jig?<sup>126</sup>

For Davies, although national difference was to be embraced, it was a particular national culture – one that did not include what were perceived as the more sordid aspects of popular culture. However, Principal Edwards urged a more all-embracing view of difference:

An object lesson was taught showing the difference between various nationalities belonging to the Celtic stock, and the presence of these Highlanders on the platform reminded one of the great Olympic games. ... I should like to say this. We must not look at these great national, and especially Pan-Celtic gatherings with too narrow a view.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 22 July 1899, 6.

<sup>124</sup> “Morien”, *Western Mail*, Friday 21 July 1899, 5.

<sup>125</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 22 July 1899, 6.

<sup>126</sup> Enoch Davies (“Gwynfi”), Letter the Editor, *Western Mail*, Monday 24 July 1899, 6.

<sup>127</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 22 July 1899, 6.

Indeed, generally those who supported the Highlanders' performance did so on the basis that the dance was part of Scottish national culture, and therefore allowable at the Eisteddfod in the same way as foreign visitors were welcomed. Moreover, they felt it subsequently suitable for the Pan-Celtic Eisteddfod. "Hwfa Môn" did not object to the dancing:

I think too much has been made of the incident. I see no harm in letting these visitors give an exhibition of skill in what is with them a national pastime. ... Different nations have different views of these things, and because we, as Welsh people, do not dance there is no reason why we should object to other people dancing if they wish.<sup>128</sup>

In a similar fashion, "Morien" pointed out that at Cardiff representatives of various nationalities had been invited to the Eisteddfod, and they "displayed their national idiosyncrasies. It was only fair to the Highlanders therefore to allow them theirs ... [T]he dance [was] a beautiful thing. Someone had said that dancing was 'poetry of motion'."<sup>129</sup> "Cynonfardd", too, had no objection:

I feel no objection to it. I think we ought to see the characteristics of other people. ... [I]n the Highlands ... the highest compliment they could pay to us was to do the sword dance. It is right that we should become acquainted with these things. They came to us in the national capacity, and wished us to see what was predominant with them. But I should not repeat it. We have seen the dance once, and do not want to see it again. At the same time, I think we can tolerate things of that sort and approve of that which is good.<sup>130</sup>

Thus, the Welsh sense of "fair play" was called upon to provide legitimacy for the Scottish dancers' performance, despite its perceived un-Welshness. The other important

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Response to Merthyr's invitation for next year's National Eisteddfod, *South Wales Echo*, Friday 21 July 1899, 4; The *Western Mail* reported it thus: "'Morien' remarked that they had invited other nationalities there and each nationality had its own predilections. It was unfair to the Highlanders to

point to emphasise was the idea that the dancing was a *national* trait, and therefore something that ought to be beyond criticism, particularly from a fellow Celtic nation.

Others felt that a lot of fuss was being made over nothing. Mr Alfred Thomas, MP, said: "I was not against the dance myself, and I am sorry to hear so much about it. I think a great deal too much has been said, and what has been said is in very bad taste."<sup>131</sup> Professor E. Anwyl perceived the situation as essentially a misunderstanding.<sup>132</sup> He attributed the incident to "an outburst of sympathy on the part of the Highlanders with what appeared to them the national character of the Eisteddfod", to which many were too quick to protest.<sup>133</sup> Anwyl was not opposed to the idea of dancing at the Eisteddfod. He even suggested the possibility of physical areas of competition: "I confess that it seems to be advisable, on the whole, to have a separate arena for the display of physical perfections as distinguished from those which are intellectual and artistic. It scarcely seems in keeping with the history of institutions to leave these arenas undifferentiated."<sup>134</sup> Mr Edward Thomas ("Cochfarf") apparently represented a more general public opinion:

I spoke to everyone I met, and there seemed to be no objection to the pipers giving an exhibition. The Dean of St. David's was one of those I spoke to, and he said he could not see any objection ... the wisest plan would be to regard it as one of those incidents that cropped up unexpectedly, and not take it as a precedent. Certainly, it ought not to cause any of the bad feeling which seems to dog the steps of every Celtic movement. I spoke to a well-known Presbyterian minister about it, and he told me that

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condemn them for exhibiting what they excelled in. (Laughter and applause.)" "Our Own Reporter", *Western Mail*, Friday 21 July 1899, 6.

<sup>130</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 22 July 1899, 6.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> "Anwyl" was a professor of Welsh at the University College of Wales in Aberystwyth. He was extensively published and knighted in 1911.

<sup>133</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 22 July 1899, 6.

<sup>134</sup> The report continued: "the general question of using the platform of the Eisteddfod for the display of physical as well as artistic and intellectual perfections is one upon which a strong difference of opinion might well be expected." Ibid.

even in Presbyterian Scotland it is looked upon almost as a religious duty to be able to do the Scotch reel.<sup>135</sup>

Thus, there was censure of the critics for the seeming weakness and invalidity of their argument, and for their reactionary stance. In fact, the “Man About Town” remarked pithily on the incident in the *South Wales Echo*:

The Cardiff Eisteddfod ... has gone out in a shout of indignation from many quarters at the introduction of dancing on the Eisteddfod platform. It is difficult for the majority of Cardiffians to understand why so much fuss should be made over the incongruous innovation of the sword dance, because they do not realise the horror with which dancing in any form is regarded in the Hills. What many people look upon as innocent diversion and an aid to social enjoyment is held to be a matter of grave evil, for participating in which members of churches are threatened with excommunication.<sup>136</sup>

The sarcasm of the above excerpt hinted at a broader public acceptance of dancing in Wales. In fact, there appeared to be genuine popular support within the pavilion for the dance. The *Western Mail* reported that:

The pipers and dancers went through a couple of dances – a sword dance and a fling – upon the platform. This addition proved very popular with the audience, who cheered heartily, but there were some who gravely shook their heads and whispered colloquies of an excited character showed that the departure from the beaten track had filled some minds with dark fore-bodings.<sup>137</sup>

Further, the audience responses that were recorded parenthetically in the reports of the main speeches revealed a degree of public support for the dancers. “Morien” recorded enthusiastic responses to the unusual actions:

At the close [of the jig] ... the thousands expressed their enjoyment of the scene they had witnessed by thunders of applause. But we felt that the novel scene would cause a religious earthquake. Ten minutes later General Lee said to me, ‘That was

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> “The Man About Town”, *South Wales Echo*, Monday 24 July 1899, 2.

<sup>137</sup> “Our Own Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Friday 21 July 1899, 6.

fine! We are having too few dances in Wales these days.' His fine face as he passed out of the building wore a smiling expression.<sup>138</sup>

Similarly, the *Western Mail* reported that "Hwfa Môn" greatly enjoyed the jig, tapping his feet to the melody:

It was noticeable when the Highland jig to the accompaniment of the pibrochs was given on the eisteddfod platform, the aged Archdruid, after getting over the shock of seeing bare knees in that sacred place, followed the performance with amused astonishment. He was seated in the high-backed bardic chair, and watched the jig with his hands on his knees and his body bent forward. After a little while the effect was seen. 'Hwfa's' heel rose and fell, the movement quickened, the hand followed suit, and before long 'Hwfa's' feet were actually joining in the jig as far as they could with the owner sitting down.<sup>139</sup>

Surely then, if the Archdruid was not averse to the physical display on the "sacred" Eisteddfod stage, dance was not so abhorrent to the Welsh people as some Eisteddfod Dignitaries felt it was – or, indeed, should be.<sup>140</sup> A reporter for the *Western Mail* echoed the suggestion made by Anwyl: "Dancing prizes should be offered in future National Eisteddfodau."<sup>141</sup>

In conclusion, Mr Vincent Evans, the Eisteddfod Secretary, summed up much of the current criticism when he said: "My personal opinion is that it was an innovation that was un-Welsh and un-eisteddfodic."<sup>142</sup> The Eisteddfod was perceived to be analogous to Wales and Welshness. Consequently, changes to the festival meant changes to the perceived sense of Welshness. In Cardiff that Welshness was dominated

<sup>138</sup> "Morien", *Western Mail*, Friday 21 July 1899, 5. Stuart Piggott said that Morien continued the "tradition of nonsense" of many of the early, Romantic Druids; "He managed to reconcile his pious Welsh Calvinistic Methodism with Druidism even though it meant equating Taliesin with Jesus Christ." Stuart Piggott, 179.

<sup>139</sup> "Wales Day By Day", *Western Mail*, Friday 21 July 1899, 5.

<sup>140</sup> The opponents of the dance were portrayed as a significant minority group, made up primarily of members of the Gorsedd; they were insignificant and unrepresentative of the Welsh, Eisteddfod-going majority.

<sup>141</sup> "Wales Day By Day", *Western Mail*, Friday 21 July 1899, 5.

<sup>142</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 22 July 1899, 6.

by nonconformity and a social conservatism. The Eisteddfod, and its corresponding sense of Welshness, would change throughout the century. In 1899, it was on the brink of change. Any change to the nonconformist norm, even in the form of another national *tradition*, had the potential to be seen as a challenge to the extant cultural hegemony. This perceived threat was similar to that of the secularism of modern culture. Thus, the discourse of “The Dance Incident” was representative of the constant state of flux that existed in relation to the Eisteddfod and its constituent parts, despite any perceived sense of continuity. This controversy further demonstrated the clash between the “traditional” and the “modern” that continued to dominate the Eisteddfod establishment throughout the century.<sup>143</sup>

### **The Controversial Issue of the Prose Medal**

Another example of the controversial growth and alterations in Eisteddfodic ritual was the discussion surrounding the creation of the Prose Medal and its ceremony in 1937. This presented a more substantial ideological and structural challenge specifically to the Gorsedd. The uniqueness of the other two Gorsedd ceremonies, and their perceived sanctity, were disputed by the creation of a new ceremony that borrowed much from the “original” two. It was no surprise that this alteration to the Eisteddfod programme caused a great deal of controversy. The new prose ceremony threatened the illusion of continuity and the idea that there was an unbroken link between the Welsh antiquity of the Druids and contemporary Wales. The “novel” new ceremony, as it was labelled by

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<sup>143</sup> Albeit over different matters. Some of these factors will be discussed later in this chapter.

the *Cardiff Times*, also endangered the sense of Welsh heritage as something real, rather than something created or constructed.<sup>144</sup>

There were those, such as T. O. Phillips, writing in the *Cardiff Times*, who appreciated the need for the prose ceremony in order to recognise “that prose has been the Cinderella of the arts for years, and has been treated with parsimonious indifference”.<sup>145</sup> He did not predict any problems with the new ceremony, although he rather tellingly foresaw a sense of ceremonial competition being introduced with the new element:

This year a prose writer will bask in the transient sunshine of the pavilion, and steal some of the thunder that has been the bards’ sole prerogative for years. ... [T]he successful essayist will be escorted to the platform with all the dignity and pomp extended to the chaired bard.<sup>146</sup>

The prose ceremony was popular. According to another reporter for the *Cardiff Times*: “Except for the chief choral contest, the proceedings watched with greatest interest in the pavilion on Wednesday were concerned with the effort to introduce a ritual for the chief Welsh prose prize.”<sup>147</sup>

However, the “Correspondent” in the *Cardiff Times* was more critical of the innovation. He saw the need, or rather the justification, for a Prose Ceremony, but felt that what was actually created was a rather cheap copy of the current Gorsedd rituals: “The result was a complete travesty of Eisteddfod ceremonial and a most humiliating 20 minutes for a number of prominent Eisteddfod personalities. The victor submitted to the

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<sup>144</sup> T. O. Phillips, MA, *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 31 July 1937, 1.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> “A Correspondent”, *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 7 August 1937, 16.

lengthy uneisteddfodic process. ... So complete was the sense of parody.”<sup>148</sup> She continued, in a slightly less biting tone:

Every justification exists for emphasising the importance of this new competition by some kind of ceremony, and it should have been possible in creating one to avoid stealing the thunder of the bards. ... They could not have been greatly pleased at an innovation so flagrantly a plagiarism of the traditional bardic ceremonies. I doubt not that the sense of the Eisteddfod is against this copying of the bardic rite, though relieved that those who organised it spared us the sword and the shouts of ‘A oes heddwch?’ which we already have four times in Eisteddfod week. ... If a literature ceremony is needed, some local committee or perhaps a committee of the new Eisteddfod Council could devise one at least marked by a degree of originality.<sup>149</sup>

If such a ceremony was necessary, she felt that not only would it be better for the ceremonies themselves to have a more original ritual, but also it would be better for the audience, who were likely to be bored by too much of the same thing. This view was common. In the *Western Mail*, “Eisteddfodwr” supported the Gorsedd’s decision not to collaborate on the new ceremony. Although supporting the elevation of prose at the national cultural festival, the author did not support the “plagiarism” of the ceremonial:

The Gorsedd has been unjustly criticised for refusing to cooperate with the Eisteddfod Committee. After all, its very pedigree would forbid an institution that was created to foster poetry to lend its patronising glamour, even in a crisis, in favour of prose. Yet we agree that prose should be given a more prominent place in the Eisteddfod. ... But let the ceremony be a new one, and as far removed as possible from the Gorsedd ceremony both in pageantry and ritual.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> “The Gorsedd was asked to allow the robed bards to participate, as in the case of the crowning and chairing, in a ritual written at the instance of the local committee. This was refused. After much discussion ‘J.J.’ (the Archdruid), Dr Elvet Lewis and Principal Maurice Jones, three of the Gorsedd leaders, agreed, presumably to avoid any suggestion of churlishness, to go on the platform with representatives of the National Eisteddfod Association to support the local committee.” “A Correspondent”, *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 7 August 1937, 16.

<sup>150</sup> “The Recorder himself would be the very person to create a ‘Gorsedd Rhyddiaith,’ for his gift for real pageantry is based on a highly developed artistic sense. If he feels ill-disposed to create a rival ceremony, and if no one else can stem the breach, let us cease to criticise the profound workings of the mind of Iolo Morganwg.” “Eisteddfodwr”, *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 14 August 1937, 1.



If not actually traceable to antiquity, the extant Gorsedd ceremonial was accepted as firmly entrenched in the Welsh cultural sphere by 1937. The ceremonies were safely part of the Welsh heritage, whereas the new ceremony was a challenger to the existing Welsh cultural identity.

Generally, the ritual and ceremony at the National Eisteddfod were perceived positively in 1937. D. R. Hughes said: “the pageantry ... appeals so much to Welsh people and is a distinct help to the Eisteddfod.”<sup>151</sup> Thus, the crucial point was the introduction of a new ceremony that was too close in practice, yet too far in time, from the existing, established ceremonies. Although attempting to borrow from the Eisteddfodic conventions, it was still perceived as a modern usurper to Welsh heritage. Ironically, however, the “traditional” Eisteddfodic ceremonies were themselves constantly being altered and changed. Indeed, in 1937 Geoffrey Crawshay, “or Sieffre, as he likes to be called during Eisteddfod week”, was working in his role as Master of Ceremonies to try to improve the dignity and quality of the Gorsedd ritual at the Eisteddfod. He said:

I am now licking the procession of the bards into shape. As you will recall ... they used to slouch along the main road on their way to the Gorsedd in so disjointed and dejected a manner as though they were going to their doom. However, I am now drilling them into the mechanical precision of the goose-step with the result that they now tread the streets as though they really were marching to a land overflowing with milk and honey.<sup>152</sup>

The consistent efforts being made by Crawshay, and later “Cynan”, to “tidy up” the Gorsedd, and subsequently the National Eisteddfod, were significant and key to the

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<sup>151</sup> D. R. Hughes, Hon. Secretary of the National Eisteddfod Association, in the Eisteddfod supplement, *Western Mail*, Monday 2 August 1937, 3.

<sup>152</sup> “Junior Member for Treorchy”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 5 August 1937, 5.

above discussion.<sup>153</sup> They reflected change to the festival, and were occasionally controversial if they became perceived as too much of a threat to the established sense of Welsh heritage that was being performed through these Eisteddfodic rituals.

## Conclusions

For much of the century, the National Eisteddfod was a particularly visible segment of the Welsh public sphere. Thus, the performative functions of identity construction on the Eisteddfodic platforms were fundamental to the formal construction of Welshness.<sup>154</sup> By the beginning of the twentieth century, many of the core elements of the current Eisteddfodic and Gorsedd ceremonial and ritual had been created and fashioned. Yet these elements would be constantly altered and adapted through the coming century as fashions changed, new elements were added to the Eisteddfod, and the structure of the Eisteddfod organisation altered. However, despite their modern invention, and an increasingly scholarly acceptance of that fact, they were accepted by the majority of Eisteddfodwyr as representative of a link to Welsh antiquity. As has been demonstrated above, paradoxically, this was the result of an active construction of that characteristic. This apparent juxtaposition between a perceived continuous past and a constantly changing present was representative of interplay between “tradition” and “modernity” evident in Wales throughout the twentieth century.

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<sup>153</sup> For example, “Cynan” was responsible for introducing the Flower Dance to the Crowning and Chaining ceremonies, probably c. 1954. In fact, the Gorsedd was, for much of the middle of the twentieth century, a source of jokes and ridicule for the National Eisteddfod. Even in the twenty-first century, the “old men in funny white costumes” are what most people call to mind of when thinking of the Eisteddfod See Dillwyn Miles, 1978.

<sup>154</sup> Scholars such as Carol Trosset and Charlotte Aull Davies have examined these aspects of the festival. See Charlotte Aull Davies, 1998; Carol Trosset, 1993.

## Chapter Five

### Structure and the Performance of Identity through the Eisteddfod II:

#### Informal Ceremonial

But music is not the whole of life - not even the whole of art, and certainly not the sole medium of national expression. There are other things the Eisteddfod attends to that are just as important as music though less showy and prominent, and there are other things the Eisteddfod might do that are also important to the cause of democratic culture and nationalist aims. ... The Eisteddfod cannot take up such matters as public health and housing as definite objects of its own, but it can and ought to take a greater part in drawing attention to the practical forms of patriotism, the practical obligations of citizenship, in order that public attention may be more liberally and effectively devoted to health and housing and other matters which concern the well-being of the people.<sup>1</sup>

Victor Turner's idea that performance and ritual, and systems of symbols, react reflexively to create a web of meanings, is appropriate in the discussion of the informal performance of identity at the Eisteddfod. The National Eisteddfod of Wales is itself a complex system of symbols.<sup>2</sup> The Editorial quoted above hints at the broad variety of elements comprising each National Eisteddfod. Whether they are the specially constructed, widely recognised ones such as the costume of the Bards as they wander around the field and the specific connotations assigned to the recognised emblems of certain organisations, or the less recognised ones such as the use of the Welsh language around the *Maes*, the eating of certain foods, or the discussion of particular social welfare topics at the festival, these symbols interact together as "performance" to construct a sense of Welshness at the Eisteddfod. Each of these elements contributed to the sense of Welshness and identity being performed at the festival.

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<sup>1</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Saturday 12 August 1911, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Turner, 1992, 21.

Thus, the performance of identity on the Eisteddfod *Maes* in the twentieth century was not limited to the formal ceremonies and rituals that occurred on stage. Many of the more revealing and edifying elements of Eisteddfodic discourse were expressed informally in and around the various corners of the festival, in the broader Eisteddfodic discourse. Aspects of this informal performance were hinted at in the previous discussion of the decoration of the pavilion as setting the stage for performance. Indeed, taking the ideas of performance a step further, Michael Billig's notion of "banal nationalism" – that nationhood is "constantly flagged", discursively, through everyday acts and aspects of culture, such as politicians' speeches, flag-waving, and (*à la* Anderson) the syntax of newspapers – is particularly useful in this context because of the emphasis he places on an almost subliminal focus on everyday objects and their nationalistic connotations.<sup>3</sup> Their very effectiveness is their unobtrusiveness, stemming from their familiarity.<sup>4</sup> Following this framework, everything on the *Maes* is potentially symbolic and representative of Welsh nationhood. The power comes from how extensively distributed and visible, recognised and interpreted, the signs are by the population. This chapter will examine the primary "supplemental" exhibition on the *Maes*, the Arts and Crafts section, at specific moments throughout the century. It will also explore some of the more substantial discussions that took place in and around the Eisteddfod during the course of the twentieth century: the hegemonic discourse of social improvement and welfare, and the evolution of youth culture as a counter-hegemonic force.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Billig, 1995, 9-10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>5</sup> See Doreen Massey for a discussion of the potentiality of external influences entering a community through its youth. Doreen Massey, "The Spatial Construction of Youth Cultures", in Tracey Skelton and Gill Valentine, eds, *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1990), 121-129.

There were definite actors in this process of “banal” nation-building. However, there was a difference between those who created the signs and symbols and those who viewed and reacted to them. Accordingly, the actors did not necessarily constitute the entire population of a community. The elite, who ran the newspapers, gave speeches, et cetera, had agency in this way of defining community membership. The average Eisteddfodwyr also did to a lesser, often immeasurable, degree. This model is very appropriate to a discussion of the Eisteddfod, in terms of both of the power structure and the manner of implementation of identity both on the *Maes* and through the various competitions. Moreover, the related concept of agency leads to an examination of participation and performance – particularly as they relate to the construction of community and identity.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the less formal structural performance of what was on the *Maes*, paying particular emphasis to three constituent themes: the didactic role of the Eisteddfod as “people’s university”, the aforementioned extant struggle between ideas of “tradition” and “modernity”, and the idea that the Eisteddfod, by broadening its competitive base, was an inclusive mirror, reflecting Welsh-speaking society. The second half of the chapter is based primarily on discursive performances and examines particular forms of counter-hegemonic cultural performances on the *Maes*: youth culture and temperance.

### **The *Maes* as People’s University**

Certainly, one of the first sights to strike the wondering eye in all this splendid panorama of Welsh culture, industry, commerce and craft, is a row of neat, temporary bank branches. They stand, adequately solid, incredibly comfortable – armchairs, flowers, walnut counters, even the red carpet – to remind us all that if you cannot take it with you, they will obligingly bring it for you. ‘An Eisteddfod means money and business,’ said one of the managers. ‘most of our work here is changing foreign currency for overseas

visitors. But should any of our customers require money, we would naturally oblige.' He beamed, rather brightly, 'Besides, we do provide something more than money. We give a real service. Coming to us here saved a ten-minute walk to our nearest branch.' It seems that the canny Scots are doing very nicely on the theory that if you cannot beat 'em, join 'em.<sup>6</sup>

What is on the *Maes* has been an equally important indicator of the Eisteddfod's identity as the formalised performance through the ritualised behaviours on stage in the pavilion. Originally, and in the purest sense traditionally, the Eisteddfod was a literary festival. Gradually it has been expanded to include a variety of topical contemporary components. As the official booklet on the Gorsedd and Eisteddfod from 1946 commented:

who indeed can say which are the *chief* competitions of the Eisteddfod? If your father is a member of a Band or Ambulance or Mining Team, for him interest in those competitions will outshine all the rest. Thus the chief festival of your nation caters through its Council for all crafts and all talents.<sup>7</sup>

Many of these elements have become integrated into the festival and have gradually become perceived as "traditional" in their own right. Although these various elements of the Eisteddfod are quite independent and dissimilar to one another, they contribute to the same discursive construction of Welshness. They also have contributed towards the dual objectives of the festival: to foster a "national" body of Welsh talent and to educate the Welsh people. One of the most significant of these constituent parts, the visual arts side of the festival, will be discussed in this section.<sup>8</sup>

The Carmarthen Eisteddfod in 1911 was typical of the late-Victorian model of a festival with explicit instructional purposes. The various features attached to the Eisteddfod, and their particular competitive subjects, were representative of the larger

<sup>6</sup> Jill Forwood, *South Wales Evening Post*, Friday 5 August 1960, 6.

<sup>7</sup> "Cynan", *The Council and Gorsedd of To-day: A handbook for the Children of Wales Published by the National Eisteddfod Council* (Dinbych: Gwasg Gee, 1946).

<sup>8</sup> A few other notable alterations include the introduction of various musical, dramatic and dance competitions, the changing role of the religious aspects of the festival, including the introduction of the *Cymanfa Ganu*, and the range and assortment of the various stands on the *Maes*.

edifying goals of the festival. For example, the Carmarthen Eisteddfod was notable for the provision of educational lectures which were open to all Eisteddfodwyr and characteristic of contemporary Eisteddfodau. Topics included archaeological research in Wales, consumption, and public housing. These lectures differed in their focus, ranging from an introspective discussion of Welsh heritage, to a strikingly progressive and appreciative acceptance of modernity. However, they each had the same broadly didactic aim.

A similarly edifying feature of the Eisteddfod, and one at the forefront of Eisteddfodic change throughout the century, was the Arts, Crafts and Industry sections. The introduction and changing nature of this section was an excellent example of a non-original aspect of the festival that gradually evolved into part of the Eisteddfod's established elements. Born out of the Victorian desire for self-improvement and education, the arts and crafts exhibitions were initially a way of bringing art to the people of Wales. Further, they carried a distinctly didactic aim. Indeed, the role of art at the Eisteddfod in 1911 was representative of the divergent goals and principles of the festival and its organisers. It had two interrelated primary aims: it was meant to spread and improve the standard of art in Wales, but also, and more importantly, to inform and educate the people of Wales. From the very first days of the section in the late nineteenth century, as an adjunct exhibition to the Eisteddfod, competitions were organised around practical topics, such as handicrafts, as well as the fine arts. In 1911, for example, there were prizes for oil painting and sculpture, but also for a cigar box in metalwork and fishing netting.<sup>9</sup> In this way, the role of the National Eisteddfod of Wales

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<sup>9</sup> Throughout the century the category of "craft" was very loosely defined; there were baking and cake decorating competitions in the 1930s. There were architectural competitions as well. When the Gold Medal for Fine Art was introduced in 1951, the Arts and Crafts section was still very broadly defined and inclusive of a variety of mediums. By the end of the century, however, notably with the introduction of an Industry tent in 1960, the Arts and Crafts Exhibition was confined more to fine arts. The exhibit still includes a variety of fine arts, ranging in subject matter, style and materials.

as national educator, roaming around the various constituencies, was clearly evident. Moreover, during the course of the twentieth century, the ideological dispute between “tradition” and “modernity” that was evident in other areas of the Eisteddfod also would emerge in relation to the arts at the national festival.

The most obvious and perhaps simplest goal of the introduction of art to Eisteddfodic competition was to improve the standard of the visual arts in Wales. According to the *Western Mail*, the Carmarthen Arts Committee was “endeavouring to foster interest in art generally and to raise the standard ... achieved”.<sup>10</sup> Mr Mansel Lewis, said that: “With a wider cultivation and a higher level of general excellence the future might bring them nearer their realisations [of a “national” school of art].”<sup>11</sup> Lewis said that the primary reason that Welsh visual arts were below standard and of poor quality was a lack of opportunity: “the same spirit was in the Welsh as was in the Italians of old, and that, given the same opportunities, they would become as artistic a nation.”<sup>12</sup> Exposure, through such means as the National Eisteddfod, would fire the Welsh imagination and character – as well as their talent. Lewis continued:

The reason why the artistic temperament in Wales was not awakened was because the poor student had not had the chance to see the examples of modern painting, or the old masterpieces. Their imagination had not been fired, nor had their eye been trained, but these competitions would do an immense amount of good in inspiring the Welsh people to rise to loftier and nobler heights (applause).<sup>13</sup>

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Moreover, its aim is still didactic; for many in Wales it remains the only gallery space with which they come into contact.

<sup>10</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Friday 4 August 1911, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis was a pupil of Herkomer and himself an excellent amateur painter, he lived in Stradey Castle, Llanelly; quoted in an Editorial, *Western Mail*, 4 August 1911, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Mr Christopher Williams, adjudicator in the arts and crafts section, of Maesteg, a professional painter, who became famous in 1911 for his painting of the Investiture at Carnarfon Castle. *Welshman*, Friday 11 August 1911, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Mrs Gwynne Hughes, presiding over opening of arts and crafts exhibit, in *Welshman*, Friday 11 August 1911, 6.



The *South Wales Daily Post* agreed with Lewis's espousal of the motivational nature of the arts exhibits at the Eisteddfod. It said the Arts and Crafts exhibit would provide opportunities for the youth of Wales to establish an understanding for and love of art:

With this praiseworthy feature of education for the young, it is hoped to rekindle that love for the beautiful which has been dormant so long, and whilst stirring latent genius, to help the useful connoisseurs and rouse Wales to take her proper place among her sister kingdoms in the world of art.<sup>14</sup>

An art exhibit at the Welsh national cultural festival was felt to be the means of inspiring Welsh talent and improving the quality of Welsh art. In this way, it would contribute towards the establishment of a significant "national" body of work.

The Eisteddfod was seen to be the logical location in which to improve the quality of Welsh visual arts because of its extant artistic nature. In fact, many felt the perceived literary and musical talents of the Eisteddfod-going Welsh belied a general artistic nature and hinted at similar talents in the visual arts. This assumption stemmed from the identification of the Welsh with the "creative" and "emotional" Celts. Mansel Lewis summarised the prevailing sentiment well:

The Welsh have found an outlet for the expression of their deepest feelings in literature, poetry and music; but nevertheless it is difficult to think that a people of so emotional and imaginative a temperament have not got the true art germ lying dormant within them, to be quickened into life and full activity when time and circumstances encourage its growth ... so that although the achievements of the past and the present may be far from having reached the highest standard of our ideals, with a wider cultivation and a higher level of general excellence, the future may bring us near to the realisation.<sup>15</sup>

This idea of the role of the Eisteddfod as a sort of "Welsh Academy" was widely propagated by mid-century. In fact, in 1944, Mr D. O. Evans, chairman of the National Eisteddfod Committee, called the national festival a "vigorous and vital factor in

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<sup>14</sup> "Our Own Correspondent", *South Wales Daily Post*, Monday 7 August 1911.

<sup>15</sup> *Welshman*, Friday 11 August 1911, 6.

building up what he hoped would eventually become ... a Welsh Academy governing all Welsh cultural institutions".<sup>16</sup> The Eisteddfod was perceived as a platform for inspirational purposes – as a way of bringing to the surface the perceived innate Welsh artistic genius.

Equally important to the twentieth-century National Eisteddfod were the festival's educational aims; these were also demonstrated by the visual arts and industry exhibits at the festival. In 1911, Mansel Lewis said: "It should be the aim of the eisteddfod, with all its organised machinery, to materially assist in promoting the growth of a more general *feeling* for art."<sup>17</sup> This "feeling" denoted an appreciation of art. An editorial in the *Western Mail* agreed with Lewis:

There is a practical value attaching to the arts, crafts, and science section which ought to earn for it a greater amount of attention from contributors as well as patrons. ... Music and letters are ... not the only arts which deserve attention at the National Eisteddfod, and it is proper to suggest that the Eisteddfod best deserves the qualification 'national' when it does its best to promote versatility in art. Without in any way depreciating music and letters, it is reasonable to suggest that the wealth of the higher things of life which is the frequent boast of Welshmen would be enhanced by becoming more liberal, more varied, more representative of the art instincts and aptitudes generally. The life of the people would be enriched if more attention were given to the art of the hand and the eye as well as the art of the ear.<sup>18</sup>

This "feeling for art" would conceivably manifest itself through a practical application, as well as an ideological one, all the while increasing a sense of Welshness. That is to say, not only would Welsh talent be improved by exposure to the visual arts, as it apparently had been by literature, but there would also be an improvement in the general standard of crafts and industrial arts. Moreover, by focusing on a *national* tradition and

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<sup>16</sup> MP for Cardiganshire, *Welshman*, Friday 18 August 1944, 1

<sup>17</sup> Emphasis original. Mansel Lewis was the chairman of the Arts, Crafts and Science Section at the National Eisteddfod; speaking at the opening on Thursday and quoted in the *Llanelly Star*, Saturday 5 August 1911, 1.

<sup>18</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Friday 4 August 1911, 3.

body of visual arts and industry, the sense of Welsh nationhood would correspondingly increase.

### **Tradition versus Modernity**

Part of the educational purpose of the Arts, Crafts and Science section, and specifically the industrial exhibits, was to educate the Eisteddfodwyr in particular forms of Welshness. This was the case in 1911, but also throughout the century, notably in 1944 and 1960. It was simultaneously introspective, nostalgic and conservative, as well as outward-looking, practical and progressive. The attempts to create a “national” body of artistic work were evidence of the former. They focused on “Welshness” and emphasized a view of Wales tinted by its heritage. The self-consciously edifying aims of the Eisteddfod were evidence of the latter. They were attempts to modernize Wales and bring it into the modern world.

Many at the Eisteddfod venerated the *gwerin* and Welsh folk culture as demonstrative of a sense of a “pure” and untainted culture. It was perceived that by celebrating the “traditional” Welsh arts and crafts, they would be preserved. Not only would this function as a sort of living museum, but it would encourage those aspects of Welsh culture and its particular ideas of Welshness.<sup>19</sup> Mrs Gwynne Hughes (“Tregyb”) celebrated the rural Welshness of the *gwerin* when she spoke of her delight regarding the home industry section. She “longed for the time when the English and Welsh people would emulate the example that the Swiss peasant set before them [of home crafts and

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<sup>19</sup> The Museum of Welsh Life at St. Fagans was established in 1948.

industries in the evening]. (Applause.)”<sup>20</sup> As mentioned in previous chapters, the introspective emphasis on the *gwerinol* aspects of Welshness at the Eisteddfod was perhaps a reactionary response to the perceived negative aspects of modernity.

This inward-looking opinion of the Eisteddfod was also evident in the increasing focus of the exhibition in the Arts and Crafts Section on particularly Welsh artists, in an ideology similar to that behind the creation of a “national” academy of art. In fact, the 1911 section of the Eisteddfod differed from those previous:

In the past ... there have been loan collections from South Kensington and private sources, but a new departure has been made on this occasion by an attempt to get together a representative collection of work executed by living Welsh artists and certain painters whose work is within certain limits more or less associated with Wales.<sup>21</sup>

The definition of “Welshness” around which competitors were able to submit work to the festival was becoming more strictly defined during this period.<sup>22</sup> Thus, by 1911 there was an explicit acknowledgement of the role of the Eisteddfod in propagating Welsh culture, and a concerted effort was being made to focus on *Welsh* arts therein.

Nevertheless, despite this focus on Welsh heritage, many Eisteddfodwyr supported a more modern outward-looking view of Wales and Welshness. Despite their frequently folksy nature, the inclusion of crafts and industrial exhibits was actually evidence of this progressive position. The corresponding “Welshness” exhibited at the National Eisteddfod was at once innovative and practical; it was aimed at improving the nature and quality of Welsh life and fitting it into the increasingly modern framework of

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<sup>20</sup> Mrs Hughes owned the Tre-Gib estate outside Llandeilo in Carmarthenshire; quoted in an Editorial, *Western Mail*, Friday 4 August 1911, 3.

<sup>21</sup> *Welshman*, Friday 11 August 1911, 6.

<sup>22</sup> “That in all cases the word ‘Wales’ shall be held to include the county of Monmouth; and the term ‘Welsh Competitor’ to mean any person born in Wales, or of Welsh parentage, and any resident in Wales for twelve months prior to the 7<sup>th</sup> day of August, 1911.” *Rhestr Swyddogol o'r Testynau a'r Gwobrwyon: Eisteddfod Frenhinol Genedlaethol Cymru Caerfyrddin, 1911*, 83.

British and world society. An editorial in the *Western Mail* in 1911 preached on this aspect of the responsibility of the Eisteddfod:

[S]o long as it continues its work upon its self-appointed lines it will continue to perform services of high value and importance to Wales, in respect both to the cultivation of the arts and to the maintenance and strengthening of national sentiment. Whether the Eisteddfod might do more within its own limits, might make more of the opportunities it already enjoys, and, further, might take up new enterprises for the benefit of the Welsh nation, are questions which have been liberally discussed in the past, and which will no doubt receive prodigal attention in the future. That reform is in the air, and that the spirit of reform is the expression of a robust and enterprising patriotism, there is much to show. ... Some degree of progress has been achieved in this direction – and in this respect the testimony of the adjudicators at Carmarthen this week is most agreeable and encouraging.<sup>23</sup>

The apparent inconsistencies of this latter stance were negligible. Although the often old-fashioned focus of competitive subjects, even such “innovations” such as the introduction of folk dance and crafts, pointed to a static sense of Welshness, the ultimate goal of this Eisteddfodic faction was to change Wales however necessary in order to adapt to the contemporary world. Indeed, some of the later twentieth-century industrial exhibits were attempts to represent a wholly modern Wales.<sup>24</sup>

The role of industry at the Eisteddfod in 1911 was similarly contentious, but steeped in progressivism. Just as the inclusion of arts and crafts were advocated to be beneficial to Eisteddfodwyr, the introduction of more explicitly industrial aspects to the Eisteddfod was seen to be both ideologically and practically constructive as well as productive to national feeling and growth. This would become the prevailing attitude by the interwar period as the celebration of folk life became one of the dominant threads of the National Eisteddfod.<sup>25</sup> Many presidential speeches in 1911 were dedicated to lauding

<sup>23</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Saturday 12 August 1911, 3.

<sup>24</sup> For example, internet access areas were introduced to the *Maes* by 2000.

<sup>25</sup> For example, as mentioned before, an increasing number of folk-oriented subjects, such as folk dance and crafts, were introduced. This was also the period in which Iorwerth Peate was lobbying for a museum of Welsh folk life.

the role of industry in Wales. Sir Courteney Mansel encouraged the introduction of an increased technical element at the Eisteddfod and throughout Welsh life. He advocated a system of technical education: "It was often said that the old world was passing away, and that men of the new age would have to be provided with new powers in the way of education to qualify them for the contest that was approaching."<sup>26</sup> The *South Wales Daily Post* reported: "The Carmarthenshire Welsh Industries Association, which does much to foster a national feeling in other parts, is in a prominent place in the grand stand, opposite the pavilion."<sup>27</sup> Further, a reporter in the *Western Mail* emphasised the necessity of linking the Welsh Industries Association and the Eisteddfod, to further the growth of both, but also highlighted the more traditional role of cottagers in Welsh industry. He said the exhibition was:

an excellent opportunity of exhibiting to the public the class of work that is being executed by the cottagers up and down the country, and at the same time bring the Welsh Industries Association into closer touch with the Eisteddfod.<sup>28</sup>

Industrial exhibits at the Eisteddfod in 1911 represented the ultimate acceptance of modernity, but the simultaneous celebration of the folksy crafts of the *gwerin* emphasised the juxtaposition of two aspects of Welshness that continued throughout the twentieth century.

The contrast between old and new, between "tradition" and "modernity", was again strongly evident on the *Maes* in Llandybïe in 1944. There was a strong emphasis on old-fashioned aspects of Welsh culture, such as traditional costume and antiquities:

Historical curios find a place in the local crafts. There is a Welshwoman's high hat, which was made by a famous Llandebïe [sic] artist at this style of headgear – 'Hetty the Hatter'. Near it is a Welsh skirt reputed to be 300 years old, showing they had good

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<sup>26</sup> Sir Courteney Mansel in *Welshman*, Friday 11 August 1911, 6.

<sup>27</sup> "Our Own Correspondent", *South Wales Daily Post*, Monday 7 August 1911.

<sup>28</sup> "Our Own Reporter", *Western Mail*, Tuesday 8 August 1911, 6.

dyes in those days, and most romantic of all a scarf which was worn by Sgt John Jones at the Battle of Waterloo.<sup>29</sup>

The inclusion of such relics of the Welsh past was significant as they emphasised the introspective sense of Welshness. Although Waterloo was mentioned, it was connected to the Eisteddfod and Welshness by the reference to Sgt Jones. Other exhibits included: “some very interesting reflections of men’s various hobbies”, such as walking-sticks – a couple of them with verses of Scripture carved on them by a quarryman and a collier, and toys well finished by a local farmer, woodcarving, spears and iron work.”<sup>30</sup> The perceived quaintness of these crafts items was noteworthy, and must be located within the continued discourse on Welsh folk life and the cult of the *gwerin*.

For all the focus on an idealised Welsh past in 1944, however, there was an increasing emphasis on the future of Wales that was similar to the discussion in 1911. An exhibit titled “New Wales”, including the “When We Build Again” exhibition and a coal industry exhibition in the National school, was a showcase of the Llandybïe Eisteddfod.<sup>31</sup> It focused on practical aspects of rebuilding Wales after the war. Examples of subject matter within these displays included bits about “new grasses” and a working model coal mine.<sup>32</sup> The coal mine was interesting because of its practical aspect, which made it important to the post-war rebuilding of Wales (and Britain), but also because it was representative of a life in Wales that was increasingly part of the past. The way in which the newspaper reports discussed the exhibit contributed towards a sense of the colliery as homely and folksy, rather than as an integral part in the *future* of Wales. *The Welshman* emphasised certain characteristics of the exhibition and exhibitors:

One of the major side-shows, a working model of a modern colliery, attracted a constant stream of visitors. It was the work of

<sup>29</sup> “D.H.I.P.” (the editor), *South Wales Evening Post*, Monday 7 August 1944, 4.

<sup>30</sup> “The Man About The Valley”, “The Watchman,” *The Amman Valley Chronicle and East Carmarthen News*, Thursday 10 August 1944, 2.

<sup>31</sup> *Western Mail*, Wednesday 2 August 1944, 3.

<sup>32</sup> “D.H.I.P.” (the editor), *South Wales Evening Post*, Monday 7 August 1944, 4.

Mr Owen Rowlands, of Margaret-street, Ammanford, a miner, who started on the job 12 years ago and gave most of his leisure hours to it. Later his young son Ellis gave a hand. The model loaded truck, the miniature pick and shovel, the low roof, the tram lines, tell their own story of life underground.<sup>33</sup>

Not only was the miner hard-working and dedicated to the Eisteddfod, but to his family as well. Moreover, the fact that he was a miner located him firmly in the folk tradition of contemporary Wales. He was part of the *industrialised gwerin*. Despite the title of the exhibit in the related discourse, there was no attempt to take the model and turn its focus towards the post-war era and the future.

Indeed, although reports often emphasised the general progressiveness of the Eisteddfod, they often found it difficult to separate the new from the old and focus entirely on modernity. The day's president, Mr Alun T. Davies, said the exhibition was "breaking new ground and pointing to future possibilities. ... They must exercise their energies and plan ahead."<sup>34</sup> However, the past was still there, exerting influence. The

*South Wales Evening Post* reported:

Included in the industrial exhibition opened at the National Eisteddfod at Llandeibie [sic] to-day is one arranged to demonstrate *progress* with the use of Welsh anthracite for domestic and industrial purposes. ... These latter include post-war models not previously shown to the public. ... Welsh anthracite was used throughout the Scott Antarctic expedition, and a non-ferrous heating stove used by captain Scott on his ship Discovery is shown.<sup>35</sup>

The emphasis on the practical uses of coal, both past and present, was central to the construction of the exhibit, and consequently the Eisteddfod, as modern and utilitarian, but also as firmly rooted in the past. This apparent disjuncture spoke of the inherent controversy of these two aspects of Welshness.

<sup>33</sup> *The Welshman*, Friday 11 August 1944, 1.

<sup>34</sup> "They could not have culture without industry, he said. The people of Wales needed bread and cheese as well as the intangible thing." Davies was a barrister. Later Sir A. T. Davies, he started a Welsh publishing business at Llandybïe in 1940. Quoted by "D.H.I.P." (the editor), *South Wales Evening Post*, Monday 7 August 1944, 1.

<sup>35</sup> *South Wales Evening Post* Monday 7 August 1944, 3.



The Central Office of Information exhibit at the Cardiff Eisteddfod in 1960 mirrored the exhibit at Llandybïe in its ideological focus on the future, and also in its practical inability to separate the old from the new. “The Welsh House”, as it was called, was dedicated to flaunting the progressiveness of Welsh industry: “ ‘The Welsh House’ shown against a background story in photographs of the way in which Wales at the dawn of a new decade, is setting the pace in world industrial progress.”<sup>36</sup> It was meant to reflect Wales and Welsh industry in 1960, with a distinct eye on the future. Wales was promoted as, not only up to date with contemporary culture and industry, but leading the way.<sup>37</sup>

However, the emphasis on industry was not entirely distanced from the more “traditional”, artistic and cultural elements of the Eisteddfod. Norman Woodhouse, in the *Western Mail*, argued for the union of industry and the arts:

The challenge facing the organisers is to present eisteddfodau which adequately reflect the industrial background so typical of these and many other Welsh communities. ... After the undoubted success of the first-ever industrial pavilion at the Cardiff Eisteddfod the opportunity of forging an even closer link between industry and Wales’s yearly cultural festival should not be missed.<sup>38</sup>

The power of Welsh industry was arguably already fading by 1960; but it continued as the perceived dominant factor in Welsh society, influencing politics, economics and culture. It was propagated as central to the Eisteddfod’s past and present, and rather ironically, particularly to the future of Welsh *culture*. This link was as accurate as it was necessary. Mr D. J. Thomas, an engineer, advocated even more changes in the Eisteddfod: “We want the Eisteddfod to follow the times and present the technical

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<sup>36</sup> *Western Mail*, Saturday 30 July 1960, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Norman Woodhouse, *Western Mail*, Monday 8 August 1960, 2.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

achievements of young people.”<sup>39</sup> He wanted to see more engineering classes at future Eisteddfodau. Industry therefore provided a link to the past and to the future of Wales.

### **A Reflection of the Welsh People?**

The emphasis on industrial aspects in Llandybie and Cardiff was not wholly different from the practical “crafts” of half a century earlier. Both reflected the functional and didactic aims of the festival. They also could be read as attempts to accurately reflect and represent the people of Wales – not all of whom were Bards or talented musicians. In this way, the Eisteddfod can be seen to be something beyond a cultural festival and more of a “mirror” of Welsh society. It was becoming increasingly inclusive in its focus on other aspects of the whole of Welsh society. This gradually changing nature of the festival was evinced by a comment in the *Western Mail* in 1960: “The National Eisteddfod of today was comparable to an international sporting event and people in Wales went there because it was the normal thing to do.”<sup>40</sup> Similarly, in the *South Wales Evening Post*, Jill Forwood said: “In its way, the Eisteddfod is a family show, with stands and tents to represent all the interests of its members.”<sup>41</sup> In 2000, the *Western Mail* asserted that the “Maes Shows All Things To All Men”. It listed the disparate activities on the *Maes*:

The national parks of Wales were celebrated in poetry and music. ... The entire Llanelli RFC squad ... was lending its support to the NFU Wales campaign to increase consumption of milk. A new video on Lesotho was shown ... Carmarthenshire County Council launched ... an attempt to provide a framework for economic, environmental and social well-being that accords with the principles of the Rio Earth Summit of 1992. Members of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg will ... press for action to protect rural villages. ... Cardiff

<sup>39</sup> A member of this year’s arts and crafts committee, quoted by Norman Woodhouse, *Western Mail*, Monday 8 August 1960, 2.

<sup>40</sup> *Western Mail*, Tuesday 2 August 1960, 9.

<sup>41</sup> Jill Forwood, *South Wales Evening Post*, Friday 5 August 1960, 6. In fact, many of the stands around the *Maes* can also be found at the Royal Welsh Show and elsewhere in Wales. For example: charities, the stands selling garden furniture and the inevitable food vendors. See Appendix Twelve.

publishing company Y Ddraig Fach ... has secured the rights to publish a Welsh version of hit film *Chicken Run*... [several people] have been awarded the Hymn 2000 award. ... Plaid Cymru's Cynog Dafis will become the first member of the National Assembly to be accepted into the highest white-robe order of the Gorsedd y Beirdd. ... [and] Diabetes Cymru is inviting members of the public to discuss the risks associated with the condition ...<sup>42</sup>

Certainly the Eisteddfod had long been perceived as a mirror of all aspects of Welsh culture. An Editorial in the *Western Mail* in 1899 said that: "So far as possible, it is a national gathering, representative men from all classes of the community having a hand in it."<sup>43</sup> Sixty years later, in an advertisement placed in the *Western Mail* by the National Eisteddfod, the newspaper billed the festival thus: "The Royal National Eisteddfod, mirror of the cultural life of the people of Wales."<sup>44</sup>

Returning to 1911 to summarize, the exhibits on the *Maes* at Carmarthen were not purely focused on the "traditional" elements of the Eisteddfod, nor were they confined to practical, didactic aims. Yet, despite the potentially contradictory facets of the festival's identity, the Eisteddfod was perceived as representative of the Welsh people, and its exhibits were meant to reflect that relationship. Moreover, as a result of that relationship, the Eisteddfod had a reciprocal sense of duty with its patrons. As one of the primary locations of the Welsh public sphere, and thus civil society, the Eisteddfod was a place of the performance not only of identity, but of *citizenship*. Eisteddfodic discourse - both explicitly, through literal comparisons, and implicitly, through tacit duties and rights - reflected that relationship.

The discussions on Consumption and Housing and Public Welfare, for example, focused on the duty of Welsh people towards their fellow citizens. The Rev. Herbert Morgan's speech on "Housing and Public Welfare - Some Economic and Moral

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<sup>42</sup> *Western Mail*, Thursday 10 August 2000, 11.

<sup>43</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Tuesday 18 July 1899, 5.

<sup>44</sup> *Western Mail* advertisement for their special Eisteddfod supplement, *Western Mail*, Saturday 30 July 1960, 1.

Considerations” emphasised the links between the Welsh people and their status as citizens, the reform of civil society and the Eisteddfod. The Eisteddfodwyr were being told that they had both rights and obligations. Citizenship, as with membership to any community, is a reciprocal relationship, revolving around the performance of corresponding rights and obligations.<sup>45</sup>

Further, if the concept is stripped bare and examined on a basic, elemental level, one sees a purer definition; citizenship is membership to a community – a nation-state community. As a sense of belonging it shifts conceptually away from the state and reflects more of a personal and social relationship between individuals and their (national) community: Civil Society.<sup>46</sup> The idea of civil society is key to a study of the National Eisteddfod’s role in Welsh identity in as much as civil society is the dialectical stage on which identity is publicly performed.<sup>47</sup> Certainly, the Eisteddfod provided much of the legitimacy for the particular form of identity and citizenship it espoused. Because it was grounded in the public sphere it provided place for social intercourse: “a field of discursive connections” within which communication flows and creates a more authentic community than the state can do.<sup>48</sup> Practically, as Habermas says:

The institutional core of the public sphere comprises communicative networks amplified by a cultural complex, a press and, later, mass media; they make it possible for a public of art-enjoying private persons to participate in the reproduction of culture, and for a public of citizens of the state to participate in the social integration mediated by public opinion.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Just as one has the (political) right to vote for members of the Welsh Assembly, s/he has the (social/civic) right – perhaps even duty – to participate in Welsh cultural events. David Prior, John Stewart and Kieron Walsh, *Citizenship: Rights, Community and Participation* (London: Pitman Publishers, 1995), 13. See also T. H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class* (London: Pluto Press, 1992); T. K. Oommen, *Citizenship, Nationality and Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997); and Z. A. Pelczynski, 1984.

<sup>46</sup> Paul Berry Clark, *Deep Citizenship* (London: Pluto Press 1996), 117.

<sup>47</sup> According to Hegel, Civil Society is “a specialised and highly complex network of rules, institutions, agencies, groups, practices and attitudes evolved within the legal and political framework of the nation-state to satisfy individual needs and safeguard individual rights.” Z. A. Pelczynski, 263.

<sup>48</sup> Craig Calhoun, 1993, 37.

<sup>49</sup> Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. Two: The Critique of Functionalist Reason* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 319; Calhoun, 1993, 34.

By providing adequate means for public discourse, then, as well as embracing the (historic) culture that constitutes the public sphere, the necessary conditions are laid out for “achieving expressive citizenship”.<sup>50</sup> This was very much the intent of Mr T. H. Lewis when he presided over the Monday night concert in 1944. He “stressed for a vigorous local life as a part of the life of the nation. Llandebie [sic] was an instance of an active local community, proud of its history and traditions.”<sup>51</sup>

In 1911, the Rev. Morgan emphasised the balance of political and social citizenship when he said that:

Our country has long been distinguished for political enthusiasm, but one hails with gladness the fairly numerous signs which point to the commencement of an era of enthusiastic interest in social and municipal reform ... at next year’s National Eisteddfod a comprehensive discussion of this subject will probably form part of the programme of competitions.<sup>52</sup>

He linked together the goals of “civic patriotism”, as he called it, with the use of the National Eisteddfod as a platform:

Shall we not then seek to foster a high degree of civic patriotism? ... Shall not the glorious story of our ancestors, mighty warriors and inspired bards, inspire us to a nobler patriotism ... ? It is no true patriotism which ever turns its gaze to the past, seeking there the golden age, and spending itself in a vain adulation of the sires of the race. It is a less picturesque patriotism but a far nobler to seek by patient and constant labour to improve the heritage won for us by the valour of those who went before us. ... There is much to do to inculcate a high sense of civic privilege and responsibility, to shake off that apathy which is a greater hindrance to progress than any other influence. ... [I]t is high time that we cultivated other forms of beauty than music and poetry so long fostered by our National Eisteddfod, and so well loved by our people.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Jim McGuigan, *Culture and the Public Sphere* (London: Routledge, 1996), 180.

<sup>51</sup> T. H. Lewis was a native of Llandybïe and a HM Inspector of Schools for History; quoted by “The Man About The Valley”, “The Watchman,” *The Amman Valley Chronicle and East Carmarthen News*, Thursday 10 August 1944, 2.

<sup>52</sup> The Rev. Herbert Morgan, paper read at the meeting of the Hon Soc of the Cymmrodorion (on Wednesday), quoted in *Welshman*, Friday 11 August 1911, 8.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

Morgan's perceived relationship between Eisteddfodic goals and civic patriotism was representative of one of the central aims of the National Eisteddfod throughout the twentieth century: the construction of Welsh identity, whether it be based on nationhood, citizenship, or something else entirely. Further, it was one that was distinctly progressive and embracing of modernity.

The National Eisteddfod of Wales, as representative of the Welsh nation, had always been something more than purely a celebration of Welsh culture. As early as the middle of the nineteenth century, it had been a means of transforming Welsh society. In fact, the Eisteddfod was consistently seen as an instrument through which to modernize Wales. By the twentieth century, however, as the Eisteddfod expanded there were more diverse outlets for discourse, due to internal and external pressures. Concurrently, as demonstrated in other discussions regarding the Eisteddfod, as the modern world became more firmly embedded in Wales and Welsh society, there was increased emphasis on a Welsh "past" at the Eisteddfod. The result was an apparently paradoxical dialogue, regarding the juxtaposition of contrasting themes. Indeed, the Eisteddfod was continuously an institution at odds with itself, balancing two conflicting identities: a "traditional" view of the Welsh past, and a progressive acceptance of "modernity". The various exhibits and component parts of the Eisteddfod reflect this juxtaposition, as new elements have been added to the original literary festival, subsequently becoming part of the accepted and established Eisteddfodic "tradition". Furthermore, out of this dialogue becomes evident a continuous discourse on the nature of citizenship and sense of belonging in Wales.

### **Youth Culture and a Less Abstemious Welshness**

Present at the Eisteddfod, too, is the ninety-three-year-old Crwys -- he was made a Fellow of the Eisteddfod some years ago -- a rare honour, in recognition of his services to the festival. He is one of

our best known and best loved poets. ... Professor Brinley Thomas, chairman of the Welsh committee, remarked that Crwys had found the secret of eternal youth and that sums up the spirit of this great eisteddfod very well.<sup>54</sup>

As demonstrated through the previous discussions of the Eisteddfodic performances throughout the past century, both formally and informally, one of the more controversial elements of the National Eisteddfod of Wales was the juxtaposition of old and new, of “traditional” and “modern”. Both of the previous discussions of performance focused on structural elements of the festival, whether it was the formal ceremonial and performances, or the various components of the festival that contribute to an informal performance of identity. The disparity between convention and progressivism was also evident in the discourse in and around the Eisteddfod. The Eisteddfod, as part of the Welsh public sphere, provided an arena for the construction and consideration of ideas, as they reflected and challenged perceived established Eisteddfodic norms, and these dialogues have become an outlet for the performance of Welshness equal to the others discussed above.

One of the more notable, continuous discursive strands in the twentieth century was the role of alternative cultures and cultural identities at the festival. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the National Eisteddfod of Wales represented a hegemonic cultural body and discourse of Welshness. The primary identity it propagated was that of an anglicised, conservative, nonconformist Welshness. Particular deviations from this behavioural norm were controversial, and contributed towards the construction of both the dominant sense(s) of Welshness, as well as an alternative one(s). Of the most controversial of these “other” identities has been any contradiction to the hegemony of the nonconformist Eisteddfod culture of the preacher-poet, which was touched upon earlier. One of the more continuous of these discordant

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<sup>54</sup> Arthur Williams, *Liverpool Daily Post*, Tuesday 8 August 1967, 1.

dialogues was related specifically to the model of temperance and any threats to that order. Similarly, the related rise of youth culture in the twentieth century meant that there was more than one distinctly *Welsh* Welsh culture, which further challenged the conservative Eisteddfodic norm. The resulting dialogue contributed to the general Eisteddfodic discourse, and subsequently towards the various identities being constructed and performed in relation to the festival.

Alcohol has always been a controversial topic at the Eisteddfod. The early modern Eisteddfodau were often held in taverns and were renowned for the connection between drink and competition. However, the post-Blue Books, overtly moralistic, Victorian reshaping of the re-invented National Eisteddfod reformed the festival, making it a platform for nonconformist values. The emphasis on teetotalism was central to this transformation as it eliminated a potential source of dissipation and decadent behaviour. Nonconformity and temperance were strongly interrelated in the nineteenth century in Wales, and manifested through popular temperance and revival movements.<sup>55</sup> However, despite revivals, by the turn of the twentieth century the grip of this movement on Wales was loosening as secularism increased. Subsequently, despite a brief surge of support following the 1905 Revival, temperance movements lost some of their vigour and momentum.<sup>56</sup>

In 1899, however, evangelical and temperance movements were still at their height in Wales. At the Eisteddfod in Cardiff, there was some discussion about the possibility of the “sale of intoxicants” on the *Maes*, but it was generally unwelcome and

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<sup>55</sup> Gareth Elwyn Jones, 1994, 208.

<sup>56</sup> The impact of nonconformity remained in Wales well into the twentieth century. Chapel membership remained high in the 1920s, Sunday schools and *Cymanfa Ganu* continued to be popular, although the decline of the Welsh language would gradually take its toll on Welsh nonconformity. The 1905 Revival saw the movement gain thousands of new recruits. Gareth Elwyn Jones, 1994, 280-282; Kenneth Morgan, 1981, 96, 140.



“heralded by a storm of angry protests and threatenings”.<sup>57</sup> The “Man About Town” saw no need to allow alcohol at the Eisteddfod because “the attractions of the strictly teetotal tents [were] so great.”<sup>58</sup> Very little Eisteddfodic discourse was focused on the topic of alcohol in 1899. However, it was a remarkable amount for the era, when most Eisteddfodic reportage focused on descriptions of the festival and competitive entries; it was also noteworthy because it comprised one of the few dialogues on alcohol until the post-war licensing laws referendum debates made alcohol and the Eisteddfod much more topical.

In the interim there were sporadic limited discussions of temporary alterations in the licensing laws with particular relevance to the Eisteddfod. In 1926, for example, the arbitrary nature of licensing extensions was discussed regarding the possibility for the Eisteddfod in Swansea.<sup>59</sup> Mr Newcombe argued in favour of the extension of the licensing hours during the Bank Holiday week:

During that week the Australians [cricket team] and the Eisteddfod were in town, and it would be a great convenience to the public if the application were granted, for there would be a very large number of visitors in Swansea. ... In other towns (he added) applications had been granted when events were held, as a matter of course. People coming to Swansea would expect to get what refreshments they required.<sup>60</sup>

Yet, although there were apparently frequent applications for the extensions of licensing hours – itself indicative of a general popular movement away from the ideology of temperance – there were few successful extensions which was indicative of the continuing hegemony of nonconformity over the Welsh establishment.

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<sup>57</sup> “The Man About Town”, *South Wales Echo*, Monday 24 July 1899, 2.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> “it was true that in some towns extensions were granted, but in others they were refused. Last year at Pwllheli it was granted, but at Pontypool it was refused. At Ammanford it was granted for houses only in the neighbourhood of the Pavilion.” *South Wales Daily Post*, Tuesday 27 July 1926, 2.

<sup>60</sup> Mr Newcombe, for the city of Swansea, in *ibid.*

By the post-war era, however, changes were occurring in British culture, which were filtering into Wales. By the 1960s, mass popular culture, often led by young people, was jeopardizing what were perceived as “traditional”, nonconformist, aspects of Welsh culture. The chapel and its “associated cultural norms” of Sabbatarianism and temperance suffered and declined in popularity as young people increasingly felt disaffection for the values of their parents and grandparents.<sup>61</sup> The new popular culture was increasingly secularised; this was perhaps the result of changes in demographics as well as general societal norms.<sup>62</sup> As Gareth Elwyn Jones points out, there were “public defeats for the chapel ethos”: a new Licensing Act in 1960 enabled changes regarding the Sunday opening of public houses and was symbolic of changes occurring in Welsh culture.<sup>63</sup> Jones summarizes the effects of this change:

Compared with a century ago the centrality of religious nonconformity to the spiritual and communal life of the Welsh is long gone. Church and chapel membership has continued to fall. ... The associated temperance inheritance, with its overtones of distinctively Welsh legislation in the 1880s, is soon to lose its last symbolic hold as the referendums on the opening of public houses on Sundays are soon to dry up. More recently, during the 1970s superficial Wales could console itself with a surrogate religion and thoughts of world greatness in rugby football as ‘grand slams’ and ‘triple crowns’ multiplied.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, by the late twentieth century, nonconformity no longer kept a hegemonic hold over Welsh culture. Popular culture focused as much around sport as religion.

This change was evident on the Eisteddfod *Maes*. Controversy over alcohol, and other aspects of this new “popular” culture, were becoming increasingly vocalised in the

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<sup>61</sup> Gareth Elwyn Jones, 1994, 282-283.

<sup>62</sup> Certainly there was in- and out- migration, as well as generational change as the old core of nonconformists was dying out.

<sup>63</sup> “The battle which followed was symbolic rather than practical since dedicated drinkers had always used clubs to circumvent the law, but the symbolic significance for nonconformity, with its traditions of sabbatarianism and temperance, was considerable... Results reflected a divide in Wales between those areas where nonconformity remained particularly strong - rural, Welsh-speaking Wales – and the industrial, most anglicised areas which voted for Sunday opening. Seven years later only Anglesey, Caernarfonshire, Merioneth and Cardiganshire held out for the ‘dry’ Sunday.” Gareth Elwyn Jones, 1994, 282-283.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 319.

media by the 1960s. Proponents of the old chapel-oriented culture still espoused their values at the Cardiff Eisteddfod in 1960. The issue of the extension of licensing hours during Eisteddfod week was criticised by the Cardiff Temperance Union. The secretary of the Temperance Union, Mr Douglas Sell, wrote:

If we had known about the application we would have opposed it. Many Cardiff chapels would also have objected. ... This is another move to increase sales. Extension of hours usually means an increase in drunkenness, but it might be that it will not happen this time, with the sort of people who come to the Eisteddfod.<sup>65</sup>

To an extent, supporters of the extension separated the act from the festival. Mr C. James Hardwicke, the co-applicant of the extension, emphasised to the Cardiff magistrates that there were no facilities for drinks at the Eisteddfod ground.<sup>66</sup> The extension was deemed standard practice for the city when visited by an event the size of the National Eisteddfod of Wales. Mr Llewelyn Jenkins, a member of Cardiff City Council, said that it was “the usual practice to seek an extension when there is something important in the city. I cannot object to that.”<sup>67</sup> Similarly, Mr C. Stuart Hallinan, who had applied for the extension, emphasised the practical and commercial aspects of the extension: “During the Eisteddfod all roads will lead to the capital of Wales, and the Royal visit will also attract large crowds. The licensees want to give the visitors an opportunity for refreshments.”<sup>68</sup> Significantly, the extension was deemed a necessary service, not so much as related to alcohol, but for public *refreshment*. Moreover, the emphasis was on the Eisteddfod as a large cultural event and social gathering, not as an arm of the nonconformist establishment.

The Eisteddfod authorities remained neutral on the matter, taking neither side in the debate. They emphasised that the application for an extension was not sponsored in

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<sup>65</sup> *Western Mail*, Wednesday 27 July 1960, 5.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

any way by the Eisteddfod authorities. The Archdruid “Trefin”, Mr Edgar Phillips, refused to comment.<sup>69</sup> Their neutrality was in effect an implicit maintenance of a nonconformist ideology of temperance. In fact, despite the extension of licensing hours in Cardiff, the Eisteddfod itself remained dry. Jill Forwood noted in the *South Wales Evening Post* that: “Biggest business at the Eisteddfod is done at the refreshment tents, where millions of cups of tea, coffee, milk – the Eisteddfod provides nothing stronger – are sold with efficient rapidity.”<sup>70</sup> This image of the Eisteddfodwr drinking cups of tea was notably homely and traditional. For many in Wales and around the world, by 1960, the established conservative image of the festival was one of its more appealing and indeed marketable aspects. “Eisteddfodwr” remarked that: “One of the main attractions of the ‘National’ is that each year it preserves a great many of its traditional aspects, and yet it also reflects the character of the area in which it is being held.”<sup>71</sup> Arguably, after the traumas invoked by decades of “modernity”, war and depression, and subsequent societal changes, there was a sense of security invested in the Eisteddfod and its antiquated ceremonies and habitual customs. As early as 1937, Ifor L. Evans said the Eisteddfod “gave pride of place to the *preservation* and the development of the language and the literature of the Cymry, and appealed to all who are interested in Wales and its cultural traditions”.<sup>72</sup>

By 1967 significant changes were noticeable in Wales, and at the Eisteddfod. Youth culture, along with the related aspects of drinking and rock and roll, increasingly were threatening the “traditional” aspects of the festival and the extant hegemonic identity. Alcohol was even more of a topical issue than seven years earlier, particularly

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<sup>69</sup> “I have no comment to make. I feel that the city authorities know what they are doing and it should be left to them.” Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Jill Forwood, *South Wales Evening Post*, Friday 5 August 1960, 6.

<sup>71</sup> “Eisteddfodwr”, *Western Mail* Monday 1 August 1960, 4.

<sup>72</sup> Ifor Evans, principal at Aberystwyth, in his speech from the chair at Tuesday afternoon’s session, in *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, Saturday 6 August 1937, 7.

with specific regard to alcohol on the *Maes* and at the Eisteddfod. Certainly, this increase in intensity was partly because Bala was located in the Welsh rural heartland and, because of the sustained strength of nonconformist tradition and culture, the issue of pub opening hours was much more controversial than it had been in cosmopolitan Cardiff. Furthermore, because of the size of the host location, there were few local pubs to service the population swollen by the Eisteddfod.

Pubs in Bala were opened with extended hours during Eisteddfod week, but not without debate and disagreement. Mr William Hollins, who represented the town's five public houses on the Licensed Victuallers Association, said that local people should get involved in order to provide better facilities for Eisteddfodwyr. As in Cardiff seven years earlier, the service nature of the extensions was emphasised:

They should have got their local MP to try to get a concession to open the pubs: 'This festival was known to be coming for over two years and if the committee wanted to offer proper amenities to people coming to the Eisteddfod then they should have made some representations regarding the availability of drink on a Sunday.' He said that people from counties where drinking was allowed on Sunday had been flocking into the town and had been amazed to find that they could not get a drink.<sup>73</sup>

It was a significant statement on contemporary Welsh culture that the pubs were expected to be extremely popular during Eisteddfod week – even in a rural “backwater” like Bala. In fact, the *Western Mail* reported that: “There is every sign of this week being the wettest week in living memory in Bala – but not with the weather, say Eisteddfod officials. Although there are only five public-houses in the town, landlords expect ‘packed houses’ every night to make it a traditional ‘wet’ Eisteddfod.”<sup>74</sup>

Bala publicans felt that the Eisteddfod organising Committee itself should have become directly involved in the debate. Mr Ken Lowther, of the Ship Hotel, said that the

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<sup>73</sup> Mansel Jones in *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 1967, 3.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

Eisteddfod Committee could have tried to do “something” as this was national festival week.<sup>75</sup> This sort of action would have been a marked contrast to the situation in 1960, when the Eisteddfod officials remained neutral. Indeed, the Eisteddfod authorities of 1967 remained similarly steadfastly neutral about their “dryness”; they refused to comment on the question of licensing hours, deliberately removing themselves from the discourse of the local public sphere. Their official refusal to comment on the licensing hours, however, did not mean universal silence on the issue of alcohol. In fact, a few specific members of the Eisteddfod and Gorsedd were extremely vocal in their opinions about the role of intoxicants at the Eisteddfod. For example, Mr John Roberts, the Eisteddfod general secretary, said: “I think it would be a mistake for the public houses to be open today [Sunday]. This is a dry county and we have not come here to upset the voiced opinion of the locality.”<sup>76</sup>

The pubs were “absolutely choc-a-bloc” during Eisteddfod week, and there was a degree of drunken disorderliness exhibited in Bala that was noted without a disproportionate amount of criticism.<sup>77</sup> Despite the licensee of one of the town’s leading hotels complaining of “wanton deliberate damage”, no complaints were registered with the police.<sup>78</sup> According to Goronwy Powell in the *Western Mail*: “Some High Street residents and traders were strangely more tolerant of the Eisteddfod night celebrations. One described it as just ‘jollification’, unlikely to upset anyone, except those who might be ill.”<sup>79</sup> Indeed, most of the town’s publicans were extremely tolerant of the behaviour of Eisteddfodwyr. The general manager of the White Lion Hotel in Bala, Robert Brookfield, commented: “So far the crowds have been extremely well behaved, drinking

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<sup>75</sup> Although “it was useless for the licensee to go to the magistrates to try to get a concession as it was an Act of Parliament that made Merioneth a dry county.” Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> William Hollins, proprietor of the Plas Coch Hotel, in *Liverpool Daily Post*, Wednesday 9 August 1967, 7.

<sup>78</sup> Goronwy Powell, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 9 August 1967, 6.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

and singing but not rough in any way. There is heavy drinking but not a dirty booze up. After all, it is a national fête.”<sup>80</sup> Similarly, Iorwerth Roberts, licensee of the Goat Hotel, said: “I have had no trouble. I am exceptionally pleased with the behaviour considering the amount of people who are supplied with drinks. I haven’t seen anyone drunk.”<sup>81</sup> Thus, the people were relatively well-behaved, the Eisteddfod itself “dry” and the issue seemed to have been non-existent. The acceptance of such (mildly) drunken behaviour, particularly in the context of the National Eisteddfod, signified changes in the composition of Welsh society by the late twentieth century, and the decline of the nonconformist, abstemious hegemony.

The old order remained, however. Archdruid “Gwyndaf” was particularly outspoken in 1967 about his worries about the damage the increased drinking of alcohol would do to the festival’s reputation and image:

‘I fear that the popular aspect of the Eisteddfod in some places would be of excessive drinking, rather than for its culture.’ After the ceremony, Gwyndaf ... referred to a growing tendency of young people to ‘go wet’ in the evenings during the festival. ‘I have noticed the tendency over the past few years of people taking advantage of the Eisteddfod to resort to drinking, and excessive drinking, at night. They are not people who necessarily attend the Eisteddfod,’ he said. ‘There is danger that we may be criticised by the public for this.’ ... he told the gathering that he hoped the nation would be ‘in its best clothes’ this week.’<sup>82</sup>

The Archdruid’s concerns were focused more on respectability and image than morality. Interestingly, he separated the people concerned into two “sorts”: those who exhibit drunken behaviour, and those who attend the Eisteddfod. This was a significant distinction because it meant that the Eisteddfod organisers saw Eisteddfodwyr as homogenous and the Eisteddfod as representing *one* Wales and sense of Welshness. “Gwyndaf” noted that this juxtaposition was also a marked contrast to the Eisteddfod

<sup>80</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, Wednesday 9 August 1967, 7.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> “Gwyndaf”, the Rev. Gwyndaf Evans and a Llandudno schoolmaster, quoted by Goronwy Powell, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 9 August 1967, 6.

before the rise of nonconformity. He mentioned that the old revivalists had banned the Eisteddfod in some places because of drinking, and saw the current state of affairs as the coming full circle of Welsh culture.<sup>83</sup> It was representative of the continued influence of an abstemious nonconformity in late-twentieth-century Wales that “Gwyndaf” emphasised that the contemporary Eisteddfod was as far-removed from its pre-Victorian predecessor as possible – while retaining a “traditional” feel, of course! In fact, the Eisteddfod establishment focused on what they perceived to be the respectable cultural aspects of the festival, and warned against any deviations from this norm:

Lay Off The Beer Says Gwyndaf: Eisteddfod-goers were reminded yesterday by the Archdruid that the Royal National Eisteddfod is a cultural festival and not an excuse for a big booze up. ... ‘The rain is keeping off here this week, but there is a tendency for the Eisteddfod to become wet in another way.’ And the Archdruid added: ‘People may remember us in some places because of the big drinking and not for our culture ... We should be able to attend the Eisteddfod without resorting to drinking and giving a really bad impression of what the festival stands for. It is not a gathering of that kind, but a cultural one.’<sup>84</sup>

His concern about alcohol was as much about the appropriateness of alcohol at a cultural event, as about the image of that event and culture being projected around Wales and the world. Not only does this emphasise the acceptance of the Eisteddfod’s role as cultural signifier of Welshness, but also of the continued influence of nonconformity in Welsh culture.

### **A New “Cymru Fydd” and a New Welshness**

Despite “Gwyndaf”’s emphasis on the existence of a single, homogenous Welsh culture, youth culture was becoming increasingly well-defined and vocal by 1967, and presenting a direct challenge to the hegemonic established Eisteddfodic ideals of previous

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<sup>83</sup> “Wales complained in past years that the Methodist revival had killed the *Noson Lawen* and the Eisteddfod. It was no wonder, for the Eisteddfod had by then become rather ‘wet.’” *Liverpool Daily Post*, Wednesday 9 August 1967, 7; Goronwy Powell, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 9 August 1967, 6.

<sup>84</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, Wednesday 9 August 1967, 7.



generations. Alcohol and the presumed related rowdiness were just some of the elements aligned to this new counter cultural movement. Pop and rock and roll music, and a distinctive youth culture, were becoming a progressively more substantial part of Welsh culture and, indeed, of the National Eisteddfod.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, a distinctive Welsh-language music scene was also developing, often with overtly political overtones. The development and evolution of various disparate streams of popular culture meant a direct challenge to an extant sense of Welshness. And the ensuing battle for Welsh cultural space was no less evident at the Eisteddfod.

The Bala Eisteddfod saw the introduction of pop music into Eisteddfod culture. This measure was a change from the customary focus on penillion singing, orchestral competitions, and folk music. However, the evolution of music as a competitive field was itself an Eisteddfodic innovation, as initially the festival's literary focus excluded even choral arts.<sup>86</sup> As the popularity of choirs increased in the late nineteenth century, particularly among the cultural establishment, choral competitions (and later, instrumental) became an accepted part of the National Eisteddfod. The development in Bala proved quite popular, as hundreds of Welsh teenagers attended the pop music competition.<sup>87</sup> The *Western Mail* supported the innovation. Its descriptions of the events were positive and even its mention of the protests that apparently followed the pop music and political Welsh pop singer Dafydd Iwan, were described as "lively".<sup>88</sup> It was not alone in its support for the new competition. Dilwyn Ellis Owen of the Merioneth Welsh Forum wrote a letter to the editor of the *Liverpool Daily Post*, supporting the move:

The Gorsedd, upheld by doddering traditionalists, survives whilst our general, modern literature (almost non-existent) is suppressed

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<sup>85</sup> Chris Williams, 2000, 225.

<sup>86</sup> "A Daily Post Reporter", *Liverpool Daily Post*, Monday 7 August 1967, 1. Penillion singing was actually encouraged in the eisteddfod at the end of the eighteenth century, but voice choirs do not appear in Wales before 1830s-40s.

<sup>87</sup> *Western Mail*, Wednesday 9 August 1967, 6.

<sup>88</sup> *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 1967, 3.

between hard covers, by pious moralists and traditionalists. Continued suppression leads to permanent distortion if not extermination. However, it was encouraging to hear popular Welsh records and also, even more encouraging to see the colourful record sleeves which attracted the attention of many.<sup>89</sup>

Owen's criticism of the Gorsedd for lagging behind the times accentuates again the extant discord between the ideas of "tradition" and "progress". Despite a discouraging number of entries to the competition, there seemed to be no criticism of the innovation.<sup>90</sup> Modernity, at least in the form of pop music, was being welcomed with open arms into the Eisteddfod community.

The same was not true of all aspects of youth culture. There was a highly controversial incident in 1967 involving the satirical magazine *Lol*. The magazine was run by Aberystwyth students and published by the small printing works of Lolfa. It attacked the Eisteddfod establishment in a very marked manner. According to the *Western Mail*:

A bawdy and satirical magazine [*Lol*] which pokes fun – and criticism – at eminent Welsh individuals and organisations was 'selling like hot cakes' on the Eisteddfod field yesterday. ... The magazine includes 'cheesecake' pictures and cartoons concerning the Secretary of State for Wales, Mr Cledwyn Hughes, two Welsh Labour MPs – Mr Elystan Morgan (Cardiganshire) and Mr Ednyfed Hudson Davies (Conway) – and former National Eisteddfod Archdruid Cynan, the Rev. A. E. Jones.<sup>91</sup>

The people targeted by *Lol* all were representative of the Eisteddfod establishment and typical of those who customarily had been celebrated by the organisation: MPs, ministers and Bards. One of the pages showed a pin-up photograph ridiculing the former Archdruid "Cynan", the Rev. A. E. Jones. Aberystwyth student Mr Heini Gruffydd, who was involved with the publication of the magazine, told the *Western Mail* that the satire

<sup>89</sup> Dilwyn Ellis Owen, Merioneth Welsh Forum, Letters to Editor, *Liverpool Daily Post*, Friday 18 August 1967, 5. His emphasis on the role of the Welsh language rather than the style of music was part of a growing trend in post-war Wales, concerning the Welsh language, and will be discussed in the following chapter.

<sup>90</sup> *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 1967, 3.

<sup>91</sup> *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 1967, 4.

generally had been well received on the *Maes*: “the demand had been so great for the magazine ... that extra copies might possibly have to be printed.”<sup>92</sup> The irreverent magazine’s extreme popularity demonstrated the weakening grip of the established Welsh “traditional” culture in Wales.

Reactionary measures were taken against the magazine by some of those who were satirized. “Cynan” in particular took offence. The offending page was torn out of 1,500 copies of the magazine and a public apology to Cynan was posted outside the Lolfa tent on the Eisteddfod field. Printed by Eisteddfod officials, the statement read:

We as the editor and publisher of the magazine *Lol*, wish to apologise unconditionally to Cynan for the obvious and dirty libel in the third issue of the magazine, and we wish to express our concern for causing so much pain to him for the libel, which had no ground whatsoever.<sup>93</sup>

It was perhaps not surprising that “Cynan” was the most vocal critic of *Lol*. He was renowned for his concern with the Eisteddfod’s image, as has been demonstrated by his active concern with and efforts to increase and “tidy” the Gorsedd ritual. Importantly, not everyone took the criticism quite so seriously. In fact many demonstrated the celebrated Eisteddfodic good humour and *hwyl*. Mr Elystan Morgan, paying an unofficial visit to the Eisteddfod with his family, joked about his own portrayal in the magazine:

Referring to a picture of himself alongside which there is a slogan in Welsh – ‘I have secured Cardiganshire for the English; maybe I can be Secretary of State’ – Mr Morgan said, ‘The picture is extremely flattering although the remarks detract somewhat therefrom.’<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> He was the brother of Robat Gruffudd, the owner and founder of the Lolfa press, in *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 1967, 4.

<sup>93</sup> “The statement was signed by the editor of the magazine, Mr Elwyn Jos, and the two publishers, Mr Penri Jos and Mr Robat Gruffudd.” *Ibid*.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*.

As regarding alcohol, the Eisteddfod authorities again refused to comment officially.<sup>95</sup> Because it intended to provoke, this element of youth culture was inherently controversial. Although both were members of the Welsh establishment and not themselves young people, the divergent opinions of the above men symbolised the disjunction of a “traditional” conservative culture, and a more irreverently “modern” culture.

There were other elements of the Eisteddfod in 1967 that reflected this disparity and provoked discourse. *Cymru Fydd*, Saunders Lewis’ play of “adult’s self-satisfaction and youth’s bitter disillusionment”, was performed to general acclaim by the Welsh Theatre Company.<sup>96</sup> It was a controversial choice, representing as it did powerful societal criticism of modern Wales. The play scandalized Eisteddfodwyr. According to Bruce Griffiths, the two young lovers in the play represented two divergent strands in contemporary Welsh life. Bet is “an idealist who believes in the value of our traditional heritage, religion and culture”, while Dewi is the disillusioned youth, embodying “Wales to Be”, *Cymru Fydd*.<sup>97</sup> Lewis’ own sympathies were apparent in the play, which advocates a merger of the beliefs of the two main characters, and the creation of a “new Wales”.<sup>98</sup> The play provoked a vehement and highly topical discourse, situated as it was in the 1960s in the midst of the nationalistic debates over politics and language.

Ironically, the 1967 setting of Merioneth was used to focus on the future of the youth of Wales. “One of the most notable sons of Merioneth”, Sir Ifan ab Owen Edwards was the founder of *Urdd Gobaith Cymru* (the Welsh League of Youth) and son

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<sup>95</sup> “The general secretary of the Eisteddfod, Mr John Roberts, said yesterday he could not comment on the magazine as he had not had time to look at it.” Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, Saturday 12 August 1967, 3.

<sup>97</sup> Bruce Griffiths, “His Theatre”, in Jones, Alun R. and Gwyn Thomas, eds, *Presenting Saunders Lewis* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973), 90.

<sup>98</sup> Bruce Griffiths, *Saunders Lewis* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1979), 92.

of the late Sir Owen M. Edwards.<sup>99</sup> Edwards was portrayed as a great “benefactor” to the nation through his work with the *Urdd* and the youth of Wales.<sup>100</sup> In the *Western Mail*, “Westgate” praised Sir Ifan and his undertaking with the young people of Wales and spoke of them in positive tones:

[Sir Ifan] represented many hundreds of patriotic Welsh schoolteachers, who had rendered outstanding service to the nation. He added, ‘Wales is today more virile than ever before. We belong to a nation on the march. It is indeed our privilege to live in the ’60s of this century. It is also our duty and responsibility to help the youth of Wales march forward confidently into the ’70s and ’80s.’<sup>101</sup>

Edwards’ selection as an Eisteddfod president, and the associated construction of him as a national hero due to his work with the youth of Wales, was significant. However, this view of Welsh youth was based on the ideals of earlier generations, in the interwar founding of the *Urdd* movement, and not in the reality of the contemporary youth movement that was challenging its predecessor’s hegemony among Welsh-speaking Wales. Although it shared certain similarities with the movement of the 1960s, for example its passionate advocacy of Welsh-language culture, it represented an old-fashioned and religious sense of Welshness, based on a muscular Christianity. The Welsh Language Society, with its secular emphasis on language that was growing in popularity among the youth of Wales, was a challenge to the *Urdd* and its extreme chapel-based respectability.

<sup>99</sup> *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 1967, 3.

<sup>100</sup> He was president on Children’s Day. Other presidents included: Wednesday: Mr J. E. Jones, Cardiff, former secretary and organiser of Plaid Cymru. He is a former pupil of the old Tŷ Tan Domen School, Bala. Thursday: Rev. Dr R. Tudur Jones, principal of the Bala-Bangor Independent College, one of Wales’ most eminent men and a powerful preacher in the Congregational Connexion. Friday: Mr O. Vaughan Jones, a farmer’s son from... near Caernarvon, who rose to become one of Wales’ most eminent doctors. One of the early members of *Urdd Gobaith Cymru*, he is a staunch Welshman and zealous supporter of the National Eisteddfod. Saturday: Alderman Tom Jones “chairman of the Eisteddfod Executive committee, and well-known through Wales as conductor of *Cor Godre’r Aran*”, and a member of the Welsh Advisory Council of the BBC. Eisteddfod Supplement. *Liverpool Daily Post*, Monday 7 August 1967, 4.

<sup>101</sup> “Westgate”, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 9 August 1967, 8.

Certainly, by the late 1960s this new youth-oriented cultural movement was being firmly established in Wales. The change was noticeable to people in Wales, but perhaps more acutely to those “Exiles” who returned to the Eisteddfod and to Wales after an extended absence: “Without exception the ‘exiles’ noticed the change in the country’s youth.”<sup>102</sup> By and large most Eisteddfodwyr were positive with regards to the emergent youth culture, particularly its focus on language. Mrs Mary Wood, who had lived in Australia for forty-eight years but was born near Pwllheli, felt that:

Youth seems to have taken over in Wales. There are so many youth group activities available now and they are all so keen. I am also glad to see Welsh being taught in the schools. When I went to school all our books were in English and we were even made to speak English in the playground.<sup>103</sup>

Mrs Wood felt that the youth were proving their worth as the next generation of Welsh culture due to their active interest in things Welsh. Notable was her emphasis on the role of the language in her determination of Welshness, and the optimistic slant she put on the renewed interest of the youth in the language. However, although Mrs Wood seemed to look towards the future of Wales, she felt that Wales was necessarily becoming more *introspective* and appreciative of its own language and culture – its *heritage*.

Conversely, Mrs Jean Pritchard-Rhoades, aged thirty-five from New Mexico, said she had “noticed a great change in the attitude of the younger people in the towns – they were not so introspective. ‘Television and radio have contributed much towards this and I was surprised to find how many Welsh programmes there are’.”<sup>104</sup> Mrs Pritchard-Rhoades’ distinction of the youth of Wales being less introspective was based in the spread of mass communications and popular culture and not in a sense of Welshness or Englishness *per se* – although certainly, her emphasis on Welsh programmes implied a positive view of the situation. The *Western Mail* reported that the population of “Exiles”

<sup>102</sup> Peter Pringle, *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1967, 8.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

at the Eisteddfod generally agreed with Mrs Pritchard-Rhoades: "Of the Eisteddfod itself, there was nothing but praise from them of the high standard and they thought a more outward-looking Wales was reflected in the greater variety of the entries."<sup>105</sup> One of the overseas visitors to the Eisteddfod, Mr Hywel Hughes, said that an outward-looking perspective was necessary if Welsh culture was to survive and flourish: "Talking of Welsh culture, he warned of the danger of any advance being stifled by people who are not prepared to promote it."<sup>106</sup> This disjunction between inward and outward looking concepts of Welshness was symptomatic of the clash between "tradition" and "modernity", and the related crisis in Welsh society.

The Theatre Company of Wales also was criticised in Bala over its "distasteful sketches" in the satirical review it produced at the Eisteddfod.<sup>107</sup> The *Western Mail* commented: "The revue, billed as a selection of satire, humour and protest, jibes at many aspects of 'the Welsh way of life,' and exposes Eisteddfod audiences for the first time to bare-legged girls."<sup>108</sup> One female Eisteddfodwr said in the *Western Mail*: "It was disgraceful. It's not the sort of thing I either expect or want to see at the Eisteddfod."<sup>109</sup> Indeed, in the late 1960s, many elements of Welsh youth culture were considered to be decidedly "alternative" and more progressive than "traditional" Welsh culture as evinced at the Eisteddfod. Increasingly it embraced an ethos of drinking, rock music and unconventional "modern" behaviour. It meant change. In fact, the youth movement in Wales encompassed a variety of counter-hegemonic cultural elements that challenged the nonconformist establishment and a homogeneous sense of Welshness.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Hughes was of Bogota and a rather mysterious Colombian millionaire who enjoyed backing "Welsh causes". Peter Pringle, *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1967, 8.

<sup>107</sup> *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1967, 4.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

This cultural dissonance existed beyond the boundaries of Wales, but was made particularly Welsh with the distinctive emphasis on the Welsh language. For example, the notorious 1967 issue of *Lol* featured pin-ups of bikini-clad young women, lewd jokes, and criticism of the conventional and conservative nature of the Eisteddfod Dignitaries – *in Welsh*. Although many of these youth-oriented aspects of the Eisteddfod culture were antithetical to the chapel-oriented culture that dominated the Eisteddfod half a century earlier, much of it was vehemently supportive of things “Welsh”. Perhaps because the emergent youth culture was a rival culture, challenging the current hegemonic ideas of Welshness, it was more tolerant and accessible than the chapel-based culture, allowing a wider variety of *Welsh-language* elements to be considered *Welsh* – as long as they were *in Welsh*. In this way, youth culture was related to the modern revival of Welsh-language culture. The simultaneous rise of the Welsh-language protest movement, evinced by the nascent *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg* in the early 1960s, cannot be ignored.<sup>110</sup> Indeed, by the end of the century, as a result of these movements, the discursive definition of Welshness was becoming more varied and inclusive of challenges to the nonconformist cultural hegemony of the beginning of the century. Concurrently, however, there was a renewed focus on the language as a signifier of Welshness that was at once narrowly introverted and heritage-based and broadly outward looking and progressive. This focus will be discussed in the next chapter.

By 2000, the youth and “alternative” cultural aspects of the National Eisteddfod of Wales were well established. From *Cymdeithas yr Iaith* and the campaign for the Welsh-language television channel, to the emergence of Welsh pop music and the “Cool Cymru” phenomena of the 1990s, a “new”, less conservative and more modern sense of

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<sup>110</sup> As demonstrated by the comments of the “Exiles”, many “Welsh” people of all ages and localities felt strongly about the need to preserve the Welsh language. The means by which these Welsh cultural movements were achieving their goals were much more controversial, as will be demonstrated in the following chapter’s detailed discussion of the role of language in Welsh national identity.



Welshness existed in Wales. For example, in 2000, the comedic sketch group *Lolipop* were widely praised in the media for a similar series of sketches.<sup>111</sup> The satirical humour in Llanelli was not noticeably different from that in Bala. As Rhys Lloyd, co-writer of the sketches, said: “*Lolipop* doesn’t set out to make fun of the Eisteddfod. Rather, it looks at the traditions of the festival and the habits of Eisteddfod-goers and treats them in bizarre ways.”<sup>112</sup> The group’s antics included a visit to the Eisteddfod field by a monkey and an animation series entitled “1,001 things to do with an Archdruid”:

the mad-cap actors paying tribute to Fat Boy Slim with their very own interpretation of Praise You – fully dressed in Eisteddfod regalia. They also performed a version of the Village People’s ‘In the Navy’ at the Eisteddfod site – dressed as druids.<sup>113</sup>

The humour surrounding *Lol* and *Cymru Fydd* in 1967 challenged the conservative Eisteddfodic norm, but the humour in 2000 was less contentious. The change that was noticeable just a generation later articulated the subsequent changes in Welsh society and the increased acceptance of a more irreverent, less conservative, and heterogeneous, culture. As a result of the shifting power structure in Welsh society, what was considered “Welsh” included a wider, more disparate grouping of signifiers than ever before.

In 1997, *Maes B* was established as the official youth site of the Eisteddfod, thirty years after the initial, informal innovation in Bala.<sup>114</sup> It was perhaps significant that *Maes B* was the only part of the Eisteddfod site on which alcohol was served, although drinking had become a much more widely accepted part of Eisteddfod culture. The *Llanelli Star* published a “Pub Crawlers guide to Eisteddfod 2000”.<sup>115</sup> Similarly, Dean Powell grumbled in the *Western Mail*:

<sup>111</sup> *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 3 August 2000, 33.

<sup>112</sup> *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 3 August 2000, 34.

<sup>113</sup> *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 10 August 2000, 27.

<sup>114</sup> There was a separate caravan site that was very popular, established at the Eisteddfod by the 1970s.

This marked a change from the Bed-and-Breakfast culture of earlier generations.

<sup>115</sup> *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 10 August 2000, 23.

To make matters even worse, there's no chance of enjoying a swift pint between events either - another factor that causes ripples of disquiet, particularly with the adjudicators themselves who were subjected to a cup of weak tea in the Press room yesterday afternoon instead.<sup>116</sup>

Powell's comments were markedly different from those discussing tea in Cardiff in 1960. Alcohol remained a controversial topic at the Eisteddfod, however. The opinions expressed in Steve Dube's article in the *Western Mail* from 2000 could easily have been from 1899:

Another chesnut is the ban on alcohol, and Mr Roberts said the Eisteddfod intends to seek the opinion of eisteddfodwyr on the issue. 'I don't know when, because we can't conduct meaningful research under our present resources. But I'm not convinced that substantial income would be generated from a bar on the Maes'.<sup>117</sup>

Thus, in this respect, change would seem to be negligible. A century of change and challenged traditions eroded the extant hegemony of the National Eisteddfod, but significant traces of that culture remained evident.

Certainly diverse strains of Welshness have always existed. The hegemonic discourse was exactly that: a *discursive* representation of a particular sense of Welshness that happened to dominate the discourse of the national festival. Nevertheless, that hegemony was eroded during the course of the century, as a result of the increasing power and influence of "alternative" movements in Welsh society generally. The driving force for much of this renewed celebration of Welsh-language popular culture was the emergent youth culture of the post-war era. By the end of the century, youth culture was a force to be reckoned with, in Wales and around the world. Young people had increased commercial influence and cultural capital, and thus significant power within Welsh culture and society. However, as has been demonstrated, different elements of youth culture were accepted to differing degrees by the Welsh population.

<sup>116</sup> "Westgate's National Eisteddfod with Dean Powell", *Western Mail*, Saturday 12 August 2000, 11.

<sup>117</sup> Steve Dube, *Western Mail*, Monday 14 August 2000, 7.

## Conclusions

[Television] disseminates a range of other images at variance with these stereotypical expectations. In so doing, it informs [those who experience the Eisteddfod directly and indirectly] about the multivocal and polysemic nature of the festival. ... Televised representations validate these various activities as all part of the Eisteddfod, encompassed in the spectacle and hence contributing to its meanings, not simply occurring coincidentally with it.<sup>118</sup>

As Charlotte Davies states above, symbolic representations and performances at the Eisteddfod have been important throughout the course of the twentieth century. Because Welsh identity is largely constructed as much through ideas and imaginings as a tangible reality, discourse and representations are as “real” to the Welsh identity as any sense of an essential Welsh character. Calhoun says that although there is basis in ethnicity and cultural traditions, we must also examine the “discursive formation that both shapes and attempts to cope with the rise of the modern state.”<sup>119</sup> Similarly, in his examination of Welsh musicality, David Allsobrook argues that the musical and mythical influences on the Eisteddfod suggest that it provided a platform – or interactive stage – from which the common Welsh person could grasp at their glorious, albeit fanciful, history. Subsequently, they were making it their own, and not just that of the ruling classes.<sup>120</sup> This was an active construction and acceptance of identity and citizenship. Related to this concept are four primary conclusions based on this chapter.

Firstly, the performance of identity at the Eisteddfod was not limited to formal, ritualistic acts on stage and in ceremonies. Rather, the ordinary acts carried out by the Eisteddfodwyr on the *Maes* and in the discourse surrounding the Eisteddfod have had as much to say about and have been equally important in the construction of a sense of Welsh identities.

<sup>118</sup> Charlotte Aull Davies, 1998, 147-148.

<sup>119</sup> Calhoun, 1997, 123. “Identity is constructed through the discourse of nationalism.” (125)

<sup>120</sup> David Ian Allsobrook, 1992, 18.

Secondly, the Welshness performed at the Eisteddfod changed in subtle ways during the twentieth century. Charlotte Davies argues that there were various, competing senses of Welshness present at the Eisteddfod, rather than one hegemonic identity.<sup>121</sup> In this way, discursive representations supported and enabled different, non-traditional ways of becoming Welsh.<sup>122</sup> Although this was certainly always the case at the Eisteddfod, as witnessed by the existence of continual challenges to the hegemonic norm, it became more obvious throughout the course of the twentieth century, as a result of the increasing democratisation and youthfulness of popular culture. Thus, although “Welshness” itself may not have altered significantly, the Welshness acted out on the stages of the *Maes* has altered markedly.

Thirdly, it is possible to consider the twentieth-century Eisteddfod as a reflection of contemporary Welshness – to an extent. As the festival changed and broadened beyond a purely literary festival, adding more variety in its competitive subjects and displays, it was attempting to be more inclusive and representative of all of Welsh society - to be a mirror, reflecting its participants. Ironically, as shall be demonstrated in the following chapter, the Eisteddfod simultaneously was becoming increasingly restrictive, along the lines of language.

Finally, there was a discursive juxtaposition of the concepts of “tradition” and “modernity” evident throughout the century at the Eisteddfod. This was evident in the discussions about the purpose and role of the festival, as discussed above. This juxtaposition existed in an ironic relationship; the more firmly entrenched ideas of “modernity” became in Welsh culture and at the Eisteddfod, the more tightly Eisteddfodic discourse clung to ideas of a “traditional” Welsh past.

<sup>121</sup> Charlotte Aull Davies, 1998, 151.

<sup>122</sup> For example, rather than by direct participation in cultural activities one may watch (indirectly) on television, and feel a part of the Welsh community.

In the twentieth century, the National Eisteddfod was a compelling and influential – and relatively open – platform within the Welsh public sphere for the performance of identity. It saw significant changes and developments to its body and image, through both the formalised rituals performed on the various stages, and the informal expressions of identity performed on the wider “stage” of the *Maes*. Indeed, the clash between multiple disparate cultural strains and discourses, between contrasting ideas of “tradition” and “modernity”, became increasingly evident during the course of the twentieth century. These ideas will be revisited in the following chapter, which will discuss two particular elements of Welsh culture that have been influenced by the performance of identity at the Eisteddfod: the Welsh language and nationalism.

## Chapter Six

### The Performance of Identity and the Language

For all the lilt and music of our speech  
 Upon young lips, or the cynghanedd's rhythm  
 ... Did one to sense the pathos of the passing  
 Of an old Order that had spent its day.  
 A going out in one last brilliant flash  
 Of what had steadily burned throughout the ages.  
 ... There's no more poignant sight in all the world  
 Than the feverish patching-up of an old Order  
 That has outlived its day. For this is sham,  
 Something imposed upon it from without.  
 ... The Castle staggered 'neath its weight of power –  
 Stark, crumbling ruins of an old Invader,  
 Floodlit in grand magnificence by the New!  
 While we the all-Welsh stalwarts just looked on  
 As always, mooning, dreaming, Twilight sleeping,  
 Wondering - knowing not why it should be so.<sup>1</sup>

The above poem, sent into the *Western Mail* in 1950 as a response to the Caerphilly Eisteddfod, epitomised the divisions in twentieth-century Wales over the Welsh language. To many, the Welsh language symbolised an old order, but to others it symbolised cultural and national autonomy. As has been established in previous chapters, the National Eisteddfod evolved from a purely cultural festival into an annual gathering that was regarded by many in Wales as a microcosm of all that is Welsh. However, as has also been demonstrated, that identity is not uncontested. The contestable nationalistic nature of the festival was evident particularly in the discussions surrounding the implementation of the All-Welsh Rule and the subsequent discussions about the role of both the Eisteddfod and the Welsh language in the middle of the twentieth century. Indeed, for much of the century,

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<sup>1</sup> "Sir, With regard to what I believe are the quite just strictures contained in your leading article on the all-Welsh Caerphilly Eisteddfod, I am tempted to supplement them with a few lines which I wrote in my notebook after spending a day there." "Readers' Views", *Western Mail*, Wednesday 23 August 1950, 4.

language was one of the more contentious topics in Wales, and its relative merits were debated continuously, both on and off the *Maes*. As such, the discourse surrounding the ruling, and the correlated concepts of nationhood, were part of the general discourse on the *Maes* and therefore part of the “performance” of Welshness at the National Eisteddfod.

The first part of the chapter traces the chronology of the rule, and subsequently that of the language movement at the Eisteddfod, looking at particular epochs in Eisteddfodic history. It begins with the introduction of the rule in 1937, before moving on to discuss the role of the Second World War and the intervening years on popular acceptance of the rule’s ideology. It then examines the discourse surrounding the implementation of the rule in 1950. The second part of the chapter considers some of the various challenges to the rule in the second half of the century. These debates were closely connected to the evolving discussion on Welsh national particularism in the twentieth century. Certainly, much of the following discussion is a linear history of the All-Welsh Rule. However, it must be stressed that this chapter does not attempt to be a history of the Welsh language or Welsh nationalism; it will endeavour to provide a skeletal history of both in the twentieth century as a framework for the discussion of the All-Welsh Rule.

The discussion surrounding the ruling was significant because it bridged several nationalistic movements in modern Wales. It also chronicled the history of the Welsh language movement and some of the key themes of cultural politics in twentieth-century Wales. The ruling was introduced in the remnants of the *Cymru Fydd* movement and the birth of Plaid Cymru, implemented in the coming of age of the *Blaid* and Welsh nationalist protests and policies, and has come of age in a new “Cool Cymru” era of Welsh nationalism and Welshness.

### Early Twentieth-Century Welsh Nationalism: The Remnants of *Cymru Fydd*

The Objects of the Federation shall be ... to federate all existing Welsh Liberal, National, and kindred Associations, into one Organisation for the furtherance of Welsh National objects ... [and] to conserve the National individuality of Wales.<sup>2</sup>

Welsh nationalism was often more cultural than political in its aims and outcomes. Despite some political overtones and successes, the *Cymru Fydd* movement was primarily oriented around Welsh culture, rather than around political aims.<sup>3</sup> Although they eventually merged with Welsh Liberalism and lobbied (unsuccessfully) for Home Rule, early *Cymru Fydd*-ers such as Tom Ellis focused on the history, traditions and “organic” culture of Wales. They “formulated a new concept of nationhood” that was based in the romanticised rural past of the *gwerin*.<sup>4</sup>

The *Cymru Fydd* movement left an important cultural legacy. The movement contributed to new opportunities for minority groups such as the Welsh to gain greater autonomy: “A new urgency could be injected into purely Welsh issues – the Church, temperance, education and so forth.”<sup>5</sup> The *Cymru Fydd* movement set the tone for the approach to national particularism in Wales. The brief political momentum of the *Cymru Fydd* years waned and, for much of the following century, cultural goals were more readily achieved in Wales than political.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, after the movement’s failures, the early

<sup>2</sup> “The Welsh National Federation (Cyngrair Cenedlaethol Cymru Fydd)”, reprinted in C. E. Breese, *Welsh Nationality* (Carmarvon [sic]: Welsh National Press Company (Limited), 1895), 47.

<sup>3</sup> “a good deal of the nationalist emotion of the period between 1880 and 1907 was profoundly apolitical. The leading figures in the cultural and literary renaissance were scarcely political, certainly not separatist.” Kenneth Morgan, 1981, 112-113.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 113-114.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>6</sup> *Cymru Fydd*’s political failures were evidence of a growing split within Wales and Welsh politics. These divisions were largely based in the extant cultural divisions between the cosmopolitan south of Wales and the rural, Welsh-speaking hinterlands. As the Labour party gained support in the industrial areas, Welsh Liberalism was losing its cross-class support and hegemony in Wales. (Although the Labour party never directly espoused Welsh nationalist ideas, it did promote many issues that were of importance to people in



decades of the twentieth century saw little *political* activity focused around Welsh nationalism. Although a Welsh Home Rule Bill was introduced at Parliament in 1914, it was practically ignored by the House of Commons. However, this period saw the establishment of the National Library and Museum and the disestablishment of the Church of Wales.<sup>7</sup>

By the interwar era, the Liberal Party's hegemony in Welsh politics was being supplanted by that of the Labour Party.<sup>8</sup> Thus, a space was opening up in the Welsh political spectrum for specifically nationalistic policies and ideologies. Political momentum was growing once again for nationalistic causes in Wales. This change was spurred on by several factors, including the recent rhetoric of the struggle for the independence of small nations of the Great War, the contemporary emergence of the Irish Free State, the immense loss of life during World War One among Welsh-speaking communities, as well as the extended hiatus of political nationalistic behaviour. *Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru* was established in 1925 with the specific intent of furthering the aims of self-government for Wales, but also of preserving Welsh culture. Yet much of early Plaid Cymru success reflected recent successes in the cultural sphere and focused on cultural expressions of national identity, such as the Welsh language. Indeed, generally, despite the establishment of a new *political* party in Wales, *cultural* objectives

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Wales.) Not only were there ramifications for *British* politics, but also for *Welsh*, nationalist, politics; Welsh Liberalism, and with it, Welsh nationalist politics, were defeated for the moment. "By the end of 1896 *Cymru Fydd* was in ruins," and a new era for Welsh nationalism and nationalist politics was dawning." Kenneth Morgan, 1981, 114, 118, 44; D. Hywel Davies, *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945, A Call to Nationhood* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1983), 9.

<sup>7</sup> Further, various nationalist conferences organised in the immediate post-war years were unremarkable.

<sup>8</sup> With communistic and socialistic overtones, the ILP was profoundly modern and international, although there were those (Kier Hardie) who still recognized the need for a degree of national particularism in Wales.

were very much the focus of much of the nationalistic activity in Wales until the Second World War.<sup>9</sup>

This cultural focus of Welsh nationalism was acutely evident at the Eisteddfod in the decade leading up to the Second World War. By the interwar years, Eisteddfod organisers were recognising the festival's role in preserving the Welsh language. In 1937, a new constitution was instituted at the National Eisteddfod that, among other things, asserted the primacy of the Welsh language at the festival. However, introducing the All-Welsh Rule was to be a challenge. It was not until the 1950 Eisteddfod that the rule was actively enforced. The intervening years were marked by extraordinary public discourse on the issues of the Welsh language and nationhood, as the ideological boundaries of Welshness were defined. Moreover, the Second World War instigated significant social and cultural changes in Wales and the World that would shape the nature of Welsh identity and nationalism in the post-war era. Although Plaid Cymru officially ceased any devolutionist behaviour for the duration and went into "political hibernation", by the end of this period a marked shift towards a more vibrant and *political* nationalism was evident in Wales.<sup>10</sup> In fact, by the middle of the twentieth century, issues of Welsh nationhood had become more overtly political than they had been since the late nineteenth century *Cymru Fydd* movement. This shift towards greater emphasis on political activism was not indicative of a decreased emphasis on cultural ideas within the nationalist movement or at the Eisteddfod. Rather, it reflected a desire

<sup>9</sup> *Urdd Gobaith Cymru* was founded in 1922 specifically to maintain the Welsh language among its youth and was representative of an extant, and increasing, desire to preserve Welsh culture. Similarly, *Y Cymro*, a weekly Welsh-language national newspaper, was founded in 1932; the first radio broadcast was made in Welsh in 1935; Radio Cymru was established in 1977. Although perhaps apparently insignificant, this step in fact contributed towards the increasing preservationist focus on Welsh-language culture in Wales; it aimed to "unite Wales and create a Welsh view and opinion on all things pertaining to Wales and the Welsh." See D. Hywel Davies, 1983.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 223-224.

to put into practice many of the cultural policies and beliefs of Plaid Cymru. This change was evidence both of the re-emergence of a maturing Welsh nationalist political party and the changes brought on by years of total war. As Welsh was officially made the language of the Eisteddfod, the explicit purpose was to preserve the Welsh language through maintaining a Welsh-medium culture; the implicit concept and intent was that Welsh should be the language of Welsh culture. As shall be demonstrated, this was a highly contentious concept for much of the century. Thus, the controversial ruling and its implementation in 1950 were key moments, not only in the history of the Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales, but also in the history of Welsh nationalism. They marked a transition between the old world and the new – between acceptance of an increasingly anglicised norm - a Wales that was happily a part of the Anglo-British State and content to assert a subsidiary cultural identity, and the teething pangs of an emerging autonomous Welsh nation. The clash between the forces of “tradition” and “modernity”, evident elsewhere in the twentieth-century Eisteddfod, was perhaps more marked in this area of discourse than in any other.

### **An All-Welsh Rule**

The big issue was the Welsh language and its place in the festival founded to honour it. For years the National did most of the honouring through English, and the position seemed to be worsening. These were the dark days of the Depression, and perhaps some of the darkest days that the Welsh tongue has ever lived through. To so many men, Welsh-speakers too, it was a full belly that was important; Welsh so often either stood nowhere in their estimation, or was a positive hindrance to the better life. Yet a small group of academics thought otherwise. In 1937 they saw their chance to save the Eisteddfod from itself and its ‘friends’. ... Out of their discussions, with little publicity, came a new rule for the Eisteddfod: ‘Welsh shall be the official language of the Council

(the new ruling body) and the Eisteddfod' – the so-called All-Welsh Rule. It is a rule honoured far more in the breach than the observance. ... English continued to have an honoured place. Although all the signs must be in Welsh, very often they were in English too.<sup>11</sup>

Worries about the “Welshness” of the National Eisteddfod and the concept of an All-Welsh Rule were introduced officially in 1937 in an era of depression, modernization and uncertainty about the place of Wales in the changing world. These fears were echoed by many, such as the Rev. Rees, quoted above, who subsequently saw the festival as a means of safeguarding their national particularism. Certainly, ideas of national particularism had particular resonance with the issue of language and the national festival. The increasing use of English at the Eisteddfod was representative of trends in Welsh society as a whole. During the first half of the century, the proportion of Welsh speakers was declining significantly.<sup>12</sup> By 1931, English had become the dominant language on the Eisteddfod stage, in adjudications and the ceremonies of the Gorsedd of the Bards.<sup>13</sup> The rapid decrease in the percentage of Welsh-speakers was a cause of worry for many in Wales.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, interwar Wales was in ideological tumult. The nostalgic cultural nationalism remained from the nineteenth century *Cymru Fydd* movement, while a burgeoning newer and more radical nationalist movement was

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<sup>11</sup> From a pamphlet written by members of the National Eisteddfod Council for the Cardiff Eisteddfod in 1978 (no publication information given).

<sup>12</sup> In 1901, the census recorded that 49.9 per cent of the population of Wales spoke Welsh, but by 1931 that figure had fallen to 36.8 per cent. By 1951 the amount of Welsh speakers had fallen to 28.9 per cent. In addition, Welsh monoglotism was dying out by the 1930s. In 1931 only four per cent of the nation's population spoke Welsh only; in 1951 the figure had fallen to 1.7 per cent. Thus bilingualism was the more feasible and potentially successful option for Welsh language proponents, but it also appeared to be declining.

<sup>13</sup> Rev. E. Ebrard Rees, *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 24 July 1937, 1.

<sup>14</sup> Importantly, the decline was not necessarily in real numbers, due to the increasing population. Lloyd George famously said in 1937 that “there were more people speaking Welsh to-day [sic] than in the time of Owen Glyndwr, and even in the Norman city of Cardiff more Welsh was spoken now than ever before. ... More Welsh was being taught in schools, and the language itself was better than ever.” Interestingly, by the post-war era, Plaid Cymru had switched its policies from a steadfast focus on Welsh-medium policies to bilingualism.

becoming increasingly popular among certain groups in Wales. The language rule was a direct result of both of these factors.

Concern about the language and its impact on Welsh identity was not new in 1937; at the turn of the twentieth century some members of the Eisteddfod establishment were concerned about the use of English at the festival. Many in 1899 viewed English as the better language, as more useful and cultivated. Indeed, by and large, the ability to speak English was thought of positively at the 1899 Eisteddfod, as a marker of unity and modernity. An editorial in the *Western Mail* commented that many of the competitions were conducted in English:

Wales is in a state of transition, and in [the] course of time English will spread itself from corner to corner of the country. Anticipating, as it were, the change, the Eisteddfod has already become bilingual; in fact, it is more English than Welsh. ... It is sad for a Welshman to contemplate the complete 'translation' of the Eisteddfod, but we suppose that such a change is not only probable, but inevitable.<sup>15</sup>

Although the editorial was not entirely enthusiastic, particularly regarding the decline of the Welsh language, it was generally in favour of anglicising the Eisteddfod as the inexorable fate of the festival. Another editorial a few days later advocated the expansion of the translation competitions, as a means of increasing bilingualism in the principality.

In a bilingual country like Wales it is difficult to over-estimate the importance of translation from English to Welsh and vice versa, and it would be well if this branch [translation] were given more attention by the promoters of eisteddfodau. ... We look upon the Eisteddfod as one of the bridges, as it were, which are to aid in the work of leading Welshmen across from Welsh to English.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Editorial Comments, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 4.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

This viewpoint was further evidence of the perceived role of the Eisteddfod as a didactic institution and a national educator. English was perceived as the way forward. Interestingly, despite his membership of the Gorsedd, which remained a staunchly Welsh-medium institution despite the increasingly apparent English-nature of the Eisteddfod, Lord Tredegar (“Ifor Hael”) delivered his presidential address in English: “His Lordship remarked that it would be a relief to them to hear a little English. (Laughter.)”<sup>17</sup>

However, many of the Eisteddfod elite were beginning to break free of this post-Blue Books outlook. This was partly due to the prolonged strength of the cultural side of the *Cymru Fydd* movement, as well as the increasing evidence of the decline of the Welsh language. “Morien’s” speech at the Cardiff Eisteddfod was representative of this changing view and its cynicism towards the new anglicised and urbanised Welshness of South Wales in particular. “Morien” praised their aptitude with English:

All this evinces a terrible lack of native pride in what is their own on the part of the rising generation in South Wales. But it must be admitted we in this part of the Principality ... now regard the English tongue almost as much our own as the ancient language of the British Isles, namely, Cymraeg ... like many others born and bred in Wales, [I] regarded the English language as a kind of intruder in Wales.<sup>18</sup>

Yet he simultaneously criticised the population’s “strange” disrespect for the Welsh language:

At Cardiff these days English is much favoured by the lasses, even from ‘the hills’ of Morgannwg and Gwent. Let us rejoice it is most admirable English, and far excels the English of the peasants of

<sup>17</sup> “Awstin”, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 19 July 1899, 5.

<sup>18</sup> “Morien”, *Western Mail*, Friday 21 July 1899, 5.

both the West and North of England. It is educated English, and not the patois of the English country folk.<sup>19</sup>

“Morien’s” concurrent pride and disgust was characteristic of the ambiguity related to the issue of bilingualism in Wales at the turn of the twentieth century, and the relative newness of the concern over the language issue.

Despite these concerns, those who emphasised the Victorian idea of the progressiveness of the English language and bilingualism in Wales were still dominant in the beginning of the century, in the wake of the failure of the *Cymru Fydd* movement. Concerns over the use of English were relatively infrequent. To many pragmatists, the Welsh language was perceived as good only when it was also perceived as beneficial to the people of Wales. This was only possible as long as it remained a spoken language in Wales and was not obsolete. At the beginning of the century the editor of the *Western Mail* supported the Welsh-language nature of Eisteddfodic competitions, arguing that “it cannot be wrong to utilise the Welsh language for literary purposes as long as it continues a living tongue”.<sup>20</sup> Importantly, as late as 1899 the bulk of Eisteddfodwyr remained Welsh-speaking - despite the linguistic trends outside the *Maes* in contemporary Wales. A correspondent in the *Western Mail* remarked that the “majority of the huge audience was Welsh, most of whom did not understand English”.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> “although all were Cymric as regards race, they nearly all spoke English to each other. English is in Wales a sort of holiday language, and associated with Sunday attire.” “Morien”, *Western Mail*, Friday 21 July 1899, 5.

<sup>20</sup> Editorial Comments, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 4.

<sup>21</sup> “Lord Windsor is a monoglot Englishman, and has an exceedingly low and poor voice. It seems a very unsuitable choice. People who know the facts will laugh at this.” Interestingly, although Windsor was censured as a speaker because of his inability to speak Welsh, he was equally criticised for his poor speaking voice and abilities as a public orator. This implies that the use of Welsh at the Eisteddfod was not politicised in the same manner as it would be later in the century. “Wales Day by Day”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 20 July 1899, 5.

As the century progressed and the language declined, however, these concerns were increasingly brought into the forefront of popular consciousness, as nationalists gained visibility in the press through public actions and statements. One such example of nationalist activity haunted the late 1930s: the arson attack on the RAF bombing school on the Llŷn peninsula in 1936 saw three nationalists subsequently jailed and made martyrs for their cause. They were celebrated as ideal patriots by generations of Welsh nationalists, bringing a sense of heroism and romantic struggle to the cause of Welsh nationalism.<sup>22</sup> In fact, the Welsh Nationalist Party (*Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru*), founded a decade earlier, was beginning to come of age in this period of economic and linguistic trauma.<sup>23</sup> Their focus on language and a more aggressive form of nationalism was replacing the more peaceful version of the *Cymru Fydd* generation, epitomized by David Lloyd George. The members of *Plaid Cymru* advocated a more radical, political nationalist future for Wales. They wanted more than Home Rule and Disestablishment; the *Blaid* advocated support for all things related to the Welsh language. Indeed, in 1933 the party's newspaper, *Y Ddraig Goch*, suggested "Gwnewch Bopeth yn Gymraeg (Do everything in Welsh)."<sup>24</sup>

Certainly, both the old *Cymru Fydd* movement and the new Nationalist Party supported a language-based Welsh culture; the distinction lay in *Plaid Cymru*'s more

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<sup>22</sup> Nationalists were, nevertheless, small in number at this time. In 1939 the party's membership was 2,000. See Alan Butt Philip, *The Welsh Question: Nationalism in Welsh politics 1945-1970* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1975), 45-59.

<sup>23</sup> *Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru* became just *Plaid Cymru* shortly after the end of the Second World War.

<sup>24</sup> Early *Plaid Cymru* advocated political separatism: "Deg Gorchymyn: Yn Method Union. 1. Cyferchwich bawb yn Gymraeg – Saeson yn ogystal. 2. Cyfeiriwch eich holl lythyrau yn Gymraeg. 3. Anfonwch bob teligram yn Gymraeg. 4. Dywedwch y rhif, pan ffoniwch, yn Gymraeg... 5. Llenwch bob ffurflen I'r Llywodraeth yn Gymraeg. 6. Anfonwch lythyrau Cymraeg at bob Cyngor, Cymdeithas a ffyrm yng Nghymru a Lloegr... 7. Llenwch bob sic yn Gymraeg. 8. Gofynnwch ymhob siop, banc a gorsaf, am yr hyn a fyynnwch yn Gymraeg. 9. Os na'ch deallir yno, mynnwch rywun a'ch deall. 10. Rhoddwch ffaf bob amser I bawb a hysbyseba ac a wna fusnes yn Gymraeg." (*Y Ddraig Goch* 7:5 (Mai 1933), 7.)



radical stance, its emphasis on the primacy of the Welsh language, and its refusal to compromise.<sup>25</sup> Gone was the support for the Victorian ideals of Welshness, based in the chapel and a pre-World War One optimism. By the interwar era, this new generation of nationalists was pushing for a secular, European and pragmatic Wales – but also a Wales heavily rooted in its own unique traditions. This new generation of nationalists saw the arson attack as both an ideological and a real success. It was a violent attack against the British State, and it also made the population of Wales sit up and pay attention to nationalist ideas - and take them seriously for the first time in a generation or more. Consequently, they were riding on the crest of a wave of nationalistic fervour and pushed for the All-Welsh Rule in 1937.

Indeed, there was evident in the Eisteddfodic discourse in 1937 a regeneration of nationalistic agitation in relation to the festival and, more specifically, a heightened level of support for the Nationalist “cause”. This increase suggested that the actions of the “Pen-y-berth Three” helped to increase the momentum of the nationalist movement in Wales, serving as inspiration, and demonstrating that protest was a valid form of nationalistic expression. Further, it hinted at the existence of an extant body of radical support for Welsh nationalist causes, however small.<sup>26</sup> This was manifested through support for both the ideals and the actions of the nationalists, although generally at this point there was more support for the former. This disparity was because there was a significant practical difference between the ideas of the nationalists and their occasionally violent actions. As stated previously, nationalists - both “unofficial” nationalists, who supported things Welsh without entering into the political arena, and

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<sup>25</sup> Saunders Lewis wanted to de-industrialise Wales and return to a more “traditional” society.

<sup>26</sup> The crowd of 12,000 that greeted the arsonists upon their release from prison was indicative of a measure of public support.

those self-proclaimed partisans who actively supported Welsh political and cultural nationalist policies - were increasingly focusing on the Welsh language as a critical factor in defining identity. By the 1930s, when the number of Welsh-language speakers was declining at a rapid rate, and English was increasingly being used at the Eisteddfod, debate over language use *in Wales generally* became an argument that intensified with each festival.<sup>27</sup> Discourse at the Eisteddfod no longer focused on the merits of bilingualism, but on the necessity of preserving the Welsh language, both on and off the *Maes*.

Actions and discourse at the Machynlleth Eisteddfod reflected the swell of nationalistic ideas. One of the more controversial discussions based purely on language usage was about the new policy of the Great Western Railway regarding the Welsh language. Instructions were given to railway employees in the central Wales division to refrain from using Welsh when on duty. An editorial in the *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald* criticised the move and supported public protest:

It was not surprising that a strong protest at this ban was made. ... It is an impertinent instruction, which can be defeated by all Welsh people who travel by the Great Western Railway. ... This railway company has outraged Welsh sentiment on previous occasions, when it made nonsensical hybrids of beautiful Welsh place-names, and, unfortunately, some misguided Welsh people approved of what was done.<sup>28</sup>

The editorial's advocacy of protest was evidence of support for some form of language activism in Wales - albeit a relatively passive means of activism based primarily on simply speaking the language. This was a change from the nationalistic lull that

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<sup>27</sup> Geraint Jenkins and Mari A. Williams, "The Fortunes of the Welsh language 1900-2000: Introduction", in Geraint Jenkins and Mari A. Williams, eds, *Let's Do Our Best for the Ancient Tongue* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), 7; W. J. Gruffydd, *Y Llenor* 10:4 (1931), 193.

<sup>28</sup> Editorial, *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald*, Friday 30 July 1937, 4.

followed the death of *Cymru Fydd*. Moreover, although still only a relative few were extreme enough in their political views to support the radical *actions* of the nationalists in 1936-1937, it was evidence that there was some public support for the *ideas* of the nationalists, and for some form of a campaign against anglicisation to preserve the Welsh language.

Despite the minority stance on violent protest, there were nevertheless episodes of such behaviour at the Eisteddfod. One such episode involved a demonstrator burning a copy of the *Western Mail*. The incident occurred after a few nationalists, led by Mr William Williams of Bangor, protested against an article discussing one of the men imprisoned for the arson attack.<sup>29</sup> Williams set fire to the paper, and “tramped on the burning paper, crying, ‘To hell with the *Western Mail*’.”<sup>30</sup> It was apparently the only such physical protest, but epitomized the “storm” that surrounded the Eisteddfod in 1937.<sup>31</sup>

There were essentially two sides to this episode: the protestor and the press. Most of the media coverage was by the *Western Mail* itself, and much of it was acerbically critical and cuttingly sarcastic – as perhaps could be expected. The *Western Mail* labelled the incident a “Comedy Of Incendiarism”.<sup>32</sup> An editorial in that paper was caustic in its recognition of the alleged aims of the demonstrator to martyr himself:

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<sup>29</sup> “WHAT THE PAPER SAID: ... The leading article, which dealt with the question of the reinstatement of Mr D. J. Williams, pointed out that until it is known what assurances he has given to the Board of Education there could not be a decision favourable to his reinstatement on his release from prison... ‘If these statements do not contain an unqualified condemnation of his crime, and expression of sincere regret for it, and a reliable assurance that he will never again resort to methods of political barbarism, his reinstatement should not be contemplated.’” *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 14 August 1937, 5.

<sup>30</sup> *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 14 August 1937, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Howell Evans, Eisteddfod supplement, *Western Mail*, Monday 2 August 1937, 9.

<sup>32</sup> “The public burner, proud in having performed at least one good deed, proceeded on his way, but when he learns that the sole effect of his performance was to create a phenomenal demand for copies of the

Our precious fire and brimstone Nationalists must always be burning something to advertise themselves. Their slogan appears to be: He that burns most shines most. We have no doubt the wrathful person ... will be decorated for his heroism at the next solemn conclave of his party. He hopes to live in history. ... His prospect of attaining high office amongst the nationalists must be immensely improved by his amateur incendiarism.<sup>33</sup>

The editorial referred to the act as “pseudo-Nationalist genius”.<sup>34</sup> Edward James also questioned the accuracy of labelling the protestors “nationalists”:

it was left to a handful of so-called Welsh nationalists to provide the one comic episode. ... These young men, not all of them Welshmen, for one of them spoke of ‘Cymru am beeth’, with long drawn out vowels, professed to be incensed.<sup>35</sup>

Generally, the media presented the Nationalists as a small group of extremists, as “ill-balanced” people who had “perpetrated an outrage which threatened” the stability of the Eisteddfod.<sup>36</sup> In this context, James’ description of the popular reaction to the protest was interesting: “Eisteddfod officials and police joined the large expectant crowd. ... Cheers were met with counter cheers and some booing. Any number of defenders were forthcoming for the paper – men whose Welsh patriotism none can impugn.”<sup>37</sup> Thus there was an apparent lack of popular support for the nationalistic protestors. However, it must be remembered that the *Western Mail* was very much a paper of the middle-of-the-road mainstream in Wales, and would not be expected to support radical nationalistic protest. The newspaper stated that it had had the proverbial last laugh as their sales soared; however, the effects of the incident on the nationalist cause were unmeasurable and possibly just as significant. In this way, the burning of the newspaper echoed the

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*Western Mail* he may be prompted to send in a bill to us for improving our sales.” Edward James, *Western Mail*, Saturday 7 August 1937, 12.

<sup>33</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Saturday 7 August 1937, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Edward James, *Western Mail*, Saturday 7 August 1937, 12.

<sup>36</sup> Editorial, *Western Mail*, Friday 6 August 1937, 8.

<sup>37</sup> Edward James, *Western Mail*, Saturday 7 August 1937, 12.

arson attack in Pen-y-berth, and was representative of the gradually changing nature of nationalistic protest in Wales. More particularly, it was significant as an early political demonstration on the *Maes*, and was a precursor of events in the following decades, as the “extreme” nationalists gradually gained a level of popular support among Eisteddfodwyr.

One member of the minority group of “extremists” was Lord Ashbourne, an Irishman who was a keen Eisteddfodwr. He used his position of power to defend the actions of the Welsh nationalists at Pen-y-berth, excusing his absence from the Eisteddfod in Machynlleth on the grounds that he was supporting the arsonists.<sup>38</sup> Ashbourne was protesting against the use of Lord Londonderry’s home at Plas Machynlleth as the site of the Arts and Crafts Pavilion. Londonderry was the Minister of Defence and thus heavily implicated with the RAF school and the arson attack. The radicals saw the use of his home as a clear statement of acceptance of the Government’s actions regarding the arsonists. Ashbourne was not alone in his censure of the Eisteddfod’s action, or lack of action, regarding the controversy between nationalists and Lord Londonderry. Various adjudicators resigned over the use of Lord Londonderry’s home as an Eisteddfodic site. In some ways, the nationalist argument was taken beyond the issue of the language and nationhood; it became a reaction to the political situation brought on by the protests a year earlier. The resignations and fiery speeches at Machynlleth were as much about the Government’s reaction to Welsh nationalist demands – that is, the imprisonment of the arsonists – as the actual demands themselves.

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<sup>38</sup> “There are three men in prison to-day, one of whom, Mr Saunders Lewis, is a personal friend of mine. ... Machynlleth became a kind of controversial centre, and I was not desirous of being involved in it.” *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald*, Friday 6 August 1937, 4.

There was a great deal of public censure directed towards the nationalists. Some supported their “noble” ideals, but criticised the crudeness and rowdiness of their sensational actions. Although Lord Londonderry ultimately resigned his presidency at the Eisteddfod to avoid further controversy, Eisteddfod officials decided not to fill the chair vacated by Londonderry’s resignation. As the *Cardiff Times* reported:

There will be a vacant chair at the massed band concert on the opening night ... the executive committee having decided not to fill the vacancy caused by Lord Londonderry’s resignation from the presidency after the controversy regarding his appointment. Eisteddfod officials on Saturday declined to comment on the decision, which, it is understood, is intended as a token of appreciation of Lord Londonderry’s regard for the welfare of the eisteddfod ... and also as a mark of appreciation of his continued support.<sup>39</sup>

Lord Davies spoke for many when, in the context of the Lord Londonderry situation, he urged Eisteddfodwyr to “Keep Politics Out”.<sup>40</sup>

Despite Lord Davies’ plea, politics were definitely a part of the 1937 Eisteddfod. Moreover, they would remain an integral part of the *Maes* throughout the century. This resurgence of nationalistic protest and protectiveness at the Eisteddfod, spawned by the arson attack at Pen-y-berth in 1936, was evidenced in the above discourse. Thus, given this controversial context and the apparent nationalistic momentum resulting from the incident, it was not a coincidence that the new constitution and language rule were introduced in 1937.

### **The National Eisteddfod as Preserver of the Welsh Language**

So the Eisteddfod is the preserver of that background of Welsh life and as it goes on its peregrinations from town to town, North and

<sup>39</sup> *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 3 July 1937, 16.

<sup>40</sup> *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 7 August 1937, 1.

South, it will carry with it its distinctive message. It is never exhibited, but none can miss it. To those who have eyes to see, it is writ large on all the activities of the Eisteddfod.<sup>41</sup>

The new constitution that was agreed upon at Machynlleth was begun in 1935, when prominent Eisteddfodwyr such as Professor W. J. Gruffydd and Albert Evans Jones (“Cynan”) became more and more worried about the future of the Welsh language, religion and culture in the face of what they saw as an increasingly corrupted (English) popular culture, and began to call for changes in the structure of the Eisteddfod. The support of Welsh culture evidenced through the ruling was a continuation of earlier Welsh cultural particularism. Most of these men were too young truly to belong to the *Cymru Fydd* generation. Yet, because they came of age during its waning years, they would not have escaped the movement’s cultural and political ideals. They were the product of their fathers’ generation of nationalistic ideals. The difference perhaps lay in their generation’s recognition of the urgency of protecting the language and their proactive stance in this regard.<sup>42</sup>

The constitution not only reorganized the structure and organization of the National Eisteddfodau; it also formally established Welsh as the language of the Eisteddfod.<sup>43</sup> Referring to the new constitution in 1937, the Bishop of St. Asaph said that it “would commence a revolution in the history of the Eisteddfod”.<sup>44</sup> This new constitution and the debate that surrounded it outlined some of the contemporary concerns about the Eisteddfod, as well as broader Welsh society in the 1930s. Foremost

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<sup>41</sup> Rev. E. Ebrard Rees, *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 24 July 1937, 1.

<sup>42</sup> There was a division within Eisteddfodwyr, between those radicals (such as Saunders Lewis) who advocated political action as well as cultural preservationism, and the more conservative members (such as Cynan).

<sup>43</sup> Dillwyn Miles, 1992, 164.

<sup>44</sup> The Bishop of St Asaph, Dr Havard, in *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 13 August 1937, 8.

among these concerns were worries about the fiscal success of the Eisteddfod and the practical future of the Eisteddfod. On a functional level, the constitution was meant to reorganize the bureaucratic structure of the Eisteddfod, thus ensuring its ability to survive into the second half of the century. On an ideological level, it would ensure the future of Welsh-language culture.

It is necessary to remember that the Eisteddfod was an organization of the cultural elite in Wales. For example, important decisions such as the selection of competition subjects, venues, et cetera, were necessarily not a popular decision, but rather that of a few. Indeed, the members of the National Eisteddfod Council, who created and implemented the 1937 constitution, were generally members of Wales' social and cultural elite.<sup>45</sup> These men were leaders in their particular worlds, and they joined together at the Eisteddfod to lead Welsh cultural life. The contemporary media relied predominantly upon their opinions and beliefs about Wales and Welshness to comprise the bulk of their reportage - although not entirely. This included most of the newspaper reports, the presidential speeches, and the editorial commentary.

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<sup>45</sup> Prominent members, who probably were responsible for the drafting of the rule, include Lord Davies of Llandinam (the president), Dr J. Caradoc Ashton (the chairman), the Rev. Henry Williams (the co-chairman), Mr J. Rhys Lewis (the secretary), Mr T. M. Hughes (the treasurer). These were the men who were in charge of organizing the 1937 Eisteddfod, and who signed their names to the annual report; they were professional and learned men. Other notable members of the Eisteddfod Council included Mr David Lloyd George, the former Prime Minister; the Archdruid "Crwys" (William Williams), also a popular and prolific poet; Mr William Jones, a poet and Congregational minister; the Rev. Dr Maurice Jones, a renowned priest and educator, and the author of a report on *Welsh in Education and Life* in 1927; Mr H. Gethin Lewis, a merchant and financier; Mr D. R. Hughes, a prominent member of the London Welsh and also the *Urdd Gobaith Cymru* (a Welsh-language-oriented youth movement) and *Undeb Cymru Fydd* (a nationalistic organisation); Mr William George, a solicitor; Professor D. Hughes Parry; and the Rev. A. E. Jones ("Cynan"), an extremely successful Eisteddfodic competitor and adjudicator, as well as instigator of much Eisteddfodic reform in the twentieth century.



The Bishop of St Asaph supported the new Constitution because he felt it would make it “possible for all Welshmen to join the Council to develop the Eisteddfod”.<sup>46</sup> Interestingly, his idea was also that the Eisteddfod would become a populist institution, rather than the rather elitist structure it was at an organisational level. This is not to say that it was not popular or democratic; in fact, it was a relatively popular public festival. In 1911, for example, despite a strike in the Rhondda and inclement weather, the *Western Mail* reported a “Record Crowd Of Cymry”.<sup>47</sup> In 1950 the discussion was more practical: “The crowds who make the Eisteddfod their holiday each year started flocking into the town on Saturday and by last night most of the available accommodation in the Rhymney and Aber Valleys, much of it booked 20 months and more ago, had been taken up”.<sup>48</sup> Even in 2000 there were record-breaking crowds.<sup>49</sup>

Indeed, despite the economic slump and societal crises of the 1930s, and perhaps because of the sense of nostalgia that continued to permeate much of Welsh society, the Eisteddfod remained an embraced and highly valued public festival for many Welsh people. Upwards of 20,000 people a day travelled to Eisteddfodau each August bank holiday week to participate. They came not only from Wales, but from around Great Britain and the Welsh Diaspora beyond. Accordingly, the Eisteddfod was a feature of civil society: a community in whose trappings theoretically anyone could come and participate and so perform the innumerable aspects of their identities that made them “Welsh”.

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<sup>46</sup> The Bishop of St Asaph, Dr Havard, in *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 13 August 1937, 8.

<sup>47</sup> “Our Own Reporter”, *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1911, 5.

<sup>48</sup> *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 1950, 4.

<sup>49</sup> “The Llanelli Eisteddfod 2000 is set to be a record breaker. Attendance figures ... have been higher than both the Anglesey Eisteddfod last year and at Bridgend in 1998.” *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 10 August 2000, 1.

It was in this context and during this period that the increasingly narrow, exclusionary nature of the Eisteddfod became evident. Certainly the Eisteddfod had always been an extension of Welsh society, and therefore maintained many of the class, gender and other distinctions evident therein. However, by the middle of the century, with the declining strength of the language, another division was becoming increasingly apparent and important in Wales: language usage. In essence, the All-Welsh Rule helped reinforce the power structure of the National Eisteddfod Council – paving the way for an increased dichotomization of Welsh culture, not along social, economic, or cultural lines, but around language use. This split of Welsh and English speakers was a conscious act on the part of the Eisteddfod Council in their attempt to secure a future for the Welsh language and Welsh-language culture: a difficult, and arguably patronizing, decision made to ensure the greatest good for the greatest number. As language use declined in the early twentieth century, language conversely became one of the key factors defining Welshness and assigning identity, particularly to Welsh-speakers. Language had always been a hallmark of national identity, but its limits had not been clear. For the language activists and nationalists, who were increasing significantly in numbers and visibility in this period, the Eisteddfod was critical, and they worked to ensure its future, arguably for the good of the people of Wales. In his address to the summer school of the Welsh Nationalist Party at Bala, Mr Griffith John Williams said that although the Welsh language was “nothing but a fancy subject in schools, and that in many parts of South Wales the language was dead. It was a decided advantage for the children of Wales to be taught other subjects through the medium of their own language.”<sup>50</sup> Obviously, this change would not necessarily be viewed as an advantage by

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<sup>50</sup> Although not an Eisteddfodic speech, the attitude and the speaker were the same. Griffith John

many in Wales, to whom the Welsh language was an impractical relic of the past, but Williams and others like him felt that it was in the best interests of Wales and the Welsh people. Again, in discussions such as this, language was the most obvious difference between the Welsh and the English peoples, and thus the principal indicator of Welsh identity.

Thus, proponents of the language rule at the Eisteddfod saw the Welsh language as the primary signifier of Welshness. Significantly, these people were often those members of civil society who had an agenda to promote. They were members of the cultural elite and/or nationalists; they were not usually the colliery worker from the Rhondda or the housewife from Bangor. While not denying the importance of other aspects of Welshness (such as blood ties, geographical boundaries, etc.), they asserted the fundamental importance of a language-based culture. This was a reversal of the ideas of earlier generations, that the Welsh language hindered progress and unity.

Many saw the Welsh language as necessary to an “authentic” sense of Welshness. The Welsh language, dominant until just a generation previously, was seen as what always had separated the Welsh from everyone else. To speak Welsh meant a connection to the past. English, moreover, was represented as a contaminating force, a source of corruption in modern society. Iorwerth Peate, the scholar and supporter of Welsh folk culture, said of the language:

Welsh culture is based upon the only true tradition which we possess, which is the Welsh language. The national culture of Wales cannot be considered apart from the language itself. The language is its essence and to-day, unfortunately, it is also the culture's only bulwark against extinction. Destroy the Welsh language – and there are many influences tending in that direction – and the whole spiritual culture and national personality of Wales

will be undermined. ... [We must] keep the Eisteddfod, the festival of our culture, essentially Welsh in speech.<sup>51</sup>

As with other aspects of Wales and Welshness, there was something “natural” and essential assigned to the Welsh language; an ancient, pre-modern aspect to the language that made it particularly threatened by modern (anglicised) society. Major W. P. Wheldon made clear his views that “the old Welsh element is yet the best custodian of noble social aims”.<sup>52</sup> As the language declined, the use of English was not only seen as a threat to the Welsh language, but also to Welsh culture.

The parallel decline of the Welsh language and the spread of urbanized modernity in Wales were not ignored. On the contrary, as has been illustrated, there was much debate about the importance of the location of the Eisteddfod and the relative strength of the Welsh-speaking population, and about whether the Eisteddfod should be held in anglicised urban centres of population or in depopulated rural areas where the language was strong. David Lloyd George, a life-long ardent Eisteddfodwr, spoke, as was his custom, at the 1937 Eisteddfod and emphasised the importance of Machynlleth’s rural location as a way of preserving the language.<sup>53</sup> He argued that the rural areas of Wales provided authenticity for the language and the correlated sense of Welsh culture and identity. Given the changing circumstances in Wales, this was an essentially nostalgic view. Thus it is interesting to view it in the context of the modernizing forces of war and twentieth-century society. In this way, the language was a facet of a *hiraeth* for the past, a longing voiced by many of the cultural elite, for a time when Wales was purely “Welsh”, before polluting outside influences had altered the socio-cultural

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<sup>51</sup> Iorwerth C. Peate, “Threats to Welsh Culture”, *Western Mail*, 3 August 1937, 15.

<sup>52</sup> Major W. P. Wheldon, the Permanent Secretary of the Welsh Department of the Board of Education, in *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald*, Friday 13 August 1937, 4.

<sup>53</sup> *North Wales Weekly News*, 12 August 1937, 10.

balance within her borders. It was perceived as a part of the “traditional” Welsh culture and past that many wanted to preserve. Mr Robert Richards MP, linked together the cultural heritage and “tradition” of the Welsh language and the Eisteddfod.<sup>54</sup> Further, in his address to the Honourable Society of the Cymmrodorion, Iorwerth Peate said that

the thread of language and of the things of the spirit was the warp which ran through it as a silver cord to hold the pattern together. The pattern changed from age to age and none would wish to return to the patterns of any past age, ‘but we have to beware’, he added, ‘lest the silver cord of our language and its traditions be broken, for upon it depends the whole order of our culture.’<sup>55</sup>

In this context, the All-Welsh Rule was for many primarily a practical means of preserving the language. Mr D. O. Evans MP, asserted that “the chief object of the Eisteddfod as laid down in the constitution was the safeguarding of the Welsh language. Welsh must be the official language of the festival. Other languages should be second only, though there was no reason why they could not be used in a secondary sense.”<sup>56</sup> As the premier cultural festival in Wales, the Eisteddfod was viewed as the decisive weapon in the struggle for the fate of the Welsh language and identity. The Bishop of St Asaph used his presidential address to urge Eisteddfodwyr to support Welsh-language literature, and thus the language. It would, he agreed, “be just as well to bury the Welsh language if literature were allowed to languish”.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, the core features of the Eisteddfod, the specific types of poetry and song, were deemed to be particularly Welsh, and therefore emphasised the linguistic role of the festival:

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<sup>54</sup> “He urged his hearers to remain true to all the cultural ideals which these names conjured up as Wales’s heritage.” *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 6 August 1937, 7.

<sup>55</sup> *Western Mail*, Tuesday 3 August 1937, 15.

<sup>56</sup> *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 13 August 1937, 8.

<sup>57</sup> The Bishop of St Asaph, Dr Havard, in *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 13 August 1937, 8.

Welsh poetry is not merely the last ditch of the Welsh language; it is a form of expression that is peculiarly Welsh in its alliterative and euphenistic [sic] music of words and sentences. It can be imitated in English, but it is only native in Welsh. The same applies to choral singing. ... There is something about Welsh choirs that is Welsh, a rhythm and an overwhelmingness that is massive.<sup>58</sup>

Principal Ifor L. Evans of Aberystwyth was pragmatic when he said that the Eisteddfod gave

pride of place to the preservation and the development of the language and the literature of the Cymry and appealed to all who are interested in Wales and its cultural traditions. Love of land and district have always been potent factors in the growth of man, and the Eisteddfod embraces all districts in its manifold activities.<sup>59</sup>

Notable was Evans' inclusion of the literature and culture of the Cymry, although admittedly the "Cymry" implies a Welsh-speaking group. Indeed, by preserving the Welsh nature of these competitions, the language certainly would also be preserved – if only artificially and as a medium for an artistic few.

The most powerful argument against the use of Welsh, or rather the sole use of Welsh, stated that the language was not central to the Welsh identity. Indeed, not everyone felt that one must speak Welsh to be a wholly Welsh individual – nor did the National Eisteddfod need to be conducted entirely in Welsh to be a wholly Welsh institution. Ifor Evans said:

The National Eisteddfod provides a rallying-point for Welsh Welshmen throughout the world and also for all the inhabitants of the Principality, whether their mother tongue be Welsh or English. ... The Eisteddfod reflects the many-sidedness of human endeavour. It is a truly national institution in that it stands for unity without, in any sense, prescribing uniformity.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Rev. E. Ebrard Rees, *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 24 July 1937, 1.

<sup>59</sup> Ifor L. Evans in *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 6 August 1937, 7.

<sup>60</sup> Ifor Evans in *Western Mail*, 4 August 1937, 6.

In this way, the Eisteddfod was perceived to be unifying society, if not the language. Evans focused less on the language and more generally on the role of the Eisteddfod as a cultural unifier: "The Eisteddfod represents the principle of unity, uniting all who believed that culture sprang from the soil; and all who believed that culture was for the many."<sup>61</sup> This argument did not disavow the nostalgic view of Wales; it merely focused on other aspects of that idealized past. This view was a compromise between a "backwards-looking" emphasis on rekindling the language and a "forward-looking" disregard of the importance of the language. It emphasised that Eisteddfodwyr must remember that their nation was increasingly unable to speak Welsh, and that to be a truly "national" festival, linguistic allowances must be made. Lord Atkin spoke for many when he denounced the Welsh language policy. He said he was

not going to apologize for speaking in English, for the festival is a National one; and it seem[s] right that people like myself who share the heritage of Welsh blood, and the love of the Welsh arts and muses, should have a humble share in the proceedings.<sup>62</sup>

In a similar manner, although the Hon. Ralph Beaumont MP, the Saturday afternoon president, spoke part of his speech in "good Welsh without the aid of notes", he said it was the "Welshman's responsibility" to promote a general Welsh culture that would unite the nation:

Welsh men living out of Wales had an important part to play in the preservation of Welsh culture and promotion of Welsh interests. All had a responsibility to see that their nationalism was not narrow, selfish or exclusive but that Wales was ready to welcome the co-operation of other nations who show interest in or appreciation of Welsh aims and ideals.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ifor L. Evans in *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 6 August 1937, 7.

<sup>62</sup> Lord Atkin in *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 6 August 1937, 7.

<sup>63</sup> He was also a cousin of Lord Londonderry. *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 13 August 1937, 8.

Certainly this sense of the Eisteddfod as being a festival for every man and woman in Wales – the *gwerin* – regardless of language, location, etc., was an important key to its identity.

Many of the Eisteddfod elite did not support the idea of the language rule because they felt it inherently restrictive. The Archbishop of Wales, Dr C. A. H. Green, said the National Eisteddfod provided a common ground for co-operation in Wales. He said it was

one of those few institutions in Wales where every one who loved Wales, whether high or low, rich or poor, Welsh by tongue or English, could meet and co-operate for the preservation and enrichment of Welsh culture and literature. It would be a thousand pities if men whose zeal outran prudence should destroy or weaken this common tryst.<sup>64</sup>

Green advocated a broader cultural basis for Welshness, one that still would be grounded in the Eisteddfod, but that would be unrestricted (around language at least) and open. As with the other opponents of the Rule, he believed that Wales was about more than the Welsh language, particularly as fewer and fewer people in Wales spoke Welsh and a narrow focus on the language as the primary signifier of Welshness would necessarily exclude much of the population of Wales.<sup>65</sup> These critics of an increased use of the Welsh language at the Eisteddfod believed the Welsh language important and worth preserving, but they rebelled at the idea of an enforced language policy at the Eisteddfod.<sup>66</sup>

They also felt that it was against the nature of the festival – and indeed, of Wales – to be exclusionary: “it was considered that unless all the people of Wales were invited

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<sup>64</sup> *Cardiff Times*, Saturday 14 August 1937, 5.

<sup>65</sup> Significantly, Green also saw a focus on the ancient history of Wales as counterproductive to the future of the nation and its people.

<sup>66</sup> Certainly the language issue was not a simple black-or-white one, where one either did or did not support the primacy of the language in all things, and for the same reasons.



to the Eisteddfod, it was not a National Eisteddfod.”<sup>67</sup> Significantly, although the *gwerin* ideal was traditionally a Welsh-speaking one, the changing demographics and linguistic trends meant that for a living *gwerin* to exist, its definition had to be modified to include the English-speaking majority. Thus, the use of English was not necessarily seen as an abandonment of the nostalgic representation of Wales. The common people, the *gwerin*, were what made Wales great. Catering to their linguistic ability was seen as merely a practical aspect of contemporary life, and nothing more.

### The War Years and Change

The Second World War ... did much to strengthen Britishness. At the same time, it seemed to be a death blow to Welshness. W. J. Gruffydd, one of the staunchest supporters of Britain's stand, believed that 'England could win the war and Wales could lose it'.<sup>68</sup>

The unity necessary for victory in the war meant that Welsh national particularism suffered during World War Two. Despite efforts in 1938 regarding the Welsh nature of the Eisteddfod, it was too late to make more than a superficial effort with the language; subjects and pieces for competitions were already decided upon and publicized. Furthermore, although the organizational committee and Eisteddfod elite wanted to make the 1938 National “the most Welsh Eisteddfod held for many years”, it would take more time to enforce that particular form of Welshness on the Eisteddfod – and actually to re-write the constitution. In fact, the new constitution was not completed and published by the National Eisteddfod Association until 1952.<sup>69</sup> Structural changes to the Eisteddfod were necessary due to the nature of total war on the British home front.

<sup>67</sup> Dr C. A. H. Green, Archbishop of Wales, in *Western Mail*, 6 August 1937, 7.

<sup>68</sup> John Davies, 1993, 602.

<sup>69</sup> Professor W. J. Gruffydd, quoted in Miles, 1992, 164.

As a result, little attention was paid either to the implementation or enforcement of the rule. The 1939 Eisteddfod was held under the shadow of an imminent war. There was no National Eisteddfod in 1940. The remaining years through to the end of the war witnessed limited, “reduced” Eisteddfodau.<sup>70</sup> The 1944 National Eisteddfod was different, however. With the end of the war in sight, and the help of the British Council, it was suddenly more feasible, both logistically and emotionally, to hold a more “complete” festival.

Thus, in 1944, the Eisteddfod was restored to a week-long festival. The Gorsedd ceremonials were returned in their pre-war splendour and there was a full range of competitions. Nationalist agitation and dissent about the rule seem to have ceased for the duration. The language issue and worries about Welshness had not disappeared, but they were very much secondary issues. As mentioned previously, discussion focused on the role of the Eisteddfod as representative of a thriving Welsh – and British – culture and there was a renewed emphasis on Wales’ role within Britain as concern turned to the future and rebuilding of Wales, Britain and the world. Despite disapproval of the British Government’s imperialistic policies, Plaid Cymru put its nationalistic desires temporarily to one side, and became officially neutral. The cessation of nationalist agitation could be interpreted as a form of tacit support for the *British* state, of unity

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<sup>70</sup> The Eisteddfod Council published a booklet in 1943 discussing the new constitution and the history of the Eisteddfod up to the present day: “The present war has had serious effects upon the National Eisteddfod ... when the war broke out, it seemed like the end of this ancient festival which has come to mean so much in Welsh eyes ... plans were made for holding a ‘reduced’ Eisteddfod at Mountain Ash. But when the time came, even this proved impossible, and all that could be done was to broadcast the chief items of the Mountain Ash program, by the kind consent of the BBC. In 1941, a three-day Eisteddfod confined to literature (with no musical contests) was held ... and this meeting was a very great success.” Thomas Parry, *The Eisteddfod of Wales* (Dinbych: Gwasg Gee for the National Eisteddfod Council, 1943).

against more frightening enemies.<sup>71</sup> Flags of both Wales and the United Kingdom covered the host-town Llandybïe, apparently without enmity.<sup>72</sup>

Indeed, those who were at the Eisteddfod appeared to be eager to make their loyalty to Britain, to Empire, and to the Allied nations quite clear. Many of the presidential speeches attacked separatism. As discussed in chapter three, 1944 saw the visit (sponsored by the British Council) of representatives from ten allied nations to the Eisteddfod. Moreover, the “Exiles” day was already a popular part of the Eisteddfod; it was the day when Welsh expatriates returned “home”, symbolically, to the Eisteddfod. This was a nostalgic celebration of their shared past, as Eisteddfodwyr and Welsh people. The visit of the Allied representatives was different, however, in its embracing of a shared future: Wales and the rest of the world would make the world a great place. Their visit was seen as a show of unity to the world and, as such, antithetical to pre-war calls for nationalist separatism and an inward-looking cultural nationalism.

Evidence of this shift towards a progressive outlook in the Eisteddfod community coincided with a nationalist voice, albeit muted by wartime patriotism. The MP for Llanelli, Mr James Griffiths, wanted Wales to have a “distinct voice in the administration of the affairs of Britain ... [and] the needs and aspirations of Wales”.<sup>73</sup> He saw Wales’ role as two-fold: “Given these two things we shall create a new Wales and help to make a new Britain and to build a new world.”<sup>74</sup> This theme was a recurrent one at the 1944 Eisteddfod.— and not just among nationalists. Increased emphasis was placed on peace and reconstruction - and the role of Wales in the New World that would

<sup>71</sup> Saunders Lewis remained pacifistic, although his views were viewed by many as traitorous.

<sup>72</sup> Unlike noticeable displays of antagonism in both 1937 and 1950, in which Union flags were burned.

<sup>73</sup> “D.H.I.P.” (the editor), *South Wales Evening Post*, Wednesday 9 August 1944, 4.

<sup>74</sup> “Our Own Reporters”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 10 August 1944, 3.

follow the peace. Wales had long seen itself as a peaceful nation. The Eisteddfodic platform was one of peace – advocated by members of the Gorsedd, the Council and even David Lloyd George. At the Eisteddfod of 1944, and thereafter, emphasis was placed on finding and maintaining peace, and thus making the world a better place. Major Gwilym Lloyd George remarked: “Peace has its problems which, in a sense, might be more difficult than the problems of war. They are doing right in talking about building a new world and a new nation, but if they are to do it they must prepare and plan early.”<sup>75</sup> The devastating results of two wars and the depression made Wales necessarily become more practical and, arguably, more forward-looking than it had been in a generation or more, as the pre-war remnants of nostalgic nationalism that had survived economic depression and societal crises in the 1920s and 1930s, dissolved into the necessity of war and rebuilding. According to R. E. Griffiths: “Wales could not live on her traditions, but must look to the future and create new conditions.”<sup>76</sup> In fact, one of the highlights of the drama pavilion that year was the prize-winning entry from 1943: *Wedi'r Drin* (The Aftermath), by Ellis Williams. It focused on renewal and change.

During this period there was a gradual shift away from a nostalgic hold on to a past based in an Anglo-Welsh culture, and a movement towards embracing a “brave new world” – that was particularly Welsh. Significantly, in conjunction with this shift, and despite the official “truce”, came an increased emphasis on political nationalism in Wales – a view that Wales could and should exert some degree of independence from Britain, just as the little nations of Europe were fighting in the war. This was an attitude

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<sup>75</sup> Major Gwilym Lloyd George quoted by “D.H.I.P.” (the editor), *South Wales Evening Post*, Monday 7 August 1944, 1, 4.

<sup>76</sup> Mr R. E. Griffiths of Aberystwyth, National organizer of *Urdd Gobaith Cymru* in *The Amman Valley Chronicle and East Carmarthen News*, Thursday 10 August 1944, 3.

shunned by the majority in Wales just a decade earlier. Among Welsh nationalists, there had long been an emphasis on Welsh cultural autonomy. The shift towards a slightly more radical, separatist view was a product of the intervening years and the resulting maturation of the nationalist party.

Mr R. Moelwyn Hughes, MP for Carmarthen, was representative of this shift. He said in “the reconstruction chorus the ‘preservation’ note [is] too prominent, and the ‘creation’ note too subdued. ... Wales should not seek the crumbs from the British table, but bake her own bread.”<sup>77</sup> Importantly, although there remained a strong emphasis on Welsh autonomy, and a distinctly Welsh future, even most of these nationalists still believed that that future would be found within the British State. The future was one of unity and shared cultures, which would embrace “modernity”, while doing what it could, within limits, to maintain the language and culture of Wales.

Nostalgic views of the past were still strong, and advocates of the language continued to call on Wales to remember her language and her past. The war made concerns about language use frivolous to many, but not all.<sup>78</sup> For example, the noted supporter of Welsh culture, Professor Henry Lewis, used his presidential speech to speak of the essential centrality of the Welsh language in the life of Wales: “it is the bond that holds [us] together, and goes to [our] roots. To lose the language is to lose nationality.”<sup>79</sup> Lewis and other vehement nationalists saw this struggle for linguistic existence as having the same basic premise of the war, and thus as inseparable from that conflict. Indeed, although still very small, a growing segment of the population saw the future for

<sup>77</sup> *The Welshman*, Friday 18 August 1944, 5.

<sup>78</sup> The official policy of the National Eisteddfod Council, as seen in the 1943 pamphlet, remained the same.

<sup>79</sup> Importantly, although Lewis supported things Welsh, he was anti-nationalist, and particularly against Plaid Cymru. *South Wales Evening Post*, Friday 11 August 1944, 1.

Wales as increasingly independent from Britain, as an independent small nation in the world. In this, its own language would be beneficial rather than restricting.<sup>80</sup> Generally, however, British patriotism overruled Welsh nationalism, as total war necessitated total social, cultural and political affiliation. As demonstrated in chapter three, although concern over the fate of Wales was still evident during the war, much of the related activity was manifested in non-party-political action in favour of a general Welsh and British welfare. As Kenneth Morgan says:

Political nationalism seemed an inevitable, almost predestined, victim of a process of integration through which the economic and political pressures of wartime, allied to the euphoria of victory over the Axis powers, brought the nations that made up the United Kingdom even closer together and reinforced their common patriotism and loyalty to Crown and parliament.<sup>81</sup>

The coming war quieted much of the Eisteddfodic reform activity of the 1930s. War-time Eisteddfodau were largely insignificant, as far as language reform and change were concerned; the people of Wales were preoccupied with issues of international importance and the status quo was maintained with little contention from either side of the debate. Although the desire by the organizational body for an increased emphasis on the language had been confirmed before the war, there were no attempts to enforce the embryonic ruling and the language situation remained throughout the war. The Eisteddfod of the war years was typified by emphasis on Wales as part of Britain, the Empire and the Allied nations of the world. In 1946, the then Princess Elizabeth was inducted into the Gorsedd, symbolizing the apparent unity, not only with the British state, but with the British cultural establishment.

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<sup>80</sup> Canon W. H. Harris, the deputy principal of St. David's College, Lampeter, quoted by "D.H.I.P." (the editor), *South Wales Evening Post*, Saturday 12 August 1944, 4.

<sup>81</sup> Kenneth Morgan, 1981, 376.

### The Implementation of the All-Welsh Rule at the Eisteddfod

Faith it is said, can move mountains. Seldom was the sage more justified in his expression than has been the case in Caerphilly, where three years ago an almost entirely English-speaking community decided to take upon themselves the gargantuan task of playing host to Wales's greatest annual festival. ... There was the question of bilingualism and of implementing the decision of the National Eisteddfod Council some time ago to enforce for the first time the rule that all eisteddfod proceedings must be carried out in the vernacular. So effectively has the rule been observed at Caerphilly that not only will The Week be a real Welsh one but almost every committee hitherto has transacted its business entirely in Welsh, and this in a community where Welsh is spoken only by a very small minority.<sup>82</sup>

After the peace, the language activists wasted no time in resuming their course of action. The official policy regarding language was echoed immediately after the war in a 1946 pamphlet published by the National Eisteddfod Council; in it the Council asserted the emphasis on language as the primary aim of the Eisteddfod. Moreover, it asserted that the language was what would unify Wales, and bring it a future – a stand that was quite different from the emphasis on nostalgia that was promoted before the war. But the platform was not entirely divorced from an idealized Welsh past. The democratic romanticism of the *gwerin* was still evident: “At the National Eisteddfod of all places, you will see the strength of a United Wales – making no distinction of party, sect or class. Remember always that the National Eisteddfod is an institution for safeguarding the Welsh language and the promotion of Welsh culture.”<sup>83</sup>

There were other notable manifestations of support for the Welsh-language culture in post-war Wales. In 1947 a state-funded Welsh-medium school was

<sup>82</sup> *Western Mail*, Tuesday 1 August 1950, 4.

<sup>83</sup> “Cynan”, *The Council and Gorsedd of To-day: A handbook for the Children of Wales Published by the National Eisteddfod Council* (Dinbych: Gwasg Gee, 1946).

established in Llanelli, beginning a slow revolution in education in Wales; by 2000 there were 440 Welsh-medium or bilingual schools in Wales.<sup>84</sup> There were also small changes in the political structure of Great Britain, hinting at increased popular support for devolution in Wales. For example, the Council of Wales was established in 1948, followed three years later by the office of the Minister for Welsh Affairs. Further, electoral support for Plaid Cymru increased during this period; it was contesting an increasing number of seats and winning a greater number of votes.<sup>85</sup> However, many of these changes were gradual in implementation as well as in achieving results. Despite growing support, nationalism was still viewed as extreme and radical sentiment by many in Wales. The party did not have an electoral victory during this period.

The language rule was imposed at the 1950 Eisteddfod, but it remained vague. It was worded simply in the constitution: “Y Gymraeg fydd iaith swyddogol y Cyngor a’r Eisteddfod” (Welsh shall be the official language of the Council and the Eisteddfod). Clearly there was much elasticity and room for interpretation of the rule. For example, only the competitions in the main pavilion needed to be in Welsh; in fact, the official program to the Arts and Crafts display retained some English in it. It is impossible to know exactly who drafted the rule, but the membership of the Council provides some interesting clues to the group’s identity. Although they remained the same types of people as in 1937 - mostly middle-aged, professional men - the membership to the Eisteddfod Council had changed in the intervening years. This changing membership

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<sup>84</sup> Of Secondary schools in Wales, twenty-seven were Welsh medium and fifty-three had Welsh “streams”; of primary schools, 450 were Welsh medium.

<sup>85</sup> Between 1929 and May 1945, Plaid Cymru contested a total of six parliamentary seats, in General Elections and By-Elections. In the 1945 General Election alone they contested seven seats; in the 1950 General Election they contested another seven seats. See Appendix Seven and Appendix Eight.



represented a new generation of Eisteddfodwyr, and a new era of Eisteddfodic policy.<sup>86</sup> The Council's membership was more centred on Wales; there were fewer members of the London Welsh and much more focus on the "home rule" of the Eisteddfod. Furthermore, on the whole, they were more radical in their political views and outspoken about their defence of Welsh culture.

By 1950, the debate about the language rule had matured, thereby helping the fledgling nationalist movement by giving it a cause célèbre in the emphasis on the future of the language. Nationalist protests and discussions about the Welshness of the Eisteddfod resumed after the war, quickly reaching a new fervour. Specifically, protests about the use of English increased. Moreover, the Eisteddfod increasingly became seen as an ideal site for such cultural and political protest. The Union Jack was burned on the *Maes* in 1949 and 1950 in an attempt to gain attention for nationalist causes; and there was a bus strike in Caerphilly in 1950 over the use of Welsh.<sup>87</sup> Both cultural and political nationalists were becoming united around the cause of the Welsh language, while separating themselves from those who continued to celebrate their ties to Britain.

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<sup>86</sup> The new president was Professor W. J. Gruffydd, one of the young instigators of change in the 1930s and an outspoken critic of the Anglicisation of Wales (and Liberal MP for the University of Wales, 1943-1950); "Cynan" was now a vice-president and the Archdruid. Other officers of the council included the Rev. Canon Maurice Jones, who remained involved as the treasurer and would later climb even higher in the ranks of the Gorsedd; William George, the brother of Lloyd George and ahead of his time in his actions towards the preservation of the Welsh language and the reform of the Eisteddfod; Sir David Hughes Parry, a widely respected lawyer (who married the daughter of Sir Owen M. Edwards); Mr Ernest Roberts, a judge and former MP for Flintshire; and Professor Ernest Hughes of the local committee.

<sup>87</sup> For the second point, see "'No Buses for the Eisteddfod' Protest", *Western Mail*, 2 August 1950, 3. Additional protests included graffiti urging the government to "Free Wales", "Down with England" and "Cymru am Byth" – which were criticized as "a wicked waste of white paint" that only "brings ridicule on the people responsible ... [and] does harm to the cause of Wales." (Mr S. O. Davies, Labour MP for Merthyr, in *South Wales Echo*, 12 August 1950, 1.)

Accordingly, the nationalist movement was becoming permanently intertwined with the use of the Welsh language and the growing language movement.<sup>88</sup> Importantly, however, this unity did not mean that all who supported the Welsh language and corresponding culture were political nationalists. For example, as R. G. Davies informed the readers of the *Western Mail*, the *Urdd Siarad Cymraeg* was established in the post-war period to stimulate a linguistic revival, but it was “entirely non-political and non-sectarian”.<sup>89</sup> The merger between the language and nationalist politics was not uncontroversial. In fact, the cultural and political divisions Davies referred to in his article bespoke a continuing controversy surrounding the language issue. The *Western Mail* noted that Caerphilly proved to be a particularly contentious Eisteddfod:

The main root of the controversy has been the ‘all-Welsh rule’ applied with full force for the first time for many years, and that in an area recognised as being extremely Anglicised. All that was said and done on the Eisteddfod platforms and much that has been said in a variety of newspapers since has produced a flood of correspondence for and against the rigid application of the rule.<sup>90</sup>

The implementation of the rule did not mean the end of this debate.

Significantly, both on and off the *Maes*, the pro-Welsh language movement was less focused on the language as a signifier of the *heritage* of Wales, and more on building it up for the *future* of Wales. However, as in previous years, there was a sense that the past was somehow more “Welsh” than the present. Mr James Beddoe said that the younger generations in Wales were

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<sup>88</sup> But speaking Welsh was not synonymous with nationalism; although increasingly, nearly all nationalists spoke Welsh, not all who spoke Welsh were nationalists.

<sup>89</sup> R. G. Davies, General Secretary for *Urdd Siarad Cymraeg*, in “Abercynon, Readers’ Views”, *Western Mail*, Monday 14 August 1950, 4.

<sup>90</sup> *Western Mail*, Tuesday 22 August 1950, 4.

growing up in an English environment, and were inheriting an English tradition. ... 'We feel that the visit of the Eisteddfod to Caerphilly is a major contribution to reawakening our Welsh conscience, rededicating ourselves to building up a Wales that seems to be disappearing.'<sup>91</sup>

Similarly, a report in the *Western Mail* urged a protective outlook towards Welsh culture, against "indications of the modern times in which we live", such as "a child reading a comic as the ceremony proceeded".<sup>92</sup> But references to the past in Eisteddfodic discourse were fewer in 1950 than previously, in particular to it as implicitly more Welsh; most of the extant ones involved references to Caerphilly's castle. For example, the *Western Mail*'s "Own Correspondent" proclaimed boldly that: "The best fighting speech ... came from Professor Ernest Hughes, who pointed out that this all-Welsh Eisteddfod was taking place a stone's throw from a castle built 700 years ago to keep the Welsh spirit in check – and which had failed in its purpose."<sup>93</sup> In this context, the Eisteddfod became a tool for the language campaigners and cultural nationalists and a way of preserving the Welsh language for future generations. It was connected with a symbol of English oppression and thus politicised. Beddoe's use of the past was in reference to the future. The Welsh past was a necessary tool for the construction of a Welsh future.

Indeed, the debates over language and culture basically retained their war-time focus on the future of Wales, but were increasingly about whether that future should and would include the Welsh language. This renewed debate focused more than ever before on the future of Wales within Great Britain, demonstrating a continuation of wartime concepts of unity. Furthermore, arguments against the language rule were more

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<sup>91</sup> Chairman of Caerphilly Urban Council, in *Western Mail*, Wednesday 9 August 1950, 3.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Hughes was Professor of History at the University of Wales in Swansea. "Our Own Correspondent", *Western Mail*, Tuesday 8 August 1950, 1

developed, and more-widespread, suggesting that, not only did people have sufficient time in the intervening years to produce a valid argument, but that more people subscribed to that argument. This signifies a broadening of Welsh civil society. The amount of discourse was more substantial, and came from a wider range of participants.<sup>94</sup>

Yet, despite the increasing popular participation in national discourse about the Eisteddfod, among many of the cultural elite in Wales there was still a feeling that the masses were ignorant of the aims and function of the Eisteddfod: “to them it was no more than a bizarre grand concert. That it had a definite educative aim ... was not generally appreciated. The use of the Welsh language on the platform was not the primary cause of the listlessness of the audience.”<sup>95</sup> Mr Leslie Woodgate described most Eisteddfodwyr and Welsh people as “culturally apathetic and lazy. ... There are so many people who are lazy, mentally and physically.”<sup>96</sup> Mr T. J. Morgan agreed with Woodgate, and used his speech at the Eisteddfod to advocate Welsh-language books and bookshops. Implicitly indicating a corresponding loss of Welshness, he reminisced about the nineteenth-century Welsh “thirst for culture which led them, however scarce the money, to buy books. ... There will be no purpose in holding the Eisteddfod, conferences, etc., unless books in our language are being bought and read.”<sup>97</sup> These men were educated leaders of society, and their ideas were those of self-proclaimed paternalistic guardians of Welshness, providing for the “good” of the Welsh people, against the perceived threat of modern, anglicised culture.<sup>98</sup> Certainly, the often dictatorial tone of the cultural elites who advocated the

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<sup>94</sup> Certainly, much of the variety came from letters to the editors of the various Welsh newspapers.

<sup>95</sup> Professor Ernest Hughes in *Western Mail*, 9 August 1948, 1.

<sup>96</sup> Mr Leslie Woodgate, BBC chorus-master when delivering the adjudication in the chief male voice choir contest, in *Western Mail*, Monday 14 August 1950, 4.

<sup>97</sup> Mr T. J. Morgan, of the Welsh Department of the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire, in *Cardiff Times and Weekly Mail*, Saturday 12 August 1950, 5.

<sup>98</sup> See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 1983.

language rule on the same terms as before the war, when it was implemented by the decision of the Council and not the broader population, was contradictory to the increasingly popular nature of the discussion after the war.

### Arguments Related to the Rule

I am puzzled by frequent statements in the Press to the effect that an all-Welsh rule was rigidly enforced at Caerffili. There was more Welsh than usual, I believe, in the singing competitions, but there was no rigid exclusion of English or other languages. ... According to Press reports, several adjudications were delivered in English and from time to time official announcements were made in English as well as Welsh. Two presidential addresses were in English but these, admittedly, have been the subject of controversy. But let us fact the fact, cheerful or otherwise. Caerffili was *not* an all-Welsh Eisteddfod.<sup>99</sup>

Because the ruling was controversial, it was not followed consistently in 1950. There were many arguments against the All-Welsh Rule. Perhaps the most powerful argument against its implementation remained the idea that by definition it excluded most of the Welsh population by the middle of the century. In the *Western Mail*, "Sassenach" attacked "the narrow isolationist nationalism that apparently has got the National Eisteddfod in its grip".<sup>100</sup> The language rule was felt to be drawing an invisible dividing line between two distinct Welsh populations: those who did and those who did not speak Welsh. It was feared that this line would grow, gradually alienating those who were not Welsh-speaking, and pushing those that did into an antiquated, minority existence. Neville Penry Thomas wrote:

The 'mongrel' Anglo-Welsh number many thousands like myself who, despite their inability to speak the language have done, are

<sup>99</sup> H. M. Lewis of Morriston, "Readers' Views", *Western Mail*, Friday 25 August 1950, 4.

<sup>100</sup> "Sassenach" from Bridgend, in *Western Mail*, Tuesday 22 August 1950, 4.

doing and will do, much for their native land and remain close to its spirit and proud of its institutions. The sinister fact about the activities of the few who seek to make the Eisteddfod exclusively Welsh is that they are creating divisions which can only weaken the support traditionally given to the National.<sup>101</sup>

In a similar speech, Ness Edwards, one of the violators of the language rule, summarized the perceived exclusivity most pithily. According to Thomas: “Mingled jeering and applause greeted his opening words (spoken in English), and catcalls and clapping.”

Edwards said:

I decided it would be more in keeping with the dignity of the Eisteddfod if I confined myself to the English language. ... It will be a sad day when the people of Gwent and Rhymney are shut out from this great national festival. It will be terrible to feel that an iron curtain has been dropped between us and the National Eisteddfod. It will be a strange experience for us to feel that we are strangers in our own native land. ... Our ways are your ways. Our conception of life and what it means is your conception; our regard for home and hearth is the same as yours. We are the same flesh and blood. ... it would be a great tragedy for Wales ‘if the predominantly English-speaking areas are transformed into Welsh Sudetenlands, shut out of all things Welsh by a barrier of our own creation.<sup>102</sup>

His emphasis on geographic and racial boundaries was unusual if unsurprising; he was accentuating non-linguistic signifiers and similarities. According to another correspondent, the consequences of such segregation would be ominous: “Let the spirit of exclusiveness exemplified by our Eisteddfodwyr continue to control our great cultural institution and it will soon harden into racial bigotry with the Welsh language as its god, and hence its religion a kind of hero-worship.”<sup>103</sup> “Sassenach” agreed with the ultimate racialist overtones: “Wales is peopled by many nationalities. Is it not the logical outcome

<sup>101</sup> Mr Neville Penry Thomas, *ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Ness Edwards in *Western Mail*, Monday 14 August 1950, 4.

<sup>103</sup> The Rev. Oliver Bowen, now living at Amroth, Pembrokeshire, in *Western Mail*, Tuesday 22 August 1950, 4.

of the nationalists' attitude to ostracise them from all social intercourse unless they learn Welsh? Such a design is bound to create antipathies and racial antagonism."<sup>104</sup>

The exclusionary nature of the post-rule Eisteddfod was blamed on a small group of nationalists. S. Evans of Cardiff similarly complained of "the harum-scarum nationalism which supposes that only Welsh-speaking Welshmen have a say in the affairs of Wales. There are many English-speaking Welshmen who must also be considered ... [before] Wales is to be governed by a cranky nationalism."<sup>105</sup> Said another Eisteddfodwr:

This year, we are told, the 'No English' rule is to be strictly enforced throughout the proceedings at the Caerphilly National Eisteddfod. Those responsible claim quite logically that the rule is justified because the Eisteddfod is a Welsh event. But when they also claim it is only intended for those who speak Welsh they are merely ignoring the facts. There will be many of us at Caerphilly who, though Welsh by birth, do not speak the language. There will also be English and foreign visitors. By making no concession at all in respect of the language question they are betraying a rude and narrow nationalism as difficult to understand as it is impossible to excuse. Natives like myself, who 'have little Welsh', will doubtless enjoy ourselves at Caerphilly. So will the 'foreigners' who attend. But we would all appreciate some slight recognition of our ignorance of the language in the programme and on the platform. What a pity it is that from the Archdruid down – and it has not always been so – celtic exclusiveness should be so strongly in control."<sup>106</sup>

These critics felt concessions should be made in order to maintain a broader Welsh unity. They saw the rule as divisive and narrow-minded and ultimately detrimental to the future of the Eisteddfod and Wales. The television critic in the *Western Mail* supported the BBC's coverage of the Eisteddfod on the grounds that its bilingual approach was:

<sup>104</sup> *Western Mail*, Tuesday 22 August 1950, 4.

<sup>105</sup> "It may have occurred to many who read the 'News Chronicle' that its critic employed 'English print' to denounce the Lord Mayor, which certainly makes his objection seem ludicrous." S. Evans of Llanishen, Cardiff, in "Readers' Views", *Western Mail*, Monday 14 August 1950, 4.

<sup>106</sup> Neville Penry Thomas of London, in "Readers' Views", *Western Mail*, Tuesday 8 August 1950, 4.

“Just the job to make the English and non-Welsh speaking Welsh listeners feel they are not frozen out of this comradely cultural feat of the Cymry.”<sup>107</sup>

In a parallel discussion, there was a similar and increasing body of criticism against the rule on musical grounds. Critics saw the rule as restrictive to the musical competitions and artistic nature of the musical side of the Eisteddfod – one of the purposes of the festival.<sup>108</sup> As a result of the All-Welsh Rule, adjudication would need to be given in Welsh, thus limiting the field of potential adjudicators and competitors. The *Western Mail* was critical of the situation:

Unfortunately ... the winners did not know the Welsh words, so the audience had to be content with being led by the [second-place] Manselton Choir in singing the Welsh National Anthem to bring the Eisteddfod to a close ... [and the] Caerphilly ... Women's ... choir ... has never entered a competition before and has had to be taught the Welsh words of the three test pieces. Only about five members of the choir are Welsh-speaking.<sup>109</sup>

Also competitive pieces would need to be translated into Welsh, or else limited to a relatively small body of extant “Welsh” pieces. Competitors who were not familiar with the language - indeed, if they chose to come and compete at all - were handicapped, in competition with native Welsh speakers.<sup>110</sup> All of these correlating aspects limited the range of possibilities within the artistic and critical areas of the Eisteddfod.

Thus, critics of the ruling saw the Eisteddfod as becoming increasingly insular, and less focused on the quality of the performances, than on maintaining narrow parameters based primarily on language. One Eisteddfodwr commented that “what the

<sup>107</sup> “Y Tiwniwr”, *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 1950, 2.

<sup>108</sup> Glyn Williams, *Cardiff Times and Weekly Mail*, Saturday 5 August 1950, 5.

<sup>109</sup> *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1950, 4.

<sup>110</sup> i.e. pieces composed in Welsh, or previously translated into Welsh.



music has made up in quantity it has lacked in quality".<sup>111</sup> Traditionally, many competitors had come from non-Welsh speaking areas, both within Wales and without. The limiting of the language of competition and adjudication to Welsh had an impact on the composition of competitors, narrowing the field.<sup>112</sup> A correspondent to the *Western Mail* complained:

to limit in this way the expression of the artistic genius of our population to a language spoken only by a minority will certainly not raise the standard of our artistic and cultural achievements, but is more likely to lower the standard by creating wide-spread disharmony which will be fatal to the free blossoming of the characteristic qualities of our people.<sup>113</sup>

As Wil Ifan said, "as a rule, quite a number of combinations venture here over Offa's Dyke and it is no rare occurrence to find that the coveted award is carried back over the self-same dyke."<sup>114</sup> Moreover, whereas music had previously drawn participants from various divergent regions together in Eisteddfodic harmony, the implementation of the language rule in the competitions would now further divide communities within Wales and Great Britain.<sup>115</sup> Notably, one of the dominant choirs from the era came from Sale, on the other side of Offa's Dyke, in Cheshire.

Proponents of the rule admitted that the implementation was potentially a sacrifice to the quality and quantity of musical competitors, but they asserted that it was a necessary sacrifice. Wil Ifan, former Archdruid, said of the ruling:

[I]t is a venture of faith devoted to the task of saving the identity of a nation. Those who have given much anxious thought to the question believe that one means of attaining such salvation is the

<sup>111</sup> *Western Mail*, Monday 14 August 1950, 4.

<sup>112</sup> Wil Ifan, Former Archdruid, in *Cardiff Times and Weekly Mail*, Saturday 5 August 1950, 5.

<sup>113</sup> The Rev. Oliver Bowen in *Western Mail*, Tuesday 22 August 1950, 4.

<sup>114</sup> Wil Ifan in *Cardiff Times and Weekly Mail*, Saturday 5 August 1950.

<sup>115</sup> Indeed, "even local loyalties are drowned in the surge of great music." Wil Ifan in *Cardiff Times and Weekly Mail*, Saturday 5 August 1950, 5.

preservation of the language in which is enshrined its richest treasures. It is possible that some visitors who are not Welsh-speaking will feel that they have a legitimate grievance when they hear everything carried on in a strange tongue. But once they realize that one of the main objects of the Eisteddfod is the preservation of the language they will be not merely tolerant, but actively sympathetic.<sup>116</sup>

Moreover, as the *Western Mail* said in its review of the final performance of the “Elijah” by the Eisteddfod Choir, musicality was also potentially helped by the translation into Welsh:

[T]o sound one last defiant note against all critics of the stress that has been laid on the Welsh language at this Eisteddfod the choir sang a Welsh translation of the words. ... The result was refreshingly surprising. ... The dramatic content of the work ... became heightened because the Welsh words gave the sense of a situation that could easily have had personal application.<sup>117</sup>

These sentiments were, arguably, the epitome of the patronizing tone taken by the cultural elite of Wales when discussing the rule. Yet it must be remembered that in 1950 the ideas of the elite were supported by a small but increasing minority segment of the Welsh-speaking population.

As evidenced in the above discussion of musical competitions, there was still support for the rule. As in 1937, worries about the gradual, eventual extinction of the language prompted people to back the ruling of the Council. A reader of the *Western Mail* complained that “it is one of my keenest regrets that I am not a fluent Welsh speaker and writer”.<sup>118</sup> Similarly, Mr T. W. Thomas, chairman of the local Eisteddfod Executive Committee, “took pride in the all-Welshness of the 1950 festival and emphasised its good

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> *Western Mail*, Monday 14 August 1950, 4.

<sup>118</sup> Gwen John in *Western Mail*, 5 June 1950, 4.

missionary work in the district".<sup>119</sup> And Wil Ifan urged everyone to "wish all possible good fortune to the pioneers of Caerphilly".<sup>120</sup> The rhetoric used by these champions was significant. Not only did it unequivocally support the use of the Welsh language, but compared the implementation of the rule, against particularly stiff odds in a heavily anglicised area such as Caerphilly, as a crusade for Welsh culture.

Other supporters of the ruling felt that the Eisteddfod's new all-Welsh nature was no reason to be exclusionary, if people were open to celebrating and learning the Welsh culture. In fact, correspondents to the Welsh press offered several solutions to the problem of exclusion. The most popular was translation. For example, E. Howard Harris believed strongly that:

[T]he experiment of a uni-lingual Wales at Caerphilly is a lost cause that has no present or future. ... We hear a great deal about the excellence of the poetry and prose that have won Eisteddfod prizes from time to time, but unless there is translation English readers in Wales and out of it know next to nothing about it. What is the only way for Wales now? I suggest that it is through bilingualism and inter translation. ... We need to build bridges in Wales, not dig trenches.<sup>121</sup>

Harris felt that the outcome of the ruling would be cultural and political segregation for Wales. He advocated an inclusive bilingualism which was an already established and popular opinion, and reminiscent of the pre-war era. In a similar manner, other correspondents deemed the study of Welsh to be the most practical solution to the issue of segregation. Brinley Evans echoed the paternalistic tones of some of the Welsh cultural elite when he said:

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<sup>119</sup> Thomas was a Cardiff businessman whose Bardic name was "Ab Eos". *Western Mail*, Monday 14 August 1950, 4.

<sup>120</sup> Wil Ifan, "O Gae'r Eisteddfod", *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 1950, 2.

<sup>121</sup> E. Howard Harris of Swansea, "Readers' Views", *Western Mail*, Monday 28 August 1950, 4.

It seems to me that non-Welsh-speaking Welshmen and more-or-less-Welsh-speaking Welshmen (like myself) should think twice before we criticize the 'rude and narrow nationalism' of those of our compatriots who insist that the language of the Eisteddfod should be Welsh. There are thousands of people in the 'more-or-less' class [of Welshness] like myself who could well afford to spend part of their leisure time improving their Welsh and remembering what has been done by your own 'Say it in Welsh' feature.<sup>122</sup>

Walter Dowding agreed that "those who complain of too much Welsh cannot bring themselves to do as I did, namely, spend 3s. 9d. on Caradar's 'Welsh Made Easy' and learn the language. So long as learning Welsh is possible to people it is hypocritical to talk of being shut out of any Welsh language movements."<sup>123</sup> As a self-professed "keen supporter of the all-Welsh rule", Dowding worried that the inevitable outcome of the decline of Welsh speakers would be a "bastard culture".<sup>124</sup> Certainly these men advocated the conservation of the Welsh language and saw its preservation as beneficial to the Welsh nation and people. In this way, there was some popular support for maintaining the Welsh-language nature of the Eisteddfod. Yet, significantly, the voluntary decision to learn Welsh advocated by this Eisteddfodwr was very different from the Eisteddfod Council's mandate; as an individual choice, it was much more in line with the legendary purported democratic and egalitarian nature of the Eisteddfod.

A second argument against the All-Welsh Rule was the denial of the omnipotence of language at the Eisteddfod, and emphasis on other signifiers of

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<sup>122</sup> In fact, he was suggesting a Welsh Learners' movement; "I am inclined to think that there is a big opportunity for champions of the Welsh language, with brains and imagination, to launch a movement that would I am sure, rapidly take root and spread. Every member of the movement should wear a badge indicating that he or she is (a) Welsh-speaking or (b) learning to speak Welsh. Class (b) members should pledge themselves to keep on learning by every means possible, and class (a) members should display a willingness to help whenever and wherever members of both classes meet." Brinley Evans of Abertillery, "Readers' Views", *Western Mail*, Thursday 10 August 1950, 4.

<sup>123</sup> Walter Dowding of Brynmawr, "Readers' Views", *Western Mail*, Tuesday 29 August 1950, 4.

<sup>124</sup> *Western Mail*, Tuesday 22 August 1950, 4.

Welshness. As previously demonstrated in the discourse on the exclusive nature of the language, critics who took this approach often reverted to geographic and biological essentialism in their efforts to minimize the role of the language. This emphasis on other factors promoted the separation of the Welsh culture and language; it said that a distinct Welsh culture existed independently from the language, and that the Eisteddfod, that ostensible great microcosm of Welsh culture, was more than the sum-total of its Welsh speakers. It was argued that average Eisteddfodwyr, unlike the cultural elite of Wales who created the rule, attended the festival for the performances and spectacle, not for the political statement of the propagation of the Welsh language. Music was more important to many than the language it was performed in or analyzed in. One English-speaking attendant said: “although we cannot understand your language, we will be able to appreciate your music.”<sup>125</sup> Similarly, Wil Ifan said that: “For most eisteddfodwyr the main attraction is the music, especially the great choral contest.” In addition, the Eisteddfod was a popular social gathering as much as a cultural festival; language was “only one fact of the Eisteddfod. Thousands attend not so much for the cultural side as for the opportunity to meet old friends.”<sup>126</sup> The Eisteddfod was perceived to be constantly changing and evolving, to the point of confusing Eisteddfodwyr. “Clustfeiniwr” complained in the *Cardiff Times*: “Thousands Go Away Not Realising What It’s All About”.<sup>127</sup> Indeed, the purpose was not always as straightforward and single-purposed as language activists would have people believe. Interestingly, when Glyn Williams asked a number of people about their interpretation of the Eisteddfod,

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<sup>125</sup> Mr W. A. Read, a student who was billeted with Welsh family during the war who could not speak Welsh, in *South Wales Echo*, 1 August 1949, 1.

<sup>126</sup> “Clustfeiniwr”, *Cardiff Times and Weekly Mail*, Saturday 5 August 1950, 5.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

“the answer as a rule was vague. Well, the main purpose is the cultivation and preservation of Welsh traditions, poetry, music and customs.”<sup>128</sup> To critics of the rule, the constantly varying elements of the Eisteddfod demonstrated the frivolity of the rule in the modern world. If it was so changeable, where were the core traits that made it an invaluable Welsh institution? If there was general ambiguity about the Eisteddfod and the All-Welsh Rule, it could not be a universal priority, or perceived purpose, of the festival.

A final argument against the implementation of the All-Welsh Rule - and the one that was used to mobilize the reaction against the language and nationalist movements - was that an emphasis on the Welsh language was actually a threat to the future of Wales. Although this argument was less obvious than in previous years, it was still evident in discussions of the cultural and economic life of the nation. Margaret Matthews said in the *Western Mail* that: “The future of Welsh culture lies not in ‘Welsh’ culture but in Anglo-Welsh culture.”<sup>129</sup> This argument was based in a “Blue Books” ideology and was a direct continuation from the wartime discussion about the future of Wales, as well as the quarrel between “tradition” and “modernity”. It also constituted the opposing side of the aforementioned argument in favour of the All-Welsh Rule as a way of preserving the language for future generations.<sup>130</sup> It focused on the Eisteddfod as representative of the

<sup>128</sup> Glyn Williams, *Cardiff Times and Weekly Mail*, Saturday 5 August 1950, 5.

<sup>129</sup> “ANGLO-Welsh HAVE KEY TO CULTURE OF WALES. ... At the outset I would clearly state that I am in no way opposed to the Eisteddfod in principle, yes, I would welcome a development of this feature of Welsh life, but I cannot foresee any such development while the dead hand of Welsh Nationalism overhangs it. ... [E]ncouraging the growth of an indigenous native culture which would indeed be our pride and a heritage for future generations. This cannot possibly be achieved whilst the Eisteddfod Council carries out the present policy, which is merely a reflection of present-day Welsh Nationalism and the old Welsh Nonconformity.” Margaret Matthews, *Western Mail*, Friday 18 August 1950, 4.

<sup>130</sup> As demonstrated by Mr T. J. Morgan, who said the disappearance of Welsh bookshops from a number of leading towns in the post-war period was a “definite threat to the future of the Welsh language” Mr

perceived antiquated folly that came from emphasizing the maintenance of the language over other, more important aspects of post-war Wales. Critics of the rule said that teaching Welsh in schools, for example, meant that Welsh children's English would not be as good as their contemporaries on the other side of Offa's Dyke. They portrayed the supporters of the Welsh language movement as mercenaries, hurting the future of Wales for the preservation of an elite cultural luxury.<sup>131</sup> Mr J. Howard Price questioned: "Do Welsh people realise that ability to speak English correctly and with a good accent, is by far a child's most important asset?"<sup>132</sup> In this way, the use of the language was seen by critics as independent from, and possibly the antithesis of, the welfare of the nation. It was a hindrance to the success of Wales in the world.

Moreover, those men and women who supported the use of the Welsh language at the Eisteddfod in order to secure "Welsh" cultural survival were seen to be denying the fact that the economic and political survival of the Welsh people was reliant on Wales' connections with the British nation-state. W. C. R. wrote in the *Western Mail*:

I am not against the preservation of what is best in a nation, such as the intelligent use for cultural purposes of an ancient tongue. What I do deplore greatly is when nationalism gets out of hand, leading to racial hatreds and the cramping down of the human spirit ... [by] their countrymen who seem bent on putting the clock

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Morgan, of the Welsh Department of the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire, in *Cardiff Times and Weekly Mail*, Saturday 12 August 1950, 5.

<sup>131</sup> These "mercenaries" were men such as Mr Ithel Davies of Swansea, who stood unsuccessfully for Parliament at Ogmere Vale as a Welsh Republican in February 1950. He argued that "Welsh life and the Welsh way of life cannot be sustained except [if] the language which expresses them survives... there were hundreds of non-Welsh-speaking people at Caerphilly who enjoyed themselves simply because it was the real thing." (*Western Mail*, Tuesday 22 August 1950, 4.) In a manner similar to his predecessors at Machynlleth, Davies felt that the language was necessary to an authentic sense of Welshness.

<sup>132</sup> Howard Price in *Western Mail*, 6 May 1950, 4. "In his letter to the *Western Mail* of the 22<sup>nd</sup> [he says] 'English is the passport to success.' ... Of course, since Henry VIII may be regarded as the founder of English imperialism his henchmen were and are consistent in saying that English 'is the key to success,' ... The language of conquest is always 'the key to success' – for further conquest and subjugation..." D. H. Thomas of Bridgend, "Readers' Views", *Western Mail*, Monday 27 June 1950, 4.

back. ... [Britain is] a federation of free nations, ... A common language cements that relationship.<sup>133</sup>

Indeed, several correspondents to the daily papers reminded fellow readers that the British Empire was the rather glorious mixture of many nationalities. I. McHunt of Cardiff stressed: "The British Empire is the joint creation of us all. Unity is strength."<sup>134</sup> Thus, not only was the extended use of Welsh seen by some as a threat, so were nationalists, who emphasized both cultural and political autonomy from Britain.

By 1950, the nationalist movement had gained some ground in Wales, both politically and culturally. Whereas the arson attack of 1936 was the act of a few nationalists – mostly founding members of the Welsh Nationalist Party, the acts that were increasing in number in the post-war years were frequently the statements of the common, ordinary nationalist. This change was mirrored in the increased electoral support for Plaid Cymru; it emerged from the war stronger than it entered it.<sup>135</sup> Clifford Bere's actions in Caerphilly in 1950 were a good example of ordinary political activism, from people who were not otherwise aligned officially with political nationalism. Bere burned a Union Jack at the Eisteddfod. He was reported to have said that it was "an Imperialistic English flag. It should not be flying over any building in Wales and that is

<sup>133</sup> W.C.R., *Western Mail*, 3 June 1950, 5.

<sup>134</sup> I. McHunt of Cardiff, "Readers' Views", *Western Mail*, Wednesday 16 August 1950, 4.

<sup>135</sup> The period immediately following the war saw a "broadening of the base" of Plaid's electoral support. They fielded an increasing number of candidates and gained more votes, demonstrating a chink in Labour's control over Welsh politics. For example, the Party's Statement of Members rose dramatically after the war. In 1939 it was 2,000; in 1945 it was 2,500; in 1950 it was 6,000; in 1954 it was 10,000; in 1958 it was 14,000; and in 1966 it was 16,000. Further, as evidenced in by-elections, although the *Blaid* was still coming last in the election contests, they were gaining a higher percentage of the vote. In Aberdare, for example, in a 1951 by-election, *Plaid Cymru* received 6.1 per cent of the vote; in 1954 they received 16.0 per cent. See Alan Butt Philip, *The Welsh Question, Nationalism in Welsh Politics 1945 – 1970* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1975), 45-59, 73-84, 171; Thomas DeWitt Combs, *The Party of Wales, Plaid Cymru: Populist Nationalism in Contemporary British Politics* (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Connecticut, 1977), 218-221.



why we burned it.”<sup>136</sup> Regarding the principle of Welsh Home Rule, another correspondent to the *Western Mail* said: “True co-operation is possible only between free and equal partners, not between master and slave.”<sup>137</sup> These men and women were “ordinary” Welsh people; that is, unlike the arsonists of 1936, they were not avowed nationalists, but rather Welsh people who became involved in nationalistic activism.

The relative increase in popularist nationalistic activity did not preclude criticism of these actions. Indeed, Ira Jones criticised Bere’s incendiarism: “these weak-kneed Welsh Nationalists who burn the Union Jack. I know the type. They sleep peacefully, for they know that their compatriots will fight any aggressor of our country and are prepared to die for freedom, democracy, and Wales.”<sup>138</sup> Similarly, in imposing the fines on Bere and his co-conspirator, Mr A. S. Williams said:

‘We are very sorry to see people like you so foolish. We are all Welsh men and women, thousands and tens of thousands of good people equally as enthusiastic about their country as you are.’ [and] He advised them to realise that this was not the way to go about getting what they wanted.<sup>139</sup>

Indeed, despite the increasingly widespread nature of these actions, they often still were branded radical extremists by mainstream Welsh culture and the media.

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<sup>136</sup> “Mr John Williams (County Prosecutor’s office, Cardiff) said that at about 4.20 p.m. on August 11, Police-sergeant Emrys Griffiths noticed a flag being lowered on the south-west corner of the castle. It was then hoisted again and seemed to be burning furiously. Two men were on the battlements. With Police-constable Gwynfryn Jones, Tonypandy, who was doing special duty at Caerphilly, he went into the castle. Seeing the two officers, Bere and Evans attempted to run away, but were caught... In evidence Police-sergeant Griffiths said that when he searched Bere he found two crumpled pieces of paper, two bottles containing methylated and paraffin, two celluloid balls, a hammer, screw driver, two boxes of matches. He also had two bundles of ‘The Welsh Republican’ newspapers – written in English.” Unknown newspaper, from Clifford Bere Papers in NLW.

<sup>137</sup> Dr Noelle Davies of Gilwern, an Irishwoman who was married to a prominent Welsh Nationalist, “Readers’ Views”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 17 August 1950, 4.

<sup>138</sup> Wing-commander Ira Jones of St. Clears, “Readers’ Views”, *Western Mail*, Thursday 10 August 1950, 4.

<sup>139</sup> *Western Mail*, Wednesday 23 August 1950, 3.

As far as the opinions expressed by the participatory members of civil society were concerned, shifts were slight in the intervening years, but there were shifts. The evolving discussion during these years demonstrated the shift towards a new, progressively modern outlook in Wales. Also, the increasingly widespread nature of nationalist protest was a trend that would continue in the following decades. In this way, Welsh civil society expanded during this period. As a result, it is possible to have a broader interpretation of Welsh popular feeling.<sup>140</sup>

Indeed, there was an increased amount of debate in an enlarged civil society, and an increasing divergence in public opinions, which marked the early years of the Welsh nationalist movement. Wales was increasingly divided, not only around language and Welsh identity, but also around the role of the nation (within Britain, Empire, and the world). Thus, the support for political nationalists was enough to cause politicians in Wales to consider their ideas, but it was not enough to be threatening to the political establishment. In fact, various campaigns for Welsh Home Rule failed miserably in the post-war era; the only partial attempt at political autonomy came from the establishment of the Secretary of State for Wales in 1964.

In this context, the discourse specific to the Eisteddfod was representative of a broader, potentially more worrying debate *vis-à-vis* all of Wales: the position of Wales and the Welsh language in the modern world. As "Our Own Correspondent" wrote in the *Western Mail*: "The 'all-Welshness' of this Eisteddfod was referred to in several speeches, but there was a startling contrast between the universal Cymraeg spoken within

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<sup>140</sup> "A recognisable Welsh civil society has gradually emerged [in the 20<sup>th</sup> century]. At least part of the explanation for this seems to lie in the fact that institutionalisation has developed a momentum of its own, with the establishment of the Welsh Office (1964) being crucial." Lindsay Paterson and Richard Wyn Jones "Does civil society drive constitutional change?", in Bridget Taylor and Katarina Thompson, eds, *Scotland and Wales, Nations Again?* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1990), 175.

the walls and the almost as universal English heard in the field.”<sup>141</sup> As demonstrated above, this divergence was evident in the discussions related to the language rule. Ironically, as far as the actual implementation of the All-Welsh Rule was concerned, public opinion was irrelevant. The National Eisteddfod Council, an elite cultural group, made decisions in 1937 that, although they were discussed in the intervening years by the expanding civil society, were never really open for debate.

In 1950, the National Eisteddfod was still seen as a “preserver” of Welsh culture. The *Cardiff Times* pondered the “Real Significance of the Eisteddfod”:

It preserves for Wales her own soul. ... So the Eisteddfod is the preserver of that background of Welsh life and ... it will carry with it its distinctive message. It is never exhibited, but none can miss it. To those who have eyes to see, it is writ large on all the activities of the Eisteddfod.<sup>142</sup>

However, insistence on maintaining the Welsh language arguably led increasingly to the marginalization of the Eisteddfod and Welsh-Wales from the majority of (non-Welsh-speaking) Wales. In the end, Caerphilly Eisteddfod was seen as a success – yet it did not succeed in bridging the growing gap between various groups in a progressively more ambiguously defined nation.<sup>143</sup> This gap would become increasingly evident during the next few decades.

### Challenges to the All-Welsh Ideology

*Bet:* And so you too are a nationalist?

*Dewi:* A lot of nonsense! I can't be a nationalist where the nation is dead, long dead.

*Bet:* I am *Welsh*.

*Dewi:* I know. It stinks.

<sup>141</sup> “Our Own Correspondent”, *Western Mail*, Tuesday 8 August 1950, 1.

<sup>142</sup> *Cardiff Times*, 24 July 1937, 1; *Western Mail*, 8 August 1950, 1.

<sup>143</sup> *South Wales Echo*, 12 August 1950, 2.

*Bet*: I thought your kiss was rather brief.

*Dewi*: You're devoting yourself to things that are dead or about to die. God, religion, church or chapel, Wales, the Welsh language – that's your world. Believe you me, Capel Celyn under water is a parable of Wales and all her chapels.<sup>144</sup>

Because the implementation of the language rule in 1950 was very much the continuation of pre-war momentum, the correlated changes in public opinion regarding the language were relatively minor compared to what would follow. The decades after the implementation of the All-Welsh Rule witnessed changes *à propos* Welsh national particularism and its manifestations. For the most part, the years immediately following the war were a barren ground for Welsh national particularism. As Kenneth Morgan says, Welsh nationalism made very little impact on the public; it seemed to be “as dead as the druids”.<sup>145</sup> The post-war Labour government's centralized policies further hampered any nationalistic aims within Wales.<sup>146</sup> Yet, as stated previously, there was evidence that demands for self-government had not died out completely in the extreme unity of the Second World War. The Parliament for Wales campaign was born in 1949, and quickly gained cross-party support, thus helping to further the political aims of Welsh nationalists throughout the 1950s.<sup>147</sup> Despite minor electoral gains, however, Plaid Cymru did not manage to present a significant challenge to the extant political powers in Wales and the 1950s were largely unremarkable for Welsh political nationalists.<sup>148</sup> The Conservative

<sup>144</sup> Saunders Lewis, *Cymru Fydd* (Abertawe: Christopher Davies, 1991); Geraint T. Davies, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 9 August 1967, 7.

<sup>145</sup> Kenneth Morgan, 1981, 376.

<sup>146</sup> Labour “ignored national or linguistic boundaries in the cause of ... solidarity [and centralization]”. *Ibid.*, 376.

<sup>147</sup> By increasing popular support for a degree of political autonomy in Wales. It made “considerable impact on Welsh opinion” across the socio-economic spectrum. Interestingly, it was formed under the auspices of *Undeb Cymru Fydd*; *Undeb* was a language pressure group. *Ibid.*, 380. See also Laura McAllister, *Plaid Cymru: The Emergence of a Political Party* (Bridgend: Seren, 2001), 98-106.

<sup>148</sup> *Plaid* maintained a slow if not steady increase in votes cast at General Elections. In 1945, the party got 14,751 votes (1.1 per cent); in 1950 they got 17,580 (1.2 per cent); in 1951 they got 10,820 (0.8 per cent);

Government was “committed to a unionist view of Wales” and the Parliament for Wales campaign failed.<sup>149</sup>

Nevertheless, various circumstances were creating a transformation in the ideology of the Welsh population and were increasing support for nationalist causes, both cultural and political. The “drowning of Tryweryn” was perhaps the most powerful episode during the post-war years. In the 1950s, Parliament allowed the Liverpool Corporation to flood the Tryweryn valley in north Wales, to provide water for the Liverpool region. That Tryweryn housed a strong and vibrant Welsh-speaking community, which was dismantled to help the English, provided fodder for Welsh nationalists, along the same lines as the arson attack a generation earlier. Less immediately compelling perhaps, but eventually equally volatile to Wales in the 1960s, was the influx of non-Welsh speakers into Wales in the second half of the century. The migration began during the war with the influx of refugees from English cities. However, it was perceived as a more serious threat after the war as, spurred on by the “age of affluence” and increased transportation networks, English people began to move into the rural centres of Welsh-speaking Wales and establish holiday homes. Because much of South Wales had long been anglicised, these areas were the last strongholds of the Welsh language. Consequently, this immigration increasingly was seen as a threat to the Welsh language and its associated culture, and it incited nationalists. The implementation of the language rule at the Eisteddfod also had an impact on public discourse and ideology in Wales. These and other changes prompted a gradual revolution in Wales during the

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in 1955 they got 45,119 (3.2 per cent); and in 1959 they got 77,571 (5.2 per cent). Plaid Cymru remained largely rurally-based and community-oriented. Particularly at the local level, emphasis remained on cultural activities. See Appendix Seven. Kenneth Morgan 1981, 381; Alan Butt Philip, 1975, 84; Laura McAllister, 2001, 98-106.

<sup>149</sup> Kenneth Morgan, 1981, 379.

second half of the century that was the manifestation of the dreams of earlier generations of nationalists.

The Conservative Government of the 1950s made few concessions to political nationalism in Wales. It did, however, make more allowances for cultural nationalist causes. During this era more money was provided for the publishing of Welsh books. The Welsh Arts Council and the Welsh Theatre Company were founded, and a private member's bill was passed in 1959 that enabled local authorities to support the National Eisteddfod from public rates. But perhaps most importantly in the context of this study, a committee was established to examine the situation of the Welsh language.<sup>150</sup> Each of these small acts was a step towards a greater support for the Welsh language, and was significant for the way they represented growing popular and institutional support for Welsh culture in the post-war era. In this way, the All-Welsh Rule at the Eisteddfod helped to encourage the implementation of similar linguistic institutions throughout Wales, such as the instruction of Welsh in schools and Welsh language television.<sup>151</sup> This cultural "renaissance" was indicative of the re-establishment of a nationalist pressure group in Wales; it echoed the *Cymru Fydd* era.

Indeed, although any extant support for cultural and political nationalistic causes was still very much a minority opinion in the 1950s, it was paving the way for later, more radical, transformations based on a linguistic national particularism. Each of the areas mentioned above provided a means of conserving and sustaining the language.

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 380.

<sup>151</sup> For example, the implementation of the Gittins Report on Primary Education in Wales, released in 1967, created a new generation of Welsh speakers. By the second half of the century most Welsh children were monoglot English speakers. The report recommended that, "every child should be given sufficient opportunity to be reasonably bilingual by the end of the primary stage." It was evidence of an increasingly powerful Welsh-language lobby that would eventually succeed in gaining Welsh-medium education, although some education authorities, such as West Glamorgan, were notoriously adverse to the idea. And Welsh medium-education would not occur for more than three decades.

These transformations gathered momentum as the decades progressed, and challenged the nature and popularity of the ruling as well as the boundaries of Welsh-language Welshness. Certainly, at least in cultural terms, the decades following the language ruling saw significant change concerning Welshness. The death in 1954 of one of the foremost proponents of the idea of the *gwerin*, W. J. Gruffydd, represented the passing of the old tradition of Welsh nationalists. Although others such as “Cynan” remained as controlling figures in the Eisteddfod for more than a decade, many others were disappearing, and taking with them the old ideas of the Eisteddfod. The first National Eisteddfod of the 1960s ushered in the decade as it meant to continue - in a storm of controversy.

The Queen’s visit to the Cardiff Eisteddfod of 1960 – and the possibility of her speaking on the platform in English, thus violating the All-Welsh Rule – caused a “hullabaloo” and symbolised the “crux of the Welsh national problem”.<sup>152</sup> The uproar was the natural outgrowth of the increasing politicisation of the language debate in post-war Wales. Although it demonstrated attitudes toward the Royal family, it was significant more for its discussion of the role of the Welsh language in Wales. Many felt that the Royal visit would bring honour to the Welsh national festival. Conversely, many felt that it would send the wrong message to Wales and the world about what were the purpose and message of the Eisteddfod. These opponents felt that an autonomous Wales should have no ties to the British state – politically or culturally.

The possibility of the Queen violating the language rule emphasised debates on exclusion – the idea that the ruling was not only excluding many of the British-Welsh

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<sup>152</sup> Owain Glyn Williams, *The Queen and the Welsh: Cymru'n Un* (Carmarthen: Welsh Radication Publications, 1960), 2.

cultural elite, but also was necessarily excluding an ever-increasing majority of the Welsh population from their national festival. The issue was discussed in a pamphlet, published for the Eisteddfod by the Welsh Radical Group, entitled “The Queen and the Welsh”.<sup>153</sup> The author of the pamphlet, Owain Glyn Williams, represented the middle ground of the language issue in 1960: he explicitly supported the Welsh language, but only if it did not divide Wales. Indeed, although he advocated the preservation of the Welsh language as a key component of Welsh identity, he was not a radical activist on the same level as Saunders Lewis. Williams was representative more of an older generation of nationalism in Wales, one that still identified itself as British, than the emerging more radical generation. The publication of the pamphlet instigated further discussion of the language issue. For example, in his presidential speech, Mr George Thomas said, amidst applause: “Even if we are not as facile in the Welsh language as we ought to be, we are none the worse Welshmen for all that.”<sup>154</sup>

Also in Cardiff, some language activists “rebelled” over the Queen’s visit and resigned from the Executive Committee, just as their predecessors had in Machynlleth in 1937 over the issue of Lord Londonderry. These men felt the same politicised sense of urgency towards the language. Although they did not boycott the entire Eisteddfod and made particular emphasis of attending Welsh-language sessions, the eight dissenters felt it against their principles as supporters of Welsh language and culture to support an administration that would encourage the breaking of the All-Welsh Rule: “It would be completely inconsistent with our principles to put in an appearance. ... But, of course,

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<sup>153</sup> The Welsh Radical Group was made up of Welsh Liberals and aimed “to bring together men and women of liberal and radical opinion”. Owain Glyn Williams, 1960, back cover.

<sup>154</sup> Mr George Thomas, MP for Cardiff West, quoted by “Daily Post Reporter”, *Liverpool Daily Post*, Tuesday 2 August 1960, 1.



none of us has weakened in our support of the Eisteddfod as an instrument for safeguarding and strengthening the Welsh language, culture and national character.”<sup>155</sup>

Similarly, Mr Huw T. Edwards turned down the invitation to the garden party in honour of the Queen “for reasons that must be apparent to any Welshman”: that it demonstrated a “callous disregard for the future of the Welsh language”.<sup>156</sup> Gwynfor Evans felt that to accept an invitation would be “to concur with a policy that imperils our national life”.<sup>157</sup>

Importantly, these acts of protest were manifested in a political manner, in support of the language through active political protest. This was evidence of a trend in Welsh cultural politics and these acts gained significance from their emphasis on the language and the link they represented on the chain of linguistic-political agitation in Wales. There was a growing recognition by people around Wales that the language was worth preserving, and the subsequent increasing amount of support given to the Welsh language in other areas of Welsh life that continued into the 1960s that would change the fate of the language movement. Indeed, when contextualised within the aforementioned series of dramatic circumstances in the late 1950s and early 1960s that helped raise public support for nationalistic causes, although rooted in the ideology of past generations, as shall be demonstrated shortly, the actions in Cardiff were more characteristic of ensuing changes and the politicisation of Welsh culture in the later 1960s.

Political nationalism was still very much the position of the minority throughout Wales as a whole. Although the ideas behind the protests were not significantly

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<sup>155</sup> J. C. Griffith Jones in *Western Mail*, Tuesday 2 August 1960, 1.

<sup>156</sup> Huw T. Edwards, chairman of the Welsh Tourist and Holiday Board, quoted by “Special Reporter”, *Liverpool Daily Post*, Tuesday 2 August 1960, 7.

<sup>157</sup> Gwynfor Evans, president of Plaid Cymru, quoted by “Special Reporter”, *ibid.*

dissimilar from, and in fact echoed, those expressed a decade earlier in Machynlleth and Caerphilly, as active campaigners, the demonstrators still comprised a minority of Eisteddfodwyr at Cardiff. Subsequently, although there was an increasing level of support for cultural nationalism, as in earlier years there was very little public support for political nationalism or activism apparent at the 1960 Eisteddfod.<sup>158</sup> Indeed, despite some evident increased institutional support for the Welsh language, many in Wales, particularly of the older generation, were not inclined to activism. Nationalists, notably those who resigned over the Queen's visit, were resoundingly criticised as "radicals" and "extremists". In the *Western Mail*, Westgate complained about the actions of such a small minority:

Why must Plaid Cymru continually confuse courtesy and politics? In today's *Y Faner* their would-be forceful columnist, Daniel, gleefully announces that since Sir Thomas Parry-Williams, president of the Eisteddfod Court, spoke Welsh in the Queen's presence on the Eisteddfod platform last Friday all Welshmen should now realise that there is no excuse for not speaking Welsh in the company of their less fortunate brethren 'without worrying in the least that this might be discourteous.' Such laughable logic belongs to the nursery, where presumably Daniel would sternly converse in Welsh, even with an alien golliwog! But he should also realise that there is nothing more calculated to bring everything Welsh into disrepute than such linguistic door-slamming and infantile rudeness.<sup>159</sup>

Thus, general opinion in Wales remained opposed to overt acts of nationalism, even if they were in support of Welsh culture, and even at a national cultural festival such as the Eisteddfod. Cultural advances were helping garner support for political causes, but it would not be until the later years of the decade that either the language movement or political nationalism in Wales would achieve any real success.

<sup>158</sup> In fact, there was even less public support evident for Plaid Cymru.

<sup>159</sup> "Westgate", *Western Mail*, Thursday 11 August 1960, 6.

In the end, the Queen avoided violating the All-Welsh Rule and irritating the nationalists and language activists; she did not speak on the stage.<sup>160</sup> As J. C. Griffith Jones said of the situation in the *Western Mail*: “The basic purpose of the Eisteddfod is to consolidate and advance the Welsh language and culture and the Queen has happily exercised her Royal prerogative not only by gracing the Eisteddfod with her presence but also by approving its rules.”<sup>161</sup> This separation of the royal family from the Eisteddfod, despite the Duke of Edinburgh’s initiation into the Gorsedd, presented a marked contrast from 1946, when the Queen was inducted into the Gorsedd. It represented a growing disjunction between British and Welsh Wales and an emphasis on Welsh cultural autonomy, within both the Eisteddfod and generally in Wales.

### The Radical Sixties and Welsh Nationalism at the Eisteddfod

Bob wythnos mae e’n darllen y Cymro a’r Herald,  
 Mae e’n darllen Dafydd ap Gwilym yn ei wely bob nos,  
 Mae dyfodol y wlad a’r Iaith yn agos at ‘i galon fach e  
 A ma nhw’n dweud ‘i fod e’n perthyn i’r FWA!

Every week he reads y Cymro and the Herald,  
 He reads Dafydd ap Gwilym in his bed every night,  
 The future of the country and the language are near to his small heart  
 And here we say that he belongs to the FWA!<sup>162</sup>

The 1960s were a turbulent era and Wales was not immune to the societal transformations occurring more broadly in the world. The changes evident in Wales by the early years of the decade continued to develop throughout the decade, encouraged by

<sup>160</sup> “The Queen will not speak either in Welsh or English when she attends the Royal National Eisteddfod in Cardiff on Friday – nor will she wear her green Bardic robes, though she was installed as a ‘novitiate’ of the Gorsedd at Mountain Ash in 1946.” J. C. Griffith Jones in *Western Mail*, Monday 1 August 1960, 1.

<sup>161</sup> J. C. Griffith Jones in *Western Mail*, Monday 1 August 1960, 1.

<sup>162</sup> Carlo, Dafydd Iwan, 1969.

the increasing politicisation of the Welsh nationalist movement. The growing concern for the Welsh language was manifested in Saunders Lewis' revolutionary *Tynged yr Iaith* lecture, which declared that the fate of the language was more important than self-government, and the subsequent establishment of a vigorous language activism with the birth of *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg* – significantly, at the 1962 Eisteddfod.<sup>163</sup> Afterwards, “an entirely new tone was detectable in the forces of Welsh nationalism, cultural and political”.<sup>164</sup> The result was an apparent gradual growing acceptance of cultural over political, particularly highly politicised cultural, forms of nationalistic behaviour that would dominate much of the remainder of the century. The establishment of *Cymdeithas* was the most compelling evidence of the growing vocality of the Welsh-language pressure groups, as well as a change towards an increasingly radical set of tactics, and marked a step away from older nationalist movements such as *Cymru Fydd*.<sup>165</sup> *Cymdeithas* used non-violent means of protest and civil disobedience, which were popular at the time, to campaign for official recognition of the Welsh language. They succeeded, in part at least, in 1965 with a report on “The Legal Status of the Welsh Language”, and in 1967 with the first Welsh Language Act.

Indeed, much of the activism in the 1960s was focused around the Welsh language. Increasingly political and at the centre of public debate, by 1968, the Welsh language “had become political dynamite in a manner inconceivable six years earlier”.<sup>166</sup> Even the “apolitical national *eisteddfod*” became political and “an annual

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<sup>163</sup> Kenneth Morgan, 1981, 382-383.

<sup>164</sup> Using the momentum of the Tryweryn scandal, Lewis' speech had revolutionary effects, most notably the founding of *Cymdeithas*. Ibid., 383.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 383.

<sup>166</sup> Although the life of Cledwyn Hughes, the Secretary of State for Wales, was threatened at the Aberavon *eisteddfod* in 1966, and the Free Wales Army and Welsh extremists went through a phase of highly

forum where members of the Welsh-language movement would vent their fury on English institutions and English-based politicians".<sup>167</sup> Meanwhile, however, political nationalism was not progressing quite so well. Plaid Cymru was still stumbling along for much of the 1960s, generally with poor electoral results.<sup>168</sup> This was the period Alan Butt Philip referred to as "drift and fragmentation" for the party. The situation was transformed in 1966, when Gwynfor Evans was elected in a Parliamentary by-election in Carmarthen. The victory provided a political outlet for "the swelling tide of national consciousness" evident in Wales since the early 1960s, and signified the increasing political nature of both the cultural and political nationalist movements in Wales.<sup>169</sup> At the Eisteddfod, however, politics took a back seat to cultural matters. The actions of language activists throughout much of the decade were having a noticeable effect by 1967. The Welsh language gained official status with the Language Act of that year, yet it remained contentious and divisive, both on and off the *Maes*. Indeed, the Bala Eisteddfod of 1967 saw another debate regarding the continuation of the language ruling that went to the core of the nature of the All-Welsh Rule.

Exclusion became accepted, but not acceptable, at the Eisteddfod by 1967. There were constant efforts to combat the exclusive nature of the All-Welsh Rule. Discussion became more focused on practical means of breaching the exclusion. For example, Welsh-medium education was becoming an increasingly "hot" topic in Wales. Education had always been an issue, particularly at the Eisteddfod, that great didactic institution.

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militant nationalistic terrorism in the late 1960s, generally the Welsh language movement was non-violent. Ibid., 384.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 384.

<sup>168</sup> Although certainly making ground, growth remained limited, and the *Blaid* came in third or fourth in the contested by-elections. See chart in Appendix Eight of political support for *Plaid Cymru*. See Alan Butt Philip, 1975; Laura McAllister, 2001, 112-113.

<sup>169</sup> Its longevity was questionable. Kenneth Morgan, 1981, 386.

By the 1960s the education debate was increasingly focused specifically on linguistic preservation through Welsh-medium education, as introduced in 1948. Dr Tudur Jones warned against the destruction of Welsh nationality brought on by educational reforms unless they focused on the language: “these people are steeped in treachery and their fondest desire was to keep Wales subject to foreign domination ... [T]he introduction of comprehensive education must not be allowed to become an excuse for destroying the Welsh language.”<sup>170</sup> He continued, asserting that: “Education in the Welsh language was not a sop to silence beggars ... [I]t is time to shatter the silly notion that teaching Welsh to children in the anglicised areas of Wales is some form of oppression.”<sup>171</sup> Education had always been one of the primary areas of discourse at the Eisteddfod; the focus on Welsh-medium education was a sign of the advanced decline of the language, but also of the acceptance of the necessity and means of activism to preserve it.

There was also a discussion of translation facilities in 1967 as a way of creating a wider audience. This pertained to the translation both of competitive materials into Welsh, and of competitions into English for the non-Welsh speaking members of the audience. The issue of translating pieces into Welsh for the purpose of competition obviously had existed since the implementation of the rule. Consequently, the discourse surrounding the topic remained similar; it focused on ideas of practicality, segregation and preservation. The discussion regarding the translation of competitions for the audience was similar. The existence of translation facilities was evidence of a desire for inclusiveness, despite the potentially exclusive nature of the All-Welsh Rule. Sir David Hughes Parry said the Eisteddfod council was “very anxious that English-speaking

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<sup>170</sup> Quoted by Gerald Williams, *Liverpool Daily Post*, Friday 11 August 1967, 7.

<sup>171</sup> Dr. R. Tudur Jones, head of Bala-Bangor Theological College, Bangor and day president, quoted by Gerald Williams, *ibid.*

people should understand what was going on, especially when the Eisteddfod visited south Wales".<sup>172</sup> Indeed, as Mr John Roberts, the North Wales organiser of the Eisteddfod, said, it "had been greatly appreciated by non-Welsh visitors who were able to follow events much better. It did not infringe on the Eisteddfod's Welsh-only rule."<sup>173</sup> According to Mr Frank Price Jones of Bangor, the translation earphones were "a real service to the Eisteddfod. I firmly believe the Eisteddfod should continue to be wholly and exclusively Welsh but it is only right that a service of this kind should be provided."<sup>174</sup> Mr William Edwards agreed: "It fosters goodwill towards the Eisteddfod, the Welsh language and Welsh culture. It has established itself as an essential service and we cannot afford to let it die."<sup>175</sup>

Interestingly, the strength of the Welsh language in the region surrounding the Eisteddfod was not a determinant of the Welsh-speaking nature of the audience. Bala was perceived to be a particularly Welsh community. However the demand for translation equipment was greater than ever – significantly, greater than at Port Talbot the previous year.<sup>176</sup> In 1967, nearly two decades after the language rule was implemented, there were enough English-speakers attending the Welsh language festival to warrant such a facility. Acceptance of translation facilities implied acceptance of a bilingual Wales and a bilingual Eisteddfod audience. Thus, just as earlier in the century, the Eisteddfod was not entirely defined around the language. Furthermore, translation was argued to be a bridge between two communities that would ultimately ensure the

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<sup>172</sup> *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1967, 4.

<sup>173</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, Saturday 12 August 1967, 3.

<sup>174</sup> The translation service had been provided by TWW since the Swansea Eisteddfod of 1964. *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1967, 4.

<sup>175</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, Saturday 12 August 1967, 3.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

future of the Welsh language by opening up Welsh-language culture to non-Welsh speakers.

The existence of these language debates was evidence that the purpose of the Eisteddfod was shifting away from being the didactic cultural showcase of the turn of the century, towards being primarily a preserver of language. Education was still central to the Eisteddfod's ideology, but rather than educating in cultural and social aims, it now had become a means of educating in and about the Welsh language. Certainly this was evidence of the increase of other Welsh cultural establishments ready to fulfil the other roles of the Eisteddfod, and also of the decline in the language. Although translation facilities might be provided to enable the wider (non-Welsh-speaking) public to enjoy the festival, the ultimate aim was that they should develop a love of the language and its culture, prompting them to study the language.

The continuance of the debate decades after the rule's implementation, however, meant that the exclusive nature of the ruling remained contentious. Furthermore, according to the *Liverpool Daily Post*, the number of those who advocated relaxing the All-Welsh Rule seemed to be growing in 1967.<sup>177</sup> Professor Jac L. Williams was one of those who called for the relaxation of the rule "to enable Welsh men who cannot write Welsh to participate in literary competitions. He claims that this has already been done in musical composition and art competitions."<sup>178</sup> Williams said that he did "not wish to see any changes in the language on the Eisteddfod platform ... [but] there should be a place for Welsh writers who write in the English language to compete at the

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1967, 4.



National".<sup>179</sup> Allegedly, there also were members of the Council who felt that some competitions should have been open to "non-Welsh speaking Welsh people" – notably not "English-speaking Welsh people"; this was a more direct translation of the Welsh "Cymry-di-Gymraeg".<sup>180</sup>

Despite this pressure on the Council to rescind the ruling, however, many non-Welsh speakers supported the language ruling. This position was also familiar to Eisteddfodwyr long before the late 1960s, but had become perhaps more popular as many in Wales had become accustomed to the All-Welsh nature of the Eisteddfod. Mrs Elsie White "regretted the Anglicisation of South Wales" and said that the "national is one of the most precious of all Welsh institutions in contributing enormously to keeping the language alive".<sup>181</sup> Similarly, T. Jones Owen claimed that at last the "Eisteddfod is beginning to exercise its rightful task of defending and safeguarding the Welsh culture, literature and language".<sup>182</sup> And as H. W. J. Edwards forcefully argued,

Welsh *should* be pushed down our throats. ... I am one of those almost di-gymraeg folk who insist as much as a fervent Eisteddfodwr upon the all-Welsh rule. I would not let a little of that law be broken. On the contrary; I believe that every possible effort should now be made to extend the constituency that habitually attends the National Eisteddfod by giving maximum opportunity for the learning of Welsh. ... [W]e all have to have something pushed down our throats. For the life of me, I do not see why we should not have our own language so pushed.<sup>183</sup>

There were also letters written in support of the ruling. The first significant letter to the Council came in September from a group of "bards, writers and Eisteddfod supporters".

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> *Western Mail*, 25 September 1967, 4.

<sup>181</sup> Elsie White, of Montville, Australia via the Dulais Valley, quoted by Michael Lloyd-Williams, *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1967, 4.

<sup>182</sup> T. Jones Owen, *The Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald and North Wales Observer*, Friday 4 August 1967, 6.

<sup>183</sup> Original emphasis. H. W. J. Edwards in *Liverpool Daily Post*, Friday 18 August 1967, 5.

They urged the Eisteddfod to “resist all attempts being made by what they called gutless Welshmen to make the events bilingual”.<sup>184</sup> According to these (anonymous) Eisteddfodwyr, the Eisteddfod was “an island of Welshness in the midst of anglicisation for one week of the year”.<sup>185</sup>

More striking was the letter that came in November 1967, signed by thirty-three self-proclaimed Anglo-Welsh authors professing their support for the rule and renouncing the counter-Welsh-Rule movement:

We, Welsh who write in the English language are desirous of demonstrating our goodwill for the national language of Wales and are desirous to see it succeed. We want to state our support for the Welsh Rule at the National Eisteddfod. We urge the Council not to relax its present policy by allowing competitions in English, confident that the time is at hand when more fellowship between writers of the two languages will be brought about by more appropriate means.<sup>186</sup>

Forty-three writers were contacted by the organisers of the appeal; six failed to reply and four refused to sign.<sup>187</sup> Those who signed included prominent members of the Anglo-Welsh literary community: Jack Jones, Meic Stephens, R. S. Thomas, Harri Webb and Gwyn Williams.<sup>188</sup> Remarkably, these cosignatories were English-speakers, whose personal versions of Welshness, as well as their projected literary versions, were anglicised. They accepted the restrictive nature of the All-Welsh Rule, even though it specifically excluded them from their supposed “national” festival, and advocated its maintenance as a means of preserving the Welsh language. Thus, they argued that the Welsh language was a fundamental feature of Welsh identity. As Meic Stephens said:

<sup>184</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 25 September 1967, 3.

<sup>185</sup> *Western Mail*, 25 September 1967, 4.

<sup>186</sup> My translation from the Welsh. NLW ex 1055.

<sup>187</sup> “Keep It Welsh-writers”, *Western Mail*, 2 November 1967.

<sup>188</sup> NLW ex 1055

“The idea of making such a drastic change in the Eisteddfod has been firmly rejected by the people whom it is supposed to benefit. ... The call for changing the all-Welsh rule came mainly from those who ... have no real interest and little understanding of the Eisteddfod’s function.”<sup>189</sup> Harri Webb said that: “Those who have advocated allowing works in English at the Eisteddfod no doubt did so in good faith assuming that this might please those who write in English about Wales. This is not so.”<sup>190</sup> Thus, support for the All-Welsh Rule was growing among non-Welsh speaking communities. The Eisteddfod was increasingly accepted as a specifically and *exclusively* Welsh-medium festival, and one that was necessary for the preservation of the language. Moreover, its preservationist activities were increasingly popular among the majority of the Welsh population – even among those who were “di-Gymraeg”.

There was no immediate reaction to these letters from the Eisteddfod Council because at the time of discussion of the letter in the press, the Council had not yet received the letter and thus could not comment on it. As a result of these letters, however, the Eisteddfod Council was persuaded into considering the rule’s “interpretation” and to “probe the full implication of adhering strictly to the Welsh-only rule”.<sup>191</sup> Importantly, these debates were occurring in 1967 at the time of the First Welsh Language Act.<sup>192</sup> Potentially encouraged by the momentum of the Language Act, the

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<sup>189</sup> “Keep It Welsh-writers”, *Western Mail*, 2 November 1967.

<sup>190</sup> “Authors say keep Welsh rule”, *Liverpool Daily Post*, 4 November 1967.

<sup>191</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 25 September 1967, 3.

<sup>192</sup> In 1965, the Hughes-Parry Report (*The Legal Status of the Welsh Language*) recommended that, “anything done in Welsh should have the same legal force as it would in English”. Two years later this principle was incorporated into the Welsh Language Act of 1967; the Act established the right to use Welsh in the courts and public administration. Although somewhat diluted from the recommendations of the Hughes-Parry Report, and inadequate, it nevertheless “whetted Welsh appetites” for more and served as a catalyst for *Cymdeithas Yr Iaith Gymraeg*. The 1988 Education Act established the right (duty?) of Welsh children to learn Welsh; the 1993 Language Act stipulated that Welsh and English have equal right and status in business and everyday life.

Eisteddfod Council did not relax the All-Welsh Rule. The ruling maintained its controversial position at the Welsh National Eisteddfod into the twenty-first century, despite continued concern about the financial future of such a limited language-based festival, when the numbers of Welsh-speaking members of the Eisteddfodic community seem to be constantly diminishing. Indeed, calls for a more comprehensive Language Act, particularly one that would deal with education, increased significantly in the decades following 1967, indicating an increasing amount of support for the Welsh language throughout a wider segment of Welsh society.

The increasing politicisation of and polarisation around the issue of language in 1967 was evident in an increasingly (nationalistic) political discourse in Wales. After the 1966 by-election, it seemed that political nationalism was catching up somewhat with cultural nationalism in Wales; and this politicisation of Welsh nationalism was manifested at the Eisteddfod.<sup>193</sup> There were small, almost subtle illustrations of nationalist sentiment, such as the unmistakable display of the Welsh flag. The *Liverpool Daily Post* proclaimed: "Extra Pole Wanted For The Dragon: Holywell Rural District Council may put up an extra flagpole outside their headquarters in order to give the Welsh Dragon equal prominence with the Union Jack on State occasions."<sup>194</sup> Certainly, the Welsh dragon flag had frequently been used before at Eisteddfodau to demonstrate an increased Welsh sentiment evident at the festival. For example, in 1937 "the male stewards [wore] red dragon badges".<sup>195</sup> And in 1960, a Welsh dragon "danced in the morning sun from a tower of Cardiff castle".<sup>196</sup> The Welsh dragon flag was important as

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<sup>193</sup> Peter Pringle, *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1967, 8.

<sup>194</sup> Holywell was near Mold in northeastern Wales. *Liverpool Daily Post*, Saturday 5 August 1967, 4.

<sup>195</sup> *The Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette*, 6 August 1937, 7.

<sup>196</sup> Lyn Owen Rees, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 3 August 1960, 4.

a decorative motif because, despite its historic origins, it was the “new” Welsh flag – it symbolised something exclusively Welsh and represented a degree of separatism from Great Britain.<sup>197</sup> In 2000, in a similarly cultural-separatist manner, names were changed in an effort to “Welshify” the Eisteddfod area:

There’s no chance of the White Horse – one of the nearest pubs to the alcohol-free Eisteddfod Maes – getting a lick of green paint from the anti-Saes brigade. For there has been a tactful change of name for the festivities to Y Ceffyl Gwyn. ... Well done all concerned. In fact, a very much better show than some of the poor folk who have insisted on flying the Welsh Dragon sideways, upside down, and all shapes in and around town. Come on, chaps, let’s keep the Dragon horizontal.<sup>198</sup>

Again, it was likely that a degree of “Welshification” existed in reference to the Eisteddfod before 1967. However, the presence of Welsh flags, significantly, was often associated with other moments of nationalistic fervour. Their existence in Bala supported the idea of an evident overt nationalistic sentiment. Indeed, these were small but important efforts, representative of the proverbial steady drip wearing away at the stone. More appreciably, the rhetoric of the media coverage was less overtly critical than a few years earlier; this represents the wider acceptance of language-oriented nationalistic activities.

There was also an increasing level of active protest evident on the *Maes*. This was representative of the wider range of nationalistic protest throughout Wales in this era. When Cledwyn Hughes toured the *Maes* in Bala there were detectives in attendance because of attacks against him a year earlier at the Aberafan Eisteddfod. The *Liverpool Daily Post* reported: “There was no demonstration but a white balloon was found on the

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<sup>197</sup> The Red Dragon was recognised in 1901 as the badge of Wales, and added to the Arms of The Prince of Wales. In 1953 the Dragon was made the official Royal badge of Wales. It was in 1959 that the Queen made the Red Dragon on a green and white, the official Welsh flag.

<sup>198</sup> “Lloyd At Large”, *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 10 August 2000, 23.

Welsh Office building with words 'Cledwyn's Hot Air' written on it. It was pulled down before the Minister saw it."<sup>199</sup> Further, the Welsh Language Society sold "protest postage stamps" at the Eisteddfod.<sup>200</sup> The (fake) "National stamps" were put on sale as a protest by the society because the translation "had the profoundest effect on the existence of the Welsh language".<sup>201</sup> Importantly, this was still language-based protest. The stamps were to commemorate an important event in the history of the Welsh language: the translation of the New Testament into Welsh. Language was becoming increasingly politicised as a result of the activities of the language activists, and this change was becoming increasingly evident at the Eisteddfod. According to Gerald Williams, the "plain fact of the matter was that they were making a political issue of the language".<sup>202</sup> H. W. J. Edwards said that: "The Welsh language Society seems to me to be much more political than Plaid Cymru. ... But I distinguish between politics and party politics."<sup>203</sup> Despite modest political gains for Plaid Cymru, many were still sceptical of the goals and actions of political nationalists, particularly on the *Maes*.<sup>204</sup> In fact, the increasing level of radicalisation and politicisation of the language movement, although ultimately helping it, was also the primary hindrance to the movement. It meant that many of the older generation in Wales, particularly those moderates who would not

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<sup>199</sup> Hughes was the Secretary of State for Wales. *Liverpool Daily Post*, Wednesday 9 August 1967, 7.

<sup>200</sup> "The Postmaster-General had rejected a request by the Society for a special issue of stamps to commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the translation of the New Testament into Welsh." *Liverpool Daily Post*, Tuesday 8 August 1967, 7.

<sup>201</sup> Mr Gareth Miles, chairman of the society, in *Western Mail*, Monday 7 August 1967, 4.

<sup>202</sup> Gerald Williams, *Liverpool Daily Post*, Friday 11 August 1967, 7.

<sup>203</sup> H. W. J. Edwards, *Liverpool Daily Post*, Friday 18 August 1967, 5.

<sup>204</sup> "The new visitors were guarded about the new wave of nationalism that has swept through Wales since the Carmarthen by-election, but few go beyond saying it was a 'good thing' and one was left with the impression that they didn't take it all that seriously." Peter Pringle, *Western Mail*, Friday 11 August 1967, 8.

support extremist behaviour of any sort for any purpose, were alienated by the language protests.

Indeed, most Eisteddfodwyr were still much more comfortable discussing the cultural nationalism of their fathers' and grandfathers' generations, rather than the political acts of contemporary cultural and political nationalists. The older ideas of men such as Sir Ifan ab Owen Edwards were much safer than the controversial ideas and radicalism of *Cymdeithas* or Plaid Cymru. The acceptance of different ideologies signified a generational rift in Wales, between the older generation of Welsh people, for the bulk of whom nationalism did not necessitate political activism and extremism was an anathema, and a new generation that was increasingly accepting of and focused on radical political and cultural goals. Nevertheless, there was little difference in the rhetoric of these campaigns. Eisteddfodwyr might have little clue to which Edwards they were listening when they were told that: "Wales is today more virile than ever before. We belong to a nation on the march. ... It is also our duty and responsibility to help the youth of Wales march forward confidently."<sup>205</sup> Edwards' emphasis on "patriotic schoolteachers" and the youth of Wales could have been from an Eisteddfod a generation earlier; it was grounded in the ideas of the *Urdd* and the early Welsh nationalists. Similar sentiment was found in the speech of Mr J. E. Jones, former General Secretary of Plaid Cymru. He said: "The flame of Welsh patriotism is making certain the future of Wales," and talked about Wales' "honourable future ... [how] her language and culture will prosper and that her economy will develop like those of the

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<sup>205</sup> The founder and president of the Welsh League of Youth [*Urdd Gobaith Cymru* ], "Westgate", *Western Mail*, Wednesday 9 August 1967, 8.

other small countries of Europe.”<sup>206</sup> The language used was important as it set a tone of “respectable” nationalistic behaviour that was markedly different from some of the increasingly violent actions of political nationalists.<sup>207</sup>

Similarly, there were many who were overtly critical of the increasingly politicised atmosphere of the Eisteddfod and Welsh national sentiment and advocated a de-politicised nationalistic ideology. As Emrys Roberts said, there “was to-day a resurgence of national spirit, there were against established systems, indications of rebellion”.<sup>208</sup> Importantly, nationalist spirit was not criticised, but *rebellion* was. Similarly, Armon Jones grumbled about the escalating political nature of the Eisteddfod, as manifested through the use of presidential speeches for political polemic:

I fear that if present trends continue, it will for not much longer be the National Eisteddfod of Wales, but the Political Eisteddfod of Wales. There has always been this element of course. It is natural and almost inevitable. ... But there is all the difference in the world between the spontaneous expressions of Welsh partisanship, which occur from time to time, and the studied, carefully staged, calculated occurrences of last week. I refer to the succession of speeches by at least three of the day-presidents, which took deliberately and specifically political topics, and converted the culture festival of Wales into a political excursion. ... What a sheer unadulterated distortion of the cultural character of the Eisteddfod for political ends.<sup>209</sup>

Certainly, presidential speeches had always been used to make political statements, the most obvious example of which was the annual visit by Lloyd George. However, the tone was changing by the 1960s and many Welsh political “radicals” were using their presidencies to crusade for their “causes”, in a manner not dissimilar to flag burners and other protestors - much to the dismay of many pro-British Welsh.

<sup>206</sup> Gerald Williams, *Liverpool Daily Post*, Thursday 10 August 1967, 7.

<sup>207</sup> Such as the terrorist Free Wales Army.

<sup>208</sup> Emrys Roberts quoted by Glyn Thomas, *Liverpool Daily Post*, Tuesday 8 August 1967, 7.

<sup>209</sup> Armon Jones, *Liverpool Daily Post*, Tuesday 15 August 1967, 5.



Undoubtedly, anything cultural is inherently political, even without affiliation to a particular party or ideology. Thus, the cultural nationalists of previous generations were political, despite their professed apolitical status. Nevertheless, J. E. Jones missed the days when an apparently apolitical cultural nationalism was sufficient for the majority of Welsh people: "But are there no people in Wales who can be invited to chair a day without making political speeches? Where are the Welsh educationalists and poets and speakers and musicians? This is a cultural festival. Keep it so."<sup>210</sup> He was explicitly critical of Welsh political nationalism:

The National Eisteddfod of Wales is at the cross-roads. The Blaid is making a take-over bid. The Eisteddfod is becoming more and more a vehicle for Blaid propaganda and politics. ... [T]he Blaid can get more and more support from a narrow sector of Welsh life for its aims and purposes; but it will fail for ever to expand and include a majority of the people, as long as it pushes naked politics, domineering, bullying, hectoring politics, into the ascendancy.<sup>211</sup>

Jones, like many others in the 1960s, saw Plaid Cymru as an elitist and restrictive group, excluding much of the Welsh population and advocating a non-advantageous separation of Wales from the British state.

Although support for the Welsh language was growing in mainstream Welsh society, and despite evidence of some electoral successes, the political nationalistic ideology generally was not. *Cultural* nationalism, even the heavily contested radical acts of language activists such as *Cymdeithas*, was still "safer" than supporting *political* separatism. Thus, by 1968, although the Welsh-language movement was at its "zenith",

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<sup>210</sup> Mr J. E. Jones, the former General Secretary of Plaid Cymru and President of the day, quoted by Armon Jones, *Liverpool Daily Post*, Tuesday 15 August 1967, 5.

<sup>211</sup> "The Blaid's take-over bid for the Eisteddfod is growing in strength every year. If it succeeds, the Eisteddfod as a national cultural festival is finished, doomed and damned." Ibid.

the political nationalist movement was slower to gain support.<sup>212</sup> The generational influence must not be ignored in this context. As J. E. Jones said at the 1967 Eisteddfod: “The flame of Welsh patriotism is making certain the future of Wales. ... [T]here was a tremendous revival of national self respect in our times, particularly among the under 30s.”<sup>213</sup> The young people at Bala would constitute the next generation of policy-makers and form mainstream Welsh culture, and consequently would constitute subtle shifts in Welsh identities towards the close of the century. Welsh nationalists were still at the beginning of their journey, and had far to go on the road to cultural and political particularity. It would need the established gains of cultural nationalists before it ultimately would become acceptable – although this would not occur for nearly three decades.<sup>214</sup>

### The All Welsh Rule and Devolution

As one Cymdeithas member told me [re: use of vernacular Welsh], ‘They’d have been better off in Swahili – SOMEBODY, just somebody, somewhere, might have understood a little bit of it.’<sup>215</sup>

The 1970s and 1980s demonstrated cultural gains, but political failures. They were notable for the continued successes of cultural nationalistic aims, particularly in the spheres of education and the media.<sup>216</sup> However, they were also notable for the failures

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<sup>212</sup> It was partly responsible for the Welsh Language Act of 1967 and a “more sensitive response from government departments than had been achieved by the peaceful petitioning of pre-1962.” Kenneth Morgan, 1981, 384.

<sup>213</sup> Mr J. E. Jones, quoted by Gerald Williams, *Liverpool Daily Post*, Thursday 10 August 1967, 7.

<sup>214</sup> As well as changing political and socio-economic circumstances.

<sup>215</sup> Paddy McKiernan, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 8 August 1979, 8.

<sup>216</sup> In 1971 the Welsh Nursery School movement was founded, enabling Welsh-medium education from a very young age; in 1974 Parliamentary Oaths of Allegiance were allowed in Welsh (four hundred years after the act of Union); in 1977 Radio Cymru and Radio Wales were established; this was followed by the Welsh-language television channel (S4C) in 1982, and also the Language Act of 1993. BBC Wales produced six hours a week of Welsh language programs in 1962. Independent Welsh regional television

in the political spectrum. It was not until the very end of the twentieth century that political devolution was successful in Wales. The nadir came with the failure of the referendum in 1979. By the 1980s these failures led many to consider that “the strategy of twenty years – indeed, the strategy of Welsh patriots since the era of *Cymru Fydd* – had come to naught”.<sup>217</sup> The success of cultural politics seemed to surpass that of party politics in late twentieth-century Wales. The changing moods in Wales, as influenced by the political failures and successes of the late twentieth century, were reflected on the *Maes*.

The St David’s Day referendum of 1979 followed decades of increasing political agitation for self-government in Wales and the subsequent relatively recent creation of certain institutions of Welsh statehood.<sup>218</sup> Despite these successes, however, the predominant mood in Wales was not one of optimism and hope for a particularly Welsh future, but one of pessimism and Britishness.<sup>219</sup> Although many notable Welsh political leaders, such as Cledwyn Hughes, were in favour of a degree of devolution, predictably, many others remained solidly opposed to any kind of assembly for Wales. They emphasised a joint Anglo-Welsh heritage.<sup>220</sup> Moreover, the electorate in 1979 was a

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followed. Demands for all-Welsh programs followed and S4C (Sianel Pedwar C) began broadcasting in 1982.

<sup>217</sup> John Davies, 1993, 677.

<sup>218</sup> The Welsh Office was established in 1964, the Welsh TUC in 1973 and the Welsh Development Agency in 1975.

<sup>219</sup> Industrial unrest and economic depression meant that many in Wales were increasingly reactionary and would not support such a radical change in their governmental structure. “Wales was a more Conservative environment in 1979 than in 1966.” See Denis Balsom, “Public Opinion and Welsh Devolution”, in David Foulkes, J. Barry Jones, and R. A. Wilford, eds, *The Welsh Veto: The Wales Act of 1978 and the Referendum* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1983), 213-214. The political condition of Wales and Britain in 1979 must not be underestimated as a contributory factor. The extant Labour Government was at the end of its mandate, the parties within Wales were divided on their support for the referendum, and the neo-Victorian ideas of self-sufficiency of Margaret Thatcher were on the rise. John Osmond, “Welsh Civil identity in the Twenty-first Century”, in John Osmond *The National Question Again* (Llandysul: Gomer, 1985), 72.

<sup>220</sup> They “felt comfortable with being simultaneously Welsh and British”, John Osmond, 1985, 72.

“generation whose formative experience had been the Second World War, the fight against fascism, and the consciousness and then the loss of empire”, and perhaps more importantly, “the creation of a nationalised economy and the welfare state which were distinctively British institutions and experiences”.<sup>221</sup>

In the end, only 25 per cent of Welsh voters supported the devolution amendment in 1979. The divided electorate in 1979 represented a continuation of the split that was becoming evident in the 1960s, between the ideas of the older more moderate generation, and the activism of the younger radical one.<sup>222</sup> The sense of Welshness that was defined by the electorate was very much a *British* identity. It was a crushing defeat for Welsh political nationalists, for whom the referendum represented the culmination of decades of agitation. It was also a significant defeat for Welsh cultural nationalists. The devolution defeat “was interpreted as a defeat for Welshness, as a declaration that the notion of Welsh nationality was unacceptable to the majority of the inhabitants of Wales”.<sup>223</sup> Indeed, by the end of the 1970s, although a distinct sense of Welshness was arguably more marked than ever before, the manifestation of that identity was still sufficiently separate as to hinder political nationalist campaigns. Wales was a “diffuse and fractured” society. There were many different Welshnesses; they were defined by the language and the different regions of Wales, rather than “any uniting civic sense of *Welshness* as such”.<sup>224</sup> Thus, these identities co-existed happily with a sense of *Britishness*. As Chris Williams says in his history of modern Wales:

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<sup>221</sup> John Osmond, “Welsh Civil identity in the Twenty-first Century”, in David Harvey, Rhys Jones, and Neil McNroy, eds, *Celtic Geographies: old culture, new times* (London: Routledge, 2002), 78,

<sup>222</sup> See John Osmond, 2002, 79.

<sup>223</sup> John Davies, 1993, 677.

<sup>224</sup> John Osmond, 1985, 72.

Although there was a more pronounced sense of a Welsh national identity by 1979, in part through the political changes of the preceding decade or more, this has to be counterbalanced by an acknowledgement that most of the people of Wales remained satisfied with Wales's location within the British state, and were uneasy about a policy that suggested a change in that relationship. ... Most of the Welsh saw no necessary conflict between their identity as Welsh (whatever they meant by that) and their continued allegiance to the British state.<sup>225</sup>

The subsequent feelings of gloom felt after the referendum by many nationalists, cultural and political alike, were very much in evidence on the Eisteddfod *Maes* in Caernarfon in 1979. The Eisteddfod fell just five months after the referendum and the proximity was reflected in the mood of Eisteddfodwyr. The post-referendum Eisteddfod provided a continuation of the ongoing disagreement over the role of the language in Wales, but often around a much harsher, bitterer and more negative focus. For example, Archdruid Geraint Bowen controversially said:

If the people of Gwynedd allow the Welsh language to be lost, the Welsh will deserve to be considered the filth of humanity. ... [I]f Gwynedd falls Wales will lose its cultural crown forever and there will be no poet left to write the elegy for this tragedy.<sup>226</sup>

Jon Dressel commented on the inspiration behind the crown-winning poem:

our sense of grief over what the misguided and intimidated majority of the Welsh people did to themselves, and to the idea and dignity of the Welsh nation, on St David's Day was so great, that we could not bear the thought of there being no poem in the competition which attempted to articulate a sense of the black enormity of what had been done ... to us, in this particular year in Wales, love of Wales, and grief at the failure of the Welsh people to rise to their historic opportunity, was a subject we could not and did not ignore. ... There are simply times when certain things have to be said, and said in the place most appropriate for their saying.

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<sup>225</sup> Chris Williams, 2000, 235-6.

<sup>226</sup> *Western Mail*, Wednesday 8 August 1979, 4.

This year has been one of those times, and the Eisteddfod was the place.<sup>227</sup>

The language used in reference to the situation of the Welsh language was more dramatic than it had been in decades previously. Indeed the characterisation of the Welsh language and culture as on their deathbeds was one of the more powerful metaphors of 1979. In the aftermath of the morale-destroying St David's Day vote, this was perhaps not surprising.

Correspondingly, although the referendum demonstrated the lack of support for Welsh political nationalism among the Welsh electorate, there was an increased level of concern about the fate of the language evident on the *Maes* in 1979. Mr Dafydd Wigley said that because of "the lack of self-confidence in the people of Wales in the referendum. ... [I]t was inevitable that they would lose ground economically as well as culturally and constitutionally. Rejecting devolution had turned back the clock."<sup>228</sup> Certainly, the dramatically pessimistic emphasis of 1979 may have been the result of a continual and gradual build-up in expressively emotional pro-Welsh sentiment; but the failed referendum directly preceding the Eisteddfod was the likely catalyst. It was, as Cledwyn Hughes later said,

the end of an era. And it was a profound disappointment to many. But ... the last hundred years have not been a total failure as far as Wales is concerned. The achievements are by any standard substantial and we have much to be proud of. We are now beginning a new era, and out of the turmoil and conflict and excitement of the present time a new vision and a fresh opportunity will surely emerge.<sup>229</sup>

<sup>227</sup> Jon Dressel of St Louis, Missouri, U.S.A., explaining the co-authorship with Jim Jones of the later-disqualified winning poem. "Letter to the Editor", *Western Mail*, Monday 20 August 1979, 8.

<sup>228</sup> *Western Mail*, Thursday 9 August 1979, 5.

<sup>229</sup> The Rt. Hon. the Lord Cledwyn, Cledwyn Hughes, *The Referendum: the End of an Era (A Lecture delivered at the Lliw Valley National Eisteddfod, 1980)* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1981), 14.

Indeed, 1979 was very much the end of an era.

A very different situation greeted nationalists and voters alike in 1997 – and was still evident three years later at the Llanelli Eisteddfod. Although many of the factors that led to the defeat twenty years earlier were still present at the close of the century, such as the tensions between regions of Wales, between linguistic communities, and between political affiliations, many changes had also occurred.<sup>230</sup> The British economy had improved; moreover, the Welsh economy was less focused on Britain, and was increasingly gaining a European dimension.<sup>231</sup> Similarly, the 1997 referendum was held under “strikingly different political circumstances” compared to the earlier one. In the years between the referendum ballots, the Conservative Government prepared Wales for devolution; it elaborated the Welsh bureaucratic machine, creating a “statelet in embryo”; it reorganised local government, thus disestablishing areas of Wales from a centralised British state; and finally, “Conservative support for the Welsh language contributed to its removal from the devolution debate as a point of controversy.”<sup>232</sup>

Indeed, gradual policy changes under the Conservative Government, ironically built upon the radical actions of previous decades, helped to make the Welsh language issue mainstream, and therefore less of an issue.<sup>233</sup> As John Osmond says, these influences “resulted in the language becoming associated with modernity rather than

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<sup>230</sup> For example, the alienation of much of the Welsh electorate from the Conservative party, enabling Plaid to gain their votes.

<sup>231</sup> John Osmond, 1985, 76. Furthermore, the campaign was better organised and faced more favourable political circumstances. In fact, the tide was turning in British politics by the 1990s, and the Conservative hegemony in British politics was fading, and a new “New Labour” Government was still in its honeymoon period and anxious to please its voters. It was also floating on a sea of leftist reactionary-ism. Geoffrey Evans and Dafydd Trystan, “Why was 1997 Different?”, in Taylor, Bridget and Katarina Thomson, eds, *Scotland and Wales: Nations Again?* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 95-118.

<sup>232</sup> John Osmond, 1985, 70, 75.

<sup>233</sup> They established the advisory body Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg (the Welsh Language Board) in 1988, which helped to bring about the Welsh Language Act in 1993.

with an emotionally suppressed past”.<sup>234</sup> This is not to say, however, that the language movement did not lose some of its momentum. The 1980s were generally a decade of inactivity and decreased membership for *Cymdeithas yr Iaith*, and the “entire national movement in Wales was afflicted by a general malaise following the bitter disappointment of the devolution referendum”.<sup>235</sup> But by the 1990s, the Welsh language movement had regained some of its confidence.<sup>236</sup> So had the Welsh electorate.<sup>237</sup>

The last of the significant changes in the period between the devolution referendums was generational.<sup>238</sup> The generational conflict that was evident in the 1960s and 1970s waned by the 1990s as the older generation with its sense of British-Welshness was replaced by the younger generation with its particular Welshness. Welsh people became “palpably, indeed patriotically, more Welsh” in the interim.<sup>239</sup> By the mid 1990s, Wales was feeling more confident about itself and its identity; this was in part due to the subtle gains of the past decades, and evidenced in the momentum of the “Cool Cymru” movement. Thus, “although the increase in the proportion of the population of Wales affirming a Welsh identity between 1979 and 1997 was small,

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<sup>234</sup> John Osmond, 1985, 75-76.

<sup>235</sup> Dylan Phillips, “The History of the Welsh Language Society 1962 – 1998”, in Geraint H. Jenkins and Mari Williams, eds, *Lets Do Our Best for the Ancient Tongue: The Welsh Language in the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002), 480.

<sup>236</sup> Geraint H. Jenkins and Mari A. Williams, 2002, 22.

<sup>237</sup> In 1997, although a smaller percentage of the electorate voted than in 1979 (50.3 per cent compared to 58.8 per cent), it voted in favour of devolution. (In 1997, 552,689 voted against devolution and 559,419 voted in favour of it. This should be compared to 956,330 voting against devolution and 243,048 voting in favour of it in 1979.) Further, in the National Assembly Elections in May 1999, Plaid Cymru gained 28.4 per cent of the vote, second to Labour (with 37.6 per cent). See Appendix Eleven.

<http://www.llgc.org.uk/yngyrchu/Pleidleisio/Etholiadau/1999/index-e.htm>

<sup>238</sup> John Osmond, 1985, 79.

<sup>239</sup> See charts on Age and National Identity and 1997 Devolution Referendum in Appendix Nine and Appendix Ten. Those under the age of forty-five were more likely to support the establishment of an assembly than older people, although they were significantly less likely to vote. Geoffrey Evans and Dafydd Trystan, “Why was 1997 Different?”, in Bridget Taylor and Katarina Thomson, eds, *Scotland and Wales: Nations Again?* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 95-118; John Osmond, 1985, 70.



Welsh national identity increased in political salience.”<sup>240</sup> All of these factors contributed to the essential “paradox” of Welsh nationalism in the interim: the near-total defeat of Welsh nationalism in 1979 “eventually ... generated a renaissance of both”.<sup>241</sup> Thus, the devolution referendum in 1997 met a Wales that was more enthusiastic about its Welshness and about political change.

The contrast to 1979 was remarkable. Whereas Wales in 1979 was comparable to a “living museum” and a relic of Britain’s industrial past, its identity apparently based in cultural and industrial obsolescence, Wales in 1997 was part of a vibrant New Labour “Cool Britannia” – “Cool Cymru.” “Cool Cymru” was the name given to the late 1990s celebration of Welsh talent in an international cultural scene. It became a hegemonic term when referring to much of contemporary Welsh culture, from the Welsh Scouts to Catherine Zeta Jones.<sup>242</sup> The *Guardian* commented that the new arm of devolution in Wales, the National Assembly,

provided a focus and momentum for all kinds of distinctly Welsh noises in music and theatre, literature and visual art. Pop music has led the way, finally giving Wales its own independent soundtrack. As Catatonia's Cerys Matthews likes to remind us: ‘Every day when I wake up/I thank the Lord I'm Welsh.’<sup>243</sup>

Indeed, according to the BBC, “Cool Cymru” was “a reaction to the staid and dated old guard of Welsh culture, as well as an expression of the growing confidence in Wales”.<sup>244</sup>

There was a sense of there being a new generation of Wales and of Welshness - and one that was progressively different from those previous - that was similar to that of the

<sup>240</sup> Geoffrey Evans and Dafydd Trystan, 1999, 113.

<sup>241</sup> Chris Williams, 2000, 239-240.

<sup>242</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/483279.stm>, Saturday, October 23, 1999 Published at 13:18 GMT 14:18 UK.

<sup>243</sup> “Cool Cymru”, *The Guardian* (online), Saturday March 3, 2001.

<sup>244</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/wales/about/culturefaq.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/about/culturefaq.shtml), 11 May 2003.

1960s. It was the natural progression from the radicalisation of the previous generation. This new sense of identity and the self-confidence therein was based in the successful devolution referendum.<sup>245</sup> Furthermore, it presented a marked contrast to the previous anti-Welsh hatred and racism evident throughout much of British mainstream culture.

Importantly, however, “Cool Cymru” was not *Cymraeg*; it was an English-language manifestation of Welshness marketed towards a global audience.<sup>246</sup> Yet, although much of the “Cool Cymru” marketed to the wider world was Anglo-Welsh, there was also a revival of a distinctly *Cymraeg* “Cool Cymru” within Wales.<sup>247</sup> The “Taffia” who populated Cardiff’s (and therefore much of Wales’) cultural sphere was the product of a generation of Welsh-medium education and the Welsh language learner movement (which was particularly popular among the middle classes). In this way, the last years of the century witnessed a degree of continuation of the pro-language activism evident before the 1979 referendum.

The air of confidence and the corresponding celebration of a newly fashionable Welshness were very much evident at the Llanelli Eisteddfod in 2000. For example, there was an expansion and increased variety of manifestations of the Welsh-language

<sup>245</sup> “This confidence was engendered by the forming of the National Assembly and a growing sense of Welsh identity.” [www.bbc.co.uk/wales/about/culturefaq.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/about/culturefaq.shtml), 11 May 2003.

<sup>246</sup> The idea of “Cool Cymru” was born in the mid-1990s when some of the better Welsh-speaking bands began to record in English, attracting attention from the English-speaking media and population. Simon Price, *Everything (A book about Manic Street Preachers)* (London: Virgin Publishing, 2002), 25; “The Manic Street Preachers [break up]... will be a cruel blow to the Government-recognised Cool Cymru campaign which holds up the Manics as the new face of Wales.” Maria Williams, “MANICS; Is this the end?”, *Wales on Sunday*, 4 October 1998.

<sup>247</sup> “after using the Welsh music scene as a stepping stone, the cynics said, these bands would no longer sing in Welsh, would never return to Wales, and would admit to their Welsh connection as though it were a nasty disease. Why then have the Super Furry Animals insisted on a Welsh language B side to every English language A side? Why do Gorkys Zygotic Mynchi want to play *Ciwb Ifor Bach* in Cardiff. ... These people are not on a crusade. They are musicians who work in their own language, and no justifications are needed. The initial reaction to this was to be expected. During the mid-1980s, bands who had always sung in Welsh began singing in English too. There was confusion, a sense of betrayal, and angry noises were made.” “Why Noel Gallagher has got it wrong”, *The Western Mail Database*, 24 May 1997.

on the *Maes*, from books, pop music and DVDs to a protest against the 2001 Census.

The *Llanelli Star* reported that the Eisteddfod was

leading the campaign by Welsh people to get their nationality recognised on the 2001 census. ... Protestors say that this is an insult to Welsh people and some have even gone as far as to say they will boycott it. The chance to declare themselves as Welsh on the census form has been a particularly hot issue in Llanelli.<sup>248</sup>

The boycott was a reaction to the exclusion of Welshness in the official British census. Although not directly related to the language - in fact the census was already bilingual in Wales - it was representative of the regained nationalistic momentum associated to the "Cool Cymru" ideology. Ironically, however, although there were certainly manifestations of "Cool Cymru" on the *Maes*, none of the *mainstream* "Cool Cymru" pop bands ever performed at the National Eisteddfod; even on *Maes B* they would have needed to violate the All-Welsh Rule.

Much of the momentum had returned to Welsh nationalism, both cultural and political, and to the language movement in particular. *Cymdeithas* led a campaign that gathered 3,000 signatures on a petition calling for a new Welsh Language Act.<sup>249</sup> Many Eisteddfodwyr remarked confidently about the future of the Language. The then Plaid Cymru MP for Ceredigion, Cynog Dafis, felt a renewed sense of optimism about the language at Llanelli: "The threat to the language – culturally, economically and demographically – is more [sic] than ever but the opportunity for the language to grow

<sup>248</sup> *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 10 August 2000, 3.

<sup>249</sup> "Members are accusing the council of pursuing anti-Welsh politics... Cymdeithas spokesman Ffred Ffrancis claimed: "The [Carmarthenshire County] Council's use of the Welsh language is no more than a PR front for the Eisteddfod and the public. Carmarthenshire's economic development cabinet member Huw John said ... 'The allegation that Carmarthenshire is pursuing anti-Welsh policies is totally unfounded and there is a wide body of evidence which shows that Carmarthenshire County Council is actually one of the foremost authorities in Wales in promoting the Welsh language and delivering services through the medium of Welsh.'" *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 10 August 2000, 2.

has never been better.”<sup>250</sup> Professor Hywel Teifi Edwards agreed that: “There is no need to be negative. There is still a fair bit of Welsh to be heard in Llanelli.”<sup>251</sup> His son Huw Edwards shared this confidence in the future of the Welsh language. He:

dismissed as naïve or cynical claims that the battle for the language had been won but acknowledged that huge strides had been made. ‘Twenty years ago, it would be hard to imagine hearing a Welsh-speaking Welshman reading the news from London, but it has happened. And it proves that healthy attitudes are on the march.’<sup>252</sup>

The success of the Welsh Learners’ Movement at the Eisteddfod and elsewhere provided a “glimmer of hope” to cultural nationalists: “Isn’t it incredible what a fantastic part the web’s playing in this revival of Welsh learning. ... [T]he cassettes and books have been flying out ... this week.”<sup>253</sup> In fact, although some warned about the still perilous future of the Welsh language in 2000, the Welsh language now had the security of decades of stability; the percentage of Welsh speakers had begun to level out by the early 1970s.<sup>254</sup> Thus, there was more confidence among Welsh language activists in their movement than had been manifest arguably since the first Welsh Language Act.

This confidence in the future of the Welsh-language was symbolised most strongly by the absorption of Dylan Thomas, the “bogeyman for Welsh speakers”, into Welsh language culture: “It is now as much as second nature for Welsh speakers to refer

<sup>250</sup> Rhodri Jones, *Western Mail*, Tuesday 8 August 2000, 13.

<sup>251</sup> H. T. Edwards in *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 17 August 2000, 41.

<sup>252</sup> Steve Dube, *Western Mail*, Thursday 10 August 2000, 11.

<sup>253</sup> BBC Wales Online producer Gaereth Morlais. The association with the internet was indicative of a more modern identity of the language. Interestingly: “Already, over 500 listeners in Wales and around the world have subscribed to the show’s mailing list and are taking advantage of a database of links to other language resources. The language has never been so international.” Rob Andrews, *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 17 August 2000, 43.

<sup>254</sup> D. Gareth Evans, *A History of Wales 1906 – 2000* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 192. In 1971, 20.8 per cent spoke Welsh; in 1981, 18.9 per cent; in 1991, 18.5 per cent; and in 2001, 20.5 per cent. However, the overall increase in Welsh speakers in Wales must be considered in conjunction with the continuing decrease of Welsh-speakers (both those who can and those who do) in the traditional language “heartlands”. Thus, there has been a degree of artificiality to the resurgence of the Welsh language in the late-twentieth century.

to him and his poetry as for English speakers. He has been absorbed into Welsh-medium culture and he now helps to bring the two cultures together where once he seemed to be a divisive force.”<sup>255</sup> This is not to say that there was not controversy surrounding the language; on the contrary, that discourse was still very much evident on the *Maes* as the linguistic nature of Welshness continued to be debated. However, despite its largely English-language embodiment, the “Cool Cymru” movement was reinvigorating the language movement and making it fashionable again on and off the *Maes*.

The structural manifestation of the fashionable and youthful confidence of “Cool Cymru” at the Eisteddfod was *Maes B* - the youth field at the Eisteddfod and the “alternative” site for a counter-hegemonic sense of Eisteddfodic Welshness. It was marketed at the youth of Wales, and, as evident in the difference in licensing laws, maintained a different cultural outlook from the main body of the Eisteddfod. It provided “gigs” rather than concerts and served beer rather than the endless “cuppa”. In “The Essential Guide To Survival On Maes B!” Ceri Jones compared the two venues and their ideas of Eisteddfodicism:

If the word ‘Eisteddfod’ conjures up images of druidic robes and orderly choirs, then think again. While ‘steddfod veterans are tucked up in their tents and camper vans after a night at the ‘Paviliwn’, North Dock is the venue as thousands of Welsh youths descend on the Eisteddfodau youth campsite. ... A livelier night greeted those out at Maes B’s venue.<sup>256</sup>

In this way, the introduction of *Maes B* was symptomatic of the changing, youthful attitude that went with the “new” post-devolution Wales. As perhaps a natural outgrowth of the language movement and the expansion in Welsh medium education, it possessed a

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<sup>255</sup> Professor Wynn Thomas quoted by Steve Dube, *Western Mail*, Tuesday 8 August 2000, 12. Ironically, Thomas was once quoted to have said “The land of my fathers? My fathers can have it.”

<sup>256</sup> Ceri Jones, *Llanelli Star*, Thursday 10 August 2000, 38.

profoundly dynamic sense of identity. “Westgate” commented on this apparent, new popularity of Welshness in relation to the Eisteddfod, as he introduced a discussion about one of the stars of “Cool Cymru”, Ioan Gruffydd:

While walking the length of the Eisteddfod Maes, it becomes increasingly obvious that what you have before you is a Who’s Who of Wales. From Plaid Cymru leaders to *Pobol y Cwm* extras, the Eisteddfod is a melting pot of everyone who’s anyone in the Welsh crachach. ... Like the best film premiere or celebrity luncheon, the Maes appears to be the ‘in-place’ to be seen.<sup>257</sup>

Gruffydd’s visit to the Eisteddfod emphasised the reinvigorated sense of “coolness” attributed to the language and the festival alike, as well as the idea of the Eisteddfod as a microcosm of Welshness; in this context, it was a microcosm of Welsh coolness

## Conclusions

The sense of “coolness” evident at the Eisteddfod in 2000 was specifically representative of the post-devolution mood in Wales. “Cool Cymru” was a new way of looking at what it meant to be Welsh, a reinvigoration and a celebration of Welshness. It was not so much a uniquely Welsh identity, as a new interpretation of Welshness, both in the Welsh-language communities and in “Welsh-Wales”.<sup>258</sup> As Geraint Jenkins and Mari Williams said, the National Eisteddfod changed during the twentieth century to reflect Wales’ developing maturity as a nation:

The experience of the National Eisteddfod of Wales was rather different in the second half of the century. Since the days of Hugh Owen its attitude towards Welsh had been at best ambivalent, and even its most enthusiastic sponsors believed that it was more important for Wales’s national festival to project itself to the English-speaking world than to cherish and promote Welsh as a

<sup>257</sup> “Westgate’s National Eisteddfod with Dean Powell”, *Western Mail*, Saturday 12 August 2000, 11.

<sup>258</sup> As in Balsom’s model, which was still a relevant model for divisions of Welshness at the close of the century. [http://www.swansea.ac.uk/sssid/Postgraduate/PG%20Research%20-%20NE%20\(E\).htm](http://www.swansea.ac.uk/sssid/Postgraduate/PG%20Research%20-%20NE%20(E).htm)

living language. However, when the all-Welsh rule was instituted at the Caerffili Eisteddfod in 1950, this annual event became a standard-bearer of Welsh language and culture. For all its shortcomings – uneven literary standards, erratic adjudications and apolitical judgements – the Eisteddfod exercised a catalytic effect on Welsh learners and on the diffusion of literary, musical and dramatic skills.<sup>259</sup>

Certainly, the performance of identity at the National Eisteddfod was never more vociferous, clearly articulated and evocative than when related to the issues of Welsh language and national particularism. All of the primary themes of Welshness and Welsh nationhood, evident elsewhere in the discourse of the Eisteddfod, were evident in the debates surrounding the All-Welsh Rule during the middle of the twentieth century; for example, the juxtaposition between ideas of “tradition” and “modernity”, concepts of inclusion and exclusion and the role of the Welsh language in Welsh identity. Significantly, the All-Welsh Rule marked a transition in the narrative of Welsh national identity in regards to all of these areas. Three key points are apparent in the discourse surrounding the ruling.

Firstly, the Welsh language was increasingly viewed in Eisteddfodic discourse as fundamental to the identity of both the Eisteddfod and Wales, with the Eisteddfod seen as central to its preservation. The debate over the language rule demonstrated a transformation in Welsh society and subsequently in the perceived purpose of their national festival; the Eisteddfod was no longer the didactic institution of the Victorian period, but a preserver of a uniquely, and specifically Welsh-language, national culture. Indeed, the belief that the primary purpose of the Eisteddfod was to promote the Welsh language, and the corresponding specifically language-based culture, had been

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<sup>259</sup> Geraint H. Jenkins and Mari A. Williams, 2002, 20-21; Hywel Teifi Edwards, “Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Caerffili, 7-12 Awst 1950”, in Hywel Teifi Edwards ed., *Ebwy, Rhymni a Sirhywi* (Llandysul: Gomer, 1999), 190-218; *ibid.*, *The Eisteddfod*, 1990, 43.

becoming increasingly prevalent throughout the twentieth century. The chairman of the local executive committee in 1950 noted the changing role of the festival: "The main purpose of the Eisteddfod is to keep alive the genius of the nation. To do this we must keep the language alive, and the Eisteddfod is one of the best ways of accomplishing the task."<sup>260</sup> In 1967, J. E. Jones said the Eisteddfod was a site of linguistic improvement and growth.<sup>261</sup>

Second, nationalism, both cultural and political, became progressively and markedly more associated with the Welsh language as cultural movements such as *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg* and the National Eisteddfod became increasingly politicised. In fact, the cultural is often inherently political. As Abner Cohen says, festivals and cultural celebrations are simultaneously both cultural and political: "A cultural movement is *ipso facto* also a political movement. ... [It] may ostensibly appear to be a pure cultural performance, but it is inevitably political from the start."<sup>262</sup> What we assume are essentially cultural events are often "politics masquerading as culture", and are inherently political. That is, there is a definite political undertone and political connections to the event, particularly to the performance of identity.<sup>263</sup> The National Eisteddfod in the twentieth century was no different; throughout the century, it was a powerful platform for various expressions of political and *politicised* cultural identity. Indeed, the belief in the primacy of the Welsh language, and the use of the Eisteddfod as a platform through which to preserve and promote it, was both cultural and political.

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<sup>260</sup> Mr T. W. Thomas quoted by "Our Own Correspondent", *Western Mail*, Tuesday 8 August 1950, 1.

<sup>261</sup> Jones' sense of the Eisteddfod as a tool to revitalise culture in Wales – not necessarily *Welsh* culture – was similar to the ideology of the Saunders Lewis generation of nationalists. Armon Jones, *Liverpool Daily Post*, Tuesday 15 August 1967, 5.

<sup>262</sup> Abner Cohen, *Masquerade Politics: Explorations in the Structure of Urban Cultural Movements* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 8, 154.

<sup>263</sup> From the discussion of the politics of everyday ritual in John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, 1997, 11.



Further, it tied together two of the broader themes manifested at the Eisteddfod: the role of the language in Welsh identity and the dichotomy between “tradition” and “modernity”.

Finally, the twentieth century witnessed an increasingly popular radical politicisation of the nationalist movement and national identity, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. In this maturing Wales, cultural and political nationalism came of age, independently and together. The Home Rule movements of the *Cymru Fydd* generation, the cultural nationalist aims of Plaid Cymru in the middle years of the century, and the post-modern sense of “Cool Cymru” were all merged together in the electoral results of September 1997. Wales was on the map.

## Chapter Seven

### Conclusions

A WONDERFUL SHOP WINDOW FOR THE language: The product is the same; it's merely the selling that is different. On offer is the Welsh language and the Eisteddfod provides the proselytisers of this ailing heritage with the perfect opportunity to peddle their ware. There are as many ways of doing this as there are puddles on the Eisteddfod field. The irony of all this is of course, that they are to a great extent preaching to the converted. The great majority of the Eisteddfodwyr are Welsh speakers. Only a few, including myself, are to be seen walking about in a state of perpetual perplexity. Certainly that was the case at yesterday's eisteddfodic centrepiece, the ceremony of crowning the bard. One of the handful taking advantage of the simultaneous translation devices was Welsh Secretary, Mr Nicholas Edwards. The vast majority listened unaided to the ceremony, which is an odd mixture of high culture and low drama, costume drama at that. Urdd Gobaith Cymru manages a jovial, entrepreneurial approach on their stand. ... They have it off to a T-shirt, all emblazoned with their familiar triangle. ... There are Mistar Urdd dolls and Urdd-coloured fluffy rugby balls. But Urdd badges are best, they sell like hot Welsh cakes. You see, you get your own name stamped on them; plastered over the wall are examples of the names available, and herein lies propaganda of a none-too-subtle sort. ... These badges resound with the sonority of an entire culture. ... Yesterday morning a man was playing a set of bagpipes nearby; a Welsh flag fluttered from the predominant pipe. Another man performed a jaunty dance to the music. It failed to ease the solemnity in this showcase of hard-line Welsh language activism. A deadpan quartet, sat behind trestle tables loaded with literature. There were posters of the struggle variety, a hand clasping a shovel, digging for language victory. Adfer did not appear to be doing very good business. ... The walls were festooned with demographic information, language speakership charts, and visual examples of the English language invasion. ... A different approach to language preservation... a community that believes the continued survival of the Welsh language is fundamental to the survival of their entire way of life – which is, of course, a decidedly enviable way of life in the eyes of the urban majority.<sup>1</sup>

This was how David Hughes described the multi-faceted nature of the National Eisteddfod of Wales to readers of the *Western Mail* in 1979. In many ways, the metaphor of a shop window was appropriate for the Eisteddfod in the twentieth century.

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<sup>1</sup> David Hughes, *Western Mail*, Wednesday 8 August 1979, 4.

He saw the festival as a porthole to a particular culture, and more specifically, as a way of selling that culture to Wales and the world. Hughes emphasised several key characteristics of the late-twentieth century Eisteddfod: the romantically-conceived struggle of the language movement and political nationalism and their questionable popularity, the ailing language, the festival's subsequent ideological location within the heritage boom of late-twentieth century Britain and the distinctly "post-modern" sense of national identity focused around ideas of a marketable heritage. This heritage was sold to the people on the *Maes* through rugby balls, dolls and welsh cakes. In this way, Hughes explicitly emphasised the diverse nature of the festival, while implicitly drawing attention to the increasingly limited focus on language evident at the festival.

Throughout the twentieth century the festival was a complicated and contested cultural institution. As an invented tradition, at once ancient and modern, it was constructed to appear as if eternal, emerging slowly out of the misty past. Yet it *was* in fact actively created and constantly evolving. In this way, despite its questionable origins out of a pseudo-historic past, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the National Eisteddfod was an established feature of Welsh culture and identity. It had evolved to include a wide variety of elements. Moreover, it was a powerful symbol of nationhood. As such, it is a useful vehicle through which to examine the various identities being performed on its stages.

During the examination of these discursive performances throughout the century, certain themes have become evident. Firstly, the National Eisteddfod of Wales has always been a highly politicized event. Whether it was around the Welsh language, party politics, or moral and religious issues, the festival was constantly a site for the contestation of ideas and identity in Wales. Although these discursive threads were often contrasting and demonstrative of different ideas of Welshness, they contributed to

multiple Eisteddfodic identities and an established sense of Welsh nationhood in Eisteddfodic discourse by the end of the century.

This concept was central to the idea of performance. Identity is highly political, in the purest sense. Furthermore, identity is performed by individuals in the public sphere, of which the Eisteddfod is part. Welshness was performed by Eisteddfodwyr on a variety of levels and in a number of ways during the twentieth century, using a reflexivity that is at the heart of Victor Turner's concept of performance, with its "magic mirrors" of society: "Performative reflexivity is a condition in which a sociocultural group, or its most perceptive members ... make up their 'public' selves. ... It is a highly contrived, artificial, of culture not nature, a deliberate and voluntary work of art."<sup>2</sup> These performances occurred all over the various "stages" of the National Eisteddfod. Indeed, the identity-forming aspects of the Eisteddfod extended beyond the narrowly-defined performances in the Pavilion, to the images displayed in the media, and to the general discourse surrounding the Eisteddfod.<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, Welsh identity was focused around a strong sense of the past, particularly a *national* one. This focus was evident in all aspects of the performance of identity at the Eisteddfod: in the discussions about the site of performance, the performers, and in the performance of identity itself. However, this focus did not exist without an extant tension between ideas of "tradition" and "modernity" that was evident throughout the century. Indeed, the continuous discursive interplay between ideas of "tradition" and "modernity" emphasised this fascination in and engagement with the past, albeit one that was often mythologized and romanticised.

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<sup>2</sup> Victor Turner, 1977/1969, 24, 22.

<sup>3</sup> Charlotte Davies' study of the National Eisteddfod in the late twentieth century reveals a similarly performance-oriented, discursive sense of Welshness, extending the concept of participatory agency in performance and ritual: "the National Eisteddfod has always been a performance directed not only to audiences actually present in the space that it annually constructs for itself but also, through media representations, to audiences both real and imagined elsewhere." Charlotte Davies, 1998, 145.

Tom Nairn says that there is a reactionary nature to romantic nationalism that results from anxiety about the perceived threat of modernity and thus mobilises the masses around an idealised view of the “safe” past.<sup>4</sup> This idea of the past often revolved around a clear sense of antiquity and tradition at the Eisteddfod, and was reflected by efforts at preservationism. Further, it was often explicitly connected to nationalistic discourse. It relied especially upon the myth of the *gwerin* and an associated rural idyll, and was manifested increasingly through concern about the threat to the language and the associated “traditional” way of life. However, “tradition” is not constant; it is “created, negotiable, influenced by ideology, and subject to continued reinterpretation and change”.<sup>5</sup> It has no “*a priori* existence in the past, but is created through communicative processes in the present”. Moreover, as demonstrated in this thesis, it is often overtly political.<sup>6</sup>

The desire to ground a sense of Welshness in a perceived Welsh heritage reflects Anthony Smith’s idea of nationhood. He says that although it is largely “imagined”, nationhood is grounded in some degree of “reality”, which provides “authenticity” to the nation and its citizens.<sup>7</sup> Simultaneously, however, in Wales there was a perceived need, based in economic issues, to adapt to modernity and present Wales as a viable and up-to-date nation with an international future. As Wales made the transition to a post-industrial economy, the financial state of its national festival became increasingly threatened. The composition and ideology of the festival attempted to keep

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<sup>4</sup> Further: “Nationalism has always been a struggle to connect romantically conceived traditions and culture with the need for modern social and economic development. In modern Welsh history these two things are thrust together with special intensity, imposing a duty of political leadership on the national movement.” Tom Nairn, “Culture and Politics in Wales”, in Ian Hume and W. T. R. Pryce, eds, *The Welsh and Their Country* (Llandysul: Gomer, 1986), 211.

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth C. Fine and Jean H. Speer, 1992, 16-17.

<sup>6</sup> “The dialectic between continuity of tradition in performance and the invention of tradition” has overt political overtones. Richard Handler and Joyce Linnekin, “Tradition: Genuine or Spurious”, *Journal of American Folklore* 97 (1984): 273-290.

<sup>7</sup> Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991); *ibid.*, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1986).

pace with the changing world, while trying to maintain a particular cultural and political *status quo*. Such a disjunction between ideas of “tradition” and “modernity” is perhaps inherent in such an “invented tradition”. Currently, the National Eisteddfod is categorized as part of the “complex network of institutions whose activities are tourist-related” in Wales.<sup>8</sup> This ideological location situates the festival within the broad network of the “heritage industry” and thereby reinforces the idea of a Wales forever caught between the past and the present. This juxtaposition is central to Welshness.

A third conclusion is that throughout the twentieth century there was a change in perceptions of Welsh identity evident at the National Eisteddfod. There was a movement away from essentialism and towards cultural factors as signifiers of identity. The identity manifested early in the century was based on different criteria than that of the end of the century; it was focused on various binary comparisons, situated in geographic and biological difference. Although at the beginning of the twentieth century there was certainly emphasis placed on perceived Welsh cultural talents, Welsh identity was based primarily on racial characteristics and geographic boundaries. Demographic movement and changing conceptions of national and ethnic groups during the twentieth century have meant that Welsh identities have become more fluid and are based on broader criteria. Moreover, certain cultural signifiers that were in a nascent form at the beginning of the century had matured by the end of it, and became perceived as fundamental components of Welsh identity by the twenty-first century.

Thus, increasingly, in Eisteddfodic discourse Welshness became defined around cultural signifiers such as the myth of the *gwerin*, the language, and myths of musicality. Despite being assigned an enduring and intransient status, these traits were cultural constructs. The reliance on such ephemeral traits meant that at the end of the

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<sup>8</sup> Others include the Welsh Tourist Board, Cadw, and the Arts Council for Wales. See D. Gareth Evans, 2000, 171.

twentieth century there was arguably a stronger sense of Welsh nationhood, but it was chiefly ideological and based in a non-existent past. It also meant that the notion of hybridity was central to Welsh culture throughout the century. Rather than being based in the authenticity that many of these sources advocated, Welsh culture was a mixture of many influences, internal and external. It was, as Doreen Massey says, the “product of interaction”.<sup>9</sup> This was evidenced through the discourses on the diaspora and youth culture, and the ways in which they introduced comparative and competing senses of Welshness.

Fourth, the National Eisteddfod has evolved from an institution for all Welsh people, and focused on culture *in* Wales, to an institution specifically focusing on Welsh language culture. As such, it became a narrower institution, employing a correspondingly narrower definition of Welshness. Rather than the earlier outlook that emphasised the utility of the festival for all of the Welsh people, the festival at the end of the century concentrated on the preservation and maintenance of a small linguistic community.

Indeed, the birth and the continued controversial nature of the language debate dominated the Eisteddfod – and Wales – throughout the century. Certainly, the language became one of the most politicised signifiers of identity in Wales. Its evolution as such, notably reflected through the increased attention paid to the language at the National Eisteddfod, reflected the decline in the strength of the language throughout Wales. In fact, there was a correlation between the decline of the language in Wales, and on the *Maes*, and the emphasis placed on the language at the Eisteddfod. The language, as reflective of part of a particularly Welsh past, was perceived to be

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<sup>9</sup> Doreen Massey, 1998, 122.

fundamental to maintaining a particularly Welsh identity. In the particular world where the Welsh language existed, its future was paramount.

The political identities assigned to the language were powerful, and closely connected to concepts of “tradition” and “modernity”. Although there were efforts to sustain an artificial regeneration of the language, this aspect of Wales and Welshness was frequently consigned to the past, further distancing both the Eisteddfod and the Welsh-speaking population of Wales, from the everyday Welsh life and bulk of the Welsh population. The words of Philip Squire at the 1979 Eisteddfod are still relevant when discussing the Eisteddfod in the twenty-first century:

National Choice: Living Museum Or Bilingual: The National Eisteddfod is in danger of becoming a living museum. ... The more isolated it becomes, the more difficult it will be for it to survive. ... ‘How relevant is the present Welsh National Eisteddfod? For many still living in largely Welsh-speaking areas it retains its magic, but we ask what influence does the institution now hold over the young of our South Wales towns and villages? ... Can the National Eisteddfod speak to them in any way? ... We feel that never before has the need for a strong national cultural institution to feed our minds and spirits been so great. ... In an age of radical change I do not believe that the most venerable of our institutions can afford – or is likely to be allowed – to stand still. ... Sooner or later the national is going to have to grasp the nettle and decide whether its first responsibility is towards the language or the people. ... Should they adhere closely to their traditional and vital role of promoting the finest use of Welsh, or should the Eisteddfod shoulder an even greater responsibility – that of setting standards of artistic achievement and merit recognisable as a challenge by all Welshmen? ... One thing is certain. The more isolated the language and its institutions become, the more difficult it will be for them to survive. ... The Welsh National Eisteddfod must be prepared either to take late 20<sup>th</sup> century Wales by the seat of its pants, or face the risk of becoming more and more a living museum. The day it becomes the property only of a particular group of our nation will be a sad day for us all.’<sup>10</sup>

Finally, the National Eisteddfod, while not representative of all of Wales, did reflect some Welsh people and Welshness in the twentieth century. As the festival’s

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<sup>10</sup> Mr Philip Squire, leader of Mid Glamorgan County council, and contributor to the Communist Party magazine *Cyffro*, in *Western Mail*, Thursday 9 August 1979, 2.



purpose changed through the course of the century, and it became a vehicle for Welsh-speaking Wales, it became reflective of only a particular segment of the Welsh nation, further polarizing the predominately Welsh-speaking Eisteddfodwyr from the majority of the Welsh people. Within these limits, the Eisteddfod could be perceived as representative of Welsh-speaking Wales and thus as a microcosm of a particular identity.

Festivals such as the Eisteddfod provide excellent means through which to study identity because they are popularly considered to be illustrative of a particular region's identity, as performed in the public sphere; they are "bellwethers of social developments".<sup>11</sup> It is widely agreed that cultural festivals are more than tangible events; they are an important ideological locus of nationality in modern society and provide a vehicle for promoting and reinvigorating a sense of group identity. As such, they have the ability and tendency to unite and educate the people around a particular identity.<sup>12</sup> In the case of the Eisteddfod, that identity was not focused so much around a geographic regional identity as an ideological linguistic identity.

However, complications arise from the centrality attached to the language which, in the place of geographical and biological signifiers of identity, assigns a sense of purity to that particular Welshness. This cultural essentialism places structural limits on the participatory community, which in turn limits the extent to which such a festival can represent a geographic community. Thus, the extent to which such a performance can accurately reflect a culture, even a limited specific one, in its entirety is debatable and depends on certain factors. First of all, the linear boundaries are questionable. Can

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<sup>11</sup> Chris Rasmussen, 1992, 21. "The public sphere ... is the totality formed by the communicative interaction of all groups, even nominally dominant and subaltern." See also Mike Hill and Warren Montag, "Introduction", in Mike Hill and Warren Montag, eds, *Masses, Classes, and the Public Sphere* (London: Verso, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> Often this identity is a (consciously) nostalgic and romantic one. Chris Rasmussen, 1992.

such a brief performance represent that culture for the duration of the year? As Adrian Forty says, the representative nature of festivals is questionable; they are just a brief moment in time, rather than a site of performance that can be used as a lens through which to view society.<sup>13</sup>

Secondly, and more importantly in the discussion of Wales, the ideological boundaries of the culture are problematic. For example, does the Eisteddfod assume representative characteristics for *all* of Wales, all of Welsh-speaking Wales, or just for Eisteddfodwyr? As a popular public festival in the twentieth century, the National Eisteddfod often was considered to be a microcosm of Welshness. Certainly, the Eisteddfod, and its various component parts, was *a* symbol of Welshness, just as rugby was, or male voice choirs.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, through Turner's "magic mirrors", one can view the performance of a particular Welsh identity. But, as demonstrated above, this performance was limited to that of the Eisteddfodwyr, a narrow segment of the Welsh-speaking population in Wales. It cannot have been representative of all of Welsh people. It was only constitutive of part of Welsh culture. Despite "magic mirrors", festivals such as the Eisteddfod are only reflective of the people who participate in them.

This narrowness problematises the notion of the public sphere. The concept of the public sphere traditionally assumes total participation, or the capability to participate, and is not wholly satisfactory when discussing cultural festivals such as the Eisteddfod in which such strong limits are placed on participants. Certainly, the

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<sup>13</sup> Adrian Forty similarly described the Festival of Britain as a national "narcotic"; "Like all the great fetes in history it solved nothing, but, for a brief fleeting moment, it presented a mirage of hope." Mary Banham and Bevis Hillier, 1976, 9.

<sup>14</sup> Bourdieu says that culture can no longer be seen as a self-contained text, but must be seen in a political, social and economic context of change that must be approached through its symbols. Culture is very much a 'symbolic world', where a symbol is any object, act, event, quality or relation which serves as a vehicle for conception. Roger Chartier, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1988), 102.

Eisteddfod was theoretically accessible to everyone, in varying degrees, but only if they subscribed to a particular identity. In this way, the Eisteddfod was located within the public sphere; however it was just one part of the public sphere in twentieth-century Wales, whose composition and function were constantly changing, as restrictions were placed upon its boundaries. Or perhaps it was indicative of a plurality of public spheres, containing an even wider plurality of power struggles and discursive voices, speaking in various languages.

Thus, the degree to which the Eisteddfod was representative of *all* varieties and forms of Welshness in the twentieth century was determined by the popularity of that festival and the limitations placed on it. Because of the changes occurring in twentieth-century Wales and the festival's subsequent ideological focus, and perhaps more so than many similar festivals, the Eisteddfod evolved into a limited celebration of a particular identity: Welsh-language Welshness. It symbolised a particular identity, just as rugby did, or the Chapel. In this context, the validity for this study of the Eisteddfod as a discursive site for the construction of Welsh identity is unquestionable. Many more people in Wales than attend the festival, or than even speak Welsh, assign significance to the Eisteddfod as *a* signifier of identity. It is not the only such indicator, but an important one. Thus, it is popularly recognised as *a* symbol of Welshness. Further, whereas the Eisteddfod cannot be said to represent all Welsh people, or all variations on Welshness, it can be said to represent *some* of Welshness and Wales. The Eisteddfod does not speak for everyone in Wales, but it does reflect change.

Today, Wales is in an extraordinary position. The Welsh nation is more of a tangible reality than ever before. Yet what it means to be Welsh is popularly recognised to be more complex and fluid than ever before. Because it is fluid and unfixed, it is something that is adaptable and subject to personal interpretation. Rather like a coat

that is changeable with the weather, Welshness changes with the times and popular opinion. Although certain threads of identity remain constant, constructing the fabric of Welsh identity throughout the century, it is woven into fabric and sewn into different coats by conscious and unconscious identification with ideas. In this way, Welsh people may choose how to identify themselves, and on what signifiers they hang their coats of Welshness. Thus, just as identity is fluid and elastic, the future of Wales, very much rooted in the past, is for the Welsh people to decide.

As the National Eisteddfod of Wales enters the twenty-first century, it is a troubled institution. Its purpose evolved during the last century, narrowing its focus, but equally, strengthening its political purpose. As it struggles to keep a profit, financial issues may plague the festival, but, as a cultural institution, it is sound. Its objective is the nourishment and maintenance of the language, as a way of preserving both the festival and the correlated sense of Welsh identity. That identity is itself tied to the past, but also to the future. However, unlike in the past, it is no longer controversial, but an established function of the preservation of a Welsh "heritage". To extend the above metaphor, the Eisteddfod is like a vintage coat; it may be a bit threadbare and patched, but it has its own unique style that is timeless and appealing. However, not everyone will wear it.

## Appendix One

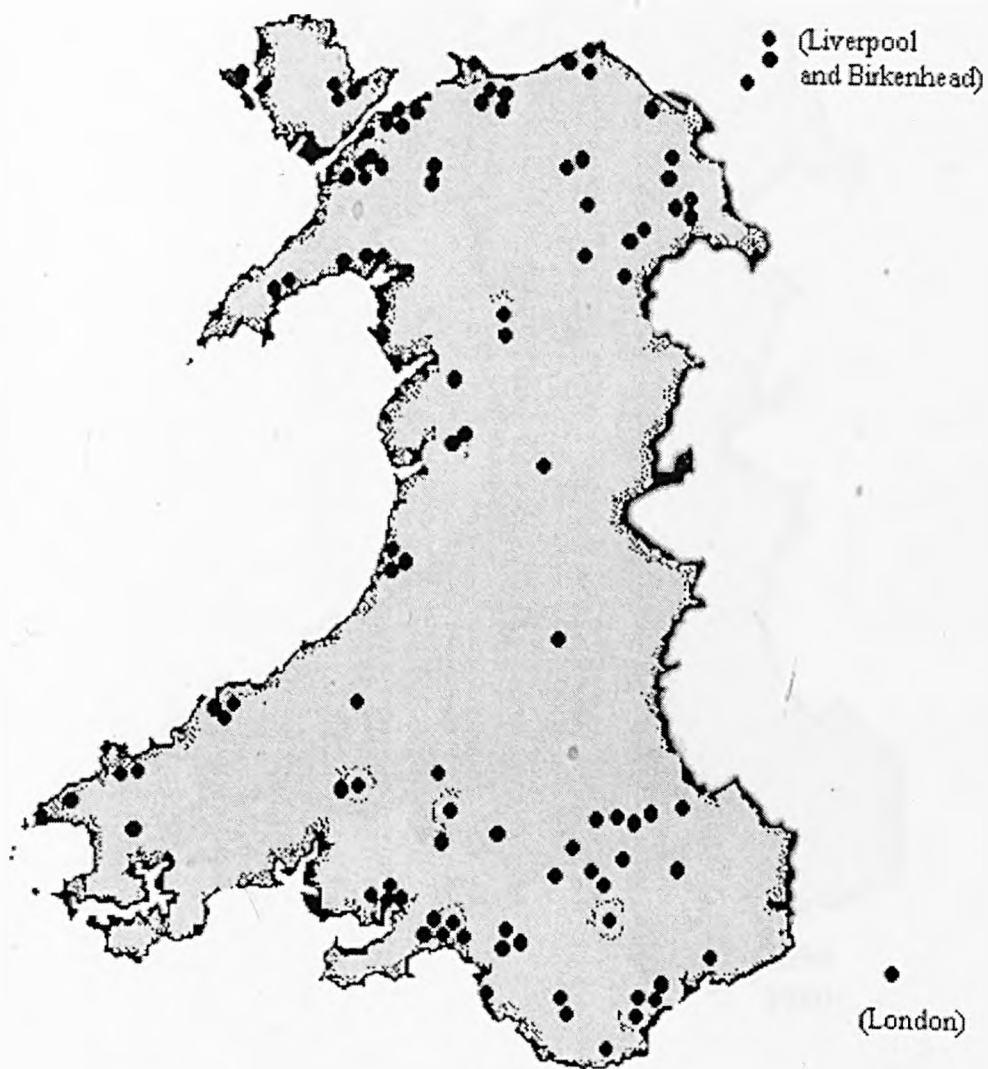
### National Eisteddfodau of the Long Twentieth Century

1899	Cardiff (Caerdydd)
1900	Liverpool (Lerpwl)
1901	Merthyr
1902	Bangor
1903	Llanelli
1904	Rhyl
1905	Mountain Ash (Aberpennar)
1906	Caernarfon
1907	Swansea (Abertawe)
1908	Llangollen
1909	London (Llundain)
1910	Colwyn Bay (Bae Colwyn)
1911	Carmarthen (Caerfyrddin)
1912	Wrexham (Wreccsam)
1913	Abergavenny (Y Fenni)
1914	----
1915	Bangor
1916	Aberystwyth
1917	Birkenhead
1918	Neath (Castell-Nedd)
1919	Corwen
1920	Barry
1921	Caernarfon
1922	Ammanford (Rhydawan)
1923	Mold (Yr Wgddgrug)
1924	Pontypool
1925	Pwllheli
1926	Swansea (Abertawe)
1927	Holyhead (Caergybi)
1928	Treorchi
1929	Liverpool (Lerpwl)
1930	Llanelli
1931	Bangor
1932	Aberfan
1933	Wrexham (Wreccsam)
1934	Neath (Castell Nedd)
1935	Caernarfon
1936	Fishguard (Abergwaun)
1937	Machynlleth
1938	Cardiff (Caerdydd)
1939	Denbigh (Dyrbich)
1940	(radio)
1941	Old Colwyn
1942	Cardigan (Aberteifi)
1943	Bangor
1944	Llandybie
1945	Rhosllannerchrugog
1946	Mountain Ash (Aberpennar)
1947	Colwyn Bay (Bae Colwyn)
1948	Bridgend (Penybont)
1949	Dolgellau

1950	Caerffili
1951	Llanrwst
1952	Aberystwyth
1953	Rhyl
1954	Ystradgynlais
1955	Pwllheli
1956	Aberdare
1957	Llangefni
1958	Ebbw Vale (Glynebwy)
1959	Caernarfon
1960	Cardiff (Caerdydd)
1961	Rhosllannerchrugog (Dyffryn Maelor)
1962	Llanelli
1963	Llandudno
1964	Swansea (Abertawe)
1965	Newtown (Y Drenewydd)
1966	Aberafon
1967	Y Bala
1968	Barry (Y Barri)
1969	Flint
1970	Ammanford (Rhydawan)
1971	Bangor
1972	Haverfordwest (Aberdaugleddau)
1973	Ruthin
1974	Carmarthen ( <u>Caerfyrddin</u> )
1975	Criccieth
1976	Cardigan (Aberteifi)
1977	Wrexham (Wrecsam)
1978	Cardiff (Caerdydd)
1979	Caernarfon
1980	Gowerton (Tregwyr)
1981	Machynlleth
1982	Swansea (Abertawe)
1983	Llangefni
1984	Lampeter (Llanbedr Pont Steffan)
1985	Rhyl
1986	Fishguard
1987	Porthmadoc
1988	Newport Mon (Casnewydd)
1989	Llanrwst
1990	Rhymni Valley
1991	Mold
1992	Aberystwyth
1993	Llanelwedd
1994	Neath (Castell Nedd)
1995	Bro Colwyn
1996	Bro Dinefwr
1997	(Port)Meirion
1998	Bridgend (Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr)
1999	Llangefni
2000	Llanelli a'r Cylch
2001	Denbigh (Dyrbich)
2002	St Davids (Tyddewi)
2003	Meifod

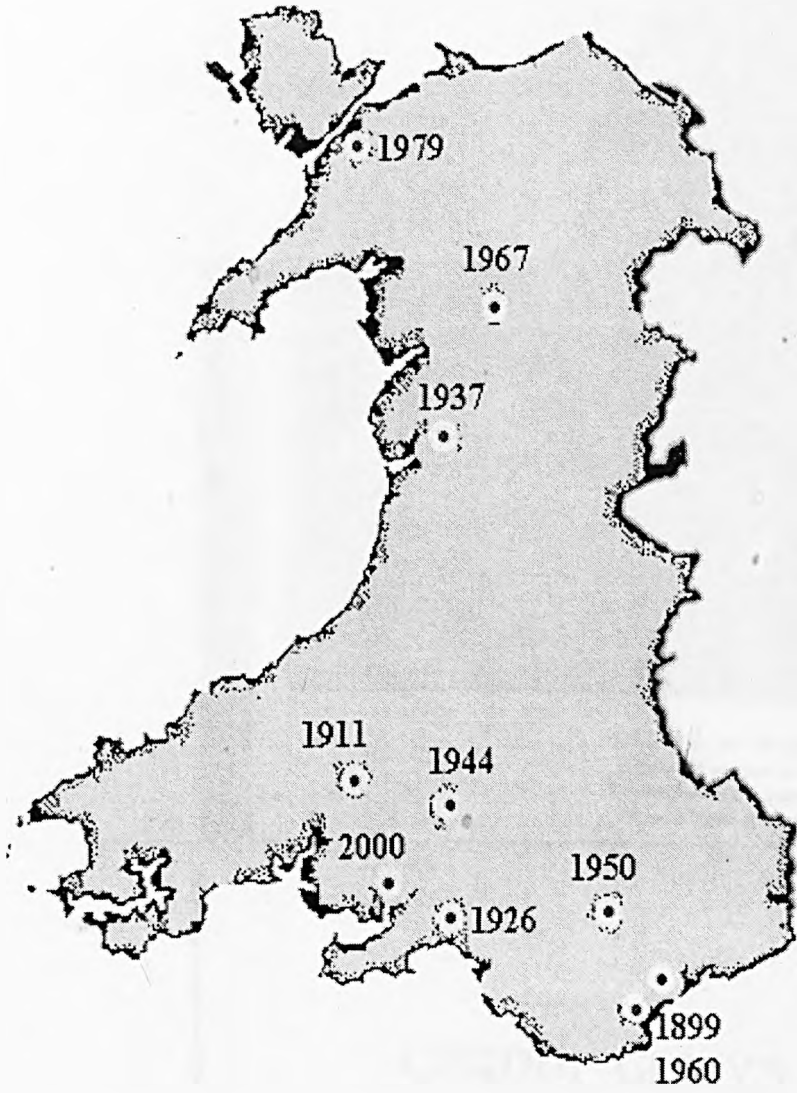
## Appendix Two

### Map of National Eisteddfodau 1899-2000



## Appendix Three

### Map of Selected National Eisteddfodau





## Appendix Five

### The Political and Cultural Background of the *Western Mail*

The *Western Mail* was a politically Conservative newspaper throughout the twentieth century. Originally owned by the Bute family, it expressed their views on Welsh politics and culture in the early years of the century. The paper supported British involvement in the First World War, unlike many other Welsh newspapers, although it was antagonistic towards increased levels of state control. It was particularly anti-Labour during the depressions of the 1920s and 1930s. As such, it was remarkably popular, even in Liberal towns, particularly in the post-war period. This was evidence that politics of the press were not as important to the population as daily coverage of Welsh news – of which the *Western Mail* was increasingly one of the few carriers.<sup>1</sup>

For much of the century, the *Western Mail's* attitudes towards devolution were reluctant at best. At the beginning of the century, it was adamantly pro-British and unsupportive of Home Rule or any form of devolution. Notably, in 1937 it made a firmly critical stand against “radical” nationalist protest. It retained this position for much of the century, only clearly converting to support for devolutionist policies in the aftermath of the 1979 referendum. Its coverage of Plaid Cymru became noticeably less critical, although it remained unsupportive of the party. One of the Eisteddfodic headlines was: “Picture by ‘Bomber’ was designed in prison.” While still critical of the actions, and hence, labelling him the “bomber” rather than the “patriot”, the derisive tone of earlier generations was missing.<sup>2</sup>

The *Western Mail's* position regarding the Welsh language changed as the century progressed, becoming increasingly liberal and supportive of the Welsh language. At the beginning of the century it was “sympathetic but inconsistent”; it became increasingly supportive of the preservation of the Welsh language by the 1920s, although its commitment varied with particular circumstances.<sup>3</sup> For example, it was supported Welsh language education, but emphasised bilingualism rather than an enforced use of Welsh.<sup>4</sup> By the post-war period, it continued to be sympathetic towards Welsh medium education and perceived the very real danger to the language from anglicising forces, although it still saw inward migration of English-speakers into Wales positively.<sup>5</sup> By the 1960s the paper became increasingly supportive of the Welsh language, although it remained opposed to the tactics of language campaigners.<sup>6</sup> In the 1980s the paper developed a strong pro-Welsh attitude that grew particularly strong as the century closed.<sup>7</sup> However the paper's stand regarding the language was that it was primarily voluntary. It was in favour of enabling Welsh speakers to use the language in various realms of Welsh life, but did not support the opinion that the language was “essential” to Welsh life.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Aled Gruffydd Jones, *Press, Politics and Society: A History of Journalism in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993), 218-220.

<sup>2</sup> *Western Mail*, Tuesday 7 August 1979, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Smith, “Journalism and the Welsh Language”, in Geraint H. Jenkins and Mari A. Williams, eds, *Let's Do Our Best for the Ancient Tongue* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 309.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Smith, 282-283.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Smith, 288-289, 292.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Smith, 294, 299.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Smith, 309.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Smith, 302.

## Appendix Six

### Newspaper Column Inches for Samples Years.

One way of attempting to quantitatively measure interest in things Welsh is to measure the amount of column inches, or lines, available in major newspapers discussing the Eisteddfod for each focus year of this study.

#### *The Times*

Year	Lines of text	Pictures	Days of coverage	Headlines/Day	Total length of paper
1899	105	0	2	1/2	6 columns (16 pages)
1911	91	0	3	2/2/1	6 columns (14-24 pages)
1926	302	1	3	3/3/2	7 columns (16-22 pages)
1937	0	0	0	0	7 columns (20-22 pages)
1944*	0	0	0	0	7 columns (8-10 pages)
1950	426	0	6	1/4/3/4/3/4/3	7 columns (8-10 pages)
1960	304	2	4	2/2/2	7 columns (12-16 pages)
1967	403	5	4	3/3/3+2/1	9 columns (22 pages)
1979	486	0	6	3/3/3/3/2/3	8 columns (22-28 pages)
2000	214	0	1	6	8 columns (36-56 pages plus supplements)

\*Paper rationing was in place.

## Appendix Seven

### Votes Cast at General Elections in Wales 1945 – 1970

Party	1945	1950	1951	1955	1959	1964	1966	1970	1974 (Feb)	1974 (Oct)	1979	1983	1987	1992	1997
Labour	779,184	888,674	926,118	825,690	841,447	837,022	863,692	781,941	745,547	761,447	795,493	603,858	765,209	865,633	886,935
%	58.5	58.4	60.5	57.6	56.5	57.8	60.7	51.6	46.8	49.5	48.6	37.5	45.1	49.5	54.6
Conservative	301,978	418,706	471,269	428,866	486,335	425,022	396,795	419,884	412,535	367,248	526,254	499,310	501,316	499,677	317,127
%	22.6	27.4	30.8	29.9	32.6	29.4	27.8	27.7	25.9	23.9	32.2	31.0	29.5	28.6	19.6
Liberal	198,553	193,090	116,826	104,095	78,951	106,114	89,108	103,747	255,428	238,997	173,725	373,358	304,230	217,457	200,020
%	14.9	12.6	7.6	7.3	5.3	7.3	6.3	6.9	16.0	15.5	10.6	23.2	17.9	12.4	12.3
Plaid Cymru	14,751	17,580	10,920	45,119	77,571	69,507	61,071	175,016	171,364	166,321	132,544	125,309	123,599	156,796	161,030
%	1.1	1.2	0.8	3.2	5.2	4.8	4.3	11.5	10.8	10.8	8.1	7.8	7.3	9.0	9.9
Communist	15,751	9,120	2,948	4,544	6,542	9,377	12,769	6,459	4,293	2,941	4,310	2,015	869	245	--
%	1.2	0.6	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.7	0.9	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	--
Other	20,444	2,142	1,643	25,410	408	--	--	29,507	4,671	854	4,426	36,736	2,873	8,988	54,591
%	1.6	.01	.01	1.8	0.0	--	--	1.9	0.3	0.0	0.3	2.3	0.1	0.6	3.4
Total Electorate	1,745,885	1,802,182	1,812,714	1,801,217	1,805,684	1,805,454	1,801,872	1,960,521	1,593,833	1,537,798	1,636,788	1,608,986	1,698,096	1,748,796	1,619,703

See Alan Butt Philip, 1975, 84, 99; Beti Jones, *Etholiadau'r Ganrif/Welsh Elections, 1885-1997* (Talybont: Y Lolfa Cyf., 1999).

## Appendix Eight

### Electoral Support for Plaid Cymru in the twentieth Century.

General Election	Number <i>Plaid Cymru</i> candidates	Number <i>Plaid Cymru</i> elected	% <i>Plaid Cymru</i> vote
1929	1	0	1.6
1931	2	0	3.0/29.1*
1935	1	0	6.9
1945	7	0	1.1
1950	7	0	1.2
1955	11	0	3.2
1959	20	3	5.2
1964	23	0	4.8
1966	20	0	4.3
1970	36	0	11.5
February 1974	36	2	10.7
October 1974	36	3	10.8
1979	36	2	8.1
1983	38	2	8.1
1987	38	3	7.3
1992	38	4	9.0
1997	40	4	9.9

\* percentage for each candidate.

See Laura McAllister, *Plaid Cymru: the emergence of a political party* (Bridgend: Seren, 2001), 112-113; D. Hywel Davies, *The Welsh Nationalist Party, 1925 – 1945: A Call to Nationhood* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1983), 271.

### Plaid Cymru Performance in Parliamentary By-Elections 1943-1965.

Month/Year	Seat Contested	% Share of Poll	Place in Contest
January 1943	University of Wales	22.5	n/a
April 1945	Caernarfon Boroughs	24.8	n/a
May 1945	Neath	16.2	n/a
June 1946	Ogmore	29.4	2/2
December 1946	Aberdare	20.0	2/3
October 1954	Aberdare	16.0	2/3
March 1955	Wrexham	11.3	3/3
July 1956	Newport	3.8	3/3
February 1957	Carmarthen	11.5	3/3
November 1958	Pontypool	10.0	3/3
November 1960	Ebbw Vale	7.0	3/3
March 1962	Montgomery	6.2	4/4
March 1963	Swansea, East	5.2	4/6
April 1965	Abertilly	6.7	3/3

See F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Statistics, 1918-1968* (Glasgow: Political Reference Publications, 1968), Table B2, 25-35; D. Hywel Davies, 1983, 271.

## Appendix Nine

### Perceptions of Nationality, in the 1997 Referendum

Age Group	Welsh but not British	More Welsh than British	As Welsh as British	More British than Welsh	British but not Welsh	Other
18-24	25	23	35	10	7	0
25-34	24	26	26	13	8	3
35-44	19	22	36	5	12	5
45-54	17	23	31	11	14	5
55-64	11	28	37	8	8	8
65+	8	26	35	12	18	2

See Evans, Geoffrey, and Dafydd Trystan, "Why was 1997 Different?", in Taylor, Bridget and Katarina Thomson, eds, *Scotland and Wales: Nations Again?* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 95-118.

## Appendix Ten

### Percentages voting for Devolution in 1997, by Age Group.

Age Group	Yes	No	No Vote
18-24	19	15	66
25-34	31	21	48
35-44	33	23	44
54-54	31	43	27
55-64	36	37	27
65+	32	40	29

See Evans, Geoffrey, and Dafydd Trystan, "Why was 1997 Different?", in Taylor, Bridget and Katarina Thomson, eds, *Scotland and Wales: Nations Again?* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 95-118.

## Appendix Eleven

### Parliamentary representation from Wales 1979 -1997.

Party	1979	1983	1987	1992	1997
Labour	21	20	24	27	34
Conservative	11	14	8	6	0
Liberal	1	2	3	1	2
Plaid Cymru	2	2	3	4	4
Others	1	0	0	0	0
Total	36	38	38	38	40

See Denis Balsom, "Political Developments in Wales 1979 – 1997", in *The Road to the National Assembly for Wales*, Jones, J. Barry and Denis Balsom, eds, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000).

### Results of the National Assembly for Wales Elections, May 1999.

Party	% Vote (Constituency Ballot)	Number of Seats (Constituency Ballot)	% Vote (Regional Ballot)	Number of Seats (Regional Ballot)	Total AMs elected
Labour	37.6	27	35.5	1.0	28
Plaid Cymru	28.4	9	30.6	8.0	17
Conservative	15.9	1	16.5	8.0	9
Liberal Democrats	13.5	3	12.6	3.0	6
Others	4.7	0	4.9	0	0
Total					60

\* Plaid Cymru won 6.8 per cent of the votes cast in the 1997 General Election, but in 1999 they won 28.4 per cent of the constituency vote and 30.59 per cent of the regional vote.

See Laura McAllister, *Plaid Cymru: the emergence of a political party* (Bridgend: Seren, 2001), 114;

<http://www.llgc.org.uk/ygyrchu/Pleidleisio/Etholiadau/1999/index-e.htm>.

## Appendix Twelve

### *Gêm y 'Steddfod: Holl hwyl yr ŵyl – a'i helynt*

Hawlfraint Y Lolfa (Talybont, Ceredigion: Y Lolfa, 1977).

This was a board game aimed at children, in which the objective was to manoeuvre a player's piece around the board, or *Maes*. It provided an accurate yet humorous representation of what was on the *Maes* in 1977.

Y Pafiliwn	Meithrin
Y Babell Lân	Undeb y Tanwyr
Y Dysgwyr	Ysgolion Dwyieithog
Celf a Chreffft	Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru
Eisteddfod Nesaf	Y Faner
Babell Fywd	Cadwyn
Ffwdan!	Undeb Celtaidd
Hufen Ia (2)	Y Lolfa
Ffrwythau (2)	Hwyl
Llaeth	Melin Wlan
Cyfaill (3)	Kymru Krafts
Paned	Cwmni Theatr Cymru
Ffôn	Comisiwn Coedwigo
Nyrs	Gasg Gomer
Maes Parcio	Ffermwyr Ifanc
Banc	San Ffagan
Heddlu	Llyfrgell Genedlaethol
Swyddfa'r Post	Maharishi Krishna
Ymholiadau	Sain
	Cyngor Llyfrau Cymraeg
BBC	Siop y Pethe
HTV	Merched y Wawr
Yr Urdd	Adfer
Barddas	<i>Western Mail</i>
<i>Y Cymro</i>	
Cylc Catholig	
Pabell Ddrama	
Swyddfa'r Cymraeg	
Tai Gwynedd	
Gymdeithas Wyddonol	
Undeb Amaethwyr Cymru	
Cymdeithas yr Iaith	
Henebion	
Dawnsio Gwerin	
UCAC	
Prifysgol Cymru	
Crudcymalau	
Cerdd Dant	
Y Ddraig Goch	
Y Efengylwyr	



# MANUSCRIPTS

## NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES

### Cliff Bere Papers – File 8

- 8/22 - Court papers regarding case of flag burning at 1950 National
- 8/29 - Unlabeled newspapers clipping: “Men Who Burned Flag, Fined” (1950)
- 8/36 – “Mudiad Gweriniaethol Cymru – Cronfa Lysoedd” (1950)
- 8/2 – Court papers (1950)

### Correspondence and artwork regarding Arts and Crafts Committee at Swansea (1964)

- Miscellaneous letters about loaning works of art

### Dr Brynley F. Roberts Papers

- Materials regarding Literary Committee 1982 Swansea (1980-1982)

### Dr Colin A. Gresham Papers – File 9

- Llys yr Eisteddfod Genedlaethol *Cyfrol Deyrnged* i Syr Thomas Parry-Williams (c. Chwefror, 1967)
- Fundraising note, in Welsh, for Bala, 1967
- Cyfansoddiad (for Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru) pub. 1976 (also 1959, 1962, 1964, 1972, 1976)
- Llawlyfr ac adroddiad Llys yr Eisteddfod – list of druids/bards/etc.

### D. R. Davies Papers – Box 52

- Scrapbook regarding Hedd Wyn at Birkenhead National Eisteddfod (1917)

### D. R. Hughes Papers

- Box 57: Materials regarding Eisteddfod 1900
- Box 61: Materials regarding London Eisteddfod 1909
- Box 62: Materials regarding Eisteddfod 1929
- Box 63: Materials regarding Eisteddfod 1933
- Box 64: Materials regarding Eisteddfod 1934
- Box 68: Materials regarding Eisteddfod 1944, mostly Cymanfa Ganu

### Dr Mary Williams Papers – Box 1161, Box 1162, Box 1163

- Various materials regarding Barry National Eisteddfod (from 1967)

### Elwyn Roberts (2) Papers – Boxes 18-19

- Newspaper cuttings and other materials about 1951 in Llanrwst (1948-1952)

### Emrys Roberts Papers – File 15

- “Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru: Agor Arddangosfa Celfyddyd a Chrefft”
- “Byrbryd yr Awdurdodau Lleol, Bala, 11 Awst 1967”

- Remarks by Emrys Roberts (chair) for Opening Ceremony at Bala, 7 August 67)
- "Bala ... Seremoni Agor ... Cyfarch ... Awst 7, 1967"
- Remarks by Emrys Roberts for luncheon for local authority representatives

#### Gwasg y Brython Papers – File 70

- Brochure for advertisers for 1937 National – programme, brochure for potential advertisers for 1937 National – list of subjects

#### J. L. Williams, MP, Papers - Box 3/5

- Booklet "Detholion o ryddiaith o farddoniaeth, Gymraeg yn disgrifio broydd Cymru" (Cardiff 1960)

#### John Maldwyn Rees Family Papers

- Ffile 28
  - "Cyhoeddiad Eisteddfod Frenhinol Genedlaethol Cymru" (1911)
  - Flyer for arts and crafts exhibition (1911)
  - "At yr Orsedd a Chymdeithas yr Eisteddfod Genedlaethol" (1911)
  - "Cais Machynlleth a'r Cylch am yr Eisteddfod Genedlaethol yn 1937"
- File 38/1
  - Two fundraising letters (1911)
  - "Eisteddfod Frenhinol Genedlaethol Cymru Caerfyrddin – General Conditions" (1911)
  - "Order of business at Executive Committee Meetings" (c. 1911)
  - "Catalogue of Loan Collection" for arts, crafts and science section (1911)
  - "Arts, Crafts and Science Section – special conditions" (1911)
  - "Musical Section" conditions (1911)
  - "Cyfrinachol – Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru – Caerfyrddin, 1911 – Rhestr o'r Testynau, Gwobrwyon, a'r Beirniaid yn yr Adran Lenyddol"
- File 38/2
  - "Historic Bardic Demand 'Is Is Peace?' Omitted", *Daily Sketch* Wednesday 4 August 1915, 12.
  - Miscellaneous cartoons (two, unlabeled)
  - "Eisteddfod", *Illustrated*, 12 August 1939, 41.

#### Kate Roberts Papers

- Letters regarding National Eisteddfod Denbigh (1939)

#### NLW ex 483

- Minute book of the Executive Committee at 1980 Dyffryn Lliw National Eisteddfod (1978-1980)

#### NLW ex 721

- Notes by "Cynan" regarding how to stage/organise/etc ceremonies and dances at National Eisteddfod

## NLW ex 1055

- Letters regarding maintaining All-Welsh Rule c. 1967
- Newspapers clippings regarding All-Welsh Rule (1967)
  - "Keep it Welsh- writers", *Western Mail*, 2 November 1967.
  - "Cadwch y Rheol – medd yr Eingl Cymry", *Y Cymro*, 3 Tachwedd 1967.
  - "Cefnogwn Reol iaith yr Eisteddfod", *Y Faner*, 9 November 1967.
  - "Authors say keep Welsh rule", *Liverpool Post*, 4 November 1967.

## NLW Minor 1268A

Typed minutes of Publicity Committee 1966 Port Talbot (1964-1965)

## NLW Minor 1982 – Box 4

Materials regarding National Eisteddfod Llandudno 1963

## Papurau 'Ap Nathan'

- D 650
  - Suggestions for the revision of the Gorsedd rules and constitution – early twentieth Century
- D 672
  - Archdruid's Notes about 1917 Birkenhead Eisteddfod

## Papurau Eunice Bryn Williams – Box 10

- Papurau amryw, 1930-80's; ffotos a dynnwyd yn yr Eisteddfod 1937

## Papurau Frank Price Jones

- Box 107-108
  - Ffeiliau Ernest Roberts, ysgrifennydd yr Eisteddfod gan gynnwys gohebiaeth, torion papur newydd ac memoranda ar rai o'r helyntion y cysylltiedig a'r Eisteddfod 1967-1969
  - Newspaper clippings from autumn 1967 regarding All-Welsh rule
  - Memorandum regarding All-Welsh rule
  - Copy of *LOL* from summer 1967
- Box 111:
  - Ffeil o dorion papur newydd, pamffledi a llythyrau ynglyn e'r Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 1922-1970

## Papurau W. J. Gruffydd

- Letters regarding National Eisteddfod (1935-1943)

## Papurau W. F. Gruffudd

- Materials regarding Crown Competition in 1952

## Professor Dafydd Jenkins Papers - Box 17

- Correspondence, minutes and misc. about National Eisteddfod (1958-1961?)

Rev. William Crwys Williams ("Crwys") Papers

- Various papers and manuscripts of "Crwys" (Archdruid 1938-1946)

Selwyn Jones Papers

- File 57
  - "Translations of the Messages of United Nations Delegates to the People of Wales" to be read at National on Thursday 10 August 1944
  - Programme of days, "Allied Delegation to Eisteddfod" (2 Aug 44), and list of delegates
  - "Confidential – Gorsedd y Beirdd – Defod Cyflwyno'r Gweinidogion Tramor"
  - "Ceremony of Presentation of the Allied Delegates to the Archdruid, Designed by "Cynan", Recorder of the Gorsedd of Bards" (1944)
  - "Explaining the Eisteddfod to the world", *Western Mail and South Wales News*, 3 August 1953, 6.
  - "The Festival's Influence lives on", *Western Mail and South Wales News*, 3 August 1953, 8.
  - "Private and Confidential – Recommended Distribution of Surplus [funds]" (1960)
  - 5 numbered press releases regarding 1960 Cardiff National
  - misc. (i.e. unnumbered) press statement for 1960 National
  - Remarks by Emrys Roberts from opening ceremony at 1966 National in Aberafan
  - Press hand-out regarding luncheon to representative of local authorities and industry, 5 August 1966
  - "Na Chyhoedder tan ar ôl y Seremoni Agor Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Y Bala 7 Awst 1967" (by Emrys Roberts)

Syr Idris Foster Paper– File 22

- "The Welsh Wallow", *The Guardian*, 2 August 1973.
- Five page statement on the aims of the National Eisteddfod (c. early 1960s?)

W. Emlyn Davies Papers and Calligrams – Box 1

- Appeal for Caernarfon and Gwyrfa National Eisteddfod (1959) – regarding funding

**PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE**

CUST 49/879 (PRO)

- Two pieces of correspondence regarding Entertainments Tax (discussing nature of Eisteddfod) (1926)
- Four official memorandum regarding Entertainments Tax (1926)

BD 24/97 (PRO)

- Two letters regarding Queen's visit to Eisteddfod (1960)

BD 11/2936

- Draft of National Eisteddfod Bill

- Explanatory notes (two pieces)
  - Newspaper clippings (two)
  - Correspondence (two pieces)
- BD 24/97
- Various invitations for 1962 (four pieces)
- BD 24/97
- Correspondence regarding various exhibitions c. 1961 (three pieces)
- BD 24/97
- Correspondence regarding accommodation/bedding c. 1955 (three pieces)
- BD 24/97
- Correspondence regarding display stands/exhibits c. 1958-9 (ten pieces – including a list of exhibitors on field)
  - Notes of the Eisteddfod 1957
- BD 24/97
- List of exhibitions c. 1962
- BD 24/97 – regarding the royal charter
- Correspondence (5 pieces)
  - Copy of the charter
  - Memo discussing National Eisteddfod
- BD 24/97
- Newspaper clippings regarding possible National Eisteddfod outside of Wales – c. 1968
- BD 24/97
- Newspaper clippings regarding Gorsedd/Welsh unity – 1966
- BD 24/97
- Minister of Wales' speech at National Eisteddfod – c. 1962
- BD 24/97
- Historical summary of National Eisteddfod for Minister of Wales – no date provided
- BD 24/97
- Regarding publicity at/of National Eisteddfod – 1959/60
- BD 24/97
- Financial appeal – 1962
- BD 24/97
- Note regarding overseas visitors and British Council – 1960
- BD 24/97
- Material regarding the proposed special issue of stamp – 1964
- BD 24/97
- Proposed Council of Information exhibit – 1960
- BD 24/97 AND HO 244/693 – regarding television and Eisteddfod
- Programme of TWW at Eisteddfod c. 1963
  - Letter regarding Wales and broadcasting regions c. 1961
  - Lobbying for S4C on behalf of National Eisteddfod c. 1974
- BD 25/283
- Discussion of the role of the wives of members of the Gorsedd c. 1968
- CAB 124/1321 – regarding role with Festival of Britain (1951)

- Nine letters /extended correspondence
  - minutes of meeting of Festival of Britain Welsh committee
- CUST 49/1768 – regarding entertainments tax
- 1937 – one letter
  - 1934 – 2 official memorandum regarding nature of various aspects of National Eisteddfod
  - 1916 – 2 drafts of memo on ‘Competitive Musical Meetings’ (and nature of National Eisteddfod) and newspaper cutting
- OF 924/545
- Correspondence regarding organisation of foreign delegates in 1946 (seven pieces)
- BD 24/97 (PRO)
- Two newspapers clippings regarding Welshness of festival

### **NATIONAL EISTEDDFOD ASSOCIATION OFFICE CARDIFF**

Pamphlet written by members of the National Eisteddfod Council for the Cardiff Eisteddfod in 1978 (no publication information given).

Attendance figures for 1960 from minutes of Eisteddfod Council

Flyer: “Pay for your seat by instalments” (1933)

*Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales: A Memorandum on the Methods of Achieving Limited Liability 31st July 1978* Deloitte Haskins and Sells

*Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales: Memorandum on the Formation of a Company to Operate the Policy of the Council of the Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales 1st December 1978*

*Constitution of the National Eisteddfod of Wales* (English translation) – 1965

*Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru Arts and Crafts Review 2002* (by Peter Davies)

Second Draft with notes related to the Eisteddfod – *The Companies Acts 1948 to 1976*

### **CARDIFF CENTRAL LIBRARY (LOCAL STUDIES COLLECTION)**

Order of Procession of Gorsedd - 1899

Crown Competition Adjudication and Winning Pryddest - 1899

Souvenir booklet of Eisteddfod by Cardiff company - 1899

Papers of Edward Thomas “Cochfarf” (Cardiff Central Library )

- Letters regarding organization of Pan-Celtic aspects of festival and hospitality (1899)
- Memorandum regarding schedule of Pan-Celtic ceremonies at Eisteddfod. (1899)

Scrapbook of newspaper clippings related to the Eisteddfod (1960)

### **CARMARTHEN COUNTY ARCHIVES OFFICE**

Receipts of expenses for committee at Carmarthen archives (1911)

“The Future of Wales” (Pamphlet published for the National Eisteddfod, 1944)

Poster and various photographs of the 1911 Eisteddfod

## POWYS ARCHIVES SERVICE

Poster related to 1937 Machynlleth Eisteddfod

## UNIVERSITY OF WALES SWANSEA PAMPLETS (PB2000-2103)

*Cyfansoddiadau buddugol Eisteddfod* (1890).

*Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Caernarfon – Yr Awdl a'r Bryddest fuddugol a Darnau Buddugol Eraill* (Caernarfon: Swyddfa'r Goleuad, 1921).

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*Awdl y gadair a Darnau Buddugol Eraill: Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Frenhinol Cymru 1926 Abertawe* (Abertawe: Morgan a Higgs, 1926).

*Braslun o Gyfansoddiad Cyngor yr Eisteddfod Genedlaethol* (Conwy: R. E. Jones a'I Frodyr, ??).

Cais Sir Drefaldwyn am Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 1957 yn y Drenewydd

*Cyfansoddiadau Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru* (draft: 1952)

*Cyfansoddiadau Cyngor yr Eisteddfod Genedlaethol* (??)

*Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru, Caernarfon – Cyfansoddiadau Buddugol: tair stori fer ymddiaadden dychmygol* (Conwy: R. E. Jones, 1935).

*Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru – Cyfansoddiad* (Caerdydd: Swyddfa'r Canolog, 1981).

*Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru Abertawe 1926 'Hyn sydd yn tystio bod \_\_\_\_ wedi ennill \_\_\_\_'* [sic]

*Gwyl y Cyhoeddi: Proclamation Festival – Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales Swansea and District 1964*

*Gorsedd Beirdd Ynys Prydain: Cysylltiad yr Orsedd a'r Pwyllgorau Lleol*

## NON-PRINT MATERIALS

### PICTURES/PHOTOGRAPHS – NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES (ISYS Web)

Llyfr: 290 Ffoto G. E. Evans Album 6

- (photographs of 1911 Caerfyrddin National Eisteddfod)

Llyfr: 398 Llyfr Ffoto National Eisteddfod

- (c. 1911 -- forty-four photos )
  - Nifer: 1 (Mynegbwynt: Sir Lewis Morris)
  - Nifer: 5 (Myn: Costumes)

Llyfr: 400 National Eisteddfod Caerffili

- (c.1950 – forty-six photos of Gorsedd and Ceremonies)

Llyfr: 466 L. Ff. Trefin Album 2

- (c.1960 – thirty photos of city)
- Nifer: 15 (Castell)
- Nifer: 30 (Edgar Phillips – Trefin)

Llyfr: 468 L. Ff. Trefin Album 4

- (c. 1960 - two hundred photos of Gorsedd)
- Nifer: 15 (Myn: Cardiff National Eisteddfod) (non-photo Blwch 9)
- Nifer: 10 (Cardiff 1959)
- Nifer: 3 (Llanelli 1962)

Llyfr Ffoto JDK Lloyd Album 7

- (photo of 1937 National Eisteddfod)

## PRINTED/PUBLISHED MATERIALS

### NEWSPAPERS

1899

*Western Mail*

*South Wales Echo*

*South Wales Daily News*

*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*

1911

*Western Mail*

*South Wales Daily Post*

*The Welshman (Carmarthen)*

*Carmarthen Journal*

*Llanelli Star*

1926

*Western Mail*

*South Wales Daily Post*

*Cambrian Daily Leader*

*The Welsh Outlook*

1937

*Western Mail*

*The Cambrian News (Aberystwyth)*

*Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald and North Wales Observer*

*Liverpool Daily Post (Welsh Edition)*

*North Wales Weekly News*

*Cardiff Times*

1944

*Western Mail*

*South Wales Evening Post*

*The Amman Valley Chronicle and East Carmarthen News*

*The Welshman (Carmarthen)*



1950

*Western Mail*

*South Wales Evening Post*

*South Wales Echo*

1960

*Western Mail*

*South Wales Echo*

*South Wales Evening Post*

*Daily Telegraph and Morning Post*

*Liverpool Daily Post*

*Daily Herald*

*Daily Worker*

*Belfast News-Letter*

*The Yorkshire Post*

*The Sunday Times*

1967

*Western Mail*

*Liverpool Daily Post (Welsh Edition)*

*The Cambrian News (Aberystwyth)*

*Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald and North Wales Observer*

*Y Cymro*

1979

*Western Mail*

*The Cambrian News (Aberystwyth)*

*Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald*

*Y Faner (Baner ac Amserau Cymru)*

2000

*Western Mail*

*Llanelli Star*

*Golwg*

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*Adroddiadau o'r Cyngor yr Eisteddfod Genedlaethol* (1926, 1935, 1937/38, 1939-1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1950, 1951, 1967, 2000, 2001).

*Arddangosfa Celf a Chreff* (1933, 1947, 1950, 1960, 1967, 1979, 1998, 2000).

*Cofnodion a Chyfansoddiadau* (1911).

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*Cyfansoddiad Cyngor yr Eisteddfod Genedlaethol* (1952 and 1981).

*Cyfansoddiadau a Barddoniaeth* (Lerpwl: Hugh Evans a'i Feibion, Cyf./Gwasg y Brythn., 1950, 1960, 1967, 1979).

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- Cyfrinachol: Arolwg Ystadegol Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 1983*
- Cyfrinachol: Arolwg Ystadegol Eisteddfod Genedlaethol de Powys, Llenelwedd 1993*
- Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Frenhinol Cymru: Ymweliad â Brwsels, Rhagfyr 18fed 1978*
- Gorsedd y Beirdd: Cyhoeddi Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Frenhinol Cymru Maldwyn a'r Gororau 2003 Pen-y-groes: Gwasg Dwyfor, 2002).*
- Gorsedd y Beirdd – Trefniadau at Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Frenhinol Cymru Sir Dinbych a'r Cyffiniau (2001).*
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- Gorsedd y Beirdd – Trefniadau at Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Frenhinol Cymru Mon (1999).*
- Gorsedd y Beirdd – Trefniadau at Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Frenhinol Cymru Meirion a'r Cyffiniau (1997).*
- Gorsedd y Beirdd – Trefniadau at Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Frenhinol Cymru Bro Dinefwr (1996).*
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- Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Frenhinol Cymru Abertawe 1926 Rhaglen Swyddogol*  
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