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The Country and the City: Rural and Urban Wales

ABSTRACTS and DELEGATES

Keynote/Special Panel Speakers

Professor Helen Fulton (University of Bristol) is Professor of Medieval Literature at the University of Bristol. Her work crosses the border between English and Welsh literary studies, focusing on the politics and cultural production of Wales and England in the Middle Ages. She has published extensively on literary representations of urban culture, most recently in her edited collection, *Urban Culture in Medieval Wales* (Cardiff, 2012).

'Arthur in Caerleon: Remembering a Roman City in the Literature of Wales'

It was Geoffrey of Monmouth who first associated King Arthur with the Welsh city of Caerleon-on-Usk, deliberately alluding to the Roman heritage of Wales as the basis for Arthur's pre-eminence. As a symbol of Wales's Roman heritage, conveying a link with the classical world and a pre-Saxon identity, the town of Caerleon came to figure in modern Welsh writing as a key literary trope of nationalism. The aim of this paper is to explore the medieval connotations of the town of Caerleon and how these were transferred into the work of modern writers in Wales. From this case study, we can draw broader conclusions about the function of towns and cities as sites of cultural identity and memory.

***My People* Centenary Panel**

Dinah Jones, is an award-winning programme maker. After many years of working for the BBC she established Silin Cyfyngedig, an independent TV & Radio production company. She recently produced 'Caradoc Evans A'i Bobl' for S4C to coincide with the centenary of the publication of Caradoc Evans' controversial collection of short stories, *My People*. She will be discussing *My People* with Prof M. Wynn Thomas (Swansea University) and Dr Mary-Ann Constantine (Aberystwyth University).

Professor Christopher Meredith (University of South Wales) is a novelist, poet and translator. He was born in Tredegar and lives in Brecon. In 2014 his first novel, *Shifts* (1988), was shortlisted for the title of 'Greatest Welsh Novel of All

Time'. His most recent novel is *The Book of Idiots*. His most recent collection of poems is *Air Histories*. christophermeredith.webs.com/

'I'r Bur Hoff Bau'

In this discussion with readings novelist and poet Christopher Meredith will think aloud about conceptions of town, city and country as they figure in his work in both a personal and a wider historical/international context.

Ed Thomas is a playwright, director and producer. He is co-creator, co-writer, one of four directors and Executive Producer on *Hinterland/Y Gwyll*, the English/Welsh detective drama (S4C, BBC Wales and BBC4). His first play *House of America* (1988) won numerous awards including 10 BAFTA Wales awards. His other plays include *Flowers of the Dead Red Sea* (1991), *East from the Gantry* (1993), *Song from a Forgotten City* (1995), *Gas Station Angel* (1998) and *Stone City Blue* (2004).

ABSTRACTS

Hiraeth and the Pastoral in the Welsh Short Story in English

Jane Aaron

The Welsh term '*hiraeth*' poses translation problems as its closest English-language equivalent, 'nostalgia', carries negative connotations absent from the Welsh concept. The term 'nostalgia' was coined in the seventeenth century to denote a mental disease affecting soldiers, rendering them unfit for their military duties, and the suggestion of psychological weakness, if not madness, remained in the modern usage. Twenty-first century socio-psychologists have, however, recently redefined nostalgia as 'a repository of positive affect' which 'strengthens social bonds' and 'imbues life with meaning', assuaging 'existential threat' (C. Sedikides, T. Wildschut, J. Arndt, and C. Routledge, 'Nostalgia: Past, Present, and Future', *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 17/5, 2008, 306). Sedikides et al suggest that older, more settled cultures, e.g. China or Ethiopia, have always conceived of nostalgia more positively, but it would appear that they have not as yet had their attention drawn to the manner in which the Celtic concept, *hiraeth* (Welsh) or *síreacht* (Gaelic), also supports their findings.

As a contribution to this current debate, this paper explores the use made of '*hiraeth*' – both the word itself and the concept – within twentieth-century Welsh short stories in English, citing examples drawn from the writings of Geraint Goodwin, Alun Lewis, Margiad Evans and Ron Berry. In particular, the emphasis in many of these tales on *hiraeth* as associated with the pastoral, or with community values initially nurtured within agrarian economies, will be examined to see what further light it may throw upon the nature and function of nostalgia-minus-its-negative-connotations, i.e., *hiraeth*.

'Cities come and go like forests': The poetry of Zoë Skoulding

Neal Alexander

This paper explores the imaginative entanglements of country and city in the poetry of Zoë Skoulding. Skoulding's work is distinctive for the way in which it brings the modernist aesthetics of post-war European avant-gardes to bear in representing the rural and coastal landscapes of Wales, her adopted home since 1991.

Characteristically, her poems depict places as radically impure, meshworks of heterogeneous elements that are at once rural and urban, natural and artificial, human and non-human, real and unreal. Moreover, places are themselves conceived as relational entities, formed and reformed ceaselessly by their shifting connections with other places, whether proximate or distant. This aesthetic of open connections often leads Skoulding to experiment with techniques of collage and juxtaposition, bringing different kinds of vocabularies and spatial images into new or disorienting alignment with one another. As a consequence, her restlessly inventive poems unpick the conceptual distinctions we habitually erect between city and country, nature and culture, place and displacement, home and away in search of more flexible ways of knowing and saying our places in the world.

Drawing examples from Skoulding's three most recent collections, *The Mirror Trade* (2004), *Remains of a Future City* (2008), and *The Museum of Disappearing Sounds* (2013), this paper illustrates some of the key features of her poetics of place and situate her work in its wider aesthetic and intellectual contexts.

'A Kind of Fall': Some Welsh Perspectives from *The Country and The City*

Malcolm Ballin

'Wales' does not actually appear in the index of my copy of Raymond Williams's *The Country and the City* but, despite this omission the concepts and the insights that feature throughout Raymond Williams's seminal work are highly relevant to the study of Welsh Writing in English. From the early intuitions drawn from his family's border-living in the shadow of the Black Mountains to his perception of the power of the myth of transition between rural and city life as amounting to 'a kind of fall' and his eventual linking of the idea of village and urban community to the organised fight for economic and political rights, Williams's book is shot through with lived perceptions that frequently feature as the staple preoccupations of Welsh writers in English.

The paper suggests a re-reading of *The Country and the City*, particularly considering its relevance to Welsh Writing in English. It also touches on the industrial novel, as practised by Williams himself, together with his treatment of colonialism in relation to Wales (discussed by Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism*). Some of these ideas can be seen being developed in Raymond Williams's early periodical *Politics and Letters* (1947).

Raymond Williams and contemporary realist art practice.

David Barnes

The imagined identity of Wales bypasses the cultural particularity of regions, communities, and individuals, and often results in representations that use a confusion of language drawn from a complex interplay of histories, memories, and myths. I argue that such forms are implicated in the processes of control and dominance characteristic of a paternalistic colonial experience, and that they are as pervasive as ever in relation to the experience of contemporary, capitalist Wales as they have been in its history.

My long-term art practice is centred around my experience of community in the south Wales valleys and Gwent borderlands, and seeks to respond to the true complexity of the lived experience of individual and society through a mode of realist practice that I characterise as 'dialogical documentary' (Chesher, 2007) - a discursive and reflexive mode of realism, (Bakhtin, 1973) that consciously embraces the concept of 'Structures of feeling' that Raymond Williams developed in throughout his work (Williams, 1961)

In this paper I reflect on the possibilities of contemporary modes of storytelling in response to the valleys and borders (Fraser, 2012) with particular attention to Raymond Williams' ideas on realism, power and nation/ Wales, and his own realist practice, in the form of his defining 'Welsh trilogy' novels (Williams, 1960, 1964, 1979)

'The Devil's Grandmother's Jointure': Elisabeth Inglis-Jones' Gothic Wales

Jayne Bowden

Elisabeth Inglis-Jones (1900–1994) was a prolific writer whose novels depicted life in rural Wales, focusing in particular on the problematic roles of the women of the Welsh squirearchy. Her books, now long out of print but generally well received at publication, ranged from historical fiction to biography but all demonstrated a keen interest in the Gothic. *Starved Fields* (1929) and *Aunt Albinia* (1948) both draw upon Gothic influence to illustrate the striking, but somewhat foreboding, landscape of Wales and its inhabitants.

The Gothic in both novels is used to explore themes of colonialism in rural Ceredigion, where Inglis-Jones grew up. In Inglis-Jones' work, it is the landscape, great Gothic estates and their inhabitants that form a backdrop that adds a further dark atmosphere to her novels. The mountains are personified as 'impenetrable' (23) lands that surround and conspire to keep one female character a prisoner in the very home where she should instead feel safe. Listless women and children are portrayed as savages and zombies amid grim, desolate landscapes.

This paper explores how Inglis-Jones employs Gothic tropes such as those used by Arthur Machen in texts such as his novel, *The Hill of Dreams* (1947) not to instil horror in her readers, but to illustrate the relative despair felt by women of the Welsh squirearchy who were trapped in a system which kept them prisoner in a land they could never inherit.

Bobbing along a sea of urbanism: the rural fiction of Cynan Jones

Dr Georgia Burdett

A contemporary writer, born and residing in Aberaeron, Cynan Jones published his prize-winning debut novel *The Long Dry* in 2006. Despite exploring age-old themes such as emotional isolation, the conflicting demands of family and farm, and the disruption of the old ways by the new, Jones's fiction nevertheless appears as something of an oddity. At work in these texts is a deep understanding of the shifting map of the human body and mind, and how this inevitably relates to the mapped world around us. Subsequent novels *Everything I Found on The Beach* (2011) and *The Dig* (2014) provide vivid, startling, and unflinching glimpses of 'country' subcultures, the enormous cruelties and tiny victories of difficult rural lives.

Subterranean rural Wales is a place where the 'understood geography, familiar and mammal' allows even 'bad' people a deep and sensual connection to the earth and its animals. To write convincingly on the exhausted subject of the difficulties of farming life takes some doing, but there are few false notes in Jones's descriptions. His passion for the landscape around him is palpable and magnetic, and despite the sense of entrapment oft-insinuated, his sense of 'place' remains acute.

In this paper I consider the instigation, motivation and obligation for a young, Welsh writer to produce 'Nature novels' in a genre that is being dominated by the semi or totally urban. Writing 'rural' may be fraught and indeed haunted by a sense of impossibility, but such works are certainly worthy of greater critical attention.

'Mountain-plants brought into a stove': Country and City in Catherine Hutton's *The Welsh Mountaineer* (1817)

Mary-Ann Constantine

Catherine Hutton (1756-1846) was a Birmingham-based novelist and prolific letter-writer, a friend (and fellow Unitarian) of Joseph Priestley, and the daughter of Birmingham's 'first historian', the bookseller William Hutton. She was also a keen traveller within the British Isles, and recorded her tours in letters and narratives, some published in journals like the *Monthly Magazine*, others woven into the plots of her novels. She is a sharp observer of social conditions, and a witty commentator on the foibles of those she encounters; the fact that (unlike many coach-bound lady tourists of her time) she was often prepared to ride on horseback or even walk gives her accounts considerable vigour. With her father, Catherine Hutton visited Wales several times, first in 1787 and then in the period 1796-1800: the respective accounts of their experiences (different genders, different generations) make interesting comparative reading.

The Huttons' responses to the Welsh landscape, language and people can be situated in the very particular (and enduring) tourist relationship that develops in this period between the city of Birmingham and its Welsh hinterland, as well as in the broader context of the domestic tour's 'rediscovery' of rural and non-English-speaking peripheries. Exploring how the idea of 'Wales' is made to signify in Catherine Hutton's work, this paper focuses principally on her 1817 novel, *The Welsh Mountaineer*, which pits Welsh country virtues against London city vices with a distinctively feminist twist.

The Influence of the *Gwerin* Writers on the Work of Rhys Davies

Catriona Coutts

In Welsh-language writing the countryside and its common people - the *gwerin* - are frequently depicted as the guardians and torch-bearers of Welsh language and culture. As Prys Morgan has shown in his essay 'The *Gwerin* of Wales: Myth and Reality' this model of the *gwerin* was primarily constructed by a handful of academics writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, stressing the link between the country and the essence of 'Welshness'.

In this paper I examine traces of the *gwerin* ideal in a selection of Rhys Davies's work. Davies's idealisation of rural West Wales has been noted by many critics, but, as far as I am aware, none have considered the influence of the *gwerin* writers in forming this view. This paper shows this influence and suggest how these influences may have filtered through to the non-Welsh-speaking Davies, and possible reasons for his adoption of them.

I focus on the works of O. M. Edwards, generally considered to be the greatest propagator of the *gwerin* ideal, but look briefly at W. J. Gruffydd - a contemporary of Davies of whose work Davies was aware. I trace comparisons with their work in Davies's novels *The Withered Root*, *The Black Venus* and *Honey and Bread*, his short stories 'Blodwen' and 'The Nature of Man' and his non-fictional *My Wales* and *The Story of Wales*. My intention is not to assess the veracity of the *gwerin* ideal, simply to show how the works of its proponents are echoed in Davies's writing.

**'Ugly cracks against the sky': rural landscapes and the politics of disease in
the short fiction of Elizabeth Baines**

Michelle Deininger

While there has been some work done on Elizabeth Baines as a feminist writer, partly because of her ground-breaking novel, *The Birth Machine* (1983) and her inclusion in Mary Eagleton's well-known text, *Feminist Literary Theory* (1986), her significance as a Welsh short fiction writer has been undeservedly overlooked. Now based in Manchester, but born in Bridgend and educated at Bangor, Baines has a deep-rooted connection with Wales. Indeed, many of her short fictions critique the ways in which Welsh rural environments have been damaged by pollution, industrialisation and inadequate political intervention. Her short story, 'Boiling the Potatoes' (1978), which was published in *Planet* but has never since been anthologised or republished, opens up a multiplicity of questions surrounding the relationship between landscape, disease, the environment and women's bodies.

This paper explores the implications of Baines' short story in relation to the devastation caused to the Welsh landscape by the spread of Dutch Elm disease, and the inadequate measures taken by both Westminster and the Forestry Commission to protect Wales' population of ancient elms. It also examines the parallels between the failure to protect the Welsh landscape with the ways in which the female body is made vulnerable to disease through carcinogens and other pollutants. Finally, this paper makes connections between 'Boiling the Potatoes' and several other environmentally-focused stories from Baines' oeuvre to argue that she should be read not just as a feminist, but as an inherently ecofeminist writer.

'[S]eventeen different processes': Mary Brunton's border crossings

Elizabeth Edwards

Presenting some early findings from the 'Curious Travellers' research project, this paper introduces Mary Brunton's posthumously-published 1815 tour of England and Wales. Brunton (1778-1818), a novelist, was from the Orkney Islands, moving to Edinburgh on her marriage in 1798. She kept the horizons of her Scottish homeland clearly in view as she travelled through England and Wales in 1815, using Scotland as a gauge against which to measure the new people, industries, landscapes, and built environments she encountered on her tour. In this paper, I use the meandering shape of Brunton's narrative, which weaves from Gloucestershire and the Wye Valley to 'Mud City' (just outside Stourbridge), manufacturing Shropshire, and the edges of Snowdonia, as the starting point for a discussion of industrial scenes and other landscapes in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century tours of Wales. How did visitors to Wales describe the bleach works at Lleweni, Anglesey's copper mine, or slate quarries and ironworks? What relation, political or aesthetic, do these scenes have to others often described in tourist accounts, such as picturesque north-east Wales, the new seaside towns, or mountainous north-west Wales?

The example of Brunton, who strings together topographical reportage, ethnographic and economic profiling, scientific curiosity, and moral or ideological reflection by means of a very writerly register, suggests that the literary tourist goes through almost as many processes as the porcelain being described in the title of this paper. Transperipheral in perspective, mapping out a composite and miscellaneous intellectual landscape, Brunton's tour suggests some ways of defining and counting these processes.

'The unknown region that lies beyond the Gray's Inn Road': Evolutionary anxiety in the country and the city in Arthur Machen's *The Green Round*

Dr Jessica George

Arthur Machen's 1933 novel, *The Green Round*, revisits a theme familiar to readers of his earlier work. An educated Londoner visits rural Wales, and has an unsettling encounter that continues to haunt him—in this case, quite literally—after his return to the English capital. The novel's protagonist, Lawrence Hillyer, suffering nervous exhaustion due to his life of secluded study, retreats to a West Wales resort for the sake of his health, and is followed back to London by a malignant, troglodytic figure who invokes the evolutionary anxieties set forth in Machen's earlier Little People stories, 'The Shining Pyramid' and the 'Novel of the Black Seal'.

Certainly, we might read Hillyer's unsettling double as expressing the projection of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century evolutionary anxieties onto a colonised Other — a startling incursion of imperfectly-civilised rural Welshness into the urban heart of England. Nineteenth-century anxieties about the city as a site of degeneration are still at large in *The Green Round*, however, and Hillyer's story is prefaced with a startling intrusion of the urban into the rural, complete with hints of racialized and class-coded atavism. The city itself becomes transformed into an Edenic paradise whose seductions pose as great a threat to Hillyer's mental state as does his troglodytic companion, and which may in the end simply offer a more attractive route to atavism. The appearance of the pre-human rural Other functions to expose the dual, or perhaps multiple, nature of the human city-dweller; its inability to escape its origins; its Other within.

An emotional 'border crossed': industrialised masculinities in Gwyn Thomas's *All Things Betray Thee* (1949) and Raymond Williams's *Border Country* (1960)

Steve Hendon

In his Introduction to the 1986 edition of Gwyn Thomas's *All Things Betray Thee*, Raymond Williams comments that the author distils the 'experience of absolute connection with a place, a people, a history, which [...] are often disconnecting, disintegrating, removing and disrupting'; the novel thus concerns the 'inner experience of [...] historical movement'. The setting is the 1830s at the time of the Merthyr and Newport Risings, and consequently 'movement' may be understood in terms of political protest. Equally, for the main character, the harpist Alan Hugh Leigh, the 'movement' is of people – from rural villages to new industrial towns. Both events have 'disrupting' implications for masculine roles.

In Williams's own novel, *Border Country*, Matthew Price is a university lecturer in London, analysing the very nineteenth-century population movements around which Thomas's novel revolves. Price's father, Harry, a railway signalman, is a product of that migration; he still lives in Glynmawr in the borderlands between Wales and England. When Harry falls seriously ill, Matthew undertakes a journey back to Glynmawr. In turn, Harry's narrative also returns, from the 1950s, in which the frame narrative is set, to 1920s and to the General Strike, a shaping event in Harry's life.

In these two novels, journeys, change and shifts between the rural and the urban-industrial shed light on masculine identity, especially related to subjective notions of emotion and 'structures of feeling', as Williams terms it. My paper examines what it means to 'be a man' in such turbulent times and environments.

**“At the hand of the mangle”: Urban Modernism and Meaninglessness in
Gwyn Thomas’s *Oscar***

Daniel Hughes

Until recently, Gwyn Thomas had largely been defined as an idiosyncratic social realist by many critics. The work of scholars like M Wynn Thomas and Laura Wainwright has challenged such readings of Gwyn Thomas, particularly in relation to his three 1940s novellas: *Oscar*, *The Dark Philosophers* and *Simeon*. This paper aims to build on the work of Thomas and Wainwright, and to firmly position Gwyn Thomas as an Anglophone Welsh modernist. The paper will offer a close textual analysis of his 1946 novella *Oscar*, which will concentrate on Thomas’s linguistic and stylistic experiment, his depiction of socio-economic oppression and, most importantly, the psychological and metaphysical oppression/nihilism of the text. The bleak, industrial/urban townscape Thomas evokes is a fitting subject for this year’s conference, and it will be argued that through its portrayal of an existential void, *Oscar* is a thoroughly modernist novella.

While Thomas’s modernism presents meaninglessness as symptomatic of the world, his modernism is far from meaningless in its value to the study of Welsh Writing in English. Such reconsiderations of Welsh authors will enhance not only Welsh Writing in English, but also aid in the continuing expansion and diversification of modernist studies. In keeping with the conference theme, this paper touches on other authors and texts, and argues that contrasting rural and urban spaces in Wales precipitated a modernist literature that is strong and diverse; at once distinctly Welsh, yet universal in its appeal and concerns.

Deformed Landscape, Disabled Industry: Disability in South Wales Coalfields Literature.

Alexandra Jones

Metaphors and representations of disability are used throughout Welsh coalfields literature. South Wales is not just seen as a region with a high proportion of disabled people, but a geographical landscape 'broken' by industrialisation, whilst this industry is itself 'broken' by devastatingly high unemployment in the post-First World War economic recession.

The Welsh landscape is romanticised as beautiful mountains rising from deprived valleys and dangerous mines: with the spreading, polluting influence of the heavy industry displacing green spaces and clean waters. It is a 'disfigured country' (*The Citadel*), in which environmental damage and imagery of broken, polluted landscapes, infers that Wales and its people have also been damaged by industrialisation. In part this reflects the social reality of high levels of occupational injuries and disease caused by the coal industry. In a mining community disability was highly prevalent and visible.

However, the image of the deformed landscape is accompanied by the metaphor of the disabled industry, stricken by high unemployment throughout the 1920s and 30s. These 'gammy-legged years' (*Tomorrow to Fresh Woods*) are dominated with images of stopped pits, and part-time operations, described as an industry 'on crutches' (*Jubilee Blues*) within a 'crippled valley' (*The Alone to the Alone*). This draws on the strange reversal in which it is the industry itself that is unfit for work. This is tied in with political fears about unemployment diminishing the power of the Unions, and indeed the status of the unemployed man in relation to a workers movement.

Using coalfields fictions of 1880-1948, this paper explores the use of disability in the depiction of the Welsh landscape and the coal industry.

**Performing the Language of the Grotesque: The 'malignant beauty' of
Caradoc Evans' *Taffy***

Dr Liz Jones

The 1923 premier of *Taffy* at the Prince of Wales Theatre, London, was booed and heckled from the gallery by a group of London Welsh men and women. What unfolded next was to be familiar Evans territory; a scathing satire on village life and its cunning, hypocritical, chapel-going inhabitants. Indeed, the play's provocative title, together with Evans' notoriety as 'the best hated man in Wales', were enough in themselves to attract a noisy protest.

The press reviews, on the other hand, were far more sanguine. While critics praised the 'brilliant company' - and its star Edith Evans in particular - *Taffy's* lack of subtlety and caricatured roles attracted a lukewarm reception; with most critics measuring the play unfavourably against the standards of theatrical realism. Yet realism was never Evans' style. The grotesque broad humour, the stylised caricatures and mischievous use of an invented 'Welsh' speech, mark his work as belonging to the traditions of broad, satirical comedy.

Twenty years later, Evans' wife, Marguerite Jervis was to produce *Taffy* with Rogues and Vagabonds, her Aberystwyth-based professional theatre company. Despite touring the Welsh-speaking (and chapel going) rural heartlands, Jervis' production was well received by audiences and critics alike; a response which she credits in part to the subtlety of her production and its emphasis on the 'poetry of the language'.

In this paper I explore Evans' manipulation of language and its potential in performance; involving as it does (intentional) mis-translations of the Welsh and a marked conflation of Bible Welsh with the Cardiganshire (Ceredigion) dialect. These layered linguistic devices combine to affect a comic, grotesque yet at times richly poetic mode of speech; a language which, as Jervis claims, affects its own 'malignant beauty.'

THE LITERATURE OF WALES: City and Country

Sally Roberts Jones

In the 1960s, at the time of the Second Flowering, Anglo-Welsh literature was seen as mainly a product of industrial South Wales. Though this was not exactly an urban environment – even Cardiff was hardly a metropolis – it was still contrasted with the supposedly largely rural background of Welsh language literature, often typified by what might be called the St Fagans tradition of folk culture, English language writing was thus seen as something alien and probably damaging, and the idea of it forming part of a broader Literature of Wales was almost heretical.

Today the situation is very different; what was once Anglo-Welsh literature is now Welsh Writing in English, Welsh-language writers can publish in both languages and both countries, English language writers no longer have to turn to London publishers as their main outlet.

Yet there is still a question of definition. What defines a Welsh writer in English? What is the relationship in this context between the writer, the text and the reader? What, if anything, joins the literature produced in the two languages, Welsh and English? How is the work produced by writers of Welsh allegiance more than a regional branch of the literature of England?

This paper looks beyond the two elements usually seen as defining the literature: the author and the text, and considers the audience that they create and the related cultural subtext that underlies work in both languages

Beyond 'Developmental Narratives': Virginia Woolf, Emyr Humphreys and Haruki Murakami

Shintaro Kono

In *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams identifies in the novels of George Eliot a form of 'developmental narrative' in which 'the social and economic solutions and the personal achievements were in a single dimension'. As we move into the modernist era he seems to believe that this integration of self and society breaks down, leading to narratives in which people achieve their growth 'through distancing and extrication' from society. From what Williams later said in his interviews with the *New Left Review*, he believed that this transition resulted, by way of Lawrence, in 'the new forms of the fifties', which Williams names 'the novel of escape'. What is important about this transition is not only that the vision of human growth is individualized and severed from society, but that with it the change in society, the growth of society, or what Williams refers as 'the continuity of working class life', is obliterated from our vision. My paper will explore the validity of this analysis, and will do so in relation to Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, Emyr Humphreys's *A Toy Epic* and Haruki Murakami's *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage* (which has not yet appeared in English). These novels all depart in significant ways from the 'developmental narrative' of classic realism, rejecting the conventions of bildungsroman, and create characters who are stunted in various revealing ways in their development. I will explore the extent to which Williams's narrative of formal change and increased thematic alienation between individuals and their social context in the novel offers a basis for comparative literary study. Does the juxtaposition of writers from different geographical locations lead to bland generalization, or does it allow us to identify some of the broad cultural effects of capitalist development? Can we draw on the internationalist perspectives opened up by Raymond Williams in *The Country and the City* to offer a global literary history, or are texts best read within their own traditions? These questions are as relevant to literary studies in Japan as they are to the field of Welsh Writing in English.

Making Room for Jesters: Male Sexuality, Class, and the Urban in the Writing of Ron Berry and Stead Jones

Daryl Leeworthy

The interplay between class and male sexuality in the urban domain remains one of the areas of modern Welsh life that has yet to be fully explored by scholars. The working-class novel, however, presents a potent consideration of the topic, whether in the form of the overt sexuality of Ron Berry's working-class male heroes and anti-heroes or in the more guarded (but no less powerful) sexuality present in Stead Jones's fictionalised Pwllheli.

The present paper therefore proposes an examination of working-class male sexuality in the context of the urban settings which the authors use to illustrate the enclosing nature of Welsh society in the post-war years: both inviting and familiar, hostile to 'difference', and clearly changing. As a consequence, we find working-class male heteronormativity nestling uncomfortably, but necessarily, alongside the apparent homosexuality of Gladstone Williams in *Make Room for the Jester* and the accusations of homosexuality levelled at Hector Bebb, whose abstinence as part of his training regime appears 'queer' to those around him.

Informed by sociology and wider historical contextualisation, the paper suggests that working-class attitudes to sexuality are indeed complex and that amongst the voices that can be heard in both Stead Jones's Pwllheli and Ron Berry's Rhondda is that of tolerance and acceptance.

'My mother gave me a pure white book with thick leaves and in it I pressed wild flowers': Lynette Roberts, neo-Romanticism, and gendered re-visions of national identity

Siriol McAvoy

Most critical accounts of Roberts's writing have acknowledged the centrality of rural space and place to her creative imagination. Her diary is full of almost obsessively detailed observations on local flowers and birds, and her descriptions of dying rural customs such as the making of 'pele' and the stacking of hay-ricks testify to her eager participation in rural village life in Llanybri. Yet in spite of Roberts's naturalism and concern for the organic, few critics have commented explicitly on her engagement with the legacy of Romanticism and the significance that this holds for her representation of landscape, history, and Welsh national identity.

I suggest that Roberts's work should be viewed within the context of the interwar 'zeitgeist' of Neo-Romanticism - a distinctive cultural movement that, encompassing literature, film, and the visual arts, was taken up by many modernist writers in Britain during the 1930s and 1940s. Defined by a complex mixture of rural nostalgia and social radicalism, this movement saw many artists and writers turn to rural locales as a locus for exploring national identity and for working out new forms of community and art for the modern world.

Like her fellow Neo Romantics, Roberts's work is charged by a kind of 'premature nostalgia' for a rural Welsh culture that she fears will soon be lost, but she seizes on this nostalgia as a positive, forward-looking impulse, presenting it as a means of bridging the gulf between past and present, and of imagining a new cultural future for Wales. I argue that by 'rescuing' the traces and fragments of an oral folk culture 'buried' in the landscape, Roberts attempt to recuperate (or more rightly, to *fabricate*) an anterior, alternative national tradition - one that, centred on bodily gesture, play, and the maternal semiotic, is shown to offer a more inclusive basis for national belonging than that offered by nationalistic models of Welsh identity. Commenting on Roberts's use of modern technology and

modernist forms as a means of recasting, or revisioning, both the natural landscape and the 'landscape' of national tradition, I suggest that she ultimately calls into question conceptions of 'natural' or unitary national origins, preferring instead a historical model focused on continuance and reinvention.

A geocritical re-examination of Brenda Chamberlain's *Tide Race*

Rosie Milnes

Chamberlain's *Tide Race* takes place almost exclusively on Ynys Enlli. This island, also called Bardsey, lying to the west of the Llŷn Peninsula lends itself very well to a geocritical examination in the style of Bertrand Westphal: a heterogeneous understanding of a specific place based on multiple points of view which ultimately prioritises geography over history and subjective opinion. To this end, *Tide Race* would be studied as just one text alongside surveys, poetry, and religious and historical documents.

My paper draws on some key concepts from Westphal's *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* but, conversely, my ultimate concern is an understanding of the ways in which we relate to the world around us over a polyvalent understanding of the geographical site. Examining the text as autobiography in light of Westphal's referentiality leads to a phenomenological exploration of place. The insular space of the island is sought by the narrator as a refuge from her previous experiences of daily life but becomes a stage where her anxieties are played out. Much critical work on *Tide Race* has explored the text in these terms especially feminist accounts which show Chamberlain attempting to escape oppressive gender norms. I extrapolate from this individual, egocentric account to gauge wider cultural attitudes to place. I argue that the historical moment of the text is significant, locating it in a time where place is increasingly seen as important because it appears to be under threat from 'the delocalizing forces of modernization and globalization.'

The island promises an escape from these forces as it remains a traditional rural community with strong ties to nature and physically bounded by the sea, yet I demonstrate the tensions in the text which reveal the pervasive modern attitudes to place even within this setting.

Reinhabiting the Rhondda: Reading Ron Berry as an Eco-Centric Writer

Sarah Morse

Much of Ron Berry's writing is rooted in the locale of the upper Rhondda Fawr. It traces the impact of heavy industry on the area, both looking back to its industrialisation and examining the contemporaneous late twentieth-century process of de-industrialisation. But much of Berry's writing also revels in its local environment: the mountains, moorland and watercourses as well as the natural life it sustains.

Although he did not define himself as an environmentally conscious writer, Berry's short and novel-length fiction (including the unpublished novel 'Below Lord's Head Mountain'), and his creative non-fiction work (including his autobiography *History Is What You Live*, and his natural history text, *Peregrine Watching*) all feature an underlying environmental awareness.

This paper explores Berry's work through the lens of his identification as a 'naturalist by instinct'. Drawing on the eco-critical theory of reinhabitation, that is the "specific method of committing oneself to a place", the paper considers how Berry emphasises a concurrent rehabilitation: the recovery of the narratives of industry, the re-establishment of what he terms 'the dialectic of man and his environment', and a restoration of the community and landscape he inhabits.

**Returning to Ground Level: Rediscovering Rural, Urban and Coastal Spaces in
Stevie Davies' *Kith and Kin* and Erica Woof's *Mud Puppy***

Emma Schofield

Opening with a scene set on the rural, yet coastal, landscape of Rhossili, Stevie Davies' 2004 novel *Kith and Kin* depicts protagonist Mara's attempt to confront her troubled adolescence through her rediscovery of her home town of Mumbles. Later in the novel estranged family member John encourages Mara to use this landscape to understand her own identity, suggesting that 'if you get down to ground level, you see so much more'.

Tracing a similarly complex family narrative, but focused on a more urban setting, Erica Woof's 2002 novel *Mud Puppy* sees London-based artist Daryl returning to her home town of Newport, which she affectionately nicknames the 'mud capital of Wales'. Taking these contrasting settings as a starting point, this paper compares the presentation of rural, urban and coastal spaces in both novels, tracing their portrayal of characters who find themselves returning to the places of their past in search of answers to their present difficulties. In so doing, it examines the ways in which both authors challenge the emotional, political and cultural importance of place.

Finally, this paper considers Raymond Williams' 1983 argument that "'nation", as a term, is radically connected with "native"', suggesting that for the characters in *Kith and Kin* and *Mud Puppy* their return to the rural and urban landscapes of their past may be connected to a process of regeneration and the development of a new sense of national identity in post-devolution Wales.

Title: Literature and Capitalism in Raymond Williams' *The Country and The City*

Ugo Rivetti

This presentation relates to a Masters on Raymond Williams in which I plan to grasp Raymond Williams' work as a project concerned with the comprehension of modern society and the historical process that formed its basis – defined by Williams as a 'long revolution'. In doing so intend to point out an aspect of his work still rather underexplored by the specialized literature, aiming also to emphasize the relations between this aspect and Williams' reflections on culture.

In this paper I explore the position that *The Country and The City* (1973) occupies in this project of the critique of modern history and society. According to my hypothesis, the text plays a pivotal part in this project because it is here that Williams develops a more mature and complete Marxist critique of modernity, that is to say, a critique of modernity as a critique of capitalism. Therefore, if the analysis developed in *The Country and The City* is settled in the same bases as the analysis developed in previous works – after all, he is interested here in comprehending the *ideas* of country and city as part of a determined historical *experience* – the historical process now in question is the growth of capitalism, a process that began in the sixteenth century but that continues till the present.

I present how Williams analyses this long historical process, emphasizing the ways in which he relates it to the history of English literature and showing how this new mode of cultural analysis resulted in a new approach towards Marxism.

'Escape to the Country' or into the *Heart of Darkness*?: 'Going Native' in Joe Dunthorne's *Wild Abandon* (2011)

Lisa Sheppard

This paper examines the juxtaposition of country and city life in Joe Dunthorne's 2011 novel, *Wild Abandon* through the lens of postcolonial theories of 'going native'. It argues that the characters' resolution to 'leave the piss-drinking drudge' of London, and their hapless attempt to live off the land and learn Welsh on the Gower Peninsula, when read in light of colonial concerns about primitivism and atavism, offer an interesting comment on the binary division between the country and the city which the characters take for granted.

Drawing upon historical and contemporary discourses about Welsh rural and urban spaces, this paper offers an interpretation of the city/country binary which is specific to the Welsh context, and which, I argue, can be read in light of theories about colonial stereotyping. This will include examining how, in the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Welsh countryside was considered both a refuge from industrial development, and a wild and dangerous place, and how, in more recent times, the rural/urban divide in Wales has been used to echo Welsh and English linguistic divides too.

By relating these theories and discourses to Dunthorne's characters' attempts at 'going native', and his narrator's mocking of their efforts to 'battle [their] own genetics', the novel can be seen to overturn stereotypes of Wales as a rural retreat, to challenge geographical and linguistic divisions, and question the connection between the 'country', language and national destiny.

German Travel Writing in Search of the Poet as a Bohemian Dropout

Dr Rita Singer

German-speaking travellers have long shown great interest in Wales. In 1780, the Swiss painter Samuel Hieronymous Grimm explored Wales in search of picturesque landscapes and ruined castles and churches. Throughout the nineteenth century, Wales was at the forefront of industrial progress and invention and German travel writing was rife with ecstatic eyewitness accounts of modern architecture and technologies. During the twentieth century, German explorations of Wales for specific purposes were largely channelled into leisurely pursuits.

Yet, since the 1980s German-language travel writing reflects a stable interest in the life and writings of Dylan Thomas. Predominantly, Swansea and Laugharne represent the heart and essence of 'Dylan Thomas Country' in these accounts. However, these travel writers also find the south Walian poet find resonances of his works among the slate tips of Snowdonia and the abandoned copper mines of Anglesey. At once admiring and rejecting Thomas's bohemian lifestyle, authors such as Peter Sager, Elke Heidenrich and Bernadette Conrad attempt to distil an essence of Welshness in their own writing as they copy Thomas's rich literary style and complement it with their own photographs.

As such, contemporary German-language travel writing returns to the earlier picturesque tradition as it fuses Dylan Thomas's life and art with the wild and romantic representations of Wales.

From Iago to Ianto: How the Welsh peasant lost the voice it never had.

Ceri Subbe

The authentic version of the Welsh peasant is being held hostage in R. S. Thomas's utopia of Abercuawg. Emblemizing the *gwerin*, the release of this 'mystical and pure' figure constructed by Welsh-language writers such as O. M. Edwards, is ransomed by the death of Welsh cultural nationalism. Abercuawg's status as obsolete means that this refuge of Welsh identity is, in fact, absent. However, this absence exerts a haunting presence in the national consciousness, a presence which writers feel compelled to fill with ghostwritten voices of the rural Welsh folk.

I argue that the peasant's position is post-colonially subaltern, consequently rendering itself mute, relying on others to speak for him and to keep the dream of *gweriniaeth* alive in the nowhere-land of Abercuawg. With reference to R. S. Thomas's 'deliberate exercise in mystification', Iago Prydderch, Caradog Pritchard's unnamed protagonist in *Un Nos Ola Leuad*, and Niall Griffiths's Ianto in *Sheepshagger*, I will chronicle the construction, unravelling, and ultimate violent silencing of the countryside peasant.

Visions of Ceredigion: Alun Lewis's 'Dwellers in the Valley' and Idris Davies's 'Teify Side'

Dr Alan Vaughan Jones

The rural landscapes and communities of Cardiganshire (present-day Ceredigion) have often played a prominent role in the process of 'imagining' the nation. In the course of this paper I seek to examine discursive constructions of the county by two important Anglophone Welsh writers: Alun Lewis (1915–44) and Idris Davies (1905–53). Each was born and brought up within a coal-mining valley and their efforts, in poetry and prose, to depict the industrialised south have received much attention; however, their sojourns in south Ceredigion have rarely been discussed – and the texts that they inspired have therefore aroused little interest.

Two of these overlooked works ('Dwellers in the Valley' and 'Teify Side') are the foci of this discussion. The first (written by Lewis, and published in 1935) is an uncollected short story, while the second (composed by Davies *circa* 1945) is a largely-forgotten discursive essay on a walk in the Teifi Valley. Through close, comparative readings that are attentive to matters of context, the paper reveals how each of these works embodies a fraught, conflicted purchase on the 'truth' of Welsh rural life – a highly contentious, emotive issue in their authors' respective lifetimes. In addition, the paper investigates the nature of their engagement with other canonical literary visions of 'the country' – such as those of Thomas Hardy, O.M. Edwards and Caradoc Evans.

The ruralisation of gender relationships in the novels of Trezza Azzopardi

Robert Walton

In Part 2 of Azzopardi's first novel, *The Hiding Place*, the Gauci family is shown to be dispersing - emotionally, culturally and geographically - from the traditional patriarchal structure which dominated its life in 1960s Tiger Bay, adapting to roles and relationships more typical of the latter end of the twentieth century. While the gender relationships in Azzopardi's oeuvre develop in the heterosexual matrix, they are played out within shifting geographical boundaries, from Cardiff to Norwich and, in *The Song House*, in the countryside of Berkshire. The changes are not simply of location, however. In 'Twentieth-Century Women's Writing in Wales', Katie Gramich asserts that "allegiance and a sense of belonging to one's 'square mile' can be very strong".

This paper examines how, in Azzopardi's four novels, the transition from cosmopolitan Cardiff to the rural settings of eastern England provides the locus and marginality in which allegiances and belonging find themselves challenged within the square mile of gender relationships, ultimately leading towards a more negotiated form in *The Song House*. In rural Britain, nevertheless, we are never far from the urban, never far from the water's edge, and the boundaries are porous.

Post-rural, post-urban space in R.S. Thomas

Andrew Webb

We are used to reading of R.S. Thomas as the quintessential Anglophone poet of rural Wales, a writer 'hurt' into his best poetry by his experience of ministering to the hill farmers above Manafon. Likewise, we are familiar with his retreat West into the rural heartland of Wales - from the borderlands of Hanmer and Chirk, via Manafon to Eglwysfach in the Dyfi Valley, and then to Aberdaron on the Llŷn. His brief stays in Holyhead, Bangor and Cardiff notwithstanding, he appears to be a writer who went to great lengths to avoid the city both in his life and writing.

In this paper, I argue that, through his poetry, R.S. Thomas searches for a post-rural, post-urban space. In particular, I suggest that R.S. Thomas's poetry is a response to Hiroshima, and the subsequent Cold War threat of nuclear war. Extending Raymond Williams's argument, I argue that this 'theological event' transformed the relation between the country and the city: on the one hand, the distinction between the two is erased in the face of a weapon that could annihilate life on earth; on the other hand, the country represents both a location in which any possible human survival would occur, and a culture in which the seeds of a different society – one that would not lead to a world threatened by nuclear Armageddon – might be rediscovered. Read in this context, R.S. Thomas's poetry, including his 'Iago Prytherch' is very much of its time: a post-rural, post-urban literature of the nuclear age.

Local or National? Gender, place and identity in post-devolution Wales' literature.

Rhiannon Heledd Williams

1979 in Wales heralded a new dawn of literature that reacted explicitly to the failed devolution vote during this year, canonized in various mediums.

However, the successful referendum of 1997 that led to the establishment of the Welsh Assembly Government in 1999 does not seem to ignite the same fervour in the nation's artistic output. Is this simply because a failed historical event naturally incurs an element of backlash, whilst the positive vote rendered a response unnecessary? Or did it possibly spur a more subtle forging of identity?

In the decade that followed 1999 – although not instantaneously - young female authors such as Caryl Lewis, Fflur Dafydd, Rachel Tresize and Angharad Price have sought to depict a specified place in their novels, which contrast with the very patriarchal and highly nationalized nature of the literature of protest seen in the aftermath of 1979. Is this a mere coincidence, or did they feel a need to redefine the nation's rapidly evolving identity in a more localized manner, providing it with a more feminine flavour or approach?

In this paper I explore themes of gender, belonging and identity through the significance of place, exploring whether devolution did contribute to the shaping of the nation's literature – albeit in a more indirect way.

Noiring the Picturesque: the discovery and abandonment of landscape in *Hinterland / Y Gwyll*

Dr Kate Woodward

During the pre-broadcast publicity and subsequent press reviews of 'Welsh noir' crime drama *Hinterland / Y Gwyll*, the importance of the specificity of the series' rural location drew much attention. The producers maintained that the landscape of Ceredigion in mid-Wales was the 'last place somewhere in the northern part of Europe that people don't know much about' (Ed Talfan, co-creator) and that it was 'a part of the UK that is untapped and undiscovered' (Ed Thomas, co-creator). Reviews talked of the area as an 'anonymous' and 'marginal zone'.

Despite this casting of the area as an unknown and forbidding territory, this paper demonstrates the way in which the landscape of Aberystwyth and wider Ceredigion has, in fact, played a pivotal role in the visual traditions of representations of landscape. It argues that the series and the discourses surrounding its production and marketing has developed an affective sense of place.

Furthermore *Y Gwyll / Hinterland* signals the way in which landscapes might not only provide spaces in which narratives unfold, but also might be imaginatively and materially transformed by screen representations and the discourses that develop around them.



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