



*The Twenty-Fifth Annual Conference of the Association for Welsh Writing in English*

# Literary Topographies: Mapping Welsh Writing in English



Gregynog Hall  
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## Book of Abstracts

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**Conference Organisers:** Dr Kirsti Bohata or Dr Matthew Jarvis

## Plenary speakers

### Professor Tony Brown

Tony Brown is Professor of English at Bangor University and Co-director of the R.S. Thomas Study Centre. His study of R.S. Thomas in the Writers of Wales series is about to be re-issued by UWP to mark Thomas's centenary. His most recent project is the editing (with Jason Walford Davies ) of R.S. Thomas's *Uncollected Poems* (Bloodaxe).

### Dr Robert Clark

Robert Clark was until last year Reader in English at UEA. In his long career he has published and edited books and articles across a wide range of English and American fiction and prose from Defoe to Michael Ondaatje. An early exponent of 'the digital turn', since 1998 he has been the architect and driving force behind [LiteraryEncyclopedia.com](http://LiteraryEncyclopedia.com) and since 2011 of the pioneering [MappingWriting.com](http://MappingWriting.com).

### Professor Damian Walford Davies

Damian Walford Davies is Rendel Professor of English and Head of Department at Aberystwyth University, where his research fields include Romanticism, Welsh Writing in English, and creative writing. Recent publications include *Cartographies of Culture: New Geographies of Welsh Writing in English* (University of Wales Press, 2012); the poetry collection *Witch* (Seren, 2012); a critical edition of Brenda Chamberlain's *The Protagonists* (Parthian 2013); and, as editor, *R. S. Thomas: Poems to Elsi* (Seren, 2013).

### Dr Tristan Hughes

Tristan Hughes was born in Atikokan, Ontario, and brought up around Llangoed, Anglesey. Hughes is the author of *The Tower*, *Send My Cold Bones Home* and *Revenant*, all set on Anglesey; his most recent novel is *Eye Lake*, set in Canada.

### Professor M. Wynn Thomas

M. Wynn Thomas is Professor of English and Emyr Humphreys Professor of English, CREW, Swansea University. As executor of R. S. Thomas's unpublished estate, he edited the posthumous volume *Residues* (Bloodaxe, 2002). His latest publication is *R. S. Thomas: Serial Obsessive* (University of Wales Press, 2013).

## Abstracts

(alphabetically by presenter)

### Neal Alexander

(University of Nottingham)

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#### **‘Senses of place: Jo Shapcott’s border country’**

This paper will offer a reading of Jo Shapcott’s ‘Gladestry Quatrians’ from *Tender Taxes* (2001), concentrating particularly on the text’s involved figurations of the Welsh border country around Gladestry/Llanfair Llythynwg. The twenty-nine poems of this sequence are loose ‘versions’ of Rainer Maria Rilke’s *Quatrains Valaisans* (1926), but substitute the hilly, liminal topographies of Radnorshire for Rilke’s lush Swiss landscapes and invent a distinctively ‘uneasy’ mode of pastoral verse. Shapcott’s text, which shuttles between different languages, cultures, and poetic forms, is much preoccupied with the phenomenology of borders and boundaries, edges and divides, disclosing a profoundly unsettled, unsettling sense of place. Indeed, the very notion of a ‘sense of place’ is both literalised and multiplied in ‘Gladestry Quatrians’: this is a text in which the five senses are engaged not just in passively apprehending but actively making places, and in making sense of the worlds in which they take place. Accordingly, this paper will describe the fluid interplay that occurs between the body and the landscape, both of which are subject to recurrent metamorphoses, and the role played by the senses in mediating such exchanges.

Drawing upon recent work in literary geography and cultures of sense, I argue that Shapcott’s equivocally ‘Welsh’ poem-sequence reveals the boundaries of self, body, and place to be flexible and osmotic, subject to the ramifications of change and chance at any moment. In so doing, it implies the possibility of new articulations between ‘sense’ and ‘place’ on the borders of Welsh writing in English

#### Biographical note:

Neal Alexander lectures in English literature at the University of Nottingham. He is the author of *Ciaran Carson: Space, Place, Writing* (LUP, 2010) and co-editor (with David Cooper) of *Poetry & Geography* (LUP, 2013) and (with James Moran) of *Regional Modernisms* (EUP, 2013).

### Jon Anderson & Sarah Morse

(Cardiff University) & (Swansea University)

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#### **‘Page & Place: Ongoing Compositions of Plot’ and ‘Plotting theory, mapping texts’**

As a spatial turn continues across the social sciences and humanities, a range of disciplines are beginning to explore the connections between who and where we are. To this end, literature is a key resource to draw upon. This paper draws on a major research project to examine the key relationships between literar yand literal worlds. The paper argues that although it is common to frame the relationship between the literary and the literal as separate and bounded we argue that this boundary itself is more imagined than real. We use the spatial metaphor of ‘entanglement’s (following Sharp et al, 2000) to suggest how the literary plot of the story and the literal plot of a location are always implicated in, and constitutive of, one another. The paper goes on to outline how, if we take the hybrid nature of page and plot seriously, we can capture this idea of dyadic entanglement through the notion of ‘plot’. Plot is at once the crucial narrative or story line of creative writing, whilst also being a locatable, geographical territory. The entangled nature of these different, yet connected, aspects of plot is indicated by a third definition – the ability to

intrigue, subvert, scheme, or imagine. Just as we think we have nailed the plot as ‘simply’ a story telling device, or a geographical location, it loosens its independent moorings and re-tangles its- ‘self’ with its ‘other’ – our plots are therefore never singular, but always plural. We go on to outline how these various aspects of plot can be mapped, with reference to a number of Welsh authors writing in English about the city of Cardiff.

Biographical notes:

Jon Anderson

My academic interest is oriented around the ‘extraordinary sets of relations between people and places’ (Holloway & Hubbard, 2000:6). These ‘extraordinary relations’ circulate around a number of spaces of interest: Environmental Action and Identity; Geography, Place & Culture; Rural Political Action; Water Worlds and Surfing Places; Emerging Ontologies; Literary Geographies; Innovative methodologies and communication. These research interests have led to a range of international quality research publications and funding projects. They also inform my undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, both of which have won national teaching awards (Royal Town Planning Institute Awards for Teaching Excellence, 2009, 2011). My key publications include: *Understanding Cultural Geography: Places and Traces* (2012), *Water Worlds: Human Geographies of the Ocean* (with Peters, K, 2013), and *Page and Place: Ongoing Compositions of Plot* (with Morse, S, forthcoming).

Sarah Morse

My research focuses on literary depictions of place, and communities in Wales, in rural, (post)industrial and urban landscapes. I completed my doctoral thesis, "The Black Pastures": the significance of landscape in the work of Gwyn Thomas and Ron Berry' in 2010, at CREW, Swansea University. Forthcoming publications include *Page and Place: Ongoing Compositions of Plot* (with Anderson J., 2013). I am currently Executive Officer for the Learned Society of Wales, Wales's national scholarly academy.

**Malcolm Ballin**

(Independent / Cardiff University)

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### **“Where are you from?” Place and origins in short fiction in Dock Leaves’**

Concepts of place and origin supply recurrent themes in short fiction in Welsh periodicals in English. The stories in *Dock Leaves* (1949 – 58) - ‘The Voice of Pembrokeshire speaking to Wales’ - demonstrate continuing preoccupations with home and territory: exilic themes, stories of hidden wealth, fears of separation, worries about imprisonment in the home environment. The magazine’s editor, Raymond Garlick and its founder, Roland Mathias, contribute stories that turn about their protagonists’ attraction to (and sometimes repulsion from) places of origin. Powerful emotions are centred in contrasts between rural heritages and alienating encounters with industrialised or city environments, sometimes experienced, as Raymond Williams suggests, as ‘a kind of fall.’

As early as the 1950s, the phenomenon that Richard Dainotto characterises as ‘the fear of placelessness brought about by an incipient globalisation’ already surfaces in the context of this regional production. The pressures of cultural change invite continual reinterpretations of myths of personal origins. In Pierre Bourdieu’s formulation, this kind of writing is charged with a ‘legitimising, reinforcing capacity’.

The paper will discuss a number of the pieces of short fiction in *Dock Leaves* in order to demonstrate the prevalence of these characteristics and will consider them in the light of work by the theorists cited above.

Biographical note:

Malcolm Ballin is an Independent Researcher, based at Cardiff University. His book *Irish Periodical Culture* was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2008. A further publication, *Welsh Periodicals in English: 1882-2012*, is due from University of Wales Press in July 2013, as part of the Writers of Wales series.

**Georgia Burdett**

(Swansea University)

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**‘Quests of psycho-physical recovery in the Welsh landscape: the novels of Lloyd Jones’**

Lloyd Jones’ novels *Mr Vogel* [2004] and *Mr Cassini* [2006] explore the geographies of a troubled body and mind. After nearly dying of alcoholism, undergoing spells in hospital and living rough, Jones embarked on a series of walks around the Welsh perimeter- a journey of more than a thousand miles. These walks (repeated in different directions) were a crucial aspect of the novels’ composition and his recovery. Despite the physical endurance needed to complete the trek, Jones’ work prioritises mental stability over physical wholeness. Disabled protagonists are prolific in the novels, which are an eclectic mix of memoir, travelogue, and fiction; crippled Mr Vogel, disfigured Duxie, and disturbed Olly travel Wales-wide, searching for the ever-elusive truth of their disabilities and personal histories. The release of travel, even when it is travel of the mind, is depicted as being restorative of mental and physical health. Intricate plotting allows Jones to begin to unravel the complex psychology of disability and myth-making. While challenging recurring representations of Wales as a ‘disabled nation’, these novels present a landscape imbued with recuperation and hope. Yet Jones’ work thankfully avoids the pitfalls of overdone, unrealistic ‘overcoming-disability’ stories. He recognises that maintaining the ongoing relationships between geographic, mythical, and psychological places is intrinsic to our overall wellbeing, and, in doing so, delivers internalised, localised, and nationalised tour guides that are unlike anything Welsh writing in English has seen before.

Biographical note:

I am a PhD researcher at Swansea University based in CREW, Dept of English with additional supervision from Health Sciences. My thesis tracks the cultural evolution of disability in Welsh writing in English from the 1950s up to the present day. I am being supervised by Dr Kirsti Bohata, Prof. M. Wynn Thomas and Prof. Anne Borsay.

**Louise Chamberlain**

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**‘Thresholds of Environment in Zoë Skoulding’s *Remains of a Future City* and Patrick McGuinness’s *Jilted City*’**

This paper will consider how the poetry of Zoë Skoulding and Patrick McGuinness constructs and/or deconstructs boundaries between forms of Welsh environments. McGuinness and Skoulding are elective Welsh residents, and both maintain a preoccupation with how places interact and intersect with each other, what Doreen Massey calls ‘meeting places’.[1] I will therefore consider how McGuinness and Skoulding’s poetry mediates between environments, temporal boundaries, and thresholds of poetic form, as Subha Mukherji suggests: ‘the threshold is Janus-faced, looking not only in and out, but behind and ahead. It is also a space that refracts into

poetic intuition; more specifically, into a modern urban poetics.’[2] Skoulding’s ‘city’ in *Remains of a Future City* (2008) is imagined and situated as well as rooted in architectural theory, a city of the past and the present, a natural-artificial environment.[3] Indeed contemporary poetry should not be assumed to operate within one stable mode, as Ian Davidson recognises: ‘[contemporary] poetry is discursive, constructing complex arguments that incorporate a variety of perspectives while providing a critique of processes of representation’.[4] Skoulding and McGuinness’s poetry, then, will be seen to encompass not just an ‘urban poetics’ but a geographical poetics which crosses thresholds, boundaries, and borders, all the while troubling and confirming their sense of Welsh landscapes through conversation with other places. As McGuinness’s *Jilted City* (2010) states, ‘the neither/nor, the both/and, the none/of the above’ will be seen as integral to contemporary poetry which is concerned with both the built and the natural environment.[5]

[1] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1994) p.154

[2] Subha Mukherji, *Thinking on Thresholds: The Poetics of Transitive Spaces*, (London: Anthem Press, 2011) p.xxii

[3] Zoë Skoulding, *Remains of a Future City*, (Bridgend: Seren, 2008);

[4] Ian Davidson, *Radical Spaces of Poetry*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) p.3

[5] Patrick McGuinness, *Jilted City*, (Manchester: Carcanet, 2010) p.53

Biographical note:

Louise Chamberlain is a second year PhD student and postgraduate teaching fellow at the University of Nottingham. Her thesis, which is supervised by Dr. Neal Alexander and Prof. Julie Sanders, is concerned with representations of nature and environment in contemporary poetry. It maintains a particular focus on the potential intersection between literary geography and ecocriticism.

### **Mary-Ann Constantine**

(University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies)

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### **“Curt Fritter’d Fragments”: Thomas Pennant’s Heart of Darkness’**

Thomas Pennant of Downing, Flintshire (1726-1798) travelled extensively and wrote abundantly, particularly about the British Isles. A key figure in developing the notion of the Home Tour, his *Tours of Scotland* (1769 and 1772) directly inspired the journeys of Samuel Johnson and others, while his *Tour of Wales* (1778-1781) has earned him the title ‘father of Cambrian Tourism’.

These writings, a heterogeneous mix of scientific observation, social comment, anecdote and antiquarianism, were hugely influential for decades after their publication, shaping the way later travellers approached and perceived the places they describe; they also affected the perceptions of those who lived there. Where Johnson’s *Journey to the Western Isles* (1775) is suffused with a strong authorial presence, however, Pennant’s *Tours* are decidedly multivocal, absorbing (more or less thoroughly) information from a wide range of sources – letters to local antiquarians, the latest cartographical knowledge, oral traditions about names and places, material from scientific journals, and authors ancient and modern (the celebrated description of ‘Fingal’s Cave’ on Staffa is, for example, taken wholesale from the work of his friend Joseph Banks). The result is often overwhelming (reading Pennant can sometimes feel like wading through rubble), but can also be unsettling, as the different voices in the text pull in unexpected directions.

This paper will focus on one such uneasy moment - an encounter with the locals on the Isle of Canna - which raises questions about concepts of Britishness and the role of the state, while shedding light on the nature of intellectual exchange and travel to and between the ‘peripheries’ of late eighteenth-century Britain.

Biographical note:

Mary-Ann Constantine is Senior Research Fellow at the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies. She works on Romantic-era Wales, and is PI on a multi-author project exploring Wales and French Revolution; she is also co-organizer of two British Academy-funded workshops exploring the work of Thomas Pennant. Publications include *The Truth Against the World: Iolo Morganwg and Romantic Forgery* (UWP, 2007) and (with Paul Frame) *George Cadogan Morgan and Richard Price Morgan: Travels in Revolutionary France & A Journey Across America* (UWP, 2012).

**Michelle Deininger**

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**“A Store-House of the Past”: Narratives of Community, Auto-Ethnography and the Short Story in Wales’**

This paper will explore the relationship between Sandra A. Zagarell’s concept of ‘narrative of community’, the field of auto-ethnography and the short story form. Narratives of community encompass a range of generic and thematic patterns which focus on the significance of place in community interactions, the preservation of practices and customs, and the representation of community life in contrast to modernity. This genre has direct links to the field of ethnography, a strand of anthropology, which examines communities and their customs and often features a participant-observer narrator. The closely related field of auto-ethnography has been garnering much interest in the social sciences in recent years, as an approach which combines elements of ethnography with autobiography in order to challenge traditional accounts produced within anthropology. The short story form, with its roots in episodic sketches and travel narratives, has particularly strong links to narratives of community and ethnographic accounts. This paper will explore the short fiction of Kate Roberts, Lynette Roberts and Margiad Evans, predominantly written in the late 1930s and 1940s, especially in relation to the legacy of Caradoc Evans’ depiction of Welsh communities in *My People* (1915). In particular, it aims to underline the similarities between the ways in which these women writers capture and record patterns of rural life, including local customs and social practices, which were irrevocably altered in the aftermath of the Second World War. At the same time, this paper aims to examine the shifts apparent in the role of the participant-observer narrator by the 1940s. Ultimately, this paper will attempt to forge links between these overlapping areas of study in order to uncover the short story’s role in representing the dynamics of place and community in Welsh women’s writing.

Biographical note:

Michelle Deininger is a final year PhD student at Cardiff University. Her AHRC funded doctoral thesis, ‘Short Fiction by Women from Wales: A Neglected Tradition’, maps a distinct tradition of female-authored short stories from the mid nineteenth century to the present day. Publications include a review of Welsh women’s fiction for The Latchkey, entitled ‘Legacies of Recuperation: Feminism, Suffrage and the New Woman in the Honno Classics Series’ (2012) and “‘It was Forbidden, Strictly Forbidden’”: Contesting Taboo in Bernice Rubens’s *I Sent a Letter to My Love*’ in *Mapping the Territory: Critical Approaches to Welsh Fiction in English*, edited by Katie Gramich (2010).

**Elizabeth Edwards**

(University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies)  
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**“Varying Visions”: Richard Llwyd's Beaumaris Bay (1800)’**

This paper explores the now little-known book-length poem published by the Anglesey writer Richard Llwyd in 1800. Place and space are key elements of this work, which sets Puffin Island, Beaumaris, Snowdonia and the Menai Straits within eighteenth-century English-language traditions of topographical poetry and labouring-class writing, and within Romantic negotiations of localised experiences and peripheral perspectives. However, while Beaumaris Bay vividly portrays present-day landscapes around Anglesey and Snowdonia, Llwyd is equally concerned with mapping historical Welsh scenes through the poem's many footnotes, which extensively quote medieval Welsh poetry. This paper traces the interface and constant slippage in Beaumaris Bay between text and footnote, past and present, suggesting the ways in which Llwyd's visions of medieval Wales (especially the conquest of Wales and its long consequences) bring depth and complexity to his attempts to measure and picture modern Wales.

## Biographical note:

Elizabeth Edwards is a Research Fellow at the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth. She has recently edited an anthology of anglophone Welsh poetry from the period following the French Revolution, *English-Language Poetry from Wales 1789-1806* (UWP, 2013), and is currently working on an edition of the selected poetry of Richard Llwyd.

**Alice Entwistle**

(University of Glamorgan)  
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**“Forms of Address”: reading/writing topos, topography and topology in some contemporary poetry’**

This paper reflects on the cultural-political resonances which invariably inscribe and inflect critical encounters with literatures of place. ‘Forms of Address’ is rooted in the recognition – rarely acknowledged in a still-maturing cross-disciplinary discourse – that the literary text is always in and of itself a place, or topos. The paper focusses in particular on the cultural emphases which frequently help to contour the spatio-textual terrain of the poem. It takes particular interest in the way that the freighted cultural-political context(s), language(s) and landscape(s) of Wales are addressed in the very different textual environments of poems by Jo Shapcott (‘Gldestry Quatrains’ 1991), Emily Hinshelwood (*On Becoming a Fish*) and the experimental work-in-progress ‘Zeta Landscapes’ by Carol Watts, respectively. None of these writers is surprised to find the topographical complex of contemporary Wales positioning her, explicitly or not, as cultural outsider. The paper explores the different ways in which these three poets’ common – albeit not identical – sense of geopolitical situation play out in the self-consciously aesthetic disposition of their poems. It argues that, as the maturing processes of devolution in the UK flex in response to the changing political emphases of the ‘now’, literary interest in the writing/reading of place is likewise adapting; shifting from the quasi-cartographic habit of mapping history and culture onto, in and through the physical and material features of landscape (topography), towards the more elusive, more broadly discursive creative and political potentialities inhering in topology. It reads the poetic impulse to probe - rather than graph - the



proliferative logos of place/s back into the dynamic, richly compound ethnographic culture of (a still only partially) devolved contemporary Wales.

Biographical note:

Alice Entwistle is Principal Lecturer in English at the University of Glamorgan. Co-author with Jane Dowson of *A History of Twentieth Century British Women's Poetry* (Cambridge, 2005), she has published widely on poetries voicing the relationship between politics and identity in and beyond the cultural complex of the so-called British Isles. Her latest critical monograph *Poetry, Geography, Gender: Women re-writing Contemporary Wales* (University of Wales Press) will be published later this year. *LandForms*, an edited collection of interviews with a range of major women poets writing out of or identifying with Wales, will appear with Seren in 2014.

### **Lucy Gough**

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#### **'Shapeshifting and the Rhythm of Landscape in Audio Drama'**

The Man in Black: 'So you think this looks tranquil? You think this valley looks charming? Sheep and the odd hare grazing in the moonlight. What could be less threatening? Those spiny fingers are just the shadow of the trees and the village has not been snatched away, it is safely concealed under a blanket of mist, any darker thoughts are just the product of an over active imagination. We fear madness, we cling to reason distrusting imagination and yet...Maybe in this half light, where everything seems to be something else, we are actually seeing things as they really are. Maybe without the solidity of reason to block our path, our imagination edges us towards what is really there' ... (A Radio play. The White Hare radio 4 extra)

In audio drama the listener needs a place 'to be' and this place has be built around them, one has to coax them in, making sure they then inhabit the world you want them to. At the same time this place is more than just a location it is always part of the interior narrative, the emotional and psychological pulse of the play. In a drama documentary I wrote for Radio 4 THE RED ROOM about Charlotte Bronte. I used the location of where she was physically at this time (in a hot small room in Manchester) and gently steered the listener to the place where I argue she escaped to in her imagination, the ice of the Antarctic. A place from which she discovered buried under the ice, images which enabled her to write Jane Eyre.

In Mermaids Tail (RADIO 4) an anorexic teenage girl who lives in a high rise flat transforms herself into a mermaid in her bath and sails the seas of the shipping news. Coaxing the listener from the solid world of baths and high rise flats, to seas where fish dance the Dogger.

Discussing a number of plays written for radio this paper will unpick what strategies are employed to construct a specific place in the mind of the listener and from there how to then coax them on a journey into more challenging landscapes.

Biographical note:

Over the last 20 years I have written drama for theatre, radio and television. My work has been published by Seren, Methuen Parthian and Nick Hern. I am currently writing a stage play for The National Theatre Wales about Brenda Chamberlain..(an artist very much defined by place ) And an adaptation of a Dylan Thomas (unfinished ) novel for Theatr Iolo. I am a creative research fellow at Aberystwyth University.

**Steve Hendon**

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**“The Landscape of Particular Men”: Representations of First World War Masculinities : David Jones and Llewelyn Wyn Griffith’**

In her seminal text, *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler espouses a theory of the ‘performative’ nature of gender, which “ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency [...]; rather, [as] tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts.”

My paper will examine ways in which performative masculinities are represented in time – during the First World War – and place – the trenches of France. The texts to be examined are David Jones’s narrative-poem, *In Parenthesis* (1937), and Llewelyn Wyn Griffith’s memoir, *Up to Mametz* (1931). The two men were part of a remarkable group of authors who served in the Royal Welch Fusiliers in 1914-1918: Hedd Wyn and Robert Graves being notable others.

My concern is with the writers’ representations of ‘men as men’, rather than as the gender norm. Pre-war, a hegemonic public image of masculinity prevailed: ‘proper men’ operated through perceived characteristics of strength, courage, energy, and independence. This ‘stylization’ was especially relevant to the imperial soldier. The cultural historian, Graham Dawson, has described the soldier as the ‘quintessential figure of masculinity’.

The progress of the War dislocated this ‘figure’. As Jones remarks: “[July 1916] marks a change in the character of our lives [...] things hardened into a more relentless, mechanical affair [which] knocked the bottom out of the [continuing] life of small contingents of men [...]” Likewise, Wyn Griffith comments that ‘there were two kinds of men in the world – those who had been in the trenches, and the rest.’

My proposal echoes the task Jones set himself, now informed by the modern gender theory of critics such as Butler and R.W. Connell: to ‘appreciate’ the ‘complex of [...] fears, hopes, apprehensions [...] things exterior and interior, the landscape and paraphernalia of that singular time and of those particular men.’

**Biographical note:**

Steve Hendon completed a PhD at Cardiff University in 2010, and is now an Honorary Research Fellow there. He is currently researching texts of the inter-war years with a view to publishing a book on masculine gender identity, as represented by Welsh writers in English in that era.

**B. M. Jenkins**

(Bodleian Libraries)

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**‘Lewis Morris: Mapping the Edge of empire’**

In the 1730s, Lewis Morris began the surveys which would eventually lead to the Plans of Harbours, bars, bays and roads in St. George’s and the Bristol Channel, on behalf of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty. Yet the Admiralty never showed any marked enthusiasm for the task. For Lewis, providing adequate plans of the Welsh coastline are integral to providing Wales with its own, equal place in the British State. In an age of rapid imperial expansion, and a consequent boom in the mapping of empire, Morris had to fight for nearly a decade in order to produce an adequate map and seafaring guide to the Westernmost edge of England’s original colony. In his notebooks, Morris layered cartographical detail with historical and poetical notes, creating maps that showed the depth as well as the surface of Wales’s shore, placing his Welsh nation firmly in an historical context within the British Isles. If to “imagine a nation is to envision

its geography,” it becomes clear through Morris’s decade of wrangling with the Admiralty that he and the government are competing over their sense of what the British nation is, and where its bounds lie. This paper will explore the tension between Morris and the Admiralty, and consequently between often conflicting notions of Wales, Britain, and the geographical spaces of history.

Biographical note:

Bethan completed her DPhil on Concepts of Prydeindod in Eighteenth-Century Welsh Writing in English in 2009, and since then has worked for the Bodleian Libraries and as part of the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies 'Wales and the French Revolution' project. With Marion Löffler, she worked on the book *Political Pamphlets and Sermons from Wales 1790–1805*, which will be published later this year.

**Anwen Jones & Rowan O’Neill**

(Aberystwyth University)

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This conference is about Welsh writing in English, a construct that sets up an animating tension between form and content. One aspect of this tension is articulated by the artist and writer David Jones when he states, “by- & -large Welshmen writing in English, no matter how much their work may reflect something of the welsh milieu or Welsh character in certain respects, do not, or seldom, reflect that particular characteristic of Welsh metrics; the total wedding of ‘form & content’...”. It is clear that Jones’ comments are shaped by his own vocation as a poet and his personal feelings of loss in relation to the Welsh language, “My regret is that I can’t write in Welsh – that is a pain of loss that I must needs suffer.” Clearly for Jones the Welsh language held the tantalising promise of reconciliation between aspects of his experience that were held in contrast. In this paper we will consider the work of two other artists as responses to this same dilemma . Both the visual artist and scenographer, Cliff McLucas and the Pageant writer and historian, Owen Rhoscomyl , responded to this tension by rejecting the pre-eminence of language as a definitive signifier of identity in favour of a distinct set of cultural practices that coalesce around mapping.

In 1909 Owen Rhoscomyl wrote and staged Wales’ only national pageant to date, The Cardiff National Pageant. Almost a century later Cliff McLucas proposed the idea of the deep map after the writings of William Least-Heat Moon. On the one hand, the 1909 pageant was a pioneering attempt to re-map Wales in terms of, ‘the spirit of a nation’. Whilst on the other, the deep map, as advocated by McLucas offered a radically local understanding of place in relation to the people who inhabit it. Both McLucas and Rhoscomyl engaged in mapping exercises in an attempt to locate themselves and others within an environment in which their sense of identity was characterised by hybridity and multiplicity. Neither attempt was entirely successful, but both are significant in their contribution to the development of a creative mapping methodology that is both inclusive and definitive and in which form might eventually be successfully married to content.

Biographical notes:

Dr Anwen Jones is a lecturer in Theatre Studies at the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies at Aberystwyth University. She is Chair of AU’s Branch of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and Director of Teaching and Learning. She is the author of *National Theatres in Context: France, Germany, England and Wales* (Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 2007) and co-editor of *Wil Sam: Dyn y Theatr* (Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2009). Her journal publications

include studies of twentieth century French theatre and drama, and the historical and contemporary study of Welsh drama and theatre, including discussion of those figures who have made significant contributions to the definition and expansion of that field. She is co-editor of a Welsh medium student volume on the practice and production of modern European theatre that is currently in press.

Dr Rowan O'Neill is an artist and writer from Felinwynt, Ceredigion. Her practice and research represents a continuing investigation of language, identity, place and belonging. She takes inspiration from her academic background in theology and religious studies. She recently successfully defended her PhD thesis, *Crossing the bar: exploring identity through the medium of the Cliff McLucas archive*. She is currently a teaching fellow with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol within the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies at Aberystwyth University.

### **Reuben Knutson**

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### **'Blasting History into the Present: Reinventing the Rural Imaginary in a 1970s Welsh Landscape'**

I would like to present a current doctoral research project about the history of a counter-cultural migration into North Pembrokeshire, which took place during the 1970s. Individuals and communities, fuelled by the experimentation of the 1960s, moved from urban to rural spaces in order to fulfil their dreams, and experiment with modes of anti-capitalism, archaic forms of spirituality, alternative structures of community and family, and a return to 'nature' via 'back-to-the-land' ideologies. These experiments gave rise to new, or revised, social, cultural and economic structures, such as small-scale farming, the production of artisan foods, the establishment of ancient heritage sites, alternative schools, and a revival of craft skills. It looked forward with revolutionary intent, while drawing on deeply 'traditional' values. It has been suggested that such migrants, 'probably unwillingly ... facilitated the commodification of rural space.' (Boscoboinik & Bourquard, 2008)

In order to investigate these rural imaginaries, my project is concerned with how to approach the history in a way that locates the fragments of utopian practices that provided a generation with the inspiration and motivation to attempt an alternative future. My practice does this by engaging with historical re-enactment strategies, and Walter Benjamin's notion of the 'dialectical image', as contained in objects, places and spaces, where the past is 'seized ... in a flash of recognition ... which can reveal revolutionary potential in the present.' (Benjamin, 1935) I will use audiovisual references to show how I am working through a process of deep mapping, creating material from archive films and photographs, oral history testimonies, and group dialogue, to construct a site-specific re-enactment event with a re-enacted rural history.

#### **Biographical note:**

Reuben is currently undertaking a practice-based PhD at Aberystwyth University. Previously, he worked in Bristol, producing films and live events as part of the artist duo 'Artic'; and was working for the national arts organization 'Axis' presenting work, critique and discussion with visual artists, critics and curators.

**Martin Locock**

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**“At Ystrad Fflur”: the Strata Florida landscape in the poetic imagination’**

Visitors always say that Strata Florida is a special place. They differ in describing what constitutes this specialness, alluding to aspects of its location, landscape, vegetation, wildlife, history and associations. The richness of these interlocking aspects has been recognised by poets, leading to a tradition of ‘the Strata Florida poem’ that has included topographic and place-rooted Anglo-Welsh poets like Gillian Clarke, R S Thomas and Ruth Bidgood, alongside Welsh-language poets including Hedd Wyn, T Gwynn Jones.

The poems vary widely in their styles and themes, often calling on Dafydd ap Gwilym’s yew tree as a link to considerations of posterity, heritage, Welsh identity, and the poet’s role.

Among the meanings referenced are:

stone : water  
arch : ruin  
monk : pilgrim  
prince : poet  
kite : yew-tree

This paper will explore the nature of poetic responses to Strata Florida in parallel with the changing knowledge and meanings of the heritage, and highlight the discrepancies between picturesque and Romantic readings of the landscape and its prosaic reality, with roots in antiquarian writing in the late 19th century and the opening up of the Abbey as a tourist attraction and cultural icon. It will also examine the relationship between the poems as a dialogue between poets creating a shared vision of a single site.

**Biographical note:**

Martin Locock is Senior Project Officer for the Strata Florida Heritage Landscape Project, based at University of Wales Trinity Saint David in Lampeter. He has previously worked as project manager for the National Library of Wales and the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust. He has published extensively on archaeology, management and reflective practice.

He is a member of Red Heron: Lampeter Writers’ Workshop and has published three collections of poetry, *Carefully Chosen Words*, *Travels with a Notebook*, and *Removals*. He is currently editing Poetry from Strata Florida: an anthology of work inspired by the Ystrad Fflur landscape, 1350-2012.

**Steven Lovatt**

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**‘Location and Dislocation in the Fictions of Dorothy Edwards’**

The recent revival of interest in the life and fictions of Dorothy Edwards has yet to properly acknowledge the importance of spatial-temporal relations to the construction of her unique narrative worlds. Edwards’s stories are notable for their precise detailing of topography and aspect, yet the specificity of her landscapes works against their ‘realism’, contributing instead to a mood of dreamlike suspension that is without equivalent in English-language fiction. Edwards’s spare and deliberate writing, deeply concerned with polarities of movement and stasis, accentuates the significance of thoroughfares and barriers, and is ‘metaphysical’ in that it disruptively foregrounds the symbolic functions of topographical features, so that, for example,

roads 'stand for' the possibility of motion and freedom, while gates, walls and hedges delineate mental and narrative, and not just physical, barriers. Descriptions of place are always related to the states of mind of the stories' characters, who do not merely populate or inhabit their 'settings' but might be better said to co-create them, as mental projections or reflections. The unhappiness of these characters (their emotional dis-location) relates subtly and reciprocally to the landscapes in which they move, or are thwarted in their movement.

I will use my presentation to introduce and explore some of the issues arising out of Dorothy Edwards's presentations of place and time-space. By a careful examination of how her narratives are constructed I hope to indicate fruitful directions for future research, as well as to demonstrate the symbolic integrity of Edwards's fictions and their irreducibility to standard critical interpretations.

Biographical note:

I have written studies of Edwards and her fictions for the *Literary Encyclopaedia*, and I am presently teaching her collection *Rhapsody* at the University of Bristol, where I also work as a language tutor.

**Katriona Mackay**

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#### **'Underworlds Regained in Malcolm Pryce's *Aberystwyth* and *Torchwood*'s Cardiff'**

This paper aims to explore the ways in which post-devolution Anglophone Welsh writers have embraced Celtic myths and legends anew, symbolically reclaiming lost territories through an invocation of the Underworld. From a Freudian perspective all underworlds constitute the location of their culture's repressed unconscious; I argue that in these writers' texts Celtic underworlds are brought to the surface in order to revitalize Welsh culture and enable its evolution.

Malcolm Pryce's 2001 novel *Aberystwyth Mon Amour* transposes the classic noir private eye genre onto a 1980s Aberystwyth. In this surreal pastiche, Pryce plays with the stereotypes of Welsh culture: ice cream stalls take the role of rough drinking holes; the Druids are the Welsh Mafioso; and legendary singer Myfanwy headlines at the Moulin Goch. Despite the surreal events the familiar features of Aberystwyth, with its prom and amusement arcades, are all part of the ambience, as private-eye Louis Knight pairs up with streetwise teenager Calamity Jane to investigate the mysterious disappearance of local school boys. The solution of the mystery centres on a plan involving schoolboy genius Dai Brainbocs and Druid Grand Wizard and Welsh teacher Lovespoon to reclaim the legendary underworld of Cantre'r Gwaelod from beneath the sea and take pilgrims to it in an Ark. In Celtic mythology Cantre'r Gwaelod was the spot from which all Celts originated before the seas rose, so returning to reclaim and regenerate its promised land is in effect a Celtic 'exodus' story. Such regeneration myths are an important motif within postcolonial writings. In *Aberystwyth Mon Amour*, rather than taking the Ark to the sea, the idea is to bring the sea to the Ark; Brainbocs' plan is to flood Aberystwyth in order to launch the Ark. I want to argue that Cantre'r Gwaelod functions in this fiction as a mythic place of origin which can neither be fully reclaimed nor fully lost. The exodus to the underworld is thwarted, but Louie decides not to prevent the deluge and the change it will bring. Rather than being catastrophic the deluge stimulates the regeneration of Aberystwyth, metaphorically liberating Welsh culture from stagnation to re-birth.

The *Torchwood* television series, first aired in 2006, is set and filmed by BBC Wales in contemporary Cardiff; created by Welsh producer Russell T. Davies and his team of script writers, it presents the Welsh capital as distinctive multicultural city, of ethnic and sexual

diversity. Familiar edifices – the Millennium stadium and Welsh Assembly Building – dominate the landscape, but this Cardiff also has its underworld, a rift in its foundations which admits aliens in space and time, both benign and malign. Led by bi-sexual time traveller Captain Jack Harkness, the secret agency Torchwood Cardiff must monitor and protect against these arrivals. Like their devolved city, Torchwood Cardiff have attempted to become independent of Torchwood London, favouring more humane treatment at least of those aliens who present no threat to society. In one of the prose fiction adaptations spawned by the series, Gary Russell's *The Twilight Streets*, Captain Jack and his team try to uncover the secret of Tretarri, a Cardiff locality reputed to be haunted and uninhabitable, which makes Captain Jack physically ill when he attempts to enter it. The secret which is uncovered is an age old battle between dark and light energies which must be equally contained in order to retain the balance between them. However dark and light in Tretarri do not correspond to evil and good respectively, as they do in, for example, polarized Christian mythology; rather, Tretarri is more reminiscent of the Celtic Underworld of Annwn, peopled by supernatural beings with elements of good and evil combined. These energies can be destructive if one side becomes too powerful, and the Torchwood team all have premonitory visions of the warped world which may occur if their balance is altered. Rather than destroying these alien consciousnesses the team must find a way to contain them in order that the balance be retained between the two forces. In effect *Torchwood* maps Celtic mythology on to a modern Cardiff seen as the locus of fluid sexual and multiple ethnic identities (including some extra-terrestrial consciousnesses). It thus distinguishes its location as being both distinctively Welsh and simultaneously a site of diversity and tolerance.

Both these texts, then, employ popular genres and humorous pastiche to revisit mythical Celtic underworlds; I argue in this paper that they do so not in order to return to a traditional static past but to represent a devolved Wales, moving forward and writing its myths anew. The fact that in both cases these evolving energies are envisaged as anchored in highly recognizable and specific contemporary Welsh locations is central to their revitalising effects.

Biographical note:

Katriona Mackay was born in England and worked in New Zealand and Australia before settling in South Wales twelve years ago with her Welsh partner. Having completed a BA and MA in English, she is currently working on a PHD in Contemporary Gothic Anglo-Welsh writing at the University of Glamorgan.

### **Pippa Marland**

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### **“The stained bones underground feel our dancing measure”: an ecocritical exploration of the ‘relational choreographies’ of Bardsey Island (Ynys Enlli) in the work of Brenda Chamberlain and Christine Evans’**

Contemporary theorisations of ecocriticism have taken a material turn, suggesting that not only must we balance our understanding of the cultural construction of ‘nature’ with an awareness of its material existence, but that an acknowledgement of the shared materiality of all things human and more-than-human makes altogether redundant the culture/nature distinction.

In a broadly posthumanist formulation, this ‘ecomaterialism’ emphasises our imbrication in earth’s matrix and sees the world as a “densely intertwined...tissue of experience” (Abram, 2010: 143) replete with biosemiotic resonances and multiple forms of agency. An apprehension of these non-human voices and agentic powers breaks down our traditional sense of ourselves as being set apart from the earth. Instead we are engaged in a dance of mutual co-construction and

becoming, and 'place', as the site of this interaction, is an atlas of these "relational choreographies" (Iovino, forthcoming 2012: 12).

This paper explores the presence of the material island in Brenda Chamberlain's *Tide Race* and Christine Evans' *Island of Dark Horses*, both of which take Bardsey Island (Ynys Enlli) as their subject. It looks at the ways in which these writers express their imbrication in the island space, their response to its vital materiality, and their alertness to its agency and myriad tongues.

It also rises to the challenge of taking an ecomaterialist perspective on the trope of the spiritual island itself, tracing the interweaving of this cultural – and ostensibly metaphysical – construct with the materiality of the place. The legend that 20,000 saints are interred on the island (first expressed in the 12th century hagiography *Vita S. Elgari*), and the fact that the ground is "thick with bones" (Chamberlain, 1996: 26) point up the complex entanglement of Bardsey's textual and material heritage. For Evans, this textual heritage is enriched by the work of Chamberlain herself, and *Island of Dark Horses* (not least in 'Brenda and the Golden Snake') engages in a subtle dialogue with *Tide Race*.

Both writers evidence a strong sense of the dense intertwining of self and world and, to paraphrase Evans' poem for Chamberlain, fragments of their voyage go on singing in Bardsey's 'relational choreographies'.

Biographical note:

Pippa Marland is based at the University of Worcester and is writing an ecocritical PhD thesis on constructions of 'islandness' in literature from around the British and Irish archipelago. She has an article on Ecocriticism forthcoming this year for Blackwell online and is co-editing an issue of the journal *Green Letters* due for publication in 2014. She is also a reviewer for the journal *New Welsh Review*.

**Siriol McAvoy**

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### **'The Re-enchantment of Domestic Space in the Work of Lynette Roberts'**

Jed Esty claims that the contraction of the British Empire in the 1930s and 1940s occasioned a series of 'intellectual homecomings', whereby English writers and artists sought to reinvent national culture through an anthropological engagement with the local and particular. However, he neglects to explore the ways in which Welsh-identified modernists realised their own 'intellectual homecoming' through an engagement with 'meaningful time and bounded space'. I will attempt to redress this imbalance by focusing on the work of Argentinian-Welsh poet Lynette Roberts, written in and out of Llanybri during World War II.

Roberts uses the home as a means of exploring the gendered politics of localization and belonging. Like Virginia Woolf, she was aware of the interrelation of domestic space and wider socio-political structures. While Eliot, for Esty, sought to recapture the mystery once associated with the empire's fringes within a 'respiritualised core', Roberts re-enchants domestic space in order to effect the spiritual reinvention of Welsh society as a whole.

The cottage emerges as a ritual space in which the traditions that sustain and build up Welsh community and culture can be performed. Integrating the rhythm of the body into the body of the community, Roberts's domestic rites break down boundaries between self and community, public and private spaces. Like poetry, domestic ritual allows the exiled subject, following Heidegger, to 'dwell' authentically, and suggests the means by which civilization might be built up anew from the inside.

While the cottage is figured as a 'room of one's own' of the mind, a sanctified site of psychological resistance, Llanybri is evoked as a sacred text in which the unwritten history of an



emergent civilisation is inscribed. Through her re-enchantment of Welsh place and space, Roberts envisions a culture based on creation/craft, process, and flourishing – what Grace Jantzen terms ‘natality’ – as an alternative to one of individualism, war and death.

Biographical note:

Siriol McAvoy is currently in the third year of a PhD study at Cardiff University focusing on ritual, myth and medievalism in the work of Lynette Roberts and Virginia Woolf. She completed her undergraduate degree in English and French at Nottingham University in 2007. Compelled as much by modern French feminisms as by medieval texts, she went on to complete a Master’s degree in medieval literature at Oxford before returning to Wales to carry out a doctoral project that drew together her disparate interests. These include Welsh modernisms, the legacy of the Arts and Crafts movement in Wales, spiritualism and mysticism, and the intersection of these themes with gender.

**Tomos Owen**

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**‘Wales at Three Miles an Hour: W.H. Davies, Ernest Rhys and Walks through South Wales’**

‘The solitary walker’, argues Rebecca Solnit in *Wanderlust* (2002), her cultural history of walking, ‘is in the world, but apart from it. Taking Solnit’s suggestion as a point of departure, this paper follows the footsteps of two Welsh writers of the early twentieth century in their walks through South Wales. In particular, it pursues the question of walking in works by Ernest Rhys and W.H. Davies, both of whom produced book-length accounts of journeys on foot from one end of Wales to the other. As its title suggests, Rhys’s *The South Wales Coast from Chepstow to Aberystwyth* (1911) moves on the East-West axis, setting off from the Gwent border country and venturing deeper into the West. By contrast, Davies’s *A Poet’s Pilgrimage* (1918) moves in the opposite direction, setting out from the West and moving back towards the border, where the book concludes with its narrator boarding a train – presumably back to London.

Solnit suspects that ‘the mind, like the feet, works best at about three miles an hour. If so, then modern life is moving faster than the speed of thought, or thoughtfulness.’ Pre-empting Solnit, Rhys’s *The South Wales Coast* and Davies’s *Poet’s Pilgrimage* are formally and structurally conditioned by the speed and direction of the walker’s gait. Rhys’s walk moves at an ideal pace to encompass his view of Wales, topographically and culturally: it is a landscape redolent of literary and historical association. Davies, meanwhile, and in common with other works in his oeuvre, skirts around a Wales which retains its natural beauty but which also bears witness to an industrial, mechanised modernity. While Rhys’s walk stitches together the stages of his journey into a fabric of cultural and even mythical allusion, Davies’s Welsh identity is reliant on constantly remaining on the move; after all, a site of pilgrimage is a place of inspiration, but seldom a location in which to take up residence or lay down roots.

In the world but also apart from it, wondering and wandering, these two texts offer contrasting realisations of Wales through the practice and the literature of walking.

Biographical note

Tomos Owen is lecturer in English Literature at Cardiff University. He is currently working on a monograph on London-Welsh literary culture around the turn of the twentieth century. He has previously published on several aspects of this field, including the work of Arthur Machen, W.H. Davies, London Kelt newspaper and Caradoc Evans, as well as a book chapter on depictions of rioting in Welsh writing.

**LizaPenn-Thomas**

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**‘Underground - a dark and dangerous liminal place’**

When Richard Hughes was asked to write a drama for radio that could be performed through sound alone he chose to set his play in the pitch black of a mine. His seminal work *Danger* is still considered exemplary for its exploitation of the radio format and set the standard for many radio dramas to follow. This paper considers how the dark and dangerous place offered by the underground setting was utilised by writers to explore death in their contemporary context. Examining three productions, each breaking new ground in its medium, I will show how the prospect of imminent death presented a liminal moment where values were challenged, characters tested and faith questioned. Looking at the radio drama *Danger* (1924) by Richard Hughes, stage play *The Lamp* (1938) by Ken Etheridge and the film *Proud Valley* (1940) by Jack Jones, I shall also consider how the conditions of production shaped the possibilities offered by the underground space and how the performance ‘space’ itself offered new opportunities for the writers to explore universal truths for a wide audience through an essentially Welsh setting.

Biographical note:

In 4th year of part-time PhD in English within CREW at Swansea University under the supervision of Dr Daniel Williams. My PhD examines the idea of ‘Theatres of Nation in Wales and Ireland 1900-1945’. It aims to interrogate the assumption that Wales had no theatre tradition prior to the 1950’s. My research explores the ways in which a thriving amateur scene facilitated artistic freedom allowing theatrical performance to become a physical and imaginative space in which dominant culture could be challenged or subverted. I am focusing in particular on the employment of a symbolic non-realist genre, as epitomised by writers Richard Hughes, Ken Etheridge and Vernon Watkins, whose experimental works draw comparison with the writings of early C20th Irish dramatists

**Catherine Phelps and Alyce von Rothkirch**

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**‘Welsh Crime Scenes: Mapping Welsh Crime Fiction’**

Wales is not usually thought of as having produced much crime writing, but a considerable amount of crime fiction (incl. thrillers) have been set in Wales and/or were written by Welsh writers. Writers have often had particular agendas when setting their crime novels in Wales, for instance by adding a dash of the exotic by setting a novel written in an established genre in a ‘Celtic’ environment for the sake of variety and sales, the subversion of those often very Anglocentric and American-centric conventions by a Welsh setting or an equally subversive attempt to uncover hidden evil beneath tranquil rural landscapes. We are going to investigate the importance of location in a large sample of Welsh crime novels and stories from the 1920s to the present day. Using a distant reading approach, we will attempt to produce a map of ‘Welsh crime scenes’, attempting to answer questions arising from the potential discovery of patterns such as whether female writers choose different settings (and therefore have different agendas) to male writers, whether some locations are identified with particular types of crime etc. We will also use a more traditional close reading approach of selected texts to examine the interrelationship between place, language and the genre conventions of crime fiction.

Biographical notes:

Catherine Phelps is in the final stages of a PhD and has edited and contributed to the forthcoming publication, *Crime Fiction in the City: Capital Crimes*.

Alyce von Rothkirch is a lecturer at Swansea University. She is a member of CREW and is currently writing a book on the Welsh dramatist J.O. Francis.

**Bronwen Price**

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**‘Literary Tourism’**

Since 2008, Literature Wales, the National Company for the development of literature in Wales, has delivered an annual programme of literary tours. Whilst the original emphasis was on roll-on, roll-off coach visits to the places in which Welsh writers (mainly now deceased) lived, the nature of experiencing place has become increasingly central to the tours. By climbing, ambling, trotting, cycling, sailing, railing and rowing through landscapes of biographical and fictional dwelling, the intimacy of visitor engagement with place and word is stronger. Crucially, these experiences illuminate the interconnectivity of the writers, their literatures and their lives, enabling a re-examination of literary meaning and often leading to revised or intensified reader understandings. Increasingly our literary tours have explored the works and lives of living writers, in person.

This application of phenomenological literary theory in a public setting has academic significance and is ripe for critical analysis. How are readers’ understandings affected by places visited? What is the subsequent impact on local communities and their perception of home? How can literary tours offer genuine and individually reflexive rather than idealised, manufactured and uniform experiences? Does place always mould and inspire writers, and how can the complexity and diversity of this process be even more effectively tapped into? I will present these questions in the context of Literature Wales’ past five seasons of literary tours, offering a starting point for further critical analysis. The paper will culminate with the launch of Literature Wales’ 2013 Literary Tourism Events programme.

Biographical note:

Dr Bronwen Price is Project Manager for Literature Wales and co-ordinates their literary tourism activities. Her PhD in Archaeology from Cardiff University focused on liminality and rites of passage in prehistoric Wales and Ireland.

**Gwyneth TysonRoberts**

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**“The fair sequester'd vale”: Jane Williams (Ysgafell)'s early poems of place’**

This paper considers two poems by Jane Williams (Ysgafell) (1806-85) from her first collection, *Miscellaneous Poems* (published in 1824, when she was eighteen), whose subjects are located in the area of Breconshire in which she was living at the time. While the poems employ tropes which had featured prominently in earlier English poetry - the decline of grandeur and the comparison of human life to a river, respectively - and while they show the influence of major works of the eighteenth-century literary canon (especially Gray), it is their use of very specific

and local geographical references that transforms them from the purely generic into works at once more complex and more interesting.

The paper locates the poems in their geographical, biographical and historical contexts, arguing that at the time they were written Williams's life and family background had been characterised by multiple crossings and re-crossings of boundaries and borders - geographical, national, social, linguistic and financial - and that her decision to embed the poems in the Welsh landscape around her should be seen not only as an appropriation of topographical features for literary purposes, and as a literary response to the constraints of her personal situation at the time they were written, but as an assertion of her identity as a writer.

#### Biographical note:

Gwyneth Tyson Roberts has worked as a teacher and lecturer in Baghdad, Lisbon and London, and is the author of *The Language of the Blue Books: Wales and Colonial Prejudice* (re-issued in 2011). She is currently engaged in research at Aberystwyth University on the writing of Jane Williams (Ysgafell) in relation to nineteenth-century Welsh identity.

#### **Sally Roberts Jones**

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#### **‘A Sense of Place: Regional or Universal ?’**

‘It is our hope that ... the present Report may prompt teachers of English in Wales ... to look more sympathetically at the “literature of place” as a theme which is particularly relevant and rewarding in the context of education in contemporary Wales. It is a prospect which holds several important implications for the cultural life of our country ...’ (Meic Stephens, Preface to *The Literature of Wales in Secondary Schools*)

Circa 1984, the Scottish Office published an official report on the teaching of Scottish literature in secondary schools. This came to the attention of Sam Adams, who persuaded the Welsh Office to sponsor a similar project in Wales, handing the work of research to the English Language Section of Yr Academi Gymreig.

The Project Group’s report was published by the Welsh Office in 1989, as *The Literature of Wales in Secondary Schools*. Generally it made little impact, but there were at least two published responses, the second of which, an article in *Planet* by Dr, John Pikoulis, ‘The Ideology of “Anglo-Welsh”’ will be considered here.. The article was seriously critical of the ideas underlying the choice of ‘place’ as a theme for the report and what he saw as an abandonment of quality for something much more cosy and homespun.

This viewpoint is not unique, but it is important, and this paper will consider what that means, in setting ‘regional’ against ‘universal’. There is, too, a further question to be explored: is the literature of Wales in English simply a local branch of the literature of England or is it part of a separate national literature, minor perhaps, but valid in its own right, one for which the concept of ‘place’ is central, not just a picturesque element in the particular poem or story ?

**Emma Schofield**

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**“The things I ought to have been”: Escaping Nostalgia and Seeking a New Place in 1990’s Anglophone Welsh Writing’**

‘I often think about the things I ought to have been... rather than what I am’ declares the protagonist in Clare Morgan’s 1996 short story ‘Vertigo’. This sentiment reflects the difficulties faced by a nation searching for identity both geographically and politically in pre-devolution Wales.

Having failed to secure devolution in a referendum in 1979, Wales witnessed its sense of national identity descend into confusion, further compounded by industrial decline in the 1980s. Such decline was a heavy blow not only economically, but geographically, as the scars of industry marked the Welsh landscape. Industrial decline also heralded a pivotal moment for Anglophone Welsh writing. As the landscape altered dramatically and political uncertainty dominated the dawn of the 1990s, Anglophone Welsh writers sought to avoid nostalgia. Instead, while approaching a second referendum on devolution, authors engaged with the post-industrial spaces of Wales.

Examining these images of post-industrial Wales, this paper will explore the processes through which Wales rebuilt its sense of place and identity in the years prior to the 1997 referendum. Through analysis of fiction by authors including Glenda Beagan, Sian James and Mike Jenkins I will argue that this period was one of reconciliation between place, politics and literature in Wales. Building on my current PhD research into the impact of devolution on Anglophone Welsh writing, I will seek to demonstrate that these connections proved vital in presenting images of contemporary Welsh landscapes recognisable to readers. Furthermore, the ability to move beyond nostalgia for the past, instilled hope for the future. My paper will, therefore, argue that literary connections to place played a significant role in guiding Wales towards devolution and a renewed sense of identity.

**Biographical note:**

I am a PhD student at Cardiff University and the proposal is based on my ongoing research into the relation between place, identity and politics in Anglophone Welsh writing in light of devolution in Wales.

**Lisa Sheppard**

(Cardiff University)

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**“Pulling Pints and Pulling Punches? The Pubs of Contemporary Welsh Fiction and Improving Linguistic, Cultural and Gender Relations”**

My paper will examine the portrayal of pubs and drinking culture in the contemporary fiction of south Wales, arguing that the establishments described are often figured as sites where the linguistic and cultural tensions of Wales find expression. Drawing on the work of Ceridwen Lloyd Morgan (2011) and Kirsti Bohata (2004), it will begin by defining the Welsh pub itself as a culturally contentious space which is, in the Welsh imagination, arguably built upon linguistic, cultural and gender biases. Subsequently, it will examine how these tensions are addressed anew in the pubs depicted in the contemporary novels of south Wales, mainly through analysing the interesting relationship that develops between the Welsh and English languages in these establishments, whilst also paying some attention to subverted gender roles here too. The research

will draw examples from *The Book of Idiots* (2012) by Christopher Meredith, *Random Deaths and Custard* (2007) by Catrin Dafydd and *Cardiff Dead* (2001) by John Williams, and, time-allowing, will make comparisons with Welsh-language texts such as *Y Tiwniwr Piano* (The Piano Tuner - 2009), also by Dafydd, and *Ffydd Gobaith Cariad* (Faith Hope Love - 2006) by Llwyd Owen. The interpretation will use these examples to demonstrate how linguistic and cultural tensions are addressed in ways that attempt to give voice to both sides of the divide. Drawing upon this, as well as the texts' destabilising of gender roles and Diarmait Mac Giolla Christ's work (2007) on the importance of the pub to the linguistic and social make-up of a particular place, I will conclude by suggesting why it is that the pub is at the forefront of the society depicted in Wales' contemporary fiction.

#### Biographical note:

Lisa Sheppard hails from Port Talbot, but now lives in Cardiff. After studying for a BA in English Literature and Welsh and an MPhil in Creative and Critical Writing at Cardiff University, she returned in 2011 as a President's Research Scholar to begin a PhD. Supervised by Professor Katie Gramich and Dr Simon Brooks, her doctoral research examines the portrayal of ethnic, racial and linguistic minorities in the contemporary Welsh- and English-language fiction of South Wales. She has presented papers based on her masters and doctoral research at conferences such as 'Multiculturalisms: Theories and Practice' at Gregynog in May 2012 and 'Cyfrwng' at Swansea University in July 2012 and is a regular contributor to the Welsh-language arts magazine, *Tu Chwith*. In October 2012, along with other post-graduate students at Cardiff she organised the 'Connecting Interculturalism Cymru' conference and set up a related network for the sharing of information and best practice amongst academics and practitioners working in the field of multiculturalism.

#### **Rita Singer**

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#### **'Bicultural Geographies: Narrating Anglo-Welsh Identities in the Novels of Allen Raine'**

Around the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, Anne Adaliza Puddicombe (1836-1908) from Newcastle Emlyn rose to international fame under her pseudonym Allen Raine as one of the four most widely published authors of her time. Even with her popularity, the predictability of her stories and idiosyncratic portrayal of rural characters attracted much disparaging criticism almost from the start. However, Raine's strategic employment of geography as a narrative device for the portrayal of an inherently bicultural Victorian Wales has gone entirely unnoticed. Despite her focus on Ceredigion, the sum of Raine's settings classify as border areas. In the first and most concrete category of border narratives, Raine explores the effects of national borders. Owing to her focus on the Anglicising effects on the gwerin, this border-crossing frequently relates, but is not limited to migration between a rural Wales and urban England. In the second type of dividing spaces, shore dwelling or lives spent on the sea draw attention to the geographical equivalents of social spaces as they represent means of inclusion into and exclusion from life in a community. In these instances, Raine uses naturally existing border features to convey the invisible and artificially created boundaries of society between a Welsh-speaking peasantry and the Anglophone gentry. The third border experience concerns the correlation between time and space. This category illustrates the conflicts that arise from crossing the invisible border between a rural Wales that signifies the connection of the gwerin to their quasi-mythological past and the urban, industrial, Anglicized Wales that represents the future of the national community and addresses the potential danger of losing one's cultural heritage. Therefore, it can be argued that Raine

counter-balances her formulaic plots and simplistic characters with a consistent relation of Anglo-Welsh identities to threshold geographies.

Biographical note:

Rita Singer has studied British Literature and Cultural Studies at the University of Leipzig and recently submitted her doctoral thesis on the subject "Re-inventing the Gwerin: Anglo-Welsh Identities in Fiction and Non-Fiction, 1847-1914". In the past, she has presented papers about authors from Victorian Wales, such as Louisa Matilda Spooner and Elizabeth Amy Dillwyn. Currently, Rita teaches English Literature and Cultural Studies at undergraduate and post-graduate level in Leipzig. In her free-time, she has a keen interest in photography, silent film and playing the ukulele.

### **Paul Vigor**

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### **"... drums, drums in the deep": A literary archaeology of a fantasy war'**

For more than seventy years, scholars of English Literature have struggled to comprehend J.R.R. Tolkien's two, influential fantasy walking sagas, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Since 2005 I have been applying historical and archaeological landscape investigation techniques to the places and topographies as described - in almost photographic detail - in Tolkien's *Hobbit* tales.

Biographical note:

Paul Vigor is, currently, an independent historical and archaeological researcher. He read History at the University of Exeter, and Industrial Archaeology at the Ironbridge Institute, University of Birmingham. In 1997 he received two national fieldwork awards from the Association for Industrial Archaeology.

### **Diana Wallace**

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### **'Figures in a Landscape: Place, Gender and History in the Fiction of Hilda Vaughan'**

The fiction of Hilda Vaughan is notably rooted in a sense of place, specifically in the Radnorshire-Breconshire border where she grew up. Her novels frequently open with a scene which places a figure in a landscape in order to foreground the relationship between identity and place and key issues of property, ownership and inheritance. *The Battle to the Weak* (1925) opens with a view of hillside and valley and John Bevan on horseback glancing at 'My farm', 'My stock', 'My house' and reflecting that 'She is being my missus too' (4). *Here are Lovers* (1926) opens with the Squire's daughter Laetitia Wingfield leaning on the balustrade outside 'her father's house' looking out over 'his country' (1). The opening chapter of *The Soldier and the Gentlewoman* (1932) depicts the English Dick Einion-Thomas climbing an ancient burial place to take his first look at the Welsh estate, Plâs Einion, he has just inherited. The novel ends, after his death, with his sister-in-law climbing the same 'tump' and looking at the same view. *Harvest Home* (1936) similarly opens with Daniel Hafod riding home from England to the 'Great House' of which he is now 'Master': "'Mine'", said Daniel to himself, as his gaze travelled from the sturdy old mansion over the whitewashed barns and stables clustering around the fold behind it' (13). And it ends, after Daniel's death, with his cousin, Dan the sailor, walking the same road and looking at the same scene which now belongs to him. This paper will draw on the work of

Raymond Williams (1973) and Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik (1990) to explore how and why Vaughan repeatedly returns to this configuration of character, landscape and house, and how she uses this to present the experience of place and ‘country’ as always inflected by nationality, gender and class.

Biographical note:

Diana Wallace is Professor of English Literature at the University of Glamorgan. Her teaching and research focus on women’s writing, particularly of the early twentieth century, and on historical fiction. She is the author of *Sisters and Rivals in British Women’s Fiction 1914–39* (Macmillan, 2000), *The Woman’s Historical Novel: British Women Writers, 1900–2000* (Palgrave, 2005) and *Female Gothic Histories: Gender, History and the Gothic* (University of Wales Press, 2013).

**Andrew Webb**

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### **Anglophone Welsh Responses to Reservoir Construction**

My paper adapts Jason W. Moore’s work in ecology / world history to the Welsh context in order to present the late-nineteenth and twentieth century construction of reservoirs in Wales as the imposition of a new ‘socio-ecological regime’ onto mid-Wales: the re-organisation of the people and environment within a particular locality in order to facilitate the accumulation of capital elsewhere. By considering the literary registration of this imposition through the work of Ruth Bidgood, Harri Webb and R.S. Thomas, I hope to show the beginnings of a consciousness which resists the vision of a Welsh landscape re-shaped in the interests of capital accumulation in the English Midlands and North-West.

Biographical note:

Andrew Webb is a lecturer at the School of English in Bangor University. He writes about Anglophone Welsh responses to reservoir construction in the first issue of *International Journal of Welsh Writing in English*, due out later in 2013.